

Life Together in One Heart



THE CURRENT EDITION OF THE WESTON PRIORY BULLETIN spans the seasons of planting, cultivating, and harvesting in this area of Vermont. Although the Liturgical Calendar identifies the time as “Ordinary Time”, the experience of the Weston Community is that our times are all quite extraordinary! This is a vibrant season – full of life. Our Chronicle offers just a summary of all that happens here at the Priory.

May, 2011

☐ On May 5th, the Vermont House and Senate passed Concurrent Resolution 184 honoring the inspiration of Felipe and Elena Ixcot and their family from Guatemala and the Weston Priory Community for their experience of twenty five years as a Sanctuary for refugees. The full text of the Resolution appears on the Weston Priory website, www.westonpriory.org.

☐ The month of May found groups of brothers tilling the soil and planting seeds. Each brother selected his favorite crop to plant. Potatoes, corn, carrots, beets, squash, pumpkin, kale, Swiss chard, herbs, and sunflowers – all have a place.

The Cross Rock Garden at the entrance to the Priory was tended generously and with care by good friends. Well-pruned shrubs and a special plot for flowers provide color for celebrations throughout the season.

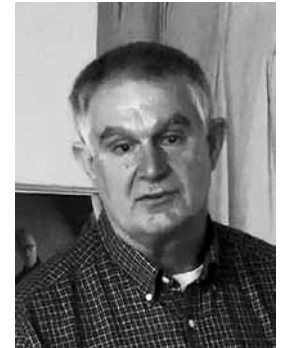
☐ A day of recollection in May brought brothers together with many friends and neighbors who assist the Community throughout the year. It is impossible to describe all the ways that the brothers are supported in their life and ministry of hospitality. Assistance in preparing meals, caring for the guesthouses, forestry work and processing firewood, minding the

Gallery Shop, Priory business office, parking cars on Sundays, attending to health care needs, sacristy and housecleaning, all make it possible for the brothers to offer a welcoming and safe place for visitors and guests.

The brief weekend with co-workers presented an opportunity to reflect on the ministry of hospitality and for the brothers to express their gratitude for the invaluable support that is offered throughout the year.

☐ The end of the spring season was marked by a fascinating presentation on bears by Ben Kilham, woodsman, author, and naturalist of Lyme, New Hampshire. The event was a gift from a longtime friend of the Community.

☐ Summer at the Priory officially began with the celebration of Pentecost. The Community then prepared for the busy season with two weeks of retreat with quiet time, reflection and prayer.



Ben Kilham

June

☐ The Priory buildings began to take on a more youthful and renewed look with new paneling and the replacement of aging windows by Doane Builders. The project would last well into the fall months.



New paneling on our buildings

☐ Adding to the texture of June days at the Priory was the bi-annual Monastic Experience. Three young men, Bill Wilkin from Broomfield, Colorado, George Goss from New York City, and Thomas Murphy from Haverhill, Massachusetts, spent a week with the Community and participated in our monastic life. They joined the Community in choir, assisted brothers in care for the animals, forestry and garden work, and an experience in the craft shops. Prayer and fraternal discussions were mutually enriching for both the participants and the brothers.



l to r: George, Bill and Thomas

☐ Jim Tomlinson who participated in a previous Monastic Experience spent a more extended time during the summer with the Community to deepen his understanding of monastic life.

☑ Also in June and for the duration of the summer, Paul Giguere presented a photo exhibit, *The People and Friends of the Guadalupe Center in Cuernavaca, Mexico*, in the Priory Visitors' Center. Benefits from the sale of the photos were a gift to the Mexican Benedictine Sisters.

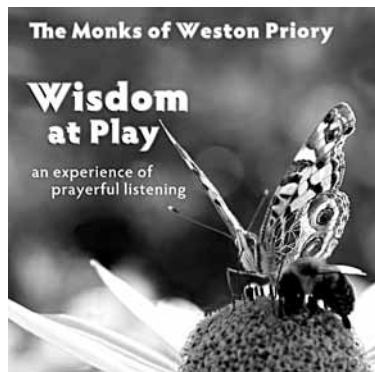
July

☑ A highlight in the month of July was the celebration of St. Benedict's feast in summer. On Saturday, July 9, a large audience filled the Visitors' Center for a moving presentation on efforts for peace and reconciliation in the Holy Land by Ilise Cohen, a Sephardic Jewish Middle East scholar-activist and chair of *Interfaith Peace Builders*. On Sunday, July 10, following a festive Eucharist, friends and visitors joined in picnics and folk dancing – expertly called by one of the brothers.



Ilise Cohen

☑ On the feast of St. Benedict we formally released our new recording, *Wisdom at Play*. It was received with enthusiasm and many orders would keep the brothers busy in the shipping room for months to come.



☑ A striking photo exhibit by Skip Schiel portraying the tragic lives of 1.5 million Palestinians in the tiny Gaza Strip was displayed in the Visitors' Center until the 20th of July.

☑ Favorable weather in the months of July and August made it possible for the brothers to gather a bountiful crop of hay to provide feed for our flock of sheep during the winter months.



Haying in July

August

☑ The Gallery Shop, devotedly tended by our co-workers, served numerous guests during the summer holidays. Brothers' craftwork from the pottery, candles, graphics, woodwork, music, and more recently, artistic photo cards, attracted many visitors.

☑ Beside the care for the sheep, rabbits, pigs and chickens, care for the garden, and harvesting hay, forestry brothers were busy with the help of generous neighbors and friends cutting and storing the supply of firewood for heating the Priory buildings for the long winter ahead. The task was greatly facilitated this year with the acquisition of a reconditioned wood processor that saved an amazing amount of time and energy.

☑ Grateful memory of brothers Leo and Philip was celebrated on the weekend of the feast of the Assumption of Mary. Community dance at the conclusion of the festal Eucharist and a procession to the cemetery with prayer joyfully marked the occasion.

September

☑ Our Autumn Retreat, a journey to Canada and the Glacier Peace Park is amply treated in the articles and poetry of the present bulletin. Brothers expended amazing energy and expertise preparing for the trip.

A week of quiet reflection following the journey gave brothers opportunity to assimilate and integrate the rich experience. The final days of the retreat were filled with prayer and a spirit of gratitude for those who made that extraordinary gift possible.

☑ A catastrophic event occurred even as the Community was departing for the journey to the West. Hurricane Irene wrought terrible damage and loss throughout the State of Vermont. Houses, roads, and bridges were destroyed by flooding rains and winds. The Priory was not seriously affected by the storm that wreaked such havoc throughout the State. It was only when the Community returned home in mid-September that the brothers realized the extent of the devastation.

October

☑ Our bees efficiently pollinated vegetable plants, fruit trees, and berry bushes throughout the growing season, and provided us with three gallons of fine honey. The harvest from the garden was especially plentiful this year. Besides providing fresh vegetables for the table, squash, pumpkin and some root plants were stored for the winter months.

The apple crop was abundant. Friends harvested the plentiful fruit and stored it for the brothers' return from Canada. Bushels of apples were soon converted into apple sauce and cider.

☑ On October 12, brother Richard represented the Community at the regional meeting of bishops and religious superiors in Braintree, Massachusetts. It was an opportunity to greet various bishops and religious leaders as well as Bishop Salvatore Matano, the Bishop of Burlington. On the way to the meeting brother Richard visited and stayed overnight with the Trappist monastic community at Spencer, Massachusetts. Abbot Damian

of Spencer and brother Richard then travelled together to participate in the bishops' meeting.

☉ To keep in touch with monastic communities in our area, brothers Richard and Peter participated in the regional meeting of New England monastics at Glastonbury Abbey in Hingham, Massachusetts.

November

☉ Brothers Richard and John journeyed to Mt. Saviour Monastery in Elmira, New York, to renew contact with our Benedictine brothers there and to visit our longtime monastic friend and brother, Fr. Martin Boler, who is convalescing from a fall in late summer.

☉ On Monday, November 14, brothers Placid, Mark and Richard, responded to the invitation of the Monks and Nuns and Companions of New Skete in Cambridge, New York, for an exchange between our communities. We explored together our common search to live faithfully a prophetic monastic life in today's world and church—they from their Eastern Orthodox tradition and we from our Benedictine tradition.

☉ On Sunday, November 20, we were delighted and privileged to have the visit of Rabbi Arthur Green. In his earlier years Rabbi Arthur was a friend and associate in Jewish-Christian Relations with our brother Leo. He studied as a rabbinical student under our mutual friend, Rabbi Abraham Heschel. Rabbi Arthur is the current rector and inspirational guide at Hebrew College in Newton, Massachusetts, a seminary for rabbinical students and cantors/educators.



Rabbi Arthur Green

Whenever we sit down in conversation together with Rabbi Arthur, we find ourselves at home and as one in our search for God. His most recent book, *Radical Judaism: Rethinking God and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), elicits refreshing insights and evokes an unqualified “yes” to the quest across the religious traditions for a living faith responding to the needs of today's world. We are very grateful for his friendship and true brotherhood of the heart.

☉ In this month especially we held in our grateful prayer remembrance close friends of the Community and several of our Mexican Benedictine Sisters who have died during these past months.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving Day, we remember the numerous friends who have touched our lives throughout this past year. Their prayer and friendship sustains us as we try to live a monastic life that speaks to and for a troubled world. ■