

# Northern Cross

*the Christian Easter pilgrimage to Holy Island – Lindisfarne*

## Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION (18 March 2010)

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## **Northern Cross – celebrating Easter by walking pilgrimage – modern pilgrims feed spiritual hunger**

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**The annual Christian cross-carrying Pilgrimage to Holy Island / Lindisfarne, takes place once again during the week before Easter when more than 50 pilgrims will walk around 100 miles through Northumberland and the Scottish Borders during Holy Week.**

Northern Cross starts on Friday 26 March and finishes on the Island of Lindisfarne, Northumberland, on Easter Sunday, 4 April. The pilgrimage began in 1976 and has grown steadily every year.

Therese Bennett, Overall Coordinator of Northern Cross for 2010, 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 denominations, 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."

This year's pilgrimage is made up of three groups or 'Legs' who will set off for Holy Island - Lindisfarne in Northumberland to join together and celebrate the Easter weekend. They will walk 10 – 19 miles per day and each group carries a large 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.

Legs will be starting from Bellingham (Northumberland), Lanark (Strathclyde), and Carlisle (Cumbria). The pilgrims of NorthernCross come from many different denominations, as do the hosts, but 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 – male and female; young and old, from 7 to 70 and above, 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.

Therese Bennett said: "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**

**w w w . n o r t h e r n c r o s s . c o . u k**

The overall coordinator of Northern Cross and the individual group organisers are elected each year, but you can always write to us care of:

Mike Blood, 43 Brynlea Terrace, Barrow Bridge, Bolton, Lancashire. BL1 7NB. U.K.

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### //// photo opportunities: ////

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#### Photo opportunities during the 2010 pilgrimage

- Opportunities to photograph walkers on each leg will be available from Saturday 27 March to Friday 2 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, 2 April.
- Easter liturgy, St Mary's Church, Holy Island 8.00 pm. Easter Saturday 3 April (*media photography in the church must be confirmed with the local vicar/priest*)
- Easter Eucharist service, St, Mary's Church, Holy Island. 10.45am Sunday 4 April. (*media photography in the church must be confirmed with the local vicar/priest*)
- Procession of decorated crosses through the streets of Holy Island, Easter Sunday, (after 10.45am Easter Eucharist service). 12.45am from outside St.Mary's church/by St.Aidans statue to end by 1.45pm. Sunday 4 April.

### //// For further information: ////

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For more information please [contact us](mailto:northerncross@freenetname.co.uk) by email on northerncross [at] freenetname.co.uk (before 27 April)

or between 26 March - 4 April call Therese Bennett, Coordinator, on **07946 168607**

### //// Notes to editors – facts and figures: ////

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- website: [www.northerncross.co.uk](http://www.northerncross.co.uk)
- facebook: search for “northerncrosspilgrimage”
- Northern Cross first started walking from Penrith to Lindisfarne in 1976, and pilgrims originally had to carry all their belongings. This evolved to become Carlisle leg, 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**, 2 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 50-60 people will cross the two miles of sands with their wooden crosses.
- **Lindisfarne**, a tidal island, was an important centre for the spread of Christianity in the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> 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.

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- The **Lanark** leg starts from St Mary's Church in Lanark on Saturday 27 March. They travel past New Lanark up the river Clyde to Biggar (Saturday), Peebles (Sunday), and then along the Southern Uplands Way past Traquair House and over the Three Brethren to Selkirk (Monday). They go past beautiful Melrose Abbey and over the Roman Trimontium to St Boswells (Tuesday), and then to Kelso via Floors Castle (Wednesday) past the site of the Battle of Flodden Field to Ford/Etal (Thursday), crossing the swollen river Till on a farmer's tractor and cart. Finally they join the other groups on the causeway to Holy Island on Good Friday morning – when the tide is out and the causeway is uncovered.
- The **Northumbrian** leg leaves the town of Bellingham on the morning of Saturday 27 March, following the valley to Kirkwhelpington. They then go over the Simonside hills to Rothbury (Sunday), to Alnmouth (Monday), Craster (Tuesday) past Dunstanburgh Castle to Beadnell (Wednesday) and past St Cuthbert's cave on the way to Fenwick (Thursday).
- The **Carlisle** leg largely follows the Roman Wall for the first two and a half days along some of its most beautiful sections, before heading up the North Tyne valley and down into Coquetdale. They start from the Baptist church in Carlisle and go to mediaeval Lanercost Priory (Saturday 27 March), Haltwhistle (Sunday), Wark (Monday), Otterburn (Tuesday), Ingram (Wednesday) and Belford (Thursday), before meeting on the causeway on Good Friday.

**ENDS**

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