



# Green Pastures

*A Twice-Yearly Newsletter of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd*

*Autumn 2020*

## Our Christmastide Greetings

Covid-19 has had a profound effect on all of us, and accounts for the fact that we did not manage to publish our newsletter in the Spring of this year. So this edition comes at about the right time to wish you all a holy and blessed Advent and Christmas 2020.

## Growth in a Time of Pandemic

Despite the pandemic, our Community, has actually grown and developed in new and interesting ways throughout this year. A decision we made last year, resulting in a revision of our *Manual*, was that we wished to include our Companions as full members of the Community, with both voice and vote in our meetings and decisions. And, interestingly, the Lord has brought to us two new Companions this year: one, a South African living in India and the other a man living in Wales, formerly an Associate. They have both introduced themselves, below.

We are in no doubt that the Lord has used this pandemic for good in many ways, forcing the Church, for example, to explore new means of outreach and worship. So we are of good heart, trusting in the goodness of the Lord to see that, indeed, "all will be well,... and all manner of things will be well."



## Our Doings for the Past Year

We gathered with several of our Associates a year ago, once again at Gary's Denyer's house, for a bit of a Christmas Party. Sandra was able to be with us at that point "in the flesh," and in January, Sr Anita travelled to London to be with Sandra, to worship in her church, and to meet with a Fr John Francis Friendship who is writing a book about new religious orders. Sandra was able to come to Wales (during the relaxation of the Covid rules in the summer), for her annual retreat. Other than that, we have largely relied on Zoom for our meetings, which has worked quite well – although, at times, the restrictions have allowed Caroline Lewis, our Guardian, to attend in person.)

**Sr Anita's** ministry has seen significant developments, including – since mid-March – an online Eucharist at 12.00 noon (British time) each day via Zoom, seven days a week. (Here are the contact details: click on: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4837488647?pwd=SG5MRINZQWhWYnhhZVhLZHhLTfHfKQT09>, ID: 483 748 8647, Passcode: 333.) Another development is that, through one of her directees, word has got round the evangelical missionary network, resulting in as much spiritual direction and retreat work as she can fit into her schedule.

**Sandra's** main developments this year are that she moved to a new teaching job (after a time of furlough), and has also, just recently, moved into a house with three other Christians, all young professionals. She continues to serve in her church, working pastorally with some particularly vulnerable folk. And her ministry of spiritual direction continues to grow, supported by further training she is doing in that field.

**Anna's** life continues to be fully occupied with motherhood, as Elise is now in her second year. Having spent several months in the USA and Sweden in the summer, they and Austin are now back in North Africa.

We remain in close touch with our Associates. We much appreciate that

**Caroline Lewis** continues as our Guardian. **Chris Phenix** (Sr Anita's sister) joins us for the Eucharist on our College Chapter Meeting days. **Christine Gittings** joins Sr Anita's Eucharist via the telephone most days. **Ruth Scourfield** continues her work as an Occupational Therapist, and has recently made her annual retreat in Sr Anita's chalet. **Christopher Davies** likewise continues his work at an OT, though he enjoys doing handyman work on the side. **Gary Denyer** joins us occasionally – giving us the odd glimpse of Rufus, and both Neil and Sr Anita keep in touch with **Vera Beak**.

## Introducing our New Companions

### Leonie Smith:

I came to salvation at the age of sixteen, and was married to Alfred at 18. Always our hearts were to reach the lost, but first we raised a beautiful family and learnt much along the way. We have three



daughters, now all in their early thirties. They and our two grandchildren are still in South Africa. I trained as a teacher and we were pioneers in the home birthing, home schooling and home church movement in South Africa. We were part of a large charismatic church, and then various simple, home churches, and 15 years ago we joined the mission organization, "All Nations," focused on reaching the neglected peoples of the earth.

Then, six years ago, when we were both fifty, God finally gave us "GO" to share the Gospel with the Tibetans in Mcleod Ganj, India, but mostly to live a life here dedicated to His worship and glory. Mcleod Ganj is a Himalayan village that is the home of the Dalai Lama and many Tibetan Buddhists. We Christians here support one another, in our various projects and trials in life, with Sunday worship and daily fellowship. We run conversation classes, Bible studies, host prayer and outreach teams and many other projects. We taught English with stories from the Bible for the monks of the Dalai Lama temple for a year. We also run a GPA Tibetan language centre that has taught more than 20 missionaries to speak Tibetan. Three times a week I lead an online Scripture meditation, focusing on spiritual disciplines. Indeed, most of this work has moved online this year, for obvious reasons.

On arrival in Mcleod, I began exploring various prayer and spiritual disciplines, but silence always seemed too daunting. This year, however, before Covid was a thing, God called me to a Sabbatical on the field and starting to teach me about rest, solitude, silence and stillness. In June, I made a ten day, individually-guided, silent retreat with Sr Anita, which finally taught me how to quiet the unending conversation in my head, "and listen to the stillness of God's presence".

So this has been a year of disconnecting from work and allowing God to build within me the solid foundation of disciplined prayer, alongside physical, emotional and spiritual rest. Becoming a companion of the SGS is part of this foundation. I look forward to seeing what "work" will look like, now that these fundamental disciplines are in place.

#### **Neil Smith:**

I was born in Tredegar in the Welsh valleys, and grew up in Ebbw Vale, where I still live. My life has been a varied journey. In my youth I worked in various shops, in a factory manufacturing motor parts, and in the Ebbw Vale Steel works. I then did a two year photography course at Cross Keys College, which I very much enjoyed, and after that was employed driving a "road train" at the "Garden Festival" site outside Ebbw Vale. Finally, I had a job involving heavy industrial cleaning.

In recent years, I've been signed off sick with mental health problems, but this has been a blessed time for me in a number of ways. I found my way into the Church and was baptised in 2012, since when I've been very active in the local parish. I've served as Verger for several years now, and I carry out a ministry of prayer – going into the church each morning to recite Morning Prayer, and to spend a good chunk of time in silent prayer on behalf of the parish. In addition to this, I keep in touch with a couple of elderly widows who seem glad of my visits and support.



I got to know of SGS when Sr Anita came to serve as "Interim Pastor" in the parish, and became an Associate of SGS three years ago. Then, in September, this year (despite the pandemic) I became a Companion on a trial basis. So far, this seems to be a valuable part of my life, and I'm grateful to be part of the SGS family.

#### **How to Contact us:**

Any enquiries concerning membership as a Sister, should be addressed to:

The Rev Sr Anita Woodwell SGS, Prioress  
1 White Houses  
Pentwyn, Pontypool  
NP4 7SY

Telephone: (+ 44) 01495 753195  
Email: [awoodwell@yahoo.com](mailto:awoodwell@yahoo.com)

Enquiries about becoming a Companion or Associate may be addressed to Sr Anita or to:

Sandra Nicholas  
Email: [sandran@letterboxes.org](mailto:sandran@letterboxes.org)

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