

## CSF Birmingham

St Francis House at 113 Gillott Road, Birmingham, is in its second incarnation as a First Order house. The brothers lived there for a number of years, using the house as a hostel for young men who had been in trouble with the law in some way or another. Arnold and Benjamin continue to be remembered by those who lived in the neighbourhood at that time. However, that work had stopped and the brothers were seeking a place where they could be involved with people on a council estate at the same time that the Community of St Francis was looking for accommodation suitable for their older sisters and Angela Helen who is wheelchair mobile. With the front steps replaced by a ramp, a through-floor lift from the ground floor, a chairlift for the upper stairs and some bathroom alterations, the necessary changes were made and the sisters moved in, in 1997.

The current group of sisters in residence is Angela Helen, Hilary, Judith Ann, Maureen and Moyra. The older sisters who lived there have now all died, so the work of the house has changed since the sisters first moved in. There is still the need for someone to be about the place when Angela Helen is in, in case she should need assistance, but there is also the opportunity for outside employment or voluntary work. However, it is also the house where a significant amount of the communications work for C/SSF is done.

Angela Helen is getting to know some Birmingham hospitals too well, having had two hospital stays in the last year. However, she is still able to carry out her own personal care. The multiple sclerosis deterioration has meant that everything takes longer than normal and she needs extra rest time. She gets the bus into the city on her day off each week and goes to the Cathedral for worship on Sundays. Several people come to her for spiritual direction and she is involved with Birmingham Older Adults, a group that promotes Social Services information for people in this category, as well as maintaining some Multiple Sclerosis Society connections.

Hilary attends the local Residents' Association and Friends of Edgbaston Reservoir meetings on behalf of the house - both groups being concerned for the local environment and quality of life in an area which is beginning major refurbishment and which will shortly be faced with a large increase in housing. Her other main activities are continuing to deal with all Gift Aid donations for the First Order in the Province and as subscriptions secretary for franciscan - together these take up a surprising amount of time. Last, but by no means least is the ministry which arises from her priesthood: she helps out at a parish church within the Deanery, responds to the occasional request to preside or preach elsewhere, and attends Deanery Chapter and Synod meetings. Twice a year she has a fortnight's chaplaincy for the Clares at Freeland.

Judith Ann does the lion's share of the housework, as she enjoys cleaning. She also keeps in contact with the neighbours, who somehow seem to be out at the front when Judith is, and she has had some profound conversations with builders and other workmen in the area, when going for the newspaper.

Card making provides a creative outlet. She is involved with two local parishes where she worships on Sundays.

Maureen works as a staff nurse at City Hospital for 2 shifts a week, on a ward for rehabilitation of the elderly. A multiplicity of other activities fits around this commitment, including mentoring an Education for Ministry group (an adult Christian lay education course), being a student in the Franciscan International Study Centre distance learning course on Franciscan spirituality, visiting an asylum-seeking family whom she has befriended through the Birmingham Churches Together project, Restore, and ringing the bells at the church where she worships on Sundays. Not a week goes by but that something needs to be done for franciscan, the two weeks prior to the deadline for having the proof reading copy ready for the editorial team being the busiest times. In addition she has intermittent tasks as General and Provincial Secretary for CSF, and the privilege as well as the work involved with these tasks.

Moyra also works in the wider community, at a Christian bookshop in the city. Her musical talents are appreciated at yet another local church, where she worships on Sundays. She has had some involvement with a youth project in the diocese. As webster for the First Order SSF European Province, she also spends a considerable amount of time at the computer.

Two other sisters who appear on the intercessions list under the Birmingham house are Gwenfryd Mary and Patricia Clare, who are hermits in Milford Haven and Llanddewi Brefi, respectively. *f*