

Northern Cross

the Christian Easter pilgrimage to Holy Island – Lindisfarne

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION (28 March 2011)

Fellowship in pilgrimage? Join us....

'Celebrating Easter by walking' – modern pilgrims seek renewal on the Northern Cross annual pilgrimage

PILGRIMS AWAIT A WEEK OF FELLOWSHIP, LAUGHTER, PRAYER, AND THE EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME. The annual Christian cross-carrying Pilgrimage to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne takes place once again during the week before Easter.

From April 16 to the 24, more than 75 pilgrims will journey through various parts of Northumberland and the Scottish Borders, in 7 groups, known as 'Legs'. Five legs will walk around 80 – 120 miles during Holy Week; while there is also one family leg based around a single location. Another leg is walking unsupported from Iona on the west coast over two weeks.

Each leg carries a life-size wooden cross as a sign of Christian witness. They stay in church and village halls along the route, and join in with people of local churches for worship. The legs will gather together on 22 April, Good Friday, to cross the tidal sands on the Pilgrims Crossing to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, Northumberland for a unique celebration of Easter, finishing on Easter Sunday afternoon.

Ruth Wallace, Overall Coordinator of Northern Cross 2011, said: "Northern Cross is a unique experience, a week of fellowship which is tremendously enriching as we share in a common journey of pilgrimage together. We come from many different backgrounds, denominations and ages, leaving the normality of everyday life, to enjoy some occasionally strenuous walking, new fellowships, and joyful liturgy. Linked by our enthusiasm for walking through beautiful countryside, we constantly grow in many ways as we meet new people along the way, parishioners, passers-by, publicans, and all, sharing prayer, worship and song, and having a really good time."

"People think of pilgrimage as a mediaeval idea, yet the idea of Christian pilgrimage is alive and well today, as can be witnessed by the 6 million people who go to Lourdes each year, or the countless thousands who in the last 30 years have resurrected the month long walk along the Camino di Santiago, from the Pyrenees to North West Spain. Northern Cross is another example of this. On pilgrimage we find ourselves divested of possessions, just requiring whatever can be carried in a small bag. Cut down to bare essentials, we see ourselves stripped of all trappings of civilisation. We look for meaning in life as we travel through it, and a pilgrimage is a chance to mirror life, and at the same time to step back from life and look to see what the important things are."

She added: "Northern Cross, and any walking pilgrimage, is a chance to get away from the world, to figuratively carry your house on your back, to have time to commune with nature. The destination itself is not so important alone – it is a goal – but the important thing is to form a small Christian group of people, travelling together on the road, using each others skills, helping each others weaknesses, working as a team to achieve an aim. It is an important part of experiencing the Easter celebration."

ENDS

For further information:

For more information please [contact](mailto:publicity@northerncross.co.uk) publicity@northerncross.co.uk up to 14 April, or call Michael Hanson, Publicity on 07799 002256, or Ruth Wallace, Coordinator on 0781 359 0102

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The overall coordinator of Northern Cross and the individual group organisers are elected each year, but you can always contact us by northerncross@northerncross.co.uk or write to us c/o Mike Blood, 43 Brynlea Terrace, Barrow Bridge, Bolton, Lancashire. BL1 7NB. U.K.

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Photo opportunities:

Photo opportunities during the 2011 pilgrimage

- Opportunities to photograph pilgrims groups will be available Saturday 16 to Friday 22 April.
- Crossing to Holy Island on the tidal causeway, Beal Sands, south of Berwick on Tweed, gather at 10.45am, crossing will start 11.00am Good Friday morning, 22 April.
Details available to download, see: <http://www.northerncross.co.uk/goodfriday.htm>
- Easter liturgy, St Mary's Church, Holy Island 8.00 pm. Easter Saturday 23 April
& Easter Eucharist service, St, Mary's Church, Holy Island. 10.45am Sunday 24 April.
(*media photography inside the church must be confirmed with the local Canon Kate Tristram*)
- Procession of decorated crosses through the streets of Holy Island, Easter Sunday, (after 10.45am Easter Eucharist service). **Starts** approx 12.30pm from outside St.Mary's church/by St.Aidans statue to end by 1.45pm. Sunday 24 April.

Notes to editors – facts and figures:

- Twitter: www.twitter.com/northerncrossuk or follow @northerncrossuk
- Website: www.northerncross.co.uk
- Facebook: search for "northerncrosspilgrimage"
- The pilgrimage began in 1976 and has grown steadily every year. Pilgrims first walked to Lindisfarne from Penrith in 1976, and originally had to carry all their belongings. This evolved to become Carlisle leg (with support vehicles), and subsequently Lanark, Newcastle (then Hexham, now Northumbrian), Haddington, and St. Cuthbert's legs were set up and the routes evolved to those walked today.
- **On Good Friday morning**, 22 April, the groups join up at the tidal causeway to Holy Island and cross the sands to Holy Island at low tide along the ancient pilgrim route, where they celebrate Easter together with the local community. About 75 people will cross the two miles of sands with their wooden crosses.
- Legs will start from Bellingham (Northumberland), Lanark, Melrose, Carlisle, Iona, Edinburgh, and other locations. The pilgrims are linked by their enthusiasm for walking through beautiful countryside (in all weathers), meeting new people in pubs as well as churches, sharing prayer, worship and song, and having a really good time. Chaucer's pilgrims were a mixed bunch – so is Northern Cross – young and old, from 0 to 70 and above, all walk with us. Most of the route is on small quiet roads, tracks or footpaths and avoids any main roads. Many have walked before and return time and time again. Others walk for the first time this year.
- **Lindisfarne**, a tidal island, was an important centre for the spread of Christianity in the 6th to 8th centuries, and was the home of St Aidan and St Cuthbert. Today the ruined priory, Norman Church and other relics remind us of our Christian heritage, while pilgrims, visitors and the people of Holy Island join together in a joyous celebration of Easter.
- Funding support is available to help pilgrims in need, to walk Northern Cross.
- Applications to walk can be accepted until the week we start, so it might not be too late to join...

www.northerncross.co.uk

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