

Our dear Friends,

Perhaps we should begin with a few preliminaries, such as we have found a ring in our garden and wonder if any of our guests remember losing a ring here?

Due to the popularity of our Quiet Weekend where we were over subscribed we are repeating it in the autumn. All the details of this and other weekends are on the leaflet. Don't forget you can also find this information on our website: [www.redacre.org.uk](http://www.redacre.org.uk) plus thoughts and pictures to help and encourage you.



In this newsletter we want to thank those who have supported us through these last difficult months. Much kindness has been shown to us making us aware once again that we belong to a wonderful Christian family. Hundreds of sympathy cards poured into our house. They are all in a large wicker basket and we are promising ourselves that in the winter evenings we will read them again one by one. We received scores of emails. Each one has been printed out and kept. We wish that we could thank each and every one of you personally but it would be impossible so please take this letter as our personal thank you to you.

We have been touched by the many people who have said to us that they are praying for us. Your love has meant so much to us. We would like to thank those who came to our aid practically in many different ways. We knew in some instances where we were going but we did not have the expertise to do it. It was truly miraculous how some things came together. Then there were friends who - realising that we had had to close the house to visitors and at the same time were facing extra expense - generously sent us gifts. So much kindness and understanding has been a gift from the heavenly Father to us and may he bless each one of you.

We realise that some of you may be profoundly shocked reading the above, as news of Sister Lynda's death may not have reached you. We tried to keep as many people on board as possible especially as the illness progressed but inevitably some of you will have slipped through the net. When cancer was first diagnosed in January we purposefully kept the news to a few close friends and ourselves, as we realised that we would have difficulty coping with all the enquiries when our first concern was caring for Lynda herself. Gradually we were able to set up informative emails. When she died we tried to contact as many of you as possible.

We know that many of you would have liked to visit Lynda. From the moment of diagnosis and the operation that soon followed, where it was discovered that the cancer was inoperable, she never recovered and she could not face visitors. We respected her wishes. She knew that we would never leave her side. She loved all the cards and the emails that you sent. These were read out to her until within an hour or two of her dying. The cancer spread with alarming rapidity. Nothing that the medical profession were able to do was able to stop it. Lynda faced the illness with great courage. She died on a ward where she had helped with the chaplaincy for many years. Many of the nurses knew her. They called her their "singing angel". They nursed her with great devotion and love. We shall forever be thankful for their care.

As death approached, her desire for heaven grew alongside a longing to be free of the body that had become such a burden for her. As the end drew near she began to hear heavenly music. She was a sensitive, intuitive person but not given to flights of fancy. She remarked that what she was hearing could be caused by the air conditioning but then she added, "But for me it is still heavenly music." In the morning of May 13<sup>th</sup>, the day she died, she was fully aware but finding it difficult to speak. She unexpectedly hummed a tune. It wasn't a tune that we recognised. When we commented on it she closed her eyes and sang it again raising her hands palms upwards. We know that she would want us to thank you for accompanying her in prayer right to the gates of heaven. She often commented how much your prayers were sustaining her.

Many of the good qualities that had endeared Lynda to us were there to the end. She was always grateful for help that was given. We heard her say "thank you" again and again. She was thoughtful for others. She asked us within hours of her dying whether we were all right. She was concerned that her dying was taking longer than expected because it was difficult for us, as well as her. She was concerned for the nurses. It is impossible to gather virtues in the last few weeks of life unless they have become part of us through the years. We talked together often about the spiritual body that the

Lord Jesus had formed and was forming within her ready to burst into freedom when she went home to the Lord. We will live longer with our new body in heaven than with the body that is discarded at death.

Lynda had her struggles, as we all do. One big area was anxiety and another was fear of suffering. She was intelligent, informed and imaginative. She understood fully what it meant, as the prognosis became steadily worse, but the grace of God was sufficient. Where she was unable, the Lord himself stepped in. When she was told that nothing further could be done she was at peace. There was a tangible sense of calm in the room. She told us that God had spoken to her reassuringly saying that everything would be O.K. There was still a long hard road ahead of her but that day she turned her face steadily towards heaven and the Lord she loved, the good Shepherd, did not leave her and was waiting to welcome her home at her journey's end. We share this because we hope that you in your own situations will take courage and will discover that his grace is always sufficient. He will not leave you or forsake you in your hour of need. He is the good Shepherd who watches over his sheep.

Many years ago someone said to us that a community is not a community until there is one Sister in heaven. Sister Lynda is now in heaven. She is as dear to us now as she was here on earth. We believe in the communion of the saints. The far distant heaven is very close. We are one Sisterhood. This is not to say that we have not shed many tears. We are a family. She was young and gifted. We loved her. We have learned much about grief these last months. We have also seen our plans for the future turned upside down as we were confident that Lynda would be the one who would lead in the future.

To repeat, "why, why, why", is often a first reaction. There are no answers. Indeed we remove ourselves further and further away from the One who alone can comfort us. He is waiting for our "yes". "Always say yes to the will of God," we were once told, "even if you say it in tears". Tearful though the path may be there is peace in acceptance. God is love. Our trust is in Him because he loves us. His way is best although we can neither see nor understand. There is peace even in sorrow when we place our trust in our loving heavenly Father.

There is sometimes a false assumption that Christians should always be joyful. This is not our experience nor is it scriptural. Our expectations of ourselves may be unrealistic and so we fall into a false guilt. We believe in heaven but the pain for us was too deep and the loss too great to be joyful even about heaven. There is a way through without falsely acting out a strength or joy we don't feel. It is to be honest with ourselves and with the heavenly Father. We can tell him everything. He understands.



There is much for which we are thankful, not least the precious gift of Lynda and all the years we shared together. We are thankful for all those who have accompanied us sensitively and lovingly.

We share these thoughts in the hope that our own faltering footsteps through grief may be of some help to others, especially those of you who are also grieving. We all go at our own pace; no two people are alike. It isn't a straight path. Sometimes we are back at a milestone we thought we had passed weeks before. We were given recently an excerpt from the Celtic Daily Prayer written by the Northumbria Community. Part of it read, "Take time, be gentle (with yourself) as you walk with grief." The Lord walks with us. His grace is sufficient, as it was for Lynda as she faced leaving us and now as we, and that includes some who will read this letter, face living without her.

May the peace of the Lord be with you and with us,

The Sisters

