

good to go home. Though I felt exhausted and really tired, (I slept for most of the following three days) I sensed total refreshment, both mentally and spiritually.

Writing this seven months after the event, the sabbatical still seems as if it were yesterday, I relive certain moments of it nearly every day. As a result of the whole experience I now feel more relaxed; am achieving more despite no longer having the support of a curate and have discovered a renewal I'd begun to doubt was possible. Again to quote some words from T S Eliot that aptly sum up how I now feel. 'The end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time'.

### **Inspirations in Africa**

*Alan Farish*

Nicky and I had an amazing time in Africa. Let me mention a few memories that will remain for many years to come. Meeting the three children that we sponsor in Mombassa, through the charity CHES was brilliant and seeing how we were helping them in their schooling was encouraging. Meeting new Christians who had come to faith as a result of the money All Saints' had given towards Church planting in Tabora was also exciting. Nicky and I were so impressed with their passion for planting new congregations into mainly Muslim villages in Tabora, that we agreed to sponsor an evangelist through training this year, in the Diocesan Bible College. Providing millet seed for all 250 clergy in Dickson Chilongani's Diocese was a great joy, helping them through a time of famine and hardship. Dickson was very grateful. Likewise, providing female goats for breeding, for all the clergy in Tabora and goats and bikes for friends we made in Malindi, meant that we returned feeling that our visit had helped the Church in small, but meaningful ways. We ended with a safari in Kenya, which was a great conclusion to a fantastic experience.

## **Diocese of Durham Council for Ministry**

# **TIME FOR GOD**

**Clergy Sabbaticals  
July 2008**

## Clergy Sabbaticals 2007

During 2007 the following clergy had sabbatical leave:

Paul Judson	Kevin Walton
Neville Vine	Robert Lawrance+
David Boddy	Alan Farish
Martin Jackson*	

In the summer I began work on a simpler process and policy for clergy sabbaticals. This was agreed by the Bishop's Staff in February 2008.

In the autumn I hosted a debriefing meeting to encourage the sharing of experience and facilitate further reflection and learning.

Most of what follows consists of separate reports of those who took sabbaticals in 2007. They are an inspiring read and testify to the renewal and creativity that can be released when we make time for God.

Stephen Cherry

\*Most of Martin's sabbatical took place in 2006, but was continued in 2007.

+ Robert had one month of sabbatical. The remaining two months are to be taken at a later date.

commonly often were – extremely dangerous and sometimes life threatening, always leaving the pilgrim tired but also fulfilled for having made the journey in anticipation of discovering something more of God's grace and what it means to trust in God.

Through relatively small events on passage I came to observe more and more each day, something of God's grace at work. For example, on leaving Anstruther bound for Arbroath I encountered heavy seas with increasing winds. With still 10nm to go the seas had become rough and progress was slow. As I was becoming more concerned about the vessel's ability and mine to cope, I decided to seek an alternative port of refuge and changed course for Tayport. On entering the fairway I was welcomed by a huge pod of dolphins and in an instant the anxiety melted and I was overcome with a terrific sense of joy and incredible well-being. I laughed out loud and praised the Creator for sending these beautiful creatures of His to escort me to safety. They jumped ahead of the bows, swam under the yacht and in all directions making their presence warmly felt. This continued for half an hour or so before the waters became more calm and the estuary approached.

By the time I reached the west coast and then on to Iona I had come to know as if for the first time, yet of course not for the first time, something of the incredible grace of God and of the refreshing and stimulating ways in which God invites us to trust Him, not just for the spiritual journeys we make but for the physical ones as well. I spent time on Iona reading, walking, praying and reflecting on the outward journey and of the return journey I would make. This in itself was incredibly refreshing but by this time I was beginning to look forward to going home and to having the opportunity to express my love in deeper and more tangible ways for God and for my family which, on reflection, I felt I had neglected in some ways.

The return trip had its moments of which I could write at length and probably bore you, but suffice to say that there were occasions, like on the outward journey, of deep anxiety immediately followed up by times of great relief and reward. When I finally returned to Hartlepool I had been away for nine weeks and one day. After a great welcome back by family and friends waiting to greet me at the marina, it was

## **A Pilgrimage at Sea** *Neville Vine*

I used my time of Sabbatical from June – August of this year to retrace in reverse something of the journey that St Aidan would have made in leaving the monastic community on Iona to Lindisfarne, the cradle of Christianity for the Northumbrians. As it was likely that Aidan would have travelled in part by sea, probably the safest form of transport in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, so it seemed appropriate that I should do the same, deliberately attempting to weave the spiritual with my love of sailing. The journey by sea from Hartlepool (my home port) to Iona via the Caledonian Canal is approximately 400nm and over a number of months I prepared both my 28ft sloop and myself for a journey that was to prove extremely demanding and yet equally rewarding. Alongside Reed's Nautical Almanac and Admiralty charts I also spent time digesting Stephen Covey's book titled 'The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People'.

I set out from Hartlepool one early morning at the end of May when a weather window presented itself. My initial plan was to sail to Tynemouth then to Amble before reaching Lindisfarne. This part of the trip went according to plan but difficulties soon presented themselves by way of sea fog which made navigation difficult. After two days at anchor at Lindisfarne, when there was time to take in something of the sacred character of the island and its deep roots of Christian history, it was time to weigh anchor and head north. The journey proved more and more difficult as the weather worsened which resulted in enforced periods held up in Tayport, Stonehaven and Lossiemouth. What should have been a good time of year for the journey turned out to be the worst. I'm reminded of some words from T S Eliot's 'Journey of the Magi' – 'A cold coming we had of it, just the worst time of the year for a journey, and such a long journey: the ways deep and the weather sharp.' Low pressure systems prevailed over the UK for the entire trip – and at times I really did wonder whether I had taken on more of an endurance test than a spiritual journey but then I ask myself what are spiritual journeys/pilgrimages?

As the sea miles went by I began to reflect upon pilgrimages as they

## **Sabbatical Policy and Process for Clergy in the Diocese of Durham**

1. As part of the CMD provision the diocese offers a limited number of sabbaticals for clergy each year.
2. Candidates for sabbaticals will normally be nominated through the 'Pastoral Conversation' scheme.
3. Nominated candidates should meet with the Director of Ministry to prepare a 'Sabbatical Proposal Document'.
4. The candidate will then send the proposal document to the Bishop of Jarrow (a copy must also be sent to the Director of Ministry).
5. The bishop will then either authorise the sabbatical, ask to meet the candidate or decline to authorise. If the sabbatical is authorised a letter will be sent, copied to the Director of Ministry, Churchwardens, Area Dean, Archdeacon and Diocesan Bishop

### **Notes**

A 'sabbatical' is a period of three months in which the minister is excused duties in order to engage in a project or set of activities that will promote personal and spiritual renewal.

Sabbaticals are not holidays and so the three month period is over and above annual leave and is supervised by a mentor.

The minister is responsible for arranging ministerial cover during the sabbatical.

A diocesan grant of £750 is paid to all who are awarded sabbaticals. Currently the budget allows for 5 grants per year

The 'Sabbatical Proposal Document' is key to this whole process. There is no form to fill in but the candidates are advised to prepare this with the help of the Director of Ministry and to ensure that the following issues are covered:

- Personal background in ministry – e.g length of service.
- Proposed dates.
- Some idea of how time will be spent.
- An indication of how the grant will be spent and whether further funding will be sought in the form of a Special Clergy Development Grant from the Council for Ministry.
- Any specific goals, hopes, agendas.
- Assurance that Churchwardens, Area Dean, family, etc. are supportive.
- Commitment to give an account of the sabbatical after the event either in writing or some other medium or by participating in a post-sabbatical workshop.

## **Where Empires Fight their Battles**

*Robert Lawrance*

For a variety of reasons my sabbatical will be taken in at least two chunks.

The first part was a month at the Tantur Ecumenical Institute near Jerusalem with an international group receiving lectures from scholars from the Abrahamic faiths, as well as visits, an itinerary in Galilee, use of the superb library and time to do your own thing.

Visiting Israel and Palestine fosters an appreciation of the topography of the Holy Land, illuminating bible reading and preaching. Meeting Israelis and Palestinians allows understanding of the roots of the conflict and what it is like to live with the separation wall and the constant threat of intimidation and violence. I rejoiced in my Christian faith and how it creates a way of living that the impassibility of Judaism and Islam seem unable to manage, but I was challenged by conflict amongst Christians. The Middle Eastern experience of Christian cultures (e.g. the crusades, colonialism, and the occupation of Iraq) is not happy. I discovered that this is a place where empires fight their battles: Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, Ottomans, Arabs, Europeans, the Cold War and now 'fundamentalist' Islamic and 'liberal' Western culture: can we address conflicts at home rather than transport them here? I also came to appreciate the importance of the Sabbath and its delight in creation.

In a land of three Sabbaths, dominated by the Jewish Shabat, I discerned the great value of space and time dedicated to the glory of God.

## Rediscovering Balance in Heidelberg

*Kevin Walton*

The highlight of my sabbatical was definitely the return to Heidelberg in Germany, truly a beautiful place. As well as helping me to brush up on my German and experience of modern Germany, there was the opportunity to 'be the student' again, cycling into lectures and getting back into the state of theology in one of the best universities for the subject. It was also about sharing the life of an Anglican community in a very different context from my own. 'Going to church', and experiencing the simplicity of German liturgy was also a great blessing, as well as a week with the Benedictine community in Trier. Last but not least, was some gorgeous weather with bike rides through asparagus fields or along the river Neckar, and walks in the forested hills.

Apart from specific learning, because I had spent a year there before my ordination, it created a bridge to life before parish ministry, and so helped to put things in a wider context. And perhaps my biggest gain has been to rediscover some sort of balance of work, prayer, study and rest, which I hope will not go away.

## Art and Soul

*Paul Judson*

The primary aim of the sabbatical was to explore the relationship between creativity and spirituality with particular reference to my own work as an artist. I began on the Isle of Skye, partly as a simple break but also to gather images to work on later. I then went to Edinburgh, speaking to other artists about their work and spending time at Leith Art School - where I could cheerfully have stayed. The remainder of the time (apart from a couple of short family holidays) was spent in a cottage in the Lake District, walking, reading, praying, drawing and painting. On Skye I was blessed with perfect weather which helped me to relax - and I had time to be. There was a sense of responsibility to make good use of the precious gift of time I had been given, but part of that 'good use' could be to waste time creatively - a luxury that many of us can't normally afford. I was, however, concerned to have something to show for it all. I need not have worried. As I wrote in my journal later: *'It's rather like a dam bursting and the water flooding out. Ideas have just poured out, as have the pictures. The only frustration is there's not enough time to get all I want to do done. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift.'*

Through this time set aside, I have realised that, for me, what links art and spirituality is the sense of wonder. Responding to beauty - or at least something that inspires admiration - being grateful for the gift of it, and then making something new happen (in my case through drawing, painting or photography) as a direct consequence. During this special time I also experienced a new sense of freedom and confidence. I was the one holding the brush, mixing the colour, deciding what should go where . . . but there was something else happening. Something far deeper than anything I'd ever experienced before. I did not feel bound to use colour in a particular way. Nor was I restricted to the shapes, patterns, or textures that were there in the original subject. I could be open to respond to the accidental brush stroke or the way a shape, pattern or colour combination developed.

## **Renewed Patterns of Living**

*Martin Jackson*

In my Sabbatical leave, I followed a theme entitled “Renewed Patterns of Living.” After 25 years of ordained ministry, this period allowed me to reflect on what I had been doing, to slow down and to examine patterns which might enable me in future life and ministry. In particular I sought to explore different spiritual traditions and the form given to them in religious “Rules,” paying particular attention to the Rule of St. Benedict and - as it turned out - the Ignatian tradition.

Periods away from home during the sabbatical - and needing funding - included time for study and reflection at St. Deiniol’s Library, Hawarden and an eight-day individually directed retreat at St. Beuno’s - both in North Wales. Necessarily, due to family commitments, I had to spend most of my sabbatical time at home - but the Crewe funding enabled me to participate in a course, “Faith Accompaniment: Training in Spiritual Direction,” run jointly by St. Antony’s Priory and Ushaw College. This course began at the same time as my period of leave (October 2006), but continued after it until June of this year, entailing approximately fortnightly whole day sessions and two residential weekends. Its benefit has been huge to me personally: in terms of learning something new; being confirmed in much that I had already held true and dear; in providing me with companions on the journey; and in complementing the three month period of the sabbatical to give it structure and a six month period after in which to consolidate what I had taken in.

I had hoped originally that my sabbatical leave would have included a three week sabbatical programme for clergy and religious in Italy, and was sorry that this programme was cancelled due to lack of take-up. However, the long-term benefits of being able to re-direct the funds made available to me were greater than I could imagine. My participation in the course in training for spiritual direction had to be arranged at quite a late stage. And I was also able to take part in a programme run by the Anglican Centre in Rome on “Benedictine Spirituality” in March 2007. This enabled the further development of themes explored during my sabbatical - with a diverse group of people

from many parts of the world. Talks, seminars and directed visits combined with a sense of place, the experience of the participants and encounters with various communities and individuals to give me a real sense of refreshment and new energy for my ministry.

These programmes have now concluded, but the work begun in them is still in progress. I have reflected on my experiences in my parish in meetings and in written form. A direct outcome has been a Quiet Day led for another parish at Alnmouth Friary on Benedict and his Rule. Following on from the course in Spiritual Direction, I have been asked if I would be willing to have potential directees referred to me. And I hope my approach to life and spirituality (my journey and that of others) has been changed for the better.