

SISTER EVELEEN

RETREAT HOUSE

ANNUAL REPORT TO DIO SYNOD FOR PERIOD FROM JANUARY 2019 – JULY 2020

Be still and know that I am God (Psalm 46.10)

INVITATION

Busy? Tired? Burdened? Needing time out to deepen the Sabbath? To settle the body, mind or spirit? For renewal? Respite? Self-care? Your Diocesan home is open and ready to welcome you back. Park your car at the foot of Scarborough Hill. Leave your worldly routines behind and walk slowly uphill in the footsteps of thousands of other pilgrims to 6 Whitewash Head Road and stay for as long as you are able. The beauty of the ocean, the distant mountains, the warm welcome, the simplicity of the House's facilities and the daily rhythms of contemplative prayer three times a day in the charming wooden Chapel will embrace you as you sit with yourself and listen to the still small voice within.....
If interested for a visit, day retreat or longer, please contact Eddie (Director) on 022 563 6879, sistereretreat@gmail.com, or www.sistereretreat.com

OUR PAST

The House built in 1924 has been and remains a treasure to both lay and ordained pilgrims in the Diocese since it was gifted in 1939 by Sister Eveleen Barklie from the Community of the Sacred Name. It offers 4 bedrooms (3 are twin) in the main House and 6 singles in an adjacent Annexe (a total of 13 beds). Church Property Trustees lovingly arranged for its restoration following the earthquakes of 2011, while the Diocese generously supported its continued existence by underwriting its overheads while it was unoccupied. A new Board of Oversight assumed responsibility in July 2018 under the Chairmanship of Rev'd Thomas Bauer, the local Vicar. Bishop-Elect Peter Carrell blessed the refurbished Retreat House on 18th December 2018, just days before we welcomed our first guests.

MISSION

Since then, a great deal of care has been taken by Board members to re-develop the use of the space within the terms of its Diocesan Statute (2009) to be a 'house for spiritual help and prayer' that promotes 'its widest possible use in meeting the spiritual needs of people in the Diocese of Christchurch'. Our prayer is that every visitor will encounter the love of God in our Christ-Centred mission, which is 'to encourage and promote the widest use of the retreat house by providing an accessible and welcoming environment in which rest, spiritual and prayer support is offered.' It is both an Anglican and ecumenical resource, as Sr Eveleen herself wished.

OBJECTIVES

Our current objectives (June 2020) are 'to support the Anglican Diocese of Christchurch by providing a venue and programmes of retreat; to generate sufficient funding to manage and grow the mission and ministry of the house; and to develop a strong Board of Trustees that can offer prayerful Christian guidance, sound governance and fundraising efforts in a sustainable way.'

FOCUS

Looking back over this period, the Board can trace its progress from acting as a Management Committee that looked after the basic setting-up details in the House (carpets, curtains, furnishings, heating, linen, electric blankets, security, fire safety compliance, brochures etc) towards taking on more responsibility for setting up internal protocols, systems, policymaking and governance.

BOARD OF OVERSIGHT

As of 31 July 2020, our Board members are Michael Earle (Chair), David Plom (deputy Chair), Fay Deam (Secretary), Glenda Prosser (Treasurer), Rev'd Thomas Bauer, Caroline McNeill and Angela Moore with Eddie O'Connor (Director, ex officio). Standing Committee has yet to confirm another clergy representative.

There have been a number of changes in Board membership over the past year and we have been grateful for the time and experience given by Ven Nick Mountfort, Rev'd John de Senna, Alumine Andrew/Kennedy and Jaymie de Roles.

Board members bring a broad range of skills, networks and life experiences that are helping us grow as a committed and more stable team. We meet monthly and currently on Zoom as members live in different parts of Christchurch/Canterbury. We have each recently chosen a portfolio to develop and shape priorities with the Director in the areas of spiritual oversight, property, marketing, fundraising, as well as Finance and Administration.

I am extremely grateful to Rev'd Thomas Bauer for his wise leadership as Chair over those first critical 18 months and to every Board member for the wise counsel, time and the sacrificial effort each has made into expressing their faith in getting this ministry up and running.

SISTER EVELEEN

RETREAT HOUSE

APPRECIATION

We have particularly appreciated the care shown this past year by (a) Bishop Peter and the staff from Church Property Trustees, Anglican Life, Diocesan Mission team, as well as the Diocesan Ministry Support team, who have continued to provide advice, wisdom and a free accounting service with oversight of our funds as we attempt to grow our finances, (b) the staff and congregational members from the local Anglican parish of Sumner-Redcliffs, (c) Fay Deam who managed all our bookings in the initial phase, (d) Julie Hampton who contracted as our non-resident 'Welcomer Hostess' from Easter to July 2019, (e) Jo Smith who kept the House clean for the rest of 2019, (f) Kevin Vincent who helped the Board start shaping its Business Plan and strategic direction, (g) Rev'd 'Spanky' Moore who assisted the Board to shape the Summer Communities, (h) those who have generously donated to support the House's ministry and (i) other locals who gave their time cleaning inside and containing the summer growth in the grounds of the House.

Highlights during 2019 included:

- Our first Intentional community involved some 5 young adult men and women led by Jaymie de Roles during the summer from January to March 2019. A meaningful time for both participants and guests as they shaped the Board's MOU guidelines into building a community life with regular worship and prayer, in exchange for a koha and manual labour on the house and gardens. It also contributed some \$4'000 of much needed income. Plans to market a 2nd Summer Community subsequently started with the aim of developing the Annexe as Air B&B accommodation to travellers interested in experiencing Christian community.
- During the period May-December, 11 day retreats were held while individuals occupied the House on retreat for 76 bed nights, all on a self-catering basis, which is our norm
- An Open afternoon was held on 14th April 2019 to welcome some 50 friends, supporters and neighbours to view the refurbished House, share a time of worship and hospitality
- A new website (sistereretreat.com) was designed by Sofia Andrew
- New systems were put in place to process donations, income & expenditure
- A Christmas Carol service was held in the Chapel on December 22nd with some 45 friends, supporters and neighbours

Highlights during 2020 (January-July) have included:

- A 2nd Intentional Community was held from the New Year under the capable leadership of Eddie O'Connor as Manager. In spite of extensive advertising, it only attracted a small group of 2 core members for the intended 3 months, but was supplemented by a number of other members staying for shorter periods and people attracted to stay through Air B&B. When the lockdown measures from Covid-19 impacted from the end of March, the Community continued with 6 in residence until the end of May. There was much to celebrate and learn from this summer with Eddie growing in his vocational commitment to this ministry and role. The Board was grateful to him and Sue Williams for ensuring its success.
- Eddie was subsequently licenced by Bishop Peter and appointed as Director of the House on a casual

SISTER EVELEEN

RETREAT HOUSE

employment contract, backdated to 1st April. He lives in the House and has established a rhythm of contemplative prayer three times a day (7am, 12 noon and 6pm) in the Chapel which is open to everyone. Casual visitors are welcome.

- The House is now being promoted on Facebook, Instagram and through Eddie's blogs. Volunteers are being recruited to help with the practical running of the House and retreats are currently being planned over the next 12 months, as well as a Surf Monastery over next summer. More details will appear on the website.
- We have recorded an impressive 747 residential nights from the New Year to 31 July (618 longer term including Eddie; 129 mostly shorter Air B&B stays) and one booking of the whole House in May by Bishop Peter and his team for a Diocesan discernment weekend. News of the House's availability is spreading and we aim to build on this.
- A new heat pump ducting air into the 3 twin bedrooms has been ordered to improve comforts in the House, especially during the winter months. The more spartan Annexe remains more suitable as a summer resource.
- Research is being undertaken with the help of the Diocesan archivist to discover more about Sister Eveleen's life (1871-1939). Her grave with a Celtic headstone lies in the Rutherford Street Cemetery, Woolston

Priorities in 2021 per Board portfolios

Growing the awareness of Sr Eveleen's availability for 'time-out/retreats' to individual Anglican clergy, Parish Vestries, Archdeacon meetings, other Anglican and ecumenical groups, and the wider church community; growing and marketing a programme that offers different retreats to different groups in each season; growing the Community of Volunteers to help with the running of the House and its gardens; growing the donor base, the grant applications and fundraising ventures to be able to offer the Director a part/full stipend; working collaboratively with other Christian retreat centres in Canterbury & New Zealand; giving some initial consideration to develop/replacing the Annexe; and following other prompts from the Spirit.

CONCLUSION

New life is returning to this taonga of a 95 year old retreat house as we open ourselves to God's leadings into new initiatives, thankful for Eddie's presence and his many giftings. With your support, financial encouragement and prayers, we look forward to serving our churches and wider community in the coming year in ways that nurture Christian faith, stillness, outreach and our calling to be human beings, rather than busy human doings.

The Invitation has been given.....

In Christ's service....

Michael Earle

Chairperson

31 July 2020