



## ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

Year by year, it is good to reflect on what has given life to us as members of the Epiphany Group and to those we meet in the practice of our varied Ignatian ministries. Our Epiphany 'New Year' began in October 2016 with our Gathering at the Burn in beautiful Aberdeenshire. A representative group of members met for a time to review, reflect and commit to the ongoing work of the Spirit as we discerned it together in our 17th year. Under the expert facilitation of Cheryl Francisconi, we honed our sense of mission, adding to this, our founding statement:

**The Purpose of the Epiphany Group is 'to give mutual support and encouragement to practitioners working within the living tradition of Ignatian spirituality, in order that ministries arising from the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises may flourish in Scotland'** a new formulation of our vision, as we discerned it:

### Our Vision

**That 'through the work of the Epiphany Group, which is rooted in Ignatian spirituality, people are helped to discover their identity in Christ and to live it more fully in the faith community that nurtures them, and out in the world.**

**'At the core of Ignatian spirituality is contemplative practice, by which we mean a way of living and being present in our daily life that is prayerful, reflective and discerning; a way of being that draws us to live out our true self in freedom'.**

### What did we discern?

That Supervision is vital and key to a healthy, accountable ministry - thus our new guidance document, available on the website at [www.epiphanygroup.org.uk](http://www.epiphanygroup.org.uk); that training in Supervision could be offered 'in-house' - and was offered in 2017 to ten directors - by three members trained at Loyola Hall (Judith, Barbara and Claire); that EG training courses continue to be valued, are well constructed and subject to review; that potential trainers should be able to apply to be considered for the ministry, discerning whether called in collaboration with those already experienced and skilled; that, given the geography of Scotland, new ways of offering training can be, and are being designed and pioneered to meet different realities - from

Orkney, to Kirkcudbright to Inverness-shire; that as a group of 76 full members, working within clearly defined criteria, we are in good heart and deeply committed to sharing the gift of Ignatian spirituality.

### **As the year unfolded...**

**Courses:** In addition to the Contemplative Supervision Course, Growth in Prayer and Reflective Living courses were offered in Edinburgh and, for the first time, Dunfermline, Fife. Taster days were also offered in Kirkcudbright, enabling participants to gain a better understanding of some key foundational elements of Ignatian spirituality.

The Spiritual Conversation course (sometimes called 'Spiritual Accompaniment I) was also offered in Edinburgh and, via distance learning methods and social media, on Orkney. New trainers, their call discerned and appropriately supported, began to tutor on these courses and brought new possibilities and insights into what could be offered.

**The Training Forum and its Co-ordinator:** 2016/17 saw Judith Irving begin her second year as Training Forum Co-ordinator, meeting regularly with and supporting those involved in offering EG courses, the Spiritual Exercises, Quiet Days - which are becoming more widely available across Scotland - Retreats in Daily Life (RDLs) and Individually Guided Retreats (IGRs). As well as supporting others, Judith is also an experienced and effective director, supervisor and retreat guide.

### **The Ministry of Spiritual Direction**

In 2017, as a 'one-off' and anonymous exercise, EG directors were asked to indicate how many people they were meeting for spiritual direction. As an optional question, most members responded. It would seem that numbers vary considerably, often depending on where people practice their ministry. Directors in rural areas have noticeably fewer directees than those living in towns and cities. In terms of website enquiries, there has been an increase in those seeking direction outwith the central belt, which is heartening. It has also been encouraging to note a rise in the number of clergy seeking accompaniment across the faith traditions.

It continues to be the case that people are more likely to follow through with their desire for direction when it has been possible for them to talk to someone face to face or by phone. The personal approach still matters and continues to be a blessing!

### **Ongoing Training Opportunities: 2017/18**

**Growth in Prayer and Reflective Living at Sacred Heart Church, Lauriston, Edinburgh:** as the new training year is about to begin, the

tutoring team of Sharon Laidlaw, Di Hollow and Duncan Hughes prepare to welcome a new group of participants. **And at The Coach House, Kilmuir, Inverness-shire:** recognising that evening or day courses are difficult to attend for those living in isolated or rural communities, the training team of Sharon and Rachel - with Judith in support - will offer this course in the residential setting of the recently extended Coach House. Weekends will begin in November and conclude in May 2018. There is evident delight that all places have been filled!

**Spiritual Direction Course, Orkney:** Having successfully pioneered the Spiritual Conversation course on Orkney last year, Judith Irving and Rachel Inglis - with assistance from other EG directors as and when required - will offer the same participants training in Spiritual Direction beginning in November 2017. The Retreat in Daily Life on Orkney in Lent 2016, which helped spark this desire for training, remains key to this development.

### **Quiet Days and other Events Offered by EG Members Around Scotland**

As far as quiet days, short themed retreats and RDLs were concerned, 2016/17 was a year rich in opportunities to experience key dimensions of Ignatian spirituality. Encompassing South East Scotland, Edinburgh, Aberdeenshire, Kirkcudbright, Inverness-shire, Renfrew, Ayrshire and the Lothians / Borders, Epiphany Group members shared their ministries with great creativity and commitment.

### **Day of Ongoing Formation: Nurturing Vision - Working with Clergy**

One such member, Rev Jenny Williams, facilitated our Annual Ongoing Formation Day on the theme of working with clergy. Throughout the day, we addressed the barriers that often prevent clergy from seeking out direction or committing to regular meetings; allied to this, we explored what constitutes an effective contract. Participants also looked at their own experience of working with clergy and possible preconceptions that get in the way. All agreed that the day had been both challenging and helpful.

### **Annual Day of Reflection**

This year's Day of Reflection, held on 19 July at the Ignatian Spirituality Centre in Glasgow in honour of St Ignatius, was entitled **Sanctuary - an invitation to a day of prayer & reflection**. Quoting Jan L. Richardson, 'Where the hunger of the world beyond you meets the hunger of the world within you' Sharon and Judith invited us into a day of quiet contemplation, anchored in scripture and focussed on the needs of our very troubled world. At the close of the day, participants gathered to create a 'Pantoum', a way in which a group or community can reflectively create together a poem, something that members found spontaneous, inspiring and very moving.

### **Links with Ignatian Spirituality Centre, Glasgow**

Our biannual joint EG / ISC continue to be helpful occasions for collaboration and programme planning. The meeting on St Andrew's Day 2016 was hosted, in style, by the team at the ISC. The two groups shared ideas and hopes as well as a lovely celebratory meal. EG members attend and gain from opportunities at the ISC for ongoing formation and are looking at collaborating for EG conference in 2018 which will be held at St Mary's, Kinnoull, Perth on 5 - 7 October. Look out for more information in Spring!

### **Coach House, Kilmuir, N. Kessock**

Many EG members have been on retreat over the past year to the beautifully refurbished and extended Coach House. Individually guided Ignatian retreats are offered regularly as well as themed weekend retreats. If you feel drawn to the peaceful Moray Firth, to a silent retreat - with or without direction - to a warm and sensitive welcome with good home-cooked food, then do have a look at the Coach House website for more information.

### **The Orchard, Kilgraston - a Fond Farewell and a big Thank You**

Many members of the Epiphany Group first encountered Ignatian spirituality and the blessing of spiritual accompaniment thanks to meeting Society of the Sacred Heart sisters at Nile Grove and later at the Orchard, Kilgraston, Perthshire. And so it was with a mixture of sadness and gratitude that a representative group of EG members joined Sisters Barbara, Carmel and friends in June to formally acknowledge the closure of the Orchard and Garden Cottage Spirituality Centre. Thanksgiving and a touching graciousness marked the occasion. The Orchard had been an important venue for EG days of Reflection and many members down the years attended and were nourished by the inspiring day events offered by the RSCJ community members and associates. EG members were also involved in tutoring on the courses and programmes offered and benefitted hugely from these opportunities and the support provided. To Sr Barbara, moving to pastures new, and to Sr Carmel enjoying some sabbatical time, every blessing for the coming year.

### **Bursary Support, Donations and Grants**

To our members who have donated - and continue to donate - to our EG Bursary Fund, a very big thank you from the course participants who will receive support over 2017/18. And here we must also acknowledge the generous bursaries that some in training have received from the Society of Retreat Conductors over recent years.

As always, we gratefully acknowledge the financial, practical and spiritual support of the Society of Jesus. The annual grant we receive from the Province is invaluable. To Fr Dermot, who has recently stepped down as Provincial, to Fr Simon, to the Society's Trustees and to Fr Gero, Promotor of Ignatian

Spirituality, our heartfelt thanks. To Fr Damian Howard, who has recently taken up the role of Provincial, many blessings!

## **Epiphany Group Annual Conference 2017**

Beginning this report with mention of the Members' Gathering at the Burn in 2016 leads, finally, to a brief flavour of the very successful and stimulating conference 2017 just ended. Acknowledging the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, the conference was described as **'Soundings and Signposts: what did the Reformation ever do for us?'**.

Our three presenters offered four very different and equally pertinent presentations. EG member Elspeth Strachan introduced us to the historical context of the Reformation, then further engaged our interest by continuing via her own faith journey through the Christian traditions continuing on Saturday by addressing the question 'Ignatius and Luther - friends or foes?'. Following on, Tim Duffy offered a masterful presentation on 'Self and Sensibility: Spiritual Legacies of the Reformation'. This panoramic view of the spiritual, cultural, philosophical and psychological developments post Reformation left participants spellbound. The final presentation, by Gero McLoughlin SJ on Sunday, brought us up to date as participants were invited to look at the ways in which organisations and institutions develop through the prism of the Epiphany Group, its origins and developments. A fascinating and memorable concluding presentation, enjoyed by all.

As is always the case, times of prayer and worship were offered by EG members. Drawing on personal experience, skills and inspiration, Libby, Winifred, Duncan, Margaret and Jock provided a reflective shape to our weekend together. And, last but not least, a big thank you to Sharon, who offered a crafting session and to Helen, who invited people to an introduction to Body Prayer during the 'free time' on Saturday.

Finally, on behalf of the hard working Core Group (Cathy, Maureen, Duncan, Judith, Sharon, Gero SJ and Ann - and not forgetting Neil who stood down this year) all good wishes to members and friends for the coming twelve months,

Barbara Buda  
Epiphany Group Co-ordinator  
October 2017