

## Community Routes

### Community of the Divine Compassion

*In November 2007, Samuel and Hugh visited the Community of the Divine Compassion (CDC) at Nyanga, 190 miles east of Harare, in the Eastern Highlands, Zimbabwe.*

**Hugh** writes of their visit:

The brothers: Peter Chapa (the Guardian), William, Bhekimpilo, and Brian live at the Anglers' Rest Hotel, which CDC owns and manages - employing eight staff and providing for the educational needs of several young men. The Hotel is well patronised by non-governmental organisations particularly those running AIDS programmes. The rooms have solar hot water panels for en suite hot baths. Satellite TV from South Africa, Botswana and the BBC was often on, except during power cuts. The phone worked from time to time.



I had purchased petrol coupons in London so that Br Bhekimpilo could meet us at Harare airport and take us directly to Nyanga. A few buses are still running. There were many roadside vendors waiting for mostly non-existent customers.

Brother Brian was professed while we were there - the profession service took place in the hotel dining room. However, the lunch at the profession may have been the best meal that some of the parish children had had for ages.

The brothers have an orchard of apples, a vineyard, and an agricultural nursery. They sell seedlings of apples, strawberries, peaches, and comfrey, all of which grow at 6,000 ft. Potatoes are also a staple along with maize. There is a local honey industry.

When we asked if the brothers needed anything that we could bring them, their primary request was for kit for the local football team! When we got there, we discovered that they did not have a proper ball to practice with and were also in need of boots, so we have since arranged to remedy these deficiencies. The team played a commendable game against an army team during our visit.

To offset some of the carbon emissions produced by our flight to Nairobi, we are sending out a consignment of compact fluorescent lamps which will also reduce the brothers' power bills and give brighter lighting in chapel. The

friary/hotel is lit with about 50 light bulbs, mainly 40 watt, which stay on all night for security purposes.

We visited the orphanage at Bonda mission run by the sisters of the Community of the Holy Transfiguration. The sisters were proud of their wood-burning stove, though how they could afford to feed the children was a mystery. We also visited the Anglican hospital at Bonda - Roger Alexander was once parish priest there.

## Companions

Saint Francis has always been a saint who has attracted people to follow Jesus Christ in a simple and humble way. There are, firstly, the communities of vowed brothers and sisters throughout the world, members of the First and Second Orders. Then there are members of the Third Order, men and women, married and single, ordained and lay, who commit themselves to a Franciscan way of life in an extended community. But there are also many other people who have a devotion to Saint Francis and the Franciscan way of life, who wish to be associated as friends with the brothers and sisters of the three orders, and do this by being a Companion of the Society of St Francis.

Companions are those who, in the course of their Christian journey, have met or heard of the Sisters and Brothers, and have a desire to accompany them in the way of Christian commitment. While they do not wish for, or are not in a position to live a life in community, Companions wish to support those called to this way of life.

Companions are encouraged to deepen their spiritual life through prayer and by having a simple rule of life. Prayer is the chief means by which they journey together with the Brothers and Sisters, for it is through their regular prayer that the Society gains much strength. To inform this prayer the Companions are encouraged to subscribe to the franciscan and to use the accompanying Intercession Paper. There is also a Companions Newsletter which is published twice a year.

Companions are also encouraged to be involved in some form of active ministry with those in need. This may be through their local parish or some charitable organisation. Where it is possible some Companions help with the particular ministry of one of the Franciscan houses.

In some areas, where there are enough Companions, meetings are held for fellowship, prayer and mutual support three or four times a year. These meetings are not obligatory but are valuable in the exchange of ideas and thoughts of those following Saint Francis together.

Companions are also encouraged to read and study the scriptures and to strengthen their Christian life by attending a retreat or quiet day.

Companions are expected:

To pray regularly for the Society of Saint Francis and to support its life and work through almsgiving;  
To aim at simplicity of life, avoiding all waste and extravagance;  
To help those in need;  
To strive to bring others to the knowledge and life of Christ.

People who wish to become Companions are admitted in a short service conducted by their local priest or a Sister or Brother. For more details about Companions please contact the Secretary for Companions, St Matthias' Vicarage, 45 Mafeking Road, Canning Town, London E16 4NS

### **Bentley-by-Water**

*By the waters of Bentley we sat down and wept*

**Nathanael** writes about last year's Doncaster floods:

'Three feet of water covers the High Street' and according to reports, is still rising. The River Don had burst its banks; the dyke surrounding Bentley village was over-flowing. Such was the situation in the last week of June and first week of July 2007.

Fortunately for those in the vicarage the situation was clear. The flood water stayed just fifty yards away. More than six months on, some shops in the High Street are still not open for business. Many are boarded up while restoration work takes place inside.

A Christmas bonus of £50 was sent to every house-holder affected by the flood, kindness of Doncaster Council. Thankfully, the situation is slowly returning to normal for some, but many will not be able to return to their homes for another six months at least.

Such was the ferocity of Sister Water.

The last flood of such magnitude was 1957 of which those who remember say, 'it wasn't as severe.' Even so, there was no loss of life in Bentley; property, yes. There is an old proverb, 'Too much of anything is not good'. We certainly had too much water, but thanks be to God we have survived.

### **A New Master for Eastbridge Hospital**

For the last five years, the brothers SSF in Canterbury have been tenants of the ancient Eastbridge Hospital who also own Greyfriars, the place where the Franciscans first settled in England in 1224. The relationship has been one of fruitful cooperation between the brothers and the Indwellers, staff and trustees of the hospital and came about through the invitation of the last Master, the Revd David Hayes, who retired last year.

The trustees have now appointed Brother **Austin** SSF as the sixty-seventh 'Master of the Hospital of St. Thomas upon Eastbridge', an appointment which was confirmed by the Patron, the Archbishop of Canterbury.



Austin was installed by the Archdeacon of Canterbury on 24 January in the Pilgrim Chapel of Our Lady in the Hospital, which was founded in 1190 and whose first Master was Thomas Becket's nephew. The chapel was crowded with representatives of the Hospital, the City and the Church, other Franciscans and friends.

The Hospital is a Christian community of Indwellers, mostly elderly men and women, who continue its long tradition of common prayer and it also welcomes to the park-like grounds over twenty-five thousand visitors and pilgrims each year - the Hospital is on the main street of Canterbury.

Since the time of Archbishop Parker in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the Hospital has provided two financial scholarships at Corpus Christi College Cambridge. There are plans to extend the Almshouse to accommodate more Indwellers.

For several hundred years the Masters have lived in a neighbouring house, the Master's Lodge, and it is hoped that the Franciscan brothers will move into that when building repairs and alterations are complete. There can't be many friaries in the world that have a croquet lawn, a vinery and a boat for the river that flows beside it!

## Round up

John has been elected to life profession and is expected to make his vows on 4 April. Maximilian has been recommended for training for ordination. Chris was admitted to the College of Evangelists during a service at Southwark Cathedral on 28 April.

Along with the other news from Canterbury, Colin Wilfred has been elected as Guardian of the friary. Paschal and Maximilian expected to move to Walsingham early in April, where Paschal will be brother in charge of a new house there, and Augustine Thomas would move to Canterbury at the same time. Alan Michael became the new Guardian of Alnmouth on 31 March, he, Desmond Alban, Jason Robert and Martin John having arrived there at the end of March; Edward, having remained at Alnmouth, completes the new grouping. Kentigern John moved to Canning Town at the beginning of February, Hugh has moved to Hilfield and Oswin Paul has moved to East London. Peter has moved to Glasshampton and Polly to Birmingham. Two more postulants were received at Hilfield this spring to join one already there.

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