

## House Up-date: Birmingham



According to the C/SSF intercession list, there are nine sisters under the auspices of St Francis House, Birmingham. Of these, six are resident at 113 Gillott Road and Angela Helen lives in a care home just over a mile away but is very much part of the extended household. Gwenfryd Mary and Patricia Clare are hermits, living at Milford Haven and Llanddewi Brefi (near Tregaron) respectively, and are included in the house intercessions every evening.

The brothers lived in the house before us, and CSF took it over in 1997 and adapted the house to accommodate our elderly and less able sisters. Although the elderly sisters in that first group here have now all moved to the heavenly mansions, the size of the house, its accessibility features and the variety of opportunities for ministry and education continue to make it a useful house for CSF to be in. Since the brothers moved from Northfield after Easter 2008, we are currently the only C/SSF house in Birmingham; we appreciate the contacts we have with members of the Third Order, both on an individual level and as a group.

### *Polly writes:*

I have been a novice for almost 3 years now and joined the Birmingham household 16 months ago. Most of my time up to now has been spent around the house attending offices, cleaning, cooking, and gardening. I also enjoy visits to Angela Helen and playing *Scrabble* with Teresa.



In May 2009 I began voluntary work for Age Concern. I help out at a lunch club. There are up to 20 members each week, mostly in their 80's and 90's. I am quickly learning the language of bingo!

I attend Christ Church, Summerfield and am a member of a home group.

### *Jenny Tee writes:*

Life in Birmingham is busy and varied, centred together at home, and with other local involvement too. Two days a week, I support individual students taking degrees in Youth Work and Counselling, by sitting alongside them and taking notes. Commuting to the college has been transformed recently by a new cycle track along an old railway line; not only is it quicker, but it's beautiful and a welcome oasis in the day. I particularly value the evenings I spend in Birmingham Prison, meeting with a small group for bible study, conversation and a quiet communion service.

### *Angela Helen*

Although Angela is resident in a care home, she is probably more a member of the Gillott Road house than she is aware, as consideration is given to including her in house activities as much as we can, and in visiting her usually

2 or 3 times a week. She is wheelchair mobile and Birmingham's buses are mostly wheelchair accessible, so she is able to get out and about as long as someone is with her, attending the Cathedral on Sundays being the main opportunity for this. However, she also chairs an information and lobby group which champions the needs of older people, it meets under the auspices of Birmingham Social Services, and takes an active interest in developments in the field of Multiple Sclerosis research and treatment.



### *Teresa*

Teresa moved here 3 years ago, after an active time in Newcastle-under-Lyme, and it has taken some time for her to make new connections. However, she is a valued member of the St Germain's congregation and older people's group, "Arise", and enjoys going with the group who take a short service at a local care home once a month. She also enjoys the Friday lunchtime concerts at the Cathedral, and now has a companion from Crossroads to accompany her.

### *Nan*

Nan helps with things about the house and has a long-running *Scrabble* challenge going with Teresa. Sometimes they walk to the reservoir across the road where they might sit for a bit and usually a few dogs come to say Hello.

### *Judith Ann writes:*

I've been in Birmingham 7 or 8 years now. My main ministry is in the house and doing the day to day things we all do. I attend St Mary's Church, Bearwood, here I preach and serve at the Eucharist now and again. Much to my surprise I've found myself doing things with the young people including talking to the Girls' Friendly Society group and being around for others. But my main ministry is prayer and more and more stillness is important to me and so are my times of solitude. These are the things that feed me spiritually, as does my craft work, making cards, and writing poetry.

### *Maureen writes:*

The main things that shape my week are the two days I work as a staff nurse at City Hospital, on a ward concerned with the acute care of older adults, and the Education for Ministry group, a lay Christian adult education programme, which I mentor on Monday evenings. The things that shape my year are more specifically connected with CSF: Provincial Chapter meetings and the Ministers' Meetings/First Order Chapters, both sets of meeting for which I have secretarial responsibilities, and I am production editor for franciscan. In addition, I spend time as able with my refugee friend Aferdita, whose story featured in the last issue of franciscan, ring the bells and assist with Sunday worship at the Old Church, Smethwick, and share in the running of the household - sometimes fitting it all together becomes a bit of a juggling act.

Undergirding the 'what we do' is, of course, the regular worship in chapel, as we say the Daily Office and have local priests coming in two days a week to preside at the Eucharist. We are a very locally grounded group, with many local connections. The house itself is in a community regeneration area that has seen the provision of a solar panel on the roof to heat the water and inclusion in a pilot scheme to monitor (and hopefully help us to reduce) electricity use. We all value the contacts we have in the places where we worship on Sundays which provide very tangible links with the world-wide body of Christ, as well as friendships and new opportunities for ministry. *f*