

REPORT FROM ABERDEENSHIRE, 2008-2009

Our Spiritual Direction Course was completed at a retreat Friday evening/Saturday session (October 16th/17th) at St. Drostan's Lodge in Tarfside, Glenesk. All 7 clergy and 2 laity completed the course and were present at the weekend. The evaluation sheets received so far reveal growth in confidence, commitment and communication skills at a deeper level. Enormous trust was shown throughout the course in the vulnerability shown amongst the participants. The group came from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures and handling this group was quite challenging. We now have some welcome Spiritual Directors in this area although the clergy in particular are not necessarily going to be able to take on extra directees and have seen the course as enabling them to improve the quality of the pastoral work they do.

Sr. Moira Donnelly and I have now started to present a G.P.R.L. course with 20 participants. We are very pleased to have Judith Irvine to help us deliver this course. We have only met once at the time of writing this but the group (17 women and 3 men) settled quickly and the sharing in the small group work was relaxed and productive. The group is made up of Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Church of Scotland and Baptist members. We meet in the Bishop's House and Bishop Peter Moran was there to welcome us at our first meeting.

Sr. Moira and I have also just led a Silent Guided Retreat at St. Drostan's following straight on from our S.D.Course retreat. Four of the course participants stayed on and we were joined by 2 other men – so a retreat which had a majority of male participants and also a majority were clergy.

We encouraged participation in the National Quiet Day last year on St. Andrew's Day and organised one in January, one in March and one in May in various parts of the Diocese. The March one was held in a freezing cold church which led to a lot of discomfort but the May one made up for it with a day held in a beautiful house with wonderful garden on a lovely sunny day.

I continue to be thankful for the growth in communication between members, and now clergy, of the different churches and the friendships that continue to grow since our courses have brought people together.

I also continue to be grateful for the growing trust that those who have influence in the Church seem to have in the work of the Epiphany Group. An example of this was when someone approached me because when she had been for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, her priest had recommended that she find herself a Spiritual Director through the Epiphany Group.

There is still much Spiritual Direction and the giving of the Exercises going on in this part of Scotland and so good that we do now have an increased number of trained Directors.

I'm not sure where our Quiet Days will go this year since there is an interest in these from Bishop Bob Gillies and so the possibility of working together on some days. Already Sr. Moira is giving a reflective morning in one of our churches in mid November and Judith Irving a series of reflective Advent mornings which we have publicised amongst all those interested.

Carole Phelan (November, 2009)