

## ROMTE

Nijkleaster-blog  
New Monastic Notes



Nijkleaster



### MONASTIC FIRE

During our Nijkleaster services, both in the church in Jorwert and at Westerhûs Monastery, “It kleasterfjoer” - the monastic fire - always burns. Usually, participants take this for granted, but sometimes we get questions like: “Why do you always have a monastic fire burning?”

In 2012, the year Nijkleaster was founded, I sometimes ‘struggled’ with the question of what gave us the spiritual right to start a new monastery in Fryslân. Could we, as a fledgling Protestant pioneer community, really lay claim to the title ‘monastery’? Of course, we could hide behind the term “nij-kleaster” - new monastery - since we certainly didn’t want to be an old monastery. But still, it felt pretentious, as if we were just playing at being a ‘little monastery.’ This line of thinking led, on the Sunday of the opening, to the ritual of the monastic fire: ‘The Monastic Fire. From Oldeclooster to Nijkleaster.’ I quote from the press release we sent out the week before the opening:

*‘The prelude to the opening of Nijkleaster in Jorwert on Sunday afternoon, October 28, 2012, will take place at the site of the old Oldeclooster monastery (Bloemkamp) in Hartwert. The Monnikhuis farm still stands on the site of one of the oldest monastic sites in Fryslân. In the centuries-old orchard in front of the farm, the Oldeclooster monastery fire will be lit on Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m. Father Jan van der Wal of the Bolsward Roman Catholic parish will light the fire. Dr. Liuwe Westra (the protestant minister in this region) will deliver a short speech during the handover of the monastic fire to representatives from Nijkleaster. After that, a group of runners from Jorwert will carry the monastic fire in a relay from Oldeclooster in Hartwert to Nijkleaster in Jorwert. Along the way, they will pass the site of the medieval Thabor Monastery in Turns, the sculpture group ‘the nuns of Nijkleaster’ in Scharnegoutum, and the former site of the medieval Nijkleaster convent near Scharnegoutum. The monastic fire will be carried into the church in Jorwert during the ceremonial opening of Nijkleaster at 3:00 p.m.’*

Through this ritual of the monastic fire, we paid our respects to our religious ancestors. Not to claim or appropriate medieval monastic life—quite the contrary. Through the ritual, we became aware of the distance that exists between medieval monastic life in Fryslân and today's religious context. And at the same time, we were also able to say: 'We are not the first. We are building on the legacy of our ancestors in a new way.'

That is why, at the beginning of each service, we assert: 'We have lit the monastic fire, the symbol of our connection to monastic traditions of the past and of the present. Here in Fryslân and everywhere on earth.'

Rev. Hinne Wagenaar  
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Kleasterfjoer | Kloostervuur | Monastic Fire