



# **ALL HALLOWS**

## **CONVENT**



**All Saints Newsletter 2017**

*Greetings to you all,*

With All Saints-tide rapidly approaching, it's time to send you our final All Saints Letter in this form, though of course we will continue to send you news of what has happened through the year in our different locations. We were really touched by the number of cards, letters, emails and assurances of prayers that we received in response to our letter about the ways in which we believe God is calling us to move forward. It has not been an easy decision. One of the hardest things for us has been knowing the shock and pain our moving from the Ditchingham site would cause to others, especially to our staff, to those who have lived in our properties close by, and to many of you who have valued the opportunity stay with us and join in our life and worship and for whom this has become almost like a second home. We feel with you and for you, as you obviously do for us. It was heartening to see how many of the cards and letters, though expressing the pain first of all, moved on to a sense of excitement at the fresh lease of life the new beginnings will mean for us. For sharing that with us and for your prayers we all want to say a big "THANK YOU".

This time last year, if you remember the previous Newsletter, we were in a very different place from where we find ourselves now. We were in the middle of a long period of prayer and discernment and nothing was at all clear, it felt as if we were just treading water and



Roan Cottage, Buinessan

getting nowhere! At that time I doubt if we had really given much serious thought to becoming a Dispersed Community with all that that would entail. Then out of the blue into our long period of waiting and praying came Sr. Pamela's call to Buinessan on the

Isle of Mull, as unexpected to her as it was to us! After that things gradually began to fall into place and become clearer for the rest of us. Sr. Margaret felt that the deterioration in her health was pointing her in the direction of going into care, preferably in the Nursing Home run by the All Hallows Healthcare Trust in Bungay. Sr. Edith Margaret already goes to Day Care there twice a week and said she would be happy to go there too. She had a taste of residential care for a week there when some of us went for our annual retreat at Clare Priory. She loved it !!

Srs. Sheila and Elizabeth felt they wanted to keep the All Hallows flag flying somewhere locally and having drawn a blank looking for a suitable place in Ditchingham decided to try Bungay. The first property we looked at on the computer really impressed us as a possibility and for us it ticks all the boxes. It is near a church, on a bus route and surrounded by local shops. (It's only about 5 minutes away from the EACH charity shop where Sr. Elizabeth works as a volunteer on Friday afternoons!) The house itself has a conservatory big enough for a chapel and enough space and facilities for us to have one or two guests to stay and to have Quiet Days and days for our Oblates, Associates and Contact members. It has a sizable garden, with fruit trees and a stream at the end. We look forward to being able to welcome some of you once we have settled in next year. Sr. Rachel is still exploring possibilities within the Norwich diocese. That means that as a Community we may well have some form of ministry in 3 dioceses! – Norwich, St Edmundsbury and Ipswich and Argyll and the Isles.

We will be more thinly spread and must make sure of regular communication and times together for Chapter and Retreat and maybe a bit of fun too! Visiting our Sisters in the Nursing Home will be easier with 3 of them in one place. Sr. Violet is still holding her own and we go to see her and take her Communion as often as we can. Hopefully our witness in our new situations will not be less effective

but may be even more so as new forms of ministry open up. A sentence I came across in Richard Rohr's book 'The Sacred Dance' seems to me to speak to our situation. "Nothing lives long-term without dying in its present form." That seems to be true for us, but in faith we look forward to the new forms which will embody the life of CAH.

At the same time as we were discerning our future with Canon Andy Bryant, Barbara was also engaged in her own process of discernment. This culminated in her leaving us in April to take up a retirement flat in West Norfolk nearer her family. Since then Lavinia House has been covered by Srs. Sheila, Rachel and Elizabeth who take responsibility for 2 days each, with Thursday falling to whoever can be free. We cannot be present in the House as much as Barbara, but the guests don't appear to have suffered too much and have been most appreciative of what we are able to offer.

In addition to Barbara's leaving us there have been a number of comings and goings among our staff. In November last year Aaron Cable took up the post of gardener to which he brought enthusiasm as well as expertise and we have benefited this year from a good supply of fresh salad foods and vegetables. Our guests have commented on how much better the gardens are looking and are eagerly awaiting the completion of the area around the water feature at Lavinia House. We did engage Sharon Beamish to help Aaron with the garden, but sadly it was not a very happy partnership and lasted only a month instead of the year planned for in her contract.

In the same month Tracey McGhee joined Donna Welch on the cleaning staff of Lavinia House. Donna does a valuable job in cleaning the rooms in between guests but inevitably there are some parts that need more attention and Tracey is responsible for that 'deep cleaning', a job for which she is admirably suited.



Work continuing in Lavinia House Garden

Our catering staff have experienced their own changes, with Mark Aldous, our 'Weekend Cook', leaving us in June this year. Unfortunately we haven't found anyone who could cover weekends for us but Heather Watson has become a welcome addition to our catering staff by cooking on Saturdays. Our Head of Catering, Christine Brook, does most of the Sundays for us in addition to her normal 3 days and Sr. Sheila covers those when we are without a cook. Along with the staff who have joined us since last year's report our thanks are due to those who have been with us a longer time, notably Christine and Marilyn Allison on the catering team, Victoria Darking who keeps St Michael's beautifully clean for us, John Laskey and Andy Malster who have done a noble job on the maintenance of the site and Beccy, our Administrator whose knowledge and skill keep our finances in order as well as making sure we keep abreast of all the legal requirements involved in running a Community /Charity like ours.

We deeply appreciate and value our staff and because they have become so much a part of the All Hallows "Extended Family" it was with heavy hearts that we told them of the plans for our future which

would obviously have an impact on all of them. It would have been slightly easier if we could have told them who would take over St Michael's and Lavinia House, but as yet that is unknown and still in our prayers. Please add your prayers to ours for the future of our houses here and in Norwich. Our hopes are that whoever takes on the houses here will employ our present staff who are familiar with the buildings and garden rather than employ new staff.

Over the past year we have again been blessed by having Carly Thompson and Jess Leeming living alongside us and joining in our worship and life and helping out in whatever ways they can. Clare Fleming has also joined us for 3 periods of a few weeks at a time and has put her gardening skills to good use and has acted as another driver for us when necessary. They are all aware that changes are afoot and that living alongside CAH in the future may be somewhat different from their experiences so far and yet that doesn't seem to have deterred them and Carly has even offered to come and help with the move!

Last year we tried out a different form of Commemoration Day which seemed to work well, giving us more time to talk with our guests, rather than having to rush off for the Sale and then for Evensong. This year will be similar, ie with no Sale or Evensong, but as it will be Fr David's last Eucharist with us he has asked for a light buffet to be provided afterwards rather than everyone bringing their own packed lunch. It will be an opportunity for our guests to say their good-byes and wish him well. We will also as a Community have a final tea together with Fr David and Mary on the Sunday before. While Commemoration Day will as usual be a day of rejoicing, in honour of the Saints, this year it will be tinged with the sadness of Fr David's leaving. Much gratitude is due for all he has done for us as our Chaplain and Warden over the past 26 years. The end of an era!

In addition to the usual Advent and Lent Quiet Days the Retreat programme this year has offered a variety of Quiet Days led by Sisters Pamela, Rachel and Sheila together with one drawing its inspiration from The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe led by Sue McCoulough. For several years now the programme has also featured 2 Mini-IGRs with Sr. Sheila, Sr. Elizabeth and our Oblate Sue Allen as Guides. The Quiet Days on the Programme were interspersed by 3 days for Contact Members and 2 for Associates, all of whom value being able to worship with us and spend time with each other and members of the Community. Not on the programme were the retreats for those specially linked with us, one for Associates at Clare Priory led by Sr. Elizabeth, and Fr Brian Faulkner guided the Oblates in their Retreat, at the end of which was a celebratory Mass and lunch to mark 25 years of Oblature, Rhoda and Jean being the first to embrace the Oblate vocation. Our own Advent Retreat last year was ably led by Revd. Ann Barley, one of our Associates, but for the Lent Retreat we had no Leader, relying individually on the Holy Spirit. Our longer Community Retreat at Clare Priory was conducted appropriately by one of our neighbouring Religious in the diocese, Sr. Julie Wiseman SSL who is herself part of a Dispersed Community.

Sisters Sheila, Pamela, Rachel and Elizabeth have all been able to join in residential Conferences with our fellow Religious, enjoying the hospitality of the Communities at Freeland, Lee Abbey and Mirfield as well as deepening the bonds between us and looking at contemporary issues facing our Communities.

Sr. Margaret is the only Sister whose Profession Anniversary usually occurs in Lent, but this year February 14<sup>th</sup> came well before the beginning of Lent so we were able to celebrate her 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in style, without an eye on our Lenten diet! Not only did we mark this splendid occasion by some beautiful golden flowers in chapel and

her favourite hymns at Mass, but also by a special lunch of her choice and a delicious chocolate cake for tea. As we are now so few we were able to enjoy it at tea on the following Sunday as well as on the day itself, there are advantages in being a small Community! Sister was thrilled by the number of lovely cards and messages she received, truly a day to be remembered and treasured as we gave thanks with her and for her to the God who has sustained her in her vocation.

We try to keep the first Wednesday of each month as a Community Day and this year, as a welcome balance to the number of meetings we've had, we have enjoyed several interesting outings, the most memorable of which were to Huntingfield Church with its "Angel" ceiling painted by a former vicar's wife, the subject of a novel we'd been given by last year's Retreat Conductor, to the exhibition of Dolls' Houses in the Castle Museum at Norwich and to Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, Museum of Norfolk Life. When time was at a premium we paid more local visits to Earsham Hall and Emmaus where we enjoyed looking around and sampling the refreshments on offer. If the weather precluded outings we watched a number of DVDs we had been given for Christmas. The January Community Day got us off to a good start this year when we said Sext with and had a delicious lunch provided by Sr. Pamela in Norwich. We all felt it was good to say the Office in a smaller chapel, even though re-ordering SMH chapel earlier this year has made it easier to hear and keep in time and tune with each other. The fact remains our 2 present chapels are too big for the number we now are. Little did we guess it was a foretaste of things to come and how soon the ball would be set in motion to make that foretaste a reality for the future!

With love from us all and our prayers for you and for the wider world with which we will be linked even more closely in our different settings,

*Sisters Sheila and Elizabeth*



## **GEMMA the cat: an appreciation**



From being a rather nervous creature whom one hardly ever saw outside Holy Cross House, this little cat became, if not a national treasure, a Community treasure even when (as in one case) you were allergic to cats.

She knew what she liked; she also knew how to get it. Who can forget her with a slice of lamb nicked from the lunch trolley, or jumping back into the refectory through the service hatch from the kitchen when we had expelled her from lunchtime and closed the door on her? - or even finding her way out through a locked window on her first night in Holy Cross House?

She had a purr like the noise of an old-fashioned lawnmower and a personality to match - but, in the end, old age and frailty caught up even with her. She left us peacefully just before her "minder" was due to go on holiday, and having waited until we had stocked her up with a fresh supply of food, litter and "flea stuff".

Dear Gemma, thank you for the joy you gave us - not to mention the scratch you delivered to the hand that was trying to anoint you with flea repellent just two days before you left us!

## Emmaus Update 2016/17

It's been another lovely year at Ditchingham. Our community grew to 20 for the first time!



There's been a lot happening with the community, companions and trading. Companion, Mark Spindler, who lived with us for 3 years moved into his own flat in November 2016 and has since secured a job with Probation. Mark said "I feel so lucky, really. Emmaus gave me a new lease of life; it takes you in

and harnesses your potential, believing in you when you're at your lowest; for that, I'm grateful".

Before the year was over we made a successful application to the Big Lottery, Awards for All and were awarded £10,000 to convert the garages and courtyard sheds into workshops. Work is now well underway to create spaces for recycling waste and upcycling donations.

We celebrated the New Year with Selwyn Image, one of our trustees being awarded the Legion d'Honneur, France's highest decoration for his work in bringing Emmaus to the UK. In February we went to a very glittery night out for the Stars of Norfolk & Waveney award ceremonies, where the community were finalists in Team of the Year and in March we launched an initiative with South Norfolk District Council's Help Hub to provide low cost furniture to people in need.

As spring unfolded we took to a range of outdoor activities, hosting the All Hallows Hospital, Easter Egg Hunt on site, the garden street market in Bungay and the antiques market in Southwold.

They are great opportunities to meet new people, talk about Emmaus, recruit volunteers and of course sell our wares! The Summer saw us

hosting the Open Gardens at the Bishops Place and a book reading by Terry Waite in the 'Sisters' library' in Abbe Pierre House, to be supported by such great friends in a real privilege. We've also been enormously blessed by an unexpected gift in the form of a legacy, which we will be putting to good use in 2018.

Companions have worked hard with our Ditchingham second hand retail outlet now open Tues – Sun and played just as hard, with river trips, bowling, cinema, go carting and Michael saved up for a wonderful week's holiday in Madeira. The community have also committed to our programme of solidarity, redistributing more than £11,000 worth of food and furniture across the Waveney Valley and even sending a van load of food out to refugees in Belgrade.

We are a community that's proud to stand on its own two feet and help others in greater need. We do though rely on a team of amazing volunteers and donors to make it happen, if you'd like to find out more about getting involved please do get in touch.

Last but not least, we are changing our name to Emmaus Norfolk & Waveney to better reflect the communities we serve, we are not though on the move we remain happily looking after one another in Ditchingham.

**Cathy Hembry**  
**General Manager**



**emmaus**  
**Norfolk & Waveney**  
working together to end homelessness

News from Sister Pamela  
ALL HALLOWS HOUSE, Norwich

Looking back on the year with the help of diaries, I feel



completely exhausted – so much has happened. The house has continued to be a buzz of visitors from all round the world coming with different stories and different needs. This weekend there are 7 people staying including a couple from the Czech

Republic and I've just had a delightful young priest from Australia.

The October Conference with Fr. Robert went well and was 'full on' with every bed taken and lots of continued interest following the repeated showing of Janina's programme 'The lost Manuscript'

Christmas saw the house full, mostly of international students (Chinese, Japanese, and Malaysian.) We also helped Rowena from the Philippines and Xavier from Spain as they looked for work and accommodation. During the year there have been two asylum seekers from Nigeria and a woman from Poland. 95% of visitors now though come because of an interest in Julian.

With Sr.Elizabeth Obbard returning to Quidenham the monthly/ 6 weekly life of Community with her ceased though visitors often join in Offices especially Compline. The year has also been busy with a variety of residential groups from Julian prayer groups to a visiting choir.

Felicity discovered I hadn't been to Paris and so with amazing help we booked into a Convent and contacted the Bibliotheque Nationale de France to see the Julian Paris Manuscript. Lots of new experiences for me as I'd never been to Paris and never been on Eurostar which is incredible. The Convent was situated near the centre of Paris and within walking distance of the library where we were able (after getting through endless security checks) to handle the manuscript and take photos for the Julian Centre. An unforgettable experience. With the Centre having volunteers I've found there has been more demand on my time there with various requests etc. including the ordering of books and occasionally working the till! I have continued giving talks, and seeing people for spiritual direction though have managed to say 'No' a few times!

Evelyn Underhill said 'The coming of the kingdom is perpetual. Again and again freshness, novelty, power beyond the world breaks in by unexpected paths, bringing unexpected change.' Certainly things are moving in a direction I wasn't expecting as I begin a new chapter for C.A.H in Scotland.

"As the tamed horse  
still hears the call of her wild brothers  
and as the farmed goose flaps hopeful wings  
as his sisters fly overhead,  
so too perhaps the wild ones amongst us  
are our only hope in calling us back to our true nature."

**DEO GRATIAS**

## **Intercessions**

### **MONDAY –**

Bishop Graham James, Father Brian, all clergy helping us,  
The Everychild Guardian scheme,  
All the Convent Staff,  
Vocations to Religious life.

### **TUESDAY –**

Sister Edith Margaret, Sister Elizabeth,  
Our Oblates,  
Lavinia House,  
All our guests and visitors.

### **WEDNESDAY –**

Sister Margaret, Sister Pamela,  
Our Associates,  
All Hallows House in Norwich,  
The Julian Shrine and Centre.

### **THURSDAY –**

Sister Rachel, Sister Sheila,  
Our Contact group,  
All Hallows Healthcare Trust; Hospital and Nursing Home.

### **FRIDAY –**

Sister Violet,  
Our Alongsiders,  
The Finance and Property Committee and all who assist us,  
The Conference Centre and the Christian Conference Trust,  
Ditchingham Day Nursery and the Benjamin Foundation.

### **SATURDAY –**

Christa Sevika Sangha in Bangladesh,  
The Oratory of the Good Shepherd,  
The prisoners and staff of the prisons in this area,  
Emmaus communities here and elsewhere.

HOMILY for Sister Margaret's Golden Jubilee of Profession  
14<sup>th</sup> February 2017 (Ss.Cyril and Methodius)

Some people would think thirty days in Community was an astonishing thing. A surprising achievement! So to spend fifty years is a triumph of grace. Some might think it is in itself a proof for the existence of God. How else would it be done? We celebrate with and for Sister Margaret on this Anniversary, giving thanks for the goodness of our Lord in all His blessings.

In celebrating with Margaret we are celebrating the nature of God's world, the kind of home he has made for us. And in particular, that it is a home of "All Hallows". This is spelt out in the old Commentary on the Rule of Life where we hear that our foundress placed the Community under the patronage of the saints. So let me say today just a word about the nature of God's world; and let's think about it in relation to the saints.

Now we are a reformed Church, and during the Reformation the statues of saints were pulled down, their shrines destroyed and their feasts abolished. This was done in part because a distortion had grown up that saw our need of saints as owing to the fact that God was remote. If God was busy running the universe, then it may seem hard to catch his attention. We needed people who were close to him to nudge his elbow, as it were, and remind him that we were in urgent need of attention. Christians even spoke of Jesus as harsh and judgemental, so we needed his Mother's help to obtain mercy. Mary softens up Jesus for us. We needed a back entrance into the divine presence. This was never the official position of any Church but it was current. So it was said by our forebears – "we do not need saints because God is remote – God is more intimate with us than any saint could ever be."

By the time of Mother Lavinia there had come about in the Church of England a whole sea change that saw it as a natural part of Christian life to be linked with the heavenly communion of All Hallows in prayer and fellowship. So Mother Lavinia, along with so many, came to see things in this way.

The Father's only-begotten Son became human in a family. He could not be truly human except as a member of a family, and so it is natural that our relationship with him overflows into a relationship with his family. On the cross Jesus adopts us as members of his family, his final gift. He said to Mary, "Woman, Here is your son", and to the beloved disciple, "Here is your Mother." That is why we can share in the prayers of the holy family – ask their prayers – because in a real sense Jesus's family is ours too. We are its members.

God is the eternal, equal love of the Trinity. This triune love lives in our love of each other – "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God and whoever loves is born of God and knows God". Our relationship with God flourishes in mutual friendship with each other. Erasmus said of St Thomas More that he was a man made for friendship. The Saints are people who are evidently and beautifully God's friends. We are attached to them not because God is remote but for the very opposite reason, that God is close. We are caught up in God's friendship and so, of course, we are friends of his friends. That is of the essence of being Church, the home that God has made for us to dwell in. This is not because we do not trust God but because it is thus that we share in the mutuality of God's triune life. This is the very substance of what all religious life in the Church aspires to be. A life lived as friends with friends, here on earth and beyond the earth.

Now today we are celebrating the triumph of God's grace in the lives of Cyril and Methodius. G.K. Chesterton once said that we easily



forget just how bizarre it is to honour anyone for no other reason than that they are recognised as good. Because this is a scandalous subversion of the world's understanding of greatness as based solely on power, fame and wealth.

“The nature of an eminence merely moral, consistent with complete stupidity or un-success, is a revolutionary image grown unfamiliar by its very familiarity, and needing some almost preposterous modern parallel to give its original freshness and point. If we entered a foreign town and found a pillar like the Nelson Column, we should be surprised to learn that the hero on the top of it had been famous for his politeness and hilarity during a chronic toothache.

“If a procession came down the street with a brass band and a hero on a white horse, we should think it odd to be told that he had been very patient with a half-witted maiden aunt.”

The saints are signs of hope. Mother Lavinia put the Community under the patronage of the saints because heroic holiness is possible. God's grace is in us to triumph over fear and despair. “Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us”.

We can be tempted to fatalism. We may think that we are the victims of our genes, of our parents, of our mistakes, of circumstances beyond our control, or whatever. It may seem that we are doomed to moral mediocrity. But the saints witness to how God's liberating grace frees weak people like ourselves. St. Paul says that he prayed that he would be freed from weakness, but the Lord said: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness”. “So I will boast all the more gladly of my weakness, so that the power of God may dwell in me” (“Cor. 12.9)

## **Dates for your diary**

**Lent Quiet Day          Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> March**  
St Michael's House

**Advent Quiet Day      Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> December**  
Bungay

While it is not possible to offer our usual programme of Quiet Days next year, we are continuing to offer these two days. At Lent, we will not quite have gone (although we are hoping to spend Lent sorting out ....); by Advent, we will hopefully be established in our new settings.

It is a case of 'watch this space' as to how they are run; but, at the very least, we can continue to provide some quiet space for people to prepare and reflect at these important times in the Church's year.

Quiet Days have been an important part of our life at Ditchingham, as well as those who join us here; we hope some of you will continue to journey with us. On a practical point, you will still need to bring a packed lunch on both days, and the cost remains £12. Please write to the convent secretary to book.

## **Moving Backwards with Jonah**

Moving forwards can bring lots of questions ...Jonah didn't have any; he was given a direct command and knew exactly where to go (Nineveh) and what to do (tell them God knows of their wickedness). So he gets up and goes on a ship to Tarshish. Which is not where Nineveh is. Running away from God is very easy; although not always wise, as Jonah found. Would you rather preach to the wicked or be chucked off a boat into a raging storm and be swallowed by a whale?

Jonah learns his lesson in part. Read *Jonah* 2 to see his prayer of repentance, his realisation that 'salvation comes from the Lord'. But

he had to go through the depths to get there. To be honest, on being told to preach to the wicked, I'd find Tarshish rather attractive (if I knew how to get there).

Going through the depths is not easy, but so often we come out beyond it, with our understanding and relationship with our Lord renewed and deepened – even if it felt non-existent while we were in the whale's belly. Maybe Jonah had to run away to be able to preach as he did.

Jonah eventually gets to Nineveh; he preaches – Nineveh will be destroyed; they repent, including the King and even the beasts. The Ninevites are really sorry for their wrongdoing, and the Lord does what he normally does when people repent – he forgives them.

Nineveh won't be destroyed; Jonah's preaching was a success. Was he pleased? No; Jonah hasn't quite got there yet. He sits down in a grump, waiting for the destruction of a city which he knows quite well will not be destroyed, feeling ashamed to be shown wrong. (See *Jonah 4*) 'Are you right to be angry?' the Lord asks. Yes, of course he was! Aren't we all?

Anger brings with it a sense of rightness. Jonah knew this would happen – our Lord is a God of compassion, rich in mercy. He knew that, but hadn't quite realised it. There was no shame in what happened; only rejoicing that these 120 000 people had come to know their God. Through Jonah.

Our gracious Lord longs to come to know us and those around us, longs to work with us as we are, where we are – even in a whale's belly.





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