

**The Society of St. Columba  
&  
Columba's Barn Community Benefit Society**

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Registered Charity no. 1160486

***We gather together to be alone with Christ***

# Introducing The Society of St. Columba

**Three labours a  
day; prayer, work  
and reading.**

*The Rule of St. Columba*

The Monastic Church of Britain and Ireland was a vibrant, indigenous ecclesiology that emerged towards the end of the 4th century and became the dominate communal expression of Churchmanship throughout the Celtic fringes of Britain's post-roman world. A spirituality rooted in the traditions of the eastern desert fathers and the eremitical call to 'be alone with Christ'. This call to prayer and spiritual discipline created a dynamic and vibrant indigenous expression of the Christian faith in the British Isles that we now associate as Celtic Christianity.

The Society of St. Columba (SSC) was established in February 2015 by a small group of Christians who are exploring a more contemplative expression of the Christian faith, using St. Columba's daily spiritual rhythm of prayer, work and reading. With this historical underpinning the Society is now working to rediscover this monastic church expression using St. Columba's life and spirituality as our primary inspiration at Chanctonbury in West Sussex.

By following St. Columba's personal and communal practice of prayer, work and reading, we aim to walk humbly upon the earth and devotionally in our work and study and create a hub of Celtic Christianity on the south coast of England called Columba's Barn.

To review the full Rule of St. Columba, please visit, <http://wp.me/p71F4v-1B>

# Where is Columba's Barn located?

**Be alone in a  
separate place,  
near a chief city**

*The Rule of St. Columba*

Set in the heart of the South Downs National Park, Columba's Barn is located on the northern side of the iconic Chanctonbury Ring. A Grade II listed Victorian Sussex flint barn and adjoining buildings offers a truly wonder filled location for the exploration of indigenous British Christian spirituality.

The essence of Columba's Barn will be to provide a location where members of SSC, guests, visitors and pilgrims can come to find hospitality, refreshment and spiritual nourishment. With the adjoining 18 acres of land, this remote, yet accessible, location embodies the Columban spiritual drama of liminal landscape, prayerful isolation and creational encounter.

The current state of the site requires considerable renovation and repurposing. The surrounding fields having been used for grazing and arable and the buildings will require love, care and attention to detail, in order for it to be able to fulfil it's potential.

Therefore the Society; under the activities of prayer, work and reading will begin a process of redefining and repurposing the site, so it can become a truly beautifully enriching part of the South Downs.

For a current ariel view of the current site please visit <https://goo.gl/maps/1UsdH>

# Prayer

## *Spiritual Formation*

**The measure of  
your prayers shall  
be until your tears  
come**

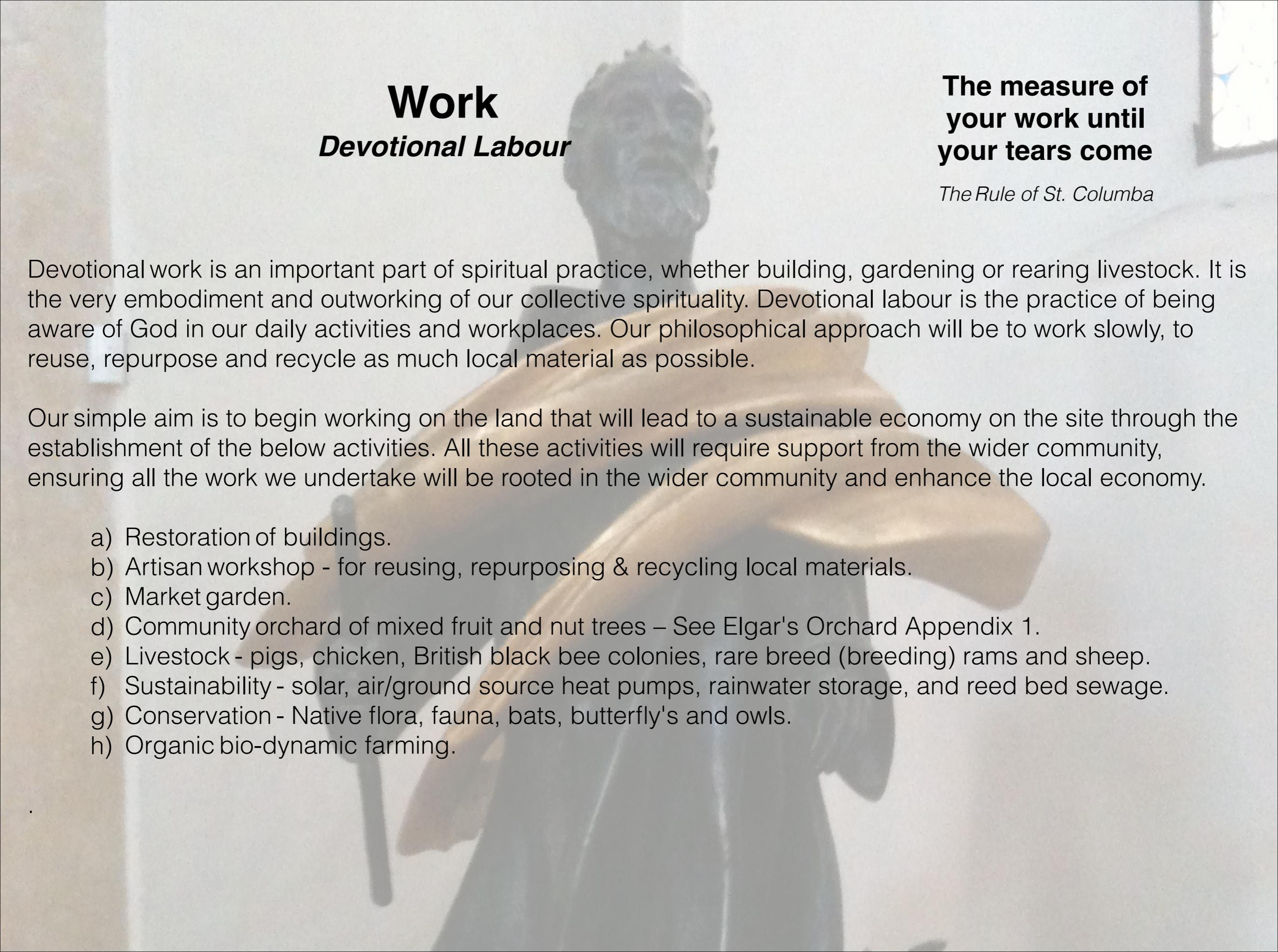
*The Rule of St. Columba*

The foundation of the Society and purpose of Columba's Barn at Chanctonbury is to respond to Jesus' call 'to pray at all times'. Columba's Barn will provide an environment where every aspect of it's life is aimed at enhancing the encounter with Christ. We gather together to be alone with Christ.

We will achieve this through establishing a number of core spiritual rhythm's and activities, that in turn, will nurture the spiritual journey towards Christ;

- a) Establishing a small Chapel - dedicated to St. Columba for private prayer, worship and vigil.
- b) An intentional rhythm of prayer, morning, evening and night office.
- c) Access to Spiritual Direction in partnership with the Chichester Diocese network of Spiritual Directors.
- d) Quiet days, structured and personal retreats.
- e) Online devotional materials.
- f) Hospitality as a spiritual discipline will be outworked through provision of The Pilgrims Granary (backpackers hostel) and Columba's Kitchen, a high quality kitchen cafe with a 'field to fork in 500 yards' approach to food and service.

The location of Columba's Barn is itself a significant contribution to the spirituality of the site. It's isolation is a key dynamic element in fostering the sense of intimacy and closeness to God. Creation plays a formative role in our understanding of the nature of community and worship. As such our whole approach will be to work reverently with creation as we re-landscape and repurpose.



# **Work**

## ***Devotional Labour***

**The measure of  
your work until  
your tears come**

*The Rule of St. Columba*

Devotional work is an important part of spiritual practice, whether building, gardening or rearing livestock. It is the very embodiment and outworking of our collective spirituality. Devotional labour is the practice of being aware of God in our daily activities and workplaces. Our philosophical approach will be to work slowly, to reuse, repurpose and recycle as much local material as possible.

Our simple aim is to begin working on the land that will lead to a sustainable economy on the site through the establishment of the below activities. All these activities will require support from the wider community, ensuring all the work we undertake will be rooted in the wider community and enhance the local economy.

- a) Restoration of buildings.
- b) Artisan workshop - for reusing, repurposing & recycling local materials.
- c) Market garden.
- d) Community orchard of mixed fruit and nut trees – See Elgar's Orchard Appendix 1.
- e) Livestock - pigs, chicken, British black bee colonies, rare breed (breeding) rams and sheep.
- f) Sustainability - solar, air/ground source heat pumps, rainwater storage, and reed bed sewage.
- g) Conservation - Native flora, fauna, bats, butterfly's and owls.
- h) Organic bio-dynamic farming.

# Reading

## *Devotional Learning*

**Live in the Testament of  
God throughout all times.**

*The Rule of Columba*

Devotional learning is the recognition that growing in our understanding of God is vital. We aim to foster an atmosphere of reflective and contemplative theological learning, as well as becoming a depository of Celtic Christianity on the south coast.

One of the beautiful aspects of the Celtic charism is the ability to harmonise deep spiritual practice with intellectual and scholastic practice. The love and studying of scripture will be a core component of our devotional learning.

Columba's Barn will nurture a genuine depth of intellectual encounter, coupled with an outworking of the Christian distinctive on conservation, sustainability and working with creation

- a) Creation of a library and study centre
- b) Invited guest speakers/lecturers/practitioners
- c) Development of our theological distinctive and contribution to the national Church and beyond
- d) Dissemination of critical learning through blogs, papers, website, e.t.c.

To achieve this Columba's Barn will look to develop strategic links and partnership with external spiritual networks, academic institutions and conservation NGO's, enabling the sharing and development of experience for the common good.

# Organisational Structure

***Everything in its proper order***

*The Rule of Columba*

The Society of St. Columba is a Christian Society whose members work together to express the Christian faith in a way that nurtures the encounter with God and spiritual formation and is sensitive and reverent towards the community of creation. This will be achieved through two complimentary organisations.

- a) Society of St. Columba a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) registered no.1160486
- b) Columba's Barn a Community Benefit Society (CBS) *being established January 2016.*

The Society will be the spiritual heartbeat and whose function is to maintain the spiritual rhythms of prayer and devotion. Columba's Barn will be responsible for the admin, management and economic activities of the site at Chanctonbury.

We have elected to pursue a two organisational model as it allows us to maximise our opportunities. Through the CIO we can achieve access to grants, donations and generate gift aid. A CBS will permit us to trade as a for-profit entity, raise capital investment from social and spiritually minded investors who can expect to see a modest return on their investment over time.

# Conservation and Ecology

***Creation is a theophany  
of God***

*John Scottus Eriugena*

***Our organic farming will model an ethos of conservation, ecological bio-diversity in land management. The following principles are a helpful outline to our approach.***

- Observe and interact: By taking time to engage with nature we can design solutions that suit our particular situation.
- Catch and store energy: By developing systems that collect resources at peak abundance, we can use them in times of need.
- Obtain a yield: Ensure that you are getting truly useful rewards as part of the work that you are doing.
- Apply self-regulation and accept feedback: We need to discourage inappropriate activity to ensure that systems can continue to function well.
- Use and value renewable resources and services: Make the best use of nature's abundance to reduce our consumptive behaviour and dependence on non-renewable resources.
- Produce no waste: By valuing and making use of all the resources that are available to us, nothing goes to waste.
- Design from patterns to details: By stepping back, we can observe patterns in nature and society. These can form the backbone of our designs, with the details filled in as we go.
- Integrate rather than segregate: By putting the right things in the right place, relationships develop between those things and they work together to support each other.
- Use small and slow solutions: Small and slow systems are easier to maintain than big ones, making better use of local resources and producing more sustainable outcomes.
- Use and value diversity: Diversity reduces vulnerability to a variety of threats and takes advantage of the unique nature of the environment in which it resides.
- Use edges and value the marginal: The interface between things is where the most interesting events take place. These are often the most valuable, diverse and productive elements in the system
- Creatively use and respond to change: We can have a positive impact on inevitable change by carefully observing, and then intervening at the right time.

# Conservation and Ecology I

*Creation is a theophany  
of God*

*John Scottus Eriugena*

## ***Bees, Bats and Birds***

- The Great Barn is currently home to a Barn Owl. Barn owls are listed under schedule 1 of the wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. They are therefore afforded special protection. It is our intention to locate the current owl nesting boxes inside the Chapel area of the barn that will be designated a quiet space.
- We will establish colonies of Native British Black bees, currently under threat throughout the UK. This will be accomplished by linking up with the British Beekeepers Association and the Queen breeding programme supported by the Co-operative Movement. <http://www.co-operative.coop/plan-bee/>
- At the time of writing there has been no bat survey undertaken, so we are unclear as to which species of bat are prevalent in the area. Our commitment however will be to nurture and encourage bat life in the area.

## ***Biodiversity & Organic status***

- The 18 acres has official organic recognition from the Soil Association. This is a great asset and something we will naturally maintain.
- Local flora, fauna will be intentionally cultivated on the site in order to encourage local insect, butterfly and moth life.
- Tree planting will be an early activity, looking to plant native deciduous trees across the site where appropriate, such as Sweet Chestnut and the native Elm (see Conservation project link) - <http://www.conservationfoundation.co.uk/project.php?id=2>

Working to maintain and continually improve the ecological bio-diversity of the site will require a long term plan as well as external expert help. Our aim will be to partner with A-Rocha a UK Christian conservation organisation who are already active in the area and whose UK Churches and Theology director, Ruth Valerio, is a member of the Society.

# Conservation and Ecology II

***Creation is a theophany  
of God***

*John Scottus Eriugena*

## ***Community Orchard.***

Year one will see us plant two acres of mixed orchard consisting of Apple, Pear, Plum, Cherry, Quince and Gages. In order to enhance the biodiversity of the site and invest into the regional provenance we will seek to source fruit trees that are as close to native Sussex or British species. All chosen for their taste and cooking ability. Our orchard will be open to the public and our intention will be to hold community harvesting days.

## ***Market Garden.***

Dedicating two acres to a market garden with associated kitchen garden linked to the Refectory, we will grow food that will be organic, and will supply our refectory. Additionally we will take this produce to local farmers market and it will be for sale to the general public.

## ***Columba's Kitchen.***

Quality of food is at the heart of Columba's Barn, offering hospitality, locally grown organic seasonal food. It will be open to retreatants as well as the general public. It will act as more than a cafe. Our food, livestock and fruit growing will be a real time expression of our core philosophy of sustainability. We will also link to other local food producers to enhance the local economy. You are what you eat.

# Sustainability

Some important background to our model. Naturally the aim is to be financially sustainable as a group. This will greatly enhanced by following a number of key principles.

The core of our sustainability strategy will be the following;

**Re-use, re-purpose, recycle.** Our aim, wherever possible will be to use locally sourced materials, thereby boosting the local economy and maintaining the integrity of our materials usage. We will also minimise our waste.

**On site workshop.** Given the high levels of work that will need to be done on the site in the early years, we will create a dedicated workshop that will facilitate the bespoke artisan work that will need to be undertaken to renovate with integrity the infrastructure of the buildings.

**Solar & Air or Ground source heat pumps.** Our aim here is to heat the rooms using sustainable energy sources, as well as generate a small income from the feed-in tariff from the solar generation.

**Rainwater storage.** By storing, UV purifying and using rainwater, our desire is to be self-sufficient in water for the whole site.

**Reed Bed sewage system.** Coupled with rainwater storage a reed bed sewage system will function to safely clean and discharge grey water and effluent, in an ecological non-chemical way, that is generated through the activities of the site.

# Conclusion

The Society of St. Columba and its sister organisation Columba's Barn is a contemporary expression of the ancient indigenous British monastic church. It is an adventure in expressing the dynamic relationship between the Creator, the land and the people. It seeks to foster an environment of blessing for all of creation through applying St. Columba's spiritual rhythm of prayer, work and reading.

It has been given 18 acres of land in Chanctonbury, with associated buildings to renovate, renew and repurpose into a place of retreat, organic farming and generous hospitality.

To achieve this it will need like-minded people to join with it on the journey through membership, partnership and investment. It is sincerely hoped that in reading this simple concept note you get a flavour of what we are looking to achieve and feel like this is something you can give of yourself to.



For more information.

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