

## THE 2017 ABBEY SUMMER SCHOOL REPORT

No man is an island.

Julie Canlis was the main speaker at the fourth Abbey Summer School, at Newhaven church in Edinburgh in June. Julie explained how the western world rewards people who achieve great things through their *individual* efforts, whereas the Christian emphasis should be on doing things *together* as a community. We are the body of Christ, with many different areas of expertise, but all contributing to the success of the whole. Julie described how St Basil originally tried to lead a perfect life by living as a hermit, but eventually had the idea of founding the monastic movement in the Eastern church. Basil said "If you live as a hermit, whose feet will you wash?" Similarly St Benedict tried studying and emulating the desert fathers by living in a cave, and he directed the many pilgrims who visited him to form separate monastic communities. He eventually realised that he should stop trying to achieve holiness by living on his own, and should join one of his own monasteries, with all the difficulties of getting on with other people! He added to the usual monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience a new vow of *stability* - the willingness to stay in one place and get to know and serve others.

Ray Simpson, who leads the Lindisfarne Community, talked at one of the workshops about different sorts of Spirituality. Ray gave the example of St Seraphim of Russia who lived as a hermit in a log cabin in the woods, but who counselled and healed up to a hundred pilgrims a day. Another workshop used film making to explore Biblical truth, and actually made a short film about Job and his comforters. Julie Canlis is thinking of using this film making technique with her Sunday school back home in the USA.

Part of the Summer School is an open meeting, where members of the public can come to sample some of the insights of the group. This year there was a screening of the film "Godspeed" which featured the experiences of Matt Canlis in his years in Scotland, at St Andrews, at Pitlochry and at Methlick. In the modern world everyone is in such a rush - the message of the film is to slow down and find time to listen to other people and get to know them by name.

The final act of the Abbey Summer School is a pilgrimage. We walked down the Royal Mile looking at Bible quotations on the walls, especially at John Knox's house. And then we climbed Arthur's Seat as far as the ruins of St Anthony's Chapel, above St Margaret's Loch, where we celebrated Holy Communion, led by Matt and Julie Canlis.

I expect there will be another Abbey Summer School next year. I recommend the first class speakers, excellent food and stimulating company - just the boost we need, to receive new ideas which lead to practical action.

David Wilkie