

CSC Newsletter

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From:



To:



Via:



St. Michael's Convent, Ham Common moves to St. Michael's Convent, Gerrards Cross

CSC has owned and lived in St. Michael's Convent, Ham Common, in the UK since **1949**.

2016 is ending that phase of our history. We are in the process of moving out of the property at Ham, as this Newsletter is being compiled. By the time you read this, the move will have happened and St. Michael's Convent, Ham Common will no longer be in our hands.

After major refurbishment and building works, it is planned that the property at Ham, once Orford Hall, will be home to people over the age of 55, settling into retirement apartments and houses. A great change, because it has often been said that Religious never retire - they just slow down!

At Gerrards Cross, seven Sisters and one Alongsider are living in what is planned to be the Retreat House, when the main house (above) has been refurbished and brought to as high a level of eco-sustainability as we can afford to make it.

Other Sisters and Alongsiders have moved, or will move, into other UK Community Houses. One will even spend some time with another Religious Community at Burnham Abbey, which isn't very far from Gerrards Cross. Eventually we will come back together again in the new St. Michael's Convent.



Community of the Sisters of the Church - An International Anglican Religious Community

'Happy Families'

The move of the Sisters from St. Michael's Convent, Ham Common to St. Michael's Convent, Gerrards Cross, has been happening slowly but surely for at least a couple of years. It is only in these last few months, however, that the pace has 'hotted up'. Every cupboard, drawer, loft and shed has had to be sorted and decisions made about what to keep and what to let go of. Sister Hilda Mary has been at the forefront of this sorting, ably using her 'clutter-clearing' skills. It has to be said that she seems to have enjoyed herself fully, exhaustion notwithstanding!

Hilda Mary writes:

'Ever since I was a child I have loved exploring cupboards and sheds. They are often full of lost treasures and things one could use but are forgotten. So I have been in my element these last few months with endless cupboards, drawers and sheds in need of clearing, sorting. I've been playing my game of 'happy families', whereby I gather together things of the same family in one place so we all know where they can be found and are ready for packing. The house seemed full of cleaning materials rather in excess of daily use so they are now altogether. Batteries, light bulbs and stationery are following.

We had already found a home at the Old Palace School (a CSC foundation) for our Stations of the Cross, then I burrowed deeper into a cupboard. There, hiding, was yet another Station. Was it providential?

Were we meant, after all, to keep one of Sister Dorina's Stations?

'The Station is of Christ falling under the weight of the cross and Simon of Cyrene coming to his rescue. We now feel it would be good to have this one station to take to our new home. The Stations are an important part of our history.



Sister Dorina's Station of the Cross, still with us

I am also gathering paintings done by other Sisters in the past. There are many of Gillian's, several by Margaret Richeldis and some by Mary Adela. 'Happy families' with Margaret Richeldis' pottery is doing

well. At present much is collecting in the refectory making a pleasing display.

'What does one do with potties, endless faded curtains that have been kept "just in case"; electrical equipment no longer required; ancient saucepans; vases, too many to count; art equipment we will have no room for? The list could go on and on.

'Well, our local charity shops are doing very well and anything we are not sure about goes in the garage for 'The Yard Sale' along with our very large collection of plants. I have taken some cuttings so we will not be totally bereft of them. I have also saved the best of the art materials in anticipation of creative explorations in our new home.

'Recycling has gone on apace too. It is amazing how much paper piles up in what is meant to be a paperless era since the advent of computers! Textiles, old electrical equipment, and other items will find their way to the dump for recycling. I wonder how long it will take to re-accumulate stuff again!

Hilda Mary wrote this piece before The Yard Sale took place. It was a good sign that before the Yard Sale opened, we already had a queue of people outside the gates.

The Yard Sale



Alongside **Catherine Wood** with **Dominic the Gardener** with some of the many plants sold at the Yard Sale

Just a few of the many who came and saw and bought!



All sorts for sale - Pots, Plants and Pictures, books and vases... and even the tables on which they stood!



MOVING DAY — A Moving Day



When you move, the ordinary things of life get bundled together and go with you.

The Waiting Game

Sisters Dorothea, Judith, Mary Josephine and Sheila Julian wait in the Community Room while possessions are loaded and delivered to their new home. Sr Jennifer, staff and friends keep them company as they while away the time.



Waiting Over

Then the moment arrives and it's time to depart. A place that has been home is left for the last time.



Alongside **Sylvia** says goodbye to Sister **Dorothea**

The Waiting Place

Everything changes. We change. The world in which we live changes, however much we wish things would stay the same. One thing is certain, that change will happen whether we like it or not. How we respond to the changes, though, we **can** do something about.

It is a sad fact that some people leave their church, because they don't like changes which are being made. Families are torn apart because some members of the family do not like what other members are doing. The changes we all go through as we get older are for some people simply a fact of life, but for others a hurdle they are trying desperately to climb over, or pretend aren't there.

Yet change actually provides us with new possibilities, new horizons. It may not be easy when we are affected by any change, but we are invited to grasp an opportunity and to become the person God would have us be in that new situation. Perhaps the difficulty of **outward** changes is that we have to make **inward** changes to accommodate them, which is always more difficult.

If we are people of faith, though, are we not called to meet God in the changes?

'Behold I stand at the door and knock.' (Revelation 3: 20)



'The Light of the World'

William Holman Hunt

'The meeting place with Jesus is at the door, at the threshold, of our hearts.

When someone knocks at the door we have a choice, to either welcome the person or turn them away. When Jesus knocks at the door the choice is the same. We can either welcome Jesus in or turn him away. We may think, "Well, I've done that; I welcomed him into my heart and life a long time ago." We all know, however, that we have to make a daily choice. There are times when we know we do not act as if Christ is part of our lives. There are times when the perceived demands seem too great and we back away from saying or doing what Christ wishes. We have left him standing at the door again. Christ seems to spend an eternity standing at the door of our hearts, waiting for us to answer his knock, waiting for us to welcome him in, waiting to cross the threshold of our hearts and lives.

The threshold is the waiting place, for us and for Christ, though if we think we are the ones to be standing at the door waiting for Christ, we are sadly mistaken. Christ knocks at a closed door and, as William Holman Hunt portrays in his famous painting, the handle is on the inside, not the outside of the door. If we stand waiting behind a closed door we are not welcoming anyone in, let alone Christ. He daily stands at the door knocking and willing us to let him in, but the choice is ours. In our more spiritual moments we might think it inconceivable that we would refuse Christ entry, but we all know that we have our times of weakness, laziness, stubbornness and just pure cussedness, when Jesus stands and waits until we are ready to put him before ourselves.'

Perhaps change asks us the question, What is most important in my life, myself or my God? Am I prepared to look and listen for what God is asking of me and giving to me now, today, or do I leave God standing, waiting for me to open my heart a little more to God's loving and compassionate heart?

Sister Aileen

Sr Emily in the UK



Sister Emily writes:

This year I had the privilege of spending nearly six months with our Sisters in the UK.



Emily with Sr Hilda Mary

While at Ham I went with Hilda Mary and Marguerite Mae to Broadstairs and cleaned the graves where some of our Sisters are buried.

Different kinds of visits

Veronica, Hilda Mary and I had a week's retreat at St. Bueno's Ignation Spirituality Centre in North Wales. Indeed it was a great time for me exploring in life and learning different things. The retreat was a grateful time with God and a time for healing. St. Bueno's is such a wonderful place that speaks so much of God with the environment. Experience of God through his creation in a different place was so much of God revealing himself in a special way.

Rosina and I attended a Biblical and Theological Studies Summer School at Ripon College, Cuddesdon. I also visited some places in the area.

The course was so helpful in broadening my knowledge on migration. The vital point was centred around hospitality. How can we welcome strangers and make them feel they belong in the community they live in, in order to have the freedom to live as we all human beings have to enjoy?



Dressed appropriately for the Mosque.

It was exciting to see some amazing places in the UK. While I was at Ripon College, we went for an excursion to Birmingham Central Mosque, the Anglican Cathedral in Birmingham, the Birmingham Museum, the Art Gallery and Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

I had a good time in the other Community houses - Three days at Bristol, a week at Clevedon, with the lovely view of the sea, and two days at West Harrow.

When I was at West Harrow Sr. Vivien took me into London. We visited St. Paul's Cathedral, where we had a very long guided tour.

We saw the spiral stone staircase built over three hundred years ago by Sir Christopher Wren. The staircase is held up by only the weight of the next step. It was used in the Harry Potter movies as the staircase at Hogwarts. We walked across the millennium Bridge and along the South Bank, where we stopped for lunch. We crossed back over Westminster Bridge, looking at the 'London Eye' as we went. We walked around Parliament square, looking at the Houses of Parliament, the outside of Westminster Abbey and then had a look inside St. Margaret's Church beside the Abbey. From there we caught a bus to Buckingham Palace and then back through Trafalgar square to St. Martin-in-the-Fields where we had a brief tour. There were crowds of people on holiday enjoying the summer weather and the sites of London. On the way back to Ham the following day we went to Kew Gardens and had a snack lunch in the garden.

At Ham I helped out in looking after our older Sisters, cleaning the house, helping in the kitchen, changing flowers in the chapel and refectory. I also helped out in our services and preaching. It was wonderful to meet our Sisters and share our lives together.

Solomon Islands-Pacific Province News

Our Sisters in the Solomon Islands celebrated St. Michael and All Angels with the Acceptance of six Junior Sisters. Many people were at the celebrations for Michaelmas and the Acceptances.

Sister Muriel's grave was also decorated and blessed.

The new Junior Sisters are:
Catherine Tawai, Ellen, Margaret,
Neslyn, Shirley and Sophia.

They send their great thanks for people praying for them during their Noviciate and they ask all to continue to pray for them throughout their time as Junior Sisters.



The Celebrant on the day was Bishop Michael Tavoia. He preached a wonderful message which was greatly appreciated.



Bishop Michael also baptised Sister Emily's nephew.



As many Sisters, Novices, Postulants and Aspirants as possible were gathered for the occasion, as they had just held a Chapter Meeting. Sister Linda Mary can be seen at the back.



Sister Muriel's grave at Tetete ni Kolivuti, beautifully decorated and blessed.

Bishop Philip Huggins' Visit to Sister Elisa Helen's Church in Melton, Victoria

The Bishop went to Christ Church, Melton, where Elisa Helen is Vicar, for NAIDOC Week. **Elisa Helen** explains:

'For those of you that aren't aware, NAIDOC stands for National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee.

In the past couple of years at the Diocesan Synod, the Archbishop of Melbourne, the Rt. Rev'd Philip Freier, has been working on a Reconciliation Action Plan [RAP] for the Diocese, and has also encouraged parishes to adopt some kind of RAP. Our actions have been small, but significant, and in many ways challenging.

First of all, we held a service which had a focus on our Christian Indigenous people. The parish is very fortunate to have a few people who have Indigenous heritage and one, Suzanne Brown [Sue], is an elder from Tasmania, who went to Collegiate Hobart (Once a CSC school). She is very well connected within the wider indigenous community and has been able to facilitate for us a much fuller church connection, than we would have had, without her.

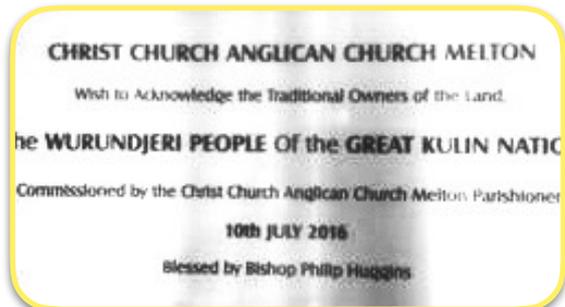
We had a few elders of the Victorian Indigenous community, a didgeridoo player and a small group of dancers who visited the parish for the service. They shared some of their cultural practices and dances with us, and spoke about the dreamtime and some of the realities in contemporary Australia for our indigenous folk. For some in the parish this was all extremely challenging, because indigenous spirituality did not emerge in a Christian context and sounds extremely foreign to the Western Christian worldview.

Our next endeavour has been to place a plaque in our church grounds which acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which the church stands. With European settlement, the land was literally taken from the local people, so there is much to be done to enable reconciliation and healing, and acknowledging their original ownership is something we can do for them, which is important.



Bishop Philip with Elisa Helen on the right

So having planned this, we then invited our regional Bishop, Philip Huggins, who is also an Associate of CSC, to come and bless the plaque in NAIDOC week. The Bishop is extremely busy and we are lucky if he can come to us annually, so we also planned to have some confirmations on the occasion. We ended up having 14 people confirmed as well.



The Plaque

Sue was able to organise Uncle Joey, who played the didgeridoo and told stories and explained the dances. His daughter Alinta, performed the dances for us and Uncle Joey's wife, Aunt Karen, also came. Uncle Gene Roberts, a Yorta Yorta Elder, and Western Regional Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Youth Liaison Officer also came, and loved it all. Alinta, accompanied by the didgeridoo, did a sweeping dance [cleansing the earth] and a gathering dance for us which was lovely.



Alina dances and Uncle Joey plays

There are very few local Indigenous people left, so our acknowledgement of the land, the welcome and blessing, were done in the presence of the ancestors more than the current living people, but it was all done with good will and much love.

The Sudanese Children danced too

Later in the service our Sudanese kids danced the offertory for the Eucharist. It was a really joyful service, with the bishop preaching on the theme of the Good Samaritan and Christian love, using and highlighting the amazing multiculturalism of the day.



Dinka South Sudanese children dancing the offertory.

We had people from Sri Lanka, South Sudan, Malaysia and Indonesia, Indigenous people and Anglos, present in the service. The Bishop used a piece of artwork by an Indigenous girl who had been able to renew her life through her faith and so discovered her talent. It was inspiring.

Overall there were about 185 men, women and children [102] present, and all were left truly rejoicing in the goodness of God's gracious generosity to us all. It all finished with the normal kind of Church feast. Everyone was very pleased and content with the occasion.'

Elisa Helen with some of the confirmation candidates. Little Alei in the front had surgery to straighten both her legs, about 3 weeks before.



The stole I'm wearing was made for me by Sue for the occasion. It has an indigenous theme.

Some Random Quotes

Forgiving does not erase the bitter past. A healed memory is not a deleted memory. Instead, forgiving what we cannot forget creates a new way to remember. We change the memory of our past into a hope for our future.

Lewis B. Smedes

No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there.

Steve Jobs

To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.

Winston Churchill

Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else.

Margaret Mea

Drawing on my fine command of the English language, I said nothing.

Robert Benchley

What I am looking for is a blessing not in disguise.

Jerome K. Jerome

The Emily Group in Perth

The Emily Group (some of the Schools founded by the Community) meeting was hosted by Perth College this year. A Music Festival was part of the meeting of the schools. Linda Mary was able to be there, and describes the experience:

'The Music Festival involved students from each of the Schools in Australia and St Margaret's College in Christchurch, New Zealand. They arrived on Tuesday and for the next four days had an adventure in rehearsals (hard work) and tours (informative) which culminated in the Music Festival on Saturday evening.

The orchestra was taken through its paces by **Dr Alan Lourens**, who is Head of the School of Music, University of Western Australia.

The choir was conducted by **Dan Walker**, a choral specialist in Australia, who was commissioned by Perth College to write a work which was premiered as the last piece of the Music Festival. He chose Sr Aileen's blessing song as its essence and part of it was sung in Gaelic by a music teacher from Perth College and now at St Michael's Hobart.

Love is the only important thing

Each School presented a segment, mostly choral with some instruments. The final section involved the full orchestra and choir in what was called 'Rockatorio', which consisted of eight songs, the last one being the commissioned 'The Heart that Stirs the Ever-Beating Sea'.

In the 'Rockatorio' several students spoke of the different aspects of life within the asking of a question. At the end a student drew these aspects together by saying that love was the only thing that was important and what held people together. It was such a gift in the context and in celebration of the Schools, and of Mother Emily.



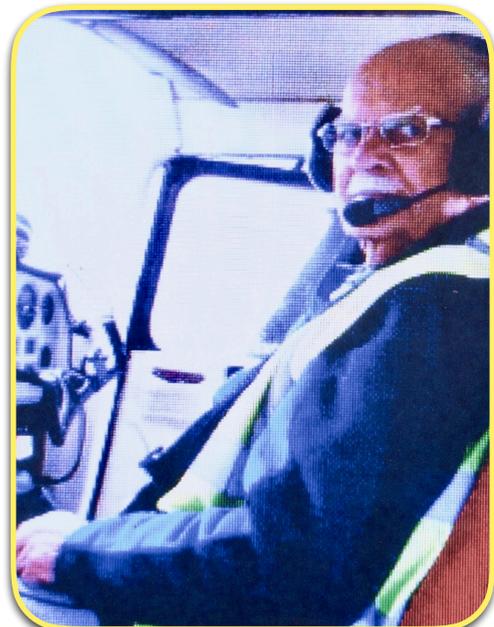
Massed choir and orchestra of the Emily Group Schools

What Would You Do to Celebrate a 90th Birthday?

A UK Associate celebrated his 80th birthday in 2006 by making a **parachute jump!** Then October 2nd this year was Vivian Jones's 90th birthday. Perhaps by now he had decided to take life more easily and celebrate in a more 'normal' way. Not a bit of it! This decade's celebration was having a **flying lesson!**

Maybe you are thinking that the rest of the time he takes things easy, saving his energy to do exciting celebrations, but not exactly. He was obviously brought up in the old school way, which said that you have to keep busy...so he does. Viv has volunteered in a local Charity Shop (Op Shop), for the past 15 years. We are beginning to wonder when he will retire and do more sedentary things. The great question is, of course, what will he do for his 100th Birthday?

Well done, Viv! Congratulations on your 90th Birthday and may you enjoy the next ten years.



When Life is made Hell for our Children

One of the horrors of our world, and probably always has been, is the many ways in which we abuse our children.

Children living in loving homes, where they are loved and cared for, probably find it hard to understand how children of their own age who live in another country, or another town, the next street, or the next house, live lives of silent hell.

Adults who know how precious children are and who love and cherish them, must weep inside when they read of yet another child being physically, psychologically, or sexually abused, and often all three.

There are many things we can find wrong with our society these days, and none more so than this, maybe. Yet one thing we can be relieved about is that more and more countries are facing the fact of abuse in their midst. Investigations are taking place into not just individual cases of the abuse of children, but in systematic abuse by groups of men (and women) throughout the world. Children are bought and sold, moved around from one paedophile to another often living short, violent lives.

The various Commissions and investigations will, hopefully, begin to show the perpetrators that they have nowhere to hide, that their sickening behaviour will come to light, and that more and more will be brought to justice.

The Christian Care Centre in the Solomon Islands, was set up to be a place of refuge for abused women and their children. People are beginning to look at their neighbours, and even people they have known as friends, and question the kind of abusive lives they are living.

Courage

In our CSC houses in the UK we have, by law, to make sure all children and adults with whom we come into contact are kept as safe as possible.

It is not enough, though, to make sure we do not allow any abuse to happen on our premises. Like the rest of society, we have to be aware of children and vulnerable adults wherever we are and speak out if we see behaviour which is abusive. We might like to think that of course we would speak out against abuse, but would we?

If we see and hear things among our neighbours, which we know is not right, would we have the courage to speak out and do something about it?

What if it were happening within our own family? Abuse is abuse, wherever it happens, even among people we know and love. Does the compassionate love of Christ fill us enough to give us the courage to challenge the things we see and hear? One thing I think we can be certain about is that Jesus would not have stood idly by and watched a child or adult suffer at another person's hands.

‘People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”’

Mark 10:13-14

I am sure that all of us would say we could not possibly cause anyone harm; we could not hurt a child; but as Edmund Burke very wisely pointed out, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.”

Dare we put anyone's life and health at risk by doing nothing?

Do we care enough to become indignant, because the children of God are exploited and abused?

Do I?

Pause for thought

Sister Linda Mary writes:

'Recently I have been reading a book by the Jewish Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, who is renowned for his ethical approach to current world issues. In this book, "Not in God's Name", he confronts the issue of religious violence and throws fresh light on it. Sibling rivalry is presented as the root of conflicts and the hatred expressed in relationships between people in the early chapters of Genesis.

'For example, in the story of Esau and Jacob, it is the first born Esau, a hunter, who is loved and preferred by his father Isaac. Jacob, born clinging to the heel of Esau, resented his brother, taking his birthright and later his blessing. Rebecca, the mother of the brothers, loved Jacob best and aided him in his deception to gain dominance over Esau. An angry Esau wanted to kill Jacob. Therefore Jacob fled to his uncle Laban, who in turn deceived the deceiver by giving Jacob Leah instead of Rachel as his first wife. Many years later, on his way home, Jacob is terrified about meeting his brother Esau. Alone, during the night, he found himself wrestling with a man/angel/stranger or with God (?). Jacob refused to let his combatant go until he blessed him.

'We might say that Jacob struggled with his own sin, his resentment and deception. He is not killed but held bodily within the wrestling. Through the struggle Jacob accepted his own true identity, symbolised in a damaged groin, and received a new name, Israel, which means 'you have wrestled with God and men and have overcome'. He now knew he was loved by God, and is able to love himself and accept his own particular gifts and personality. He no longer desired the blessing which was Esau's. When Jacob and Esau met the next day, surprisingly, it was a meeting of reconciliation. The blessing Jacob stole from Esau was returned.

'It is only when we can accept ourselves, our true identity, and God's love for us, that we can step into the place/shoes of the other/the stranger, and appreciate their true identity and that they too are loved by God. When we can do this, violence finds no place in our relationships.

'Such a relationship is illustrated in the story of Joseph who was sold to traders travelling to Egypt by his brothers who hated him and his ways. Joseph became the one who taught them what it was like to experience being and living in a strange land, and to know the truth that all people are loved by God. As Sacks argues, the theme of these Genesis stories, "is not sibling rivalry—competition for God's love—but rather, understanding that we each have a place in God's universe of justice and love" (Sacks, 2015, p.218).'

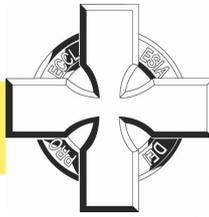
What, I wonder, does this say about our own dealings with our families and our world?

Sacks, Jonathan. (2015). 'Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence', Schocken Bks., New York.



Rembrandt's
'Jacob Wrestling with the Angel'

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~ and Who is Where

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