

SISTERS OF JESUS WAY

Summer 2015

Our dear friends,

Once again we come to our summer newsletter. Although with a howling gale outside the window it is anything but summery, we hope that by the time this reaches you we will be enjoying warm sunshine. Many church services these days begin with the notices so that they don't interrupt the flow of worship. We too, in this letter are going to begin with the announcements. First of all, the tax threshold seems to be changing with bewildering regularity. Will those who gift aid with us, kindly make sure that you are still paying tax? Our thanks to all those who have notified us over their change in tax status. Secondly, the enclosed leaflet, or the attachment, if you receive this by email, gives details of weekends that we are leading. Finally, we are grateful to all our friends that have helped us in so many different ways, working alongside us, giving financially and praying for us. It is a privilege for us to belong to such a Christian family.



Much has happened since we wrote to you last Advent, not least the full cycle of the Christian year, from Advent to Trinity. We re-live the story of our salvation, as season changes to season: the expectancy of Advent, the happiness of Christmas, yet tinged already with suffering and the cross, as we remember the murder of the innocent children in Bethlehem. The splendour of Epiphany follows and then Lent. Lent is difficult, it is a fast not a feast and seems endless. We don't fast but the reminder comes to us that temptation is real, that we are called to take up the cross and that suffering may be the lot of those who follow Jesus – all very necessary reminders. In Holy Week we walk with Jesus on his Passion Way and this is followed by the joys of Easter, not just one day but a whole season! We always wish Ascensiontide was longer. It is such a beautiful time but Pentecost hastens on, also too short, and finally Trinity. Our prayers alter according to the time of year, different hymns, songs and readings. Come December, the drama of God's intervention to rescue us from sin and darkness begins again. We can never be reminded too often of such a wonderful redemption.

As we have faithfully prayed morning and evening according to the season, and, incidentally, prayed many other times through the day, not according to the seasons, we have become more and more convinced that prayer is the key to the heart of God. As we have prayed, sometimes sacrificially, as regards our time, we have seen some, not all, of our many requests amazingly answered. It has given us the strength to persevere however we felt. More informal prayer has also given us the opportunity to listen to the Holy Spirit together. This is so important. Prayer is not only us talking, it is the Lord speaking. Prayer is the great backdrop to our lives and also, at the centre, if that is not a contradiction in terms – all-encompassing and undergirding all we do. We were struck by Eugene Peterson's modern take on the verse with which we are all familiar, "For when two or three gather together in my Name, there am I with them". (Matt 18:20 NIV) He wrote, "When two or three of you are together because of me, you can be sure that I will be there". (The Message) This has been our experience and continues to be a reality.

It was John Wesley who said, "God does not need us to pray" (that is, he already knows our hearts). "Your heavenly Father knows", said Jesus. "But," Wesley continues, "We need to pray!" Why? – Because it strengthens us, makes us aware of heavenly realities, keeps us humble and dependent upon the Lord. This brings us to the place of trust in him. Prayer is not easy but the easiest form of prayer for many of us is to pray with others. We are blessed in the community as we have each other. You, perhaps, live alone, or belong to a church where prayer is not a priority, or prayer meetings have a feeling of deadness about them. Find instead another Christian who will join you for prayer, or even better two or three. Don't allow it to become a gossip shop. Keep confidences and don't boast. Relax, it doesn't matter if there are prolonged times of quietness. Not every minute has to be filled with talk. It is better not - sometimes listen! Churchy language is not required, be natural and real.



For us the last six months can be described in the words of Charles Dickens, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." (A Tale of Two Cities) They began with our dear friend, John Isherwood, becoming the centre of our concern. He lived with us for six months last year. We had been reluctant to let him go, as we were of one heart and mind and he seemed to slip seamlessly into our community life. It was also very useful having a living Bible Commentary, Concordance and Church History lecturer with Greek and Hebrew thrown in, in our midst! However he felt that he was called to continue the Lord's work in Willaston, a village about 10 miles from us, where he was greatly loved and truly was a witness for the Lord

Jesus. We kept constantly in touch and became more and more concerned, as his health slowly deteriorated. A telephone call came and within a few hours, John, at the urging of his consultant, arrived back announcing that he would never leave us again.

We soon brought him into our Bethany so that we could look after him better. His radiotherapy had only just begun when he was admitted to Clatterbridge Cancer Centre, followed by a time in the hospice. Just before Christmas he came back to us and we had the privilege of accompanying him the final week of his life. Christmas Eve was his best day, he wanted his newspaper, so that he could pray for our needy world. We listened to carols in the evening, and then we all crowded into his bedroom and sang for him. Christmas Day he rapidly deteriorated. On December 29th he went home to the Lord. Earlier in the evening we sang gently over him, "May the angels lead you into Paradise". It is a great blessing to accompany one of God's saints to the gates of heaven and we have no hesitation in writing that he was a saint.

We are not trained in caring for the dying and we are very grateful for the help that we received. One memory that will always stay with us, is one of our women GPs sitting patiently with John when he arrived, carefully sorting out all his drugs into piles, those still necessary, those not now being taken. It would have been so easy for her to rush in and out. The palliative care nurses in Clatterbridge who remembered Sister Lynda, did their very best to protect us, as well as care for John. Then, when John was with us that last week, our district nurses were wonderful, nothing was too much trouble for them and our two carers were great, as were the Marie Curie nurses who were with us several nights.

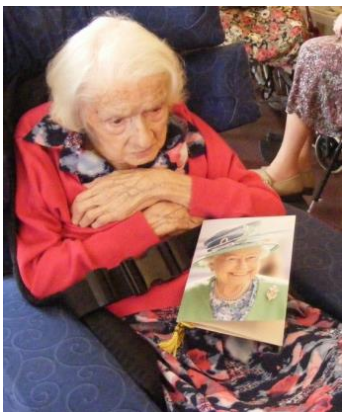
By now we were almost up to our New Year's Retreat. We could not do it – we were too exhausted. We are so sorry that those who had planned to come were disappointed. Without exception everyone was very understanding. John's brother, Bob, and family, to whom John was very close, were in Swansea. In addition, Bob's wife was very ill and died only four weeks after John. So it was some time until the funeral but when it happened, it was a wonderful service (put together by John) and the church was packed. He was buried in his beloved Willaston. Our last love gift for John was a buffet here after the service. It was cold and wet, so we didn't expect many, but we were wrong. The coat rack crashed to the ground with the weight of coats, our little prayer rack came off the wall in the crush, but the food did not run out!

By then, our whole year was out of sync. We took belated breaks and tried to get some sort of order back into our lives. In the midst of all this, Pamela quietly moved in and started to help us. The Saturday before Pentecost we held the commitment service where she wore our dress for the first time. This was a very happy day. Bishop Peter spoke. Sister Pamela's family and friends joined us, as did a number of friends of the community. We are especially grateful to the friend who played our keyboard. Our dressmaker had flown over from Switzerland to make the dresses. We had help with the flowers and food – thank you so much! Moreover, the sun shone! It was a time of rejoicing.



The recording of another CD has begun – all our own music. So don't

buy all your Christmas presents too soon! We hope that this CD will be available when our next letter goes out in November.



Many of you ask about Nain. Here is the update. We all donned our party attire (don't take this too literally, we don't have any!) for Nain's 105th birthday in June. Westhaven, her home in Hoylake, closed. It is now being demolished and will soon be rebuilt. A nursing home in Wrexham run by the same providers had a place for Nain. We wondered whether she would make it, as she hadn't been out for years. We need not have feared. The matron travelled with her, as did Sister Hazel and Brother Elliot. Sister Lynda's mum and dad, Glenys and Merfyn, were waiting there for her. Most weeks, one or other of us travels to Wrexham to see her.

So, the best of times and the worst of times, but to quote Wesley again, "Best of all, God is with us."

A blessed and refreshing summer,
Your Sisters and Brother at Redacre.

We are registered with the Charity Commissioners