



Green Pastures

A Twice-Yearly Newsletter of the Society of the Good Shepherd

Autumn 2025

Advent and Christmas Greetings

We begin with apologies for the non-issue of the Spring newsletter this year. (This was in part due to the fact that Sr Anita has undergone many health challenges since January, and also that she has been on sabbatical for 3 months.)

We resume publication with a Chinese wood sculpture of the Good Shepherd (right) which was presented to us seven years ago by our dear friend, David Joy.

Comings and goings:

By way of background, let us remind you of how a person becomes a full Member of SGS. The first step is that of **enquiring** about us, reading our website, talking with the Prioress, and attending at least one Chapter Meeting. If that all feels right, the person can ask to become a **Postulant**. The Postulancy is a time of "trying it on for size," i.e. of finding out whether the person is able to keep the full Rule of Life. This phase lasts for 6 months or so. Then, all being well, the Postulant may apply to become a **Novice**. The Novitiate is a time of intensive training, and lasts for at least a year. All being well, a Novice may then apply to take **First (or Temporary) Vows**. These vows are taken, in the first instance, for a period of one year, after which they may be extended for another two years. Finally, after a total of three years in First Vows, the person may apply to take **Life Vows**.

It is normal in any religious order that roughly 50% of those who enter will withdraw from the community before taking vows. This has proved to be true for SGS, the latest withdrawal being Leonie Smith, who left us in July. At the same time, we have welcomed a new Aspirant from South Africa, **Gadi Ntuli**. Please pray for Gadi that she may proceed smoothly through the process of becoming a full Member.



Renewal of Vows



Both Sr Rika (in May) and Sr Pam (in November) have renewed their Temporary Vows for two further years, after which they will both be eligible to take Life Vows. Each such step is a moment of great joy for the Community as a whole, and feels to us like another layer of bricks being added to the foundations of our Society.



Perspectives on the World Christian Movement

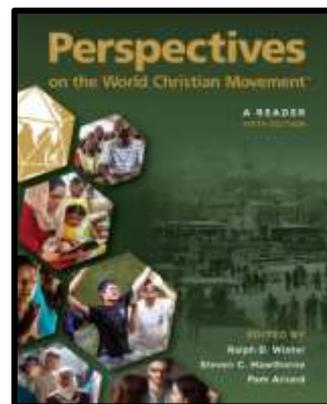


In 2023, Sister Pam became the co-editor of the 5th Edition of *Perspectives*, alongside Steve Hawthorne, and will be lead editor for the 6th Edition, expected in around 7 years time.

This program of study began in 1974, and since then, over 360,000 students in more than 40 countries have taken the course. It mobilizes believers into their calling through education, focusing on God's global glory and how to live for Jesus

alone. The course has four sections: 1) God's glory through Scripture, 2) The continuing spread of God's glory through history, 3) God's glory in cultures, and 4) Strategies for making God's name great today. Though often called a "missions" class, it's better understood as a "God's glory" class for every believer.

Perspectives is long and challenging, but the transformation it brings is worth it. Volunteers coordinate local classes, involving members from many local churches and a new instructor each week, with a local facilitator guiding the students.



“They Shall be Regular in Recreation.”

The *Seven Notes* are a document largely written by the founders of OGS (the men’s “Oratory of the Good Shepherd”) when they met together in 1917, after World War I. The *Notes* consist of guidelines demonstrating much “sanctified common sense” as to how members shall live their lives, and our Community of SGS has adopted these *Notes* largely unchanged. (If you would like to read the whole document, you can find it on our website: societyofthegoodshepherd.org.)

The guideline about “being regular in recreation” is found in the *Seventh Note*, entitled “Joy.” This guideline is an application of the “Sabbath principle,” based on the account in Genesis of God, Himself, resting on the 7th day of Creation, (*Genesis 2:2-3*), and the Commandment “Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.” (*Exodus 20:8-11*).

We know from many studies done in recent years that modern humans tend to want to cheat on the amount of rest they manage to get in any given week. Many of us fight the needs of these bodies of ours – temples of the Holy Spirit which God has given us – for the sake of earning more money or staving off feelings of personal inadequacies or for other personal reasons. The result is that we just don’t perform as well as we could and should in our everyday lives. Strong coffee is no substitute for sleep!



In addition to the *Note* about rest and recreation, it is part of our *Rule of Life* that we will each have a “Rule of Sleep,” having worked out *how much* sleep we need each night in order to serve God well the next day. And then we are responsible to try to get that much! (None of us can help it if we’re suffering from insomnia, but we *are* responsible for getting to bed at a reasonable hour, or taking naps, or whatever, to keep both mind and body fit for the Lord’s service.)

There may be times when our health and/or our workloads become just too much for us. And in some situations the remedy for this (if possible) could be to take a sabbatical. Not everyone can manage this, but our Community encouraged Sr Anita (who had struggled with health issues since January) to take one for several months this summer and autumn. We each of us need to be self-aware, and when things feel as if they’re getting too much for us, consult with those around us who understand and support us, to see whether more rest and recreation might be possible in some form.

The Gospel according to Dachshunds



Sr Rita writes:

Dachshund: A small breed in size. In personality beyond size!

The joy of having pets! Created by God! Created for our joy and comfort. A gift from the Lord are these wonderful companions. I have two of these four-legged Dachshund-gifts beyond size! They bring me endless joy and laughter.

So, let’s explore and reflect on some of the Dachshund’s characteristics

and how this might exemplify Christian virtues to inspire and encourage us believers on our spiritual journey.



1. Their unwavering loyalty to their owners mirrors the steadfast commitment and longing we should have for our Lord and King!
2. Like Biblical heroes who faced giants, dachshunds bravely confront challenges despite their small size, reminding us to trust in God’s strength. Nothing is too big (or small) for these funny little sausage dogs to take on. A David and Goliath scenario indeed.
3. Their playful nature encourages us to find joy in the Lord’s presence and approach life with gratitude and wonder. Dachshunds’ big hearts and loving nature reflect God’s love and compassion, inspiring Christians to embody these qualities in their relationships.

4. Their stubbornness and persistence, that at times might be a challenge, can also be a positive trait that reminds us what endurance and perseverance look like, that are so crucial for a life of faith in Christ.



I hope this reflection on the Dachshund's character, serves as a heartwarming reminder of the importance of faith, love, and devotion to our Lord! Mr Hope Higgins and Miss Lola Joy send their love all the way from Africa!!

(PS: It is with permission and approval of Mr Hope Higgins and Miss Lola Joy that Sister Rika was allowed to write the above)

What's Up With Our Members

(The picture, left to right: top row: Sr Rika, Sr Anita, middle row: Lucy, Joy, Caroline; bottom row: Sr Pam.)



Sr Anita has had a difficult year, health wise (several UTI's, shingles, a severe concussion, dental problems, and a relapse of her ME/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.) Despite all this, she continued most of her ministry until mid-July, when she started a sabbatical for several months. She has continued her pastoral role in the Community, but has cut down on some other aspects of her ministry. She continues to celebrate a daily Eucharist at 12:00 noon (UK time), streamed live on Zoom.

Sr Rika (now in the 2nd year of her Temporary Profession), continues to have an extensive prayer ministry, which includes prayer walks, ongoing Spiritual Direction, and giving Weeks of Guided Prayer and silent retreats. She has now completed an advanced course in spiritual direction and retreat-giving, as well as further training in Supervision. She continues to play a supportive role at the orphanage in Mozambique which she and her late husband founded. Within the Community, she has now been elected "Sub-Prioress" to shadow and support Sr Anita in the oversight of the Community.

Sr Pam, (now in the 2nd year of her Temporary Profession), has largely completed her role as co-editor of the 5th edition of *Perspectives* (see above). This year she has also completed the basic "jungle clearance" on the property she shares with her mother, which is designated as a place of rest for missionaries. She, too, has now completed an advanced course in spiritual direction and retreat-giving. Within the Community, she has been elected "Formator" to shadow and support Sr Anita in the ongoing training we give to all Members. Together with our Associate, Doug Schwert, she frequently celebrates Sr Anita's online daily Eucharist, to allow Sr Anita an occasional day off.

Caroline (our Guardian) has had a typically busy year, spending a great deal of time with her recently widowed brother, and her daughters and their families, and with the local committees and organisations she belongs to. But we've all been deeply concerned for her since 16th November, when she suffered a cardiac arrest! Thankfully, she was with her eldest daughter (in Somerset) at the time, who applied CPR, and called for an ambulance. When Caroline arrived at the hospital, the surgeon was waiting for her at the door, whisked her straight into theatre, and inserted a life-saving stent. She experienced a huge amount of pain, but is now feeling considerably better. She will need a long convalescence, but is already going out for short walks. She will remain with her daughter and family in Somerset until she's well enough to return to Wales.

Lucy continues a challenging lifestyle, caring for her three children and helping her mother who lives next door, not to mention all their pets! She also continues her full-time job teaching mathematics in a local adult learning college. Within the Community, she has been elected "Bursar," to assist Sr Anita with our bank account and other financial matters.

Joy continues her prison work, enjoying especially the teaching and individual support she offers there two evenings a week. She also continues to help out in her church in ways that make good use of her experience and skills as an administrator. She continues to serve as "Recording Secretary" for our College Chapter, and very helpfully reminds Sr Anita of details the latter may have overlooked!

Our Visitor

Fr David Matthews, our Ecclesiastical Visitor, needs our prayers. He has been carrying an extensive and very exhausting workload within the Diocese, as a Canon of the Cathedral, a Ministry Area Leader, and holder of other significant roles, in addition to looking after his Parish. He has been suffering from his own health issues lately, although these have now been resolved by the grace of God! We're particularly grateful for his role in our Community and for his intervention when needed.



Update on our Associates:

Chris Phenix continues to have medical issues, including the pain in her head and neck, and an all-pervasive dizziness, but in spite of that carries on with her voluntary work (alongside her husband, daughter and son), in a Food Pantry sponsored by local churches. She also enjoys weekly worship, fellowship, and Bible study with her church

Ruth Scourfield continues to work as a counsellor most of the time, alongside which she has been supporting her sister who is suffering from cancer. Ruth and her husband, Chris, continue to host a house group from their church on alternate weeks.

Christopher Davies (Ruth's husband) has just retired from his job as an occupational therapist. This will allow him more time for his work as a "Christian handyman," and for his artwork and playing in the "band" at their church each Sunday. He also continues to care for the garden at their church, and is also a great help to Sr Anita when she has jobs she's unable to do.

Gary Denyer and Trish are looking for a house in Pembrokeshire, closer to the ferry to Ireland and thus to Trish's family. In the meantime, they're still at his house in Tredegar. They both attend Sr Anita's online Eucharist most weeks. In October Gary received another guide dog, who was truly wonderful in every way, but, as he was a large Alsatian (German Shepherd), locals were terrified of him, meaning he had to be returned for rehoming with some other blind person. They are considering what to do next.

Vera Beak is keeping remarkably well for her age (95), and enjoyed another cruise this year. She is still out and about and able to get to church most Sundays, and is currently looking forward to a cruise in May, this time all around the coast of Ireland. She now has 5 great-grandchildren!

Doug Schwert has continued to have health challenges. In addition to a degenerative condition, he has had a second operation on his ankle, which, this time, thankfully, was altogether successful. In recent months, a heart condition has caused him to slow down a bit, but he is still willing to occasionally celebrate Sr Anita's online Eucharist, to enable her to get a complete day off.

Gerre Schwert, as you may imagine, is still much involved in caring for Doug! The two of them are currently travelling around the Eastern half of the USA, presumably visiting their respective offspring. And they, like Vera, have great-grandchildren in the mix.

Gretchen Rodriguez continues her ministry, having completed advanced training in spiritual direction and retreat-giving. She also devotes much time to looking after her grandchildren. She and her husband are still planning to move from Texas to Tennessee, so watch this space.

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