

**The Community of Aidan and Hilda**  
Registered Charity No. 1055306

**Evolving a Skete**

**A Draft Rule**

The term Skete derives from the fourth century hermits in the area of the Egyptian desert named Sketis who lived in their own cells and were responsible for their own work, but who shared a common Rule (which included hospitality) and met together for prayer, sacrament, food and fellowship at week-ends, and elected an elder as their spiritual guide.

Some of the Celtic hermitages and monastic villages were similar. In Russia and other parts of the Eastern Church Sketes have evolved in a variety of ways, some more organised.

A Skete is a third way. It is neither a wholly solitary hermit life, nor a fully organised monastery under one roof. It appeals to post modern people who wish to embrace the monastic life without losing individuality.

This draft Rule was prepared by Ray Simpson, when he was Guardian of The Community of Aidan and Hilda, at the request of those members who had taken first vows and in consultation with our Episcopal Soul Friend, other religious communities, and fellow workers in the Community. Its purpose is to set out a framework for the emergence of a Skete anywhere. At the time of writing he and another member each had a cottage on Holy Island, and the Community leased The Open Gate as its guest and retreat house, office and chapel with a resident warden. If the Community remains on Holy Island, this could be the beginning of such a Skete. With this in mind several sections of this paper address factors particular to Holy Island. However, it might well be that the first CA&H Skete emerges somewhere quite different. In that event those sections would be adapted to local conditions and culture.

The Community of Aidan and Hilda [www.aidanandhilda.org](http://www.aidanandhilda.org)

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## A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS

### 1. The Way of Life of the Community of Aidan and Hilda

We are an autonomous Skete within the Community of Aidan and Hilda which is a dispersed fellowship of Christians bound together by the Community's *Way of Life*. This sets out ten principles and values by which members live.

Each member makes a personal application of the Way of Life, with a soul friend, for the present stage of their life journey.

As members of a Skete we make these points in the Community's *Way of Life* a priority.

### 2. Our spirituality and mission is Trinitarian.

We ceaselessly adore the three Loves in the heart of God. Our goal is to immerse all peoples in the presence of the Trinity (Matthew 18:19)

### 3. We are faithful members of the one, holy, catholic, biblical and orthodox church.

Each Skete member is a faithful member of the branch of that church to which they belong and honours those in oversight. We accept the teachings of the canonical Scriptures, Creeds and the teaching of the Fathers and Mothers of the undivided church of the early centuries, and draw inspiration from her saints, especially those in Celtic lands, and in particular from Aidan and Hilda.

### 4. We are ecumenical.

We are committed, not to any one party within the universal church, but to its divine and mystical heart where the risen Christ continues to reveal himself. In order to avoid using ecumenism as a reason not to be fully accountable, we meet the requirements of one particular Christian Communion, but the Skete also seeks advice from each Communion.

### 5. Personal Rule

Within the agreed Skete framework each member creates with their soul friend a personal rule which includes personal prayer, spiritual reading (*lectio divina*), study, physical exercise and creative pursuits.

### 6. Silence and listening

A spirit of inner silence should permeate our life at all times. This should not be legalistic, but rather the natural silence of people so focussed on God and essentials that mindless surface noise becomes inappropriate.

We eliminate idle talk in order to enable deep awareness of God and one another; we speak if we have something given to us to say. Friendly smiles, greetings and interest in island neighbours are good outside the hours of silence when this seems appropriate.

7. Being fully present.

We seek to make every moment count and every act matter, whether it is washing dishes, using a computer, speaking or offering worship.

8. Detachment

We aim for detachment from all that is 'not of God' in order to enter into a warm, unselfish love for all, to become fully human and to enjoy every living thing as a gift. We are detached from compulsive habits and relationships; the form this takes differs for each person

9. Struggle and Transformation

We seek to re-channel the destructive, de-humanising passions in ourselves. We do not flee the world to be free of it, but to transform it. We seek to heal it with love.

10. Contemplation

Contemplation is at the heart of our Way. It is the ceaseless prayer of the heart, a continual turning of the heart towards the One we love.

11. Passionate followers

We root our lives in the spirit of biblical prophets such as Elijah and his community on Mount Carmel, John the Forerunner and Jesus in the Judean deserts, in the rugged, poetic and wild Celtic monks, in the gentle, selfless heroism of Aidan, and the wise, thankful fostering of Hilda and of kindred saints and role models in our own land.

12. Creative arts

We welcome arts, crafts, humour, celebration and hospitality demonstrated by such saints.

13. Desert

In Scripture, desert refers to the wilderness place and experience. Without the change of pace and break of pattern that we experience in 'the desert' it is impossible to escape the emptiness of the crowd mentality, the staleness of conventional piety, the obsession of work and the boredom of a compulsive social whirl. For this reason our Pattern (called Scheme in the Orthodox tradition) is an essential foundation for our lives.

## **B ETHOS**

By the term ethos we mean the corporate mind-set, habits and attitudes and values. In a post modern world in which many unforeseeable choices unfold over a life span that is much longer than in earlier centuries, and in which we know more about the variety of temperaments, human progression and appropriate spiritualities, it does not work to freeze everything into a particular set of practices. On the other hand, there have to be some common observances for a Skete to be meaningful. These common observances should be decided by the Skete and reviewed from time to time.

When structure is minimal, ethos becomes all important.

1. The Skete dynamic

- a) Our aim is to be like a tree, rooted in the right soil and climate. For the Skete to flourish we need to share the same spirituality, with total transparency, building one another up. We beware of drowning in a flood of purely individual impulses, but always strive to be part of the whole. Thus we respect the times when we are together and when we keep prayer or silence.
- b) We avoid the degree of organisation needed for a community that is large or under one roof, yet maintain a simple framework that enables us to live the Skete Rule without hindering one another.
- c) The Skete is not based on the efficient interplay of structures, but on communion with each other as persons in whom Christ lives. We respect each person's uniqueness, while at the same time holding each other accountable, encouraging each other not to use the claim of otherness as an excuse for selfishness.

2. Ways of relating

We seek to lay down our lives for one another, but not on each other's terms; to show kindness, to foster a family spirit, not to express criticism in a condemnatory way.

3. Friendships.

All members must be held dear. Every friendship is unique; its blessing must be entered into fully. No friendship should become possessive, compulsive, exclusive or contrived. It is best expressed through the medium of everyday working together, not in secret.

4. Correction

Frictions are a means of growth. Feelings should be honestly communicated with the person concerned in the open unless it is unkind not to be in private. The Holy Spirit can teach us from our mistakes as well as from Scripture, and we should be tolerant of mistakes, so long as there is a willingness to learn from them.

Each member needs to take responsibility for their own duties and also to think for the needs of the whole Skete and of others.

5. Solidarity with our Neighbourhood

We are in solidarity at a deep level with the spirit, rhythms and wellbeing of the island/neighbourhood in all things except sin

## C THE SKETE PRAYER LIFE ON HOLY ISLAND (OR ...)

### 1. The Framework

is not meant to be a straitjacket, rather a natural way of focussing the prayer of the heart at appropriate moments, and to reflect the rhythm of creation in our life together.

### 2. Times of Silence

- a) Members observe silence at these times ... when the tide is up, except for necessary duties, Sundays and designated activities.

Those who are employed outside the Skete keep the silences as far as possible.

Silence is kept between Night Prayer and Morning Prayer inside the dwellings of single members.

- b) We are not in silence when the tide is in except for Vigil days, and twice weekly night silence.
- c) We aim to have a silent zone where silence is always kept. Ideally this will include the chapel and dwellings of any single members who opt to live in the silent zone.

This chapel is the heart of the Skete and must lend itself to both solitary and communal prayer.

### 3. Daily

Unless there are good reasons otherwise each member observes the following pattern (whether in a solitary or a gathered context) six days a week:

- i) Rising prayer
- ii) Holy Communion in parish church (optional)
- ii) Morning Prayer (09.00)
- iii) Midday Prayer (12.00)
- iv) Evening Prayer (17.30)
- v) Night Prayer (21.00)

Times may be altered. Roman Catholic mass depends on availability of visiting priests.

Midday Prayer will be maintained, if possible, in the chapel or church by rota. It is to be said interiorly whatever the member may be doing.

Each day there is a time for work and a time for recreation

4. Weekly Corporate Observances

Sundays:

Sunday is a day of celebration, leisure and talking.

10.45 Holy Communion in the parish church

12.00 Drinks followed by communal lunch

15.30 Leisure time except for the monthly open Sunday.

Mondays:

17.30 Evening Prayer in the parish church unless there are essential duties

18.00 Supper, a talk and study

21.00 Night Prayer

Tuesdays no communal activities

Wednesdays

08.00 Holy Communion in the parish church

Thursdays

19.00 Skete Holy Communion and intercessions.

21.00 Night Prayer and silence until Morning Prayer.

Fridays

Morning study.

Midday Prayer together in chapel

Saturdays

21.00 Vigil by rota. All attend during the three Lents.

There is a vigil on Friday or Saturday evening (which day is to be determined).

Members take part in this at least twice a month

There are specified periods of study.

There is a weekly supper followed by corporate study. This may consist of a talk followed by discussion,

5. Monthly

On the first Sunday of the month and on St Aidan's Sunday we have open house from midday followed by a shared lunch to which everyone is welcome. This is followed by a talk and concludes with simple Celtic prayer and music.

6. Yearly -Seasons and Festivals

We joyfully observe, as we believe this to be according to the mind of Christ mediated through his church, the great Christian festivals. We distinctively mark the festivals of Saints Aidan, Hilda and of our local saints. We also mark the natural seasons.

The following are observed as major communal celebrations:

Nativity, Epiphany, February 1 the Coming of Light/St Brigid, Easter, Pentecost, Midsummer, Michaelmas, All Saints, St Aidan and Hilda Week (August 25 - September 2), St Cuthbert and others set out in the CA&H Handbook.

7) The Three Lents

In accordance with the Celtic Christian tradition, and in the light of contemporary church practice these three Lents are observed:

Great Lent (forty days before Easter - Ash Wednesday to Easter Eve). The focus is penance.

Lesser Lent (forty days before Nativity - Advent). The focus is preparation.

Summer Lent (forty days after Pentecost). The focus is pilgrimage

The Skete shall gather in prayer, listening and sharing on the first day of these three Lents (i.e. Ash Wednesday and the two Mondays). Each member is free to share what they believe God is saying, what lessons are to be learned. The wisdom of those in life vows should be deeply respected.

8. Time away

Each member of the Skete is free to come and go according to their own personal rule, so long as this does not neglect Skete they are committed to.

Except in cases of overriding duty Skete members should be in the Skete (except for one day per week) during the three Lents.

They seek permission for absence from any Skete duties from the Prior(ess), otherwise they are free to travel any time, but always in the spirit of the Rule.

In case of family illness no member should leave the Skete to care for a sick relative for more than fifty days.

**D STYLE OF WORSHIP**

- a) The leader of an act of worship, especially the one who celebrates the Eucharist, ought to convey 'the awed reverence of a person immersed in adoration'.
- b) In the spirit of the Psalmist who bids us 'to sing a new song' and of the CA&H Way of Life, we seek to use the creative arts and the creative gifts of members in worship.

## E WORK

- a) The main components of the corporate work of the Skete are:
  - i) Hospitality to pilgrims and seekers who stay at The Open Gate and in other Skete guest rooms.
  - ii) Provision of spiritual counsel and soul friendship
  - iii) Retreats, seminars and teaching
  - iv) Gardening, growing of crops, cleaning, cooking and repairs
  - v) Writing and production of resources that cradle a living spirituality for our time
  - vi) Creative arts
  - vii) Assisting local churches as invited.
- b) The work of individuals should reflect their personal gifts and openings, but each member should also willingly undertake tasks that are unpalatable; to them as these are needed.
- c) Individual members' work may be writing, teaching, leading missions or practical work outside the Skete. A member never spends more than six months on a mission away from the Skete and must not agree to outside undertakings before ensuring with the Prior(ess) there is cover in the Skete.
- d) Other work of those individual members who earn income from employment outside the Skete should be compatible with the Way of Life and the Skete Rule.
- e) If there is any doubt whether a work is compatible with the Rule of the Skete it must be agreed with the Prior(ess).

## F DISCIPLINES

### 1. Soul friends.

Each member has a soul friend approved by the Abbot.

### 2. Study.

There are specific periods of study each week.

### 3. Fast and feast days

Wednesday and Friday are fast days. The extent of the fast is determined by each member, but no meat should be eaten on those days.

Sunday is a day of rest and renewal for society and items should not normally be purchased from shops

### 4. Habits

The Community of Aidan and Hilda Cross is to be worn except when involved in an activity that makes this inappropriate.

The Skete may decide on a form of habit to be worn on occasions of corporate worship, mission or consultation. Otherwise the wearing of habit is voluntary.

## G FINANCE

### 1. Self supporting.

A Skete member is in the first place self-financing. They may finance themselves by employment that is compatible with the life of the Skete, through income from investments, benefits (e.g. early pension) or by inviting donations from supporters.

In some cases the work of the member will be wholly linked to that of the Skete (e.g. Open Gate retreats, board or refreshments for day visitors) and they will have free board and appropriate recompense.

### 2. Contributing

There will be some central costs of the Skete (e.g. chapel and office), plus a need of capital for developments and repairs. Each member is invited to give according to their means, and 10% is regarded as a minimum except for those who are unable to.

## H DWELLINGS, BUILDINGS AND PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

1. The chapel is the heart of the Skete and must lend itself to both solitary and communal prayer. It should be in the silent zone.
2. An ample and well rounded library/resources room is vital, including space for archives, computer and desks for people to study. This may be located in the silent zone.
3. Other facilities may include pottery/craft workshops, art studio, recording studio, fitness room, office, handicapped person's unit, garden, greenhouse.
4. Individual dwellings
  - a) Each Skete member is in the first place responsible to find, rent or own their own dwelling.  
The Skete itself may purchase dwellings. A member whose main work is within the Skete may have free use of any Skete dwelling by arrangement.
  - b) Each unmarried member must live alone unless they are responsible for The Open Gate or a similar outreach.
  - c) Each dwelling shall be simple and not in conflict with the Rule of the Skete.
  - d) Any new construction should have one sleeping room, one kitchen and bathroom, and one writing/relaxation room.
  - e) If the Skete member who owns a dwelling chooses there may be a guest bed or a guest room, but these are only to be used for guests who observe the pattern of prayer and silence.
  - f) Food shall be simple and nourishing. As much as possible should be locally grown, seasonal or fair traded.
  - g) Arrangements may be made for the Skete to have a central food supply which members use.
  - h) There shall be no smoking, drugs or drunkenness within any of the dwellings.
  - i) Telephones, televisions and computers shall not be turned on during the hours of silence, prayer and communal work. These shall be available in a central room of the Skete so that members can choose not to have these in their own dwelling.

## I THE VOWS

### a) Those making temporary and life vows say the following:

- i) I promise to live by the Way of Life of the Community of Aidan and Hilda and as a member of the Skete I also promise the following:
- ii) To have nothing that is surplus to my true needs, to look to the needs of the other Skete members, and to be transparent about my finances with the Skete.
- iii) To serve the Skete selflessly, creatively and, when in doubt or discord, to do what I am told by the leaders without hesitation or grumbling in all things that conscience allows.
- iv) To live in purity of heart and in celibacy or chastity within marriage according to the mind of the Skete, in order to always have inner space that is available to God and others.

### b) Commentary

#### i) Faithfulness

We welcome as members those who have accepted a call to celibacy in the single life or to fidelity in the married life.

The unmarried renounce genital expressions of love. We embrace Eros and unite it to agape - taking both into the heart of Christ - so that we may love as he loved his mother, John the much loved disciple, Mary Magdalene and the other disciples. This means utilising, not repressing passions for an overarching desire.

If an involuntary physical attraction develops that distorts transparency, detachment must be practised.

We commit not to treat a member of the opposite sex as an enemy, temptation or danger but as a brother or sister.

#### ii) Accountability

Obedience fundamentally means renouncing our own will in favour of God's will; recognising that our habit is to fit everyone else around our own ego, so we constantly practice fitting our own ego into the will of God.

Obedience also means we honour those in oversight over us in the Skete and in the wider church.

Obedience means no fuss. To listen with respect. To honour the calling of the other. It requires mature inter-dependence - to talk things through calmly and in love for the other as well as ourselves. It is important that we communicate what we believe to be the will of God, or something we believe the other has got wrong, without thinking we can demand this. It is a surrender, not to the power or ego of another, but to Christ in them.

‘A good community is a symphony of listeners.’

c) Renewal of Vows

Vows are renewed annually on St Aidan’s Day, August 31st

**J. THE PROCESS OF JOINING THE SKETE**

1. Discerning who is a suitable applicant

a) Men and women, single or married

Following the example of Christ (Luke 8:1-3) we need both men and women in the Skete if there is to be fullness of life. Applicants may be celibate men or women, or married to a partner who feels equally called and who is accepted with or without children.

b) Rapport with our ethos

Applicants need to understand and have a rapport with our distinctive calling and ethos.

c) Ability to adapt

They need to show a potential for being at home in both solitude and community, in manual labour and study, in prayer and discipline, with believers and unbelievers, and with local people and their ethos.

This demands psychological stamina, high values, humility and a certain maturity.

d) Willingness to make radical vows

In addition to their commitment to the Community of Aidan and Hilda Way of Life, applicants make vows that relate to money, sex, power and re-creation.

2. Steps in the Process

(a) Live as a First Voyager in the Community of Aidan and Hilda for at least five years

(unless there is a special exception)

- b) Make two or three private retreats with the Skete, one for at least a month.  
We do not discuss induction with anyone until they have made these.
- c) Await an invitation to explore further.  
If, after this, we recognise the possibility of a vocation with us, we invite the applicant to make a three month retreat with us, during which we further discern whether they demonstrate the dispositions needed for Skete life. There is a mutual review and a decision is made whether to proceed with the next step.
- d) Spend one year in formation.  
Candidates live with the Skete, meet twice weekly with a mentor and agree on a plan of study.
- e) Make temporary vows  
If this proves mutually satisfactory, temporary vows are made for one year, and are renewed each year for five years. The study continues and the curriculum, as set out in the *Reflections on the Way of Life*, is covered.
- f) Make five year review and decide re possible life vows  
After five years there is another mutual review and the decision is made whether or not to proceed to make life vows. These should only be made if there is no doubt in the applicant's mind that, God has called them to this way for the rest of their lives.

### 3. Family Members

- a) A family may apply for family membership of the Skete if both parents are willing to go through the above induction process and to bring up their children in the values and friendship of the Skete.
- b) The family dwelling must not be within the silent zone.
- c) As regards participation in the fixed corporate Skete activities the family may be represented by one (or more) of the adults in it.
- d) A young person (12-18) should be allowed to opt out of commitment to the Skete, but if she/he habitually violates the Skete's pattern (e.g. the silences) then the family must temporarily withdraw from the Skete.

## K LEADERSHIP

Leadership emerges naturally in community by consensus and election.

There needs to be continual consultation, positive sharing, listening, reflection, and selfless service.

In keeping with the ancient tradition of prophets (c.f. Elijah), Jesus and the twelve apostles, desert fathers and mothers, and Celtic monastic leaders, leadership is passed on by the founder spiritual father or mother - Abba or Amma. If for whatever reason (s)he needs to relinquish the leadership, (s)he shall engage all those in the Skete in a process of discernment and seek consensus between members and episcopal visitor over the appointment of a successor.

Periodic opportunities to ratify or change the leadership are needed. A council consisting of all in vows will meet every five years and those in life vows decide by secret ballot whether the abba/amma at the time should continue or stand down.

If the Abba or Amma is asked to make way for another leader, (s)he shall appoint a successor. In a case where the Abba or Amma is incapable of appointing a successor (through death, incapacity, or discipline by the Bishop) the council shall elect a successor by secret ballot after a period of silent prayer.

The role of the Abba or Amma is to ensure faithfulness to and development of the founding charism given by God.

The Abba or Ammas is accountable to the bishop (overseer) who is the Skete's Soul Friend, who will be, unless other decision is made, the Soul Friend to the Community of Aidan and Hilda.

### The Abba/Amma

- a) The role is to hold the whole Skete before God in his/her heart, to ensure fidelity to and development of the original God-given inspiration of the founder(s).
- b) It includes embodying and articulating the highest principles, values and goals, in the context of the Celtic Mission, the CA&H Way of Life, and in relation to the contemporary world and church.
- c) (S)he establishes an atmosphere of challenge, adventure, trust and love.
- d) (S)he needs to relate lovingly to each member, yet to be attached to none; to listen and consult often, to seek consensus, yet to act when necessary with full authority.

- e) The Abba/ Amma presides at the monthly meeting of the Skete, the Eucharist on the great festivals and open house days, and the five yearly council.
- f) The Abba/ Amma receives members who take temporary and life vows.
- g) A priority is to develop leadership in others, especially those with responsible roles.
- h) The Abba/ Amma appoints, with the consent of members, an Administrator (Prior(ess)) and (when it becomes possible) delegates certain responsibilities to a Skete Anamchara and a Vocations Anamchara.
- i) Gives loving advice or discipline when a matter of concern is brought to him/her.
- j) Reports to the archbishop or delegated spiritual overseer.
- k) (S)he should have discretion, discernment, fairness, persistence, and keep alive a spirit of listening and adventure.
- l) (S)he requires vision and the moral fibre to en flesh the vision through collaborative skills.

Administrator (Prior/Prioress: assistant to amma/abba)

- a) The prior(ess) prepares all that is needed for the Skete to function in fullest wellbeing, and aims to free the Abba/ Amma from as much administration as possible.
- b) (S)he is in charge of the practical administration of the Skete. (S)he ensures that all administration expresses the spirituality other Skete and creates a living, loving atmosphere. There must be no bossiness. The prior(ess) must be able to read the mind of the Skete and to establish a clear sense of direction.
- c) The Prior(ess) coordinates study and work projects, care of the buildings and gardens, routine duties (e,g, rotas) in the corporate worship.
- d) (S)he monitors the practice and quality of members' daily disciplines of reading, meditation, work, leisure and prayer.
- e) She appoints assistants, as they become needed, after consultation and in agreement with the Abba/ Amma. These may in time include: wardens of The Open Gate Retreat House, a sub prior(ess), a vocations anamchara, a study coordinator.
- f) (S)he endorses the appointment of the Secretary to the wider Community of Aidan and Hilda who is in charge of the Community's office housed at The Open Gate.

- g) The Prior(ess) consults the Abba/ Amma on any matter about which there is serious disagreement.
- g) Priors/ prioresses serve for five year terms. The council will decide by private ballot after silent prayer whether the prior(ess) should continue for another five years or bequeath this demanding role to another person. If the latter, the Abba/ Amma appoints a new prior(ess).

#### Skete Anamchara

- a) (S)he is attuned to the inner health of the Skete and works closely with the Abba/ Amma and the Vocations Anamchara.
- b) (S)he keeps informed about the disciplines kept by each member and (if there their personal anamchara is unable to) their personal Rule, and helps hold them responsible.
- c) (S)he seeks to purify the members so that they are and do what their destiny demands.
- d) (S)he is available for members who wish to confess their thoughts and deeds but a member is free to choose their own personal Anamchara instead.

#### Vocations Anamchara

- a) (S)he seeks out new vocations and mentors those exploring and in training and has the gift of discernment.

#### Other Roles

- a) The librarian/archivist
- b) Gardener
- c) Buildings care
- d) Public Retreats Organiser
- e) Guest and private retreatant supervisor

## Roles of the Wider Community of Aidan and Hilda which Skete members may undertake

These appointments are made by the Guardian of CA&H who is also the Abba/ Amma or, if the two roles become separate, are made by the Guardian in agreement with the Abba/ Amma.

- a) Secretary
- b) Publications and Resources
- c) Warden of the The Open Gate
- d) Record keeper of all meetings and decisions of importance, vows taken in CA&H
- e) Editorship of a Skete insert to The Aidan Way or of the entire magazine.
- f) Oversight of the annual retreat of CA&H First Voyagers
- g) Oversight of CA&H annual gathering, events and retreats outside Holy Island.

## The Council

- a) The Council consists of every life member, as long as there are no more than twelve. If there are more than twelve life members the council shall consist of the Abba/ Amma, the Prior(ess) and ten life members elected by the life members in a private ballot.
- b) The Council meets every year during a Lent for listening, prayer, sharing, review and to make proposals.
- c) Every seven years it shall ratify the leadership of the Abba/ Amma and every five years of the Prior(ess). This may be extended to six years to avoid both ratifications taking place at the same time.

## **L RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH**

### 1. The wider church

The Community of Aidan and Hilda is an Associate Body of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. Its Soul Friend (Episcopal Visitor) is Bishop Ian Harland, and it seems appropriate for the same person to be the Episcopal Visitor of the Skete.

The Skete and its members are loyal servants of the universal (catholic) orthodox, biblical church of God as expressed in the Scriptures, Creeds and Ministries of the undivided Church.

We are ecumenical, and seek to sustain loving contact with the great branches of the church. Each member is true to his/her own church.

Since at the time of writing this Rule there are more Anglican (Episcopal) members than others, and the Guardian and Warden are Anglican priests, we seek to be under the canonical authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury and to adhere to the requirements he sets out for us. They seek to relate in particular to the Diocese and Bishop of Newcastle as 'family members.'

We have Advisors in the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Church of Scotland and other churches and will seek to relate appropriately to these churches.

## 2. The Church on Holy Island

Our intention is to worship with the parish church of St Mary as long as it continues daily offices and Holy Communion, to support occasional services at St Cuthbert's URC and St Aidan's RC and to join in ecumenical actions such as Lent house groups. There will be some regular offices that are focussed in the Community chapel. e.g. Night Prayer and some special occasions.

In the framework of an ecumenical and collaborative style of church ministry on the island we hope we might be able to offer Community of Aidan and Hilda offices on agreed days in church, experimental worship for pilgrim or local groups on special occasions and to share in teaching or creative arts offered to groups visiting local churches.

## **M RELATIONSHIP WITH VOYAGERS, EXPLORERS AND FRIENDS OF CA&H**

1. The Open Gate is the community house of The Community of Aidan and Hilda and belongs to all its members whether or not the warden is a member of the Skete.
2. The Skete is an extension of the principle that groups of members are free to develop households, churches or other associations based on the Community's Way of Life.
3. The Skete is bound to First Voyagers and Explorers by the common ethos of the Way of Life and by the natural bonds of this extended spiritual family.
4. The Skete is an autonomous monastic community within CA&H, and has its own organisation. Just as a household's rules need to be respected, so do those of a Skete, which needs to have boundaries.
5. Thought is being given to establishing Long Voyagers as the dispersed monastic wing of the Community. If this is approved we would hope Long Voyagers would spend extended time in the Skete as they are able.

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