

St Hilda's- by- the- Sea!

Sometimes it is good to get away from it all. Sometimes we need to see things with fresh eyes. Sometimes we yearn for a place where we can draw closer to God... and get to know each other a bit better. Well, there is such a place on the north Devon coast. It has become a second spiritual home for some members of St Hilda's. It is called Lee Abbey and nestles on a beautiful sloping hillside looking down to a tucked away bay, not far from Lynton and Lynmouth. It is such a special place that those who have visited it would like to share it with as many as possible, young and old, from St Hilda's.

It was also a place that was important to Mary Lee, long-time Reader and spiritual guide at our church. It is in many ways thanks to Mary's generosity that we have been able to make a provisional booking for **50 places** for the weekend of June 3rd- 5th 2011. (The reason it is so far off is because it is so popular this was the earliest summer booking we could get!)

The question is: Would you like to come on St Hilda's Family Weekend away?

Lee Abbey is a Christian community of around 90 people of all ages whose particular ministry is to offer hospitality, refreshment, rest and restoration to careworn people. Set in 280 acres of stunning countryside on the edge of Exmoor, the house caters for guests of all ages: from young families and teenagers through to older folk. It is ideal for a church community. It is ideal for us.

Why are we organising this break? It has been more than 10 years since St Hilda's church family had a weekend away together. For those who can remember such events, they are always most uplifting and encouraging. A year of Sundays does not knit a church together as much as a weekend away. And really, that is at the heart of the reason why I am so eager for as many of us to go together. If we get more than 50 people wanting to come we will just have to get some more places!

Jesus used to look out for ways he could withdraw with his disciples to a quiet place. He would take them up mountains to spend time together, eat together and be taught together. A Christian community such as ours needs time away together too.

We are planning to hire a coach to take us the 160 miles down the M5 to Lee Abbey. The dates have been carefully selected so that they tie in with the summer half-term of 2011. We aim to set off mid-morning on the Friday and arrive in time for afternoon tea and delicious homemade cakes. We would hope to return on the Sunday afternoon after a slap-up lunch, getting back home around 6.30pm. Between arriving and coming home, it is my prayer that the weekend will be a joyful experience of fun, challenge, rest, laughter, wonderful hospitality and spiritual surprises as well as a rich deepening of friendships and fellowship. Going away helps give perspective, God's perspective, on our life as a Christian community.

Over the next few weeks there will be plenty of opportunity at the main Sunday morning services to ask questions, take a booking form and begin planning for the weekend. We have begun the process early so as to give us all the opportunity to budget for the trip. By the time this article comes out you will also be told what it is likely to cost per person. I am grateful to a very enthusiastic team of people who are helping to plan the event and especially to Joyce Lewis, who with Richard Haynes, will be co-ordinating the booking process. I am looking forward very much to welcoming you all to St Hilda's-by-the-Sea in June 2011.

Paul