



Dear Friends,

If I had any sense I would leave this until next year, well I may end up doing so. Because early next year we are closing the convent and moving up to Michaelgarth, our guest house, for four months or so.



This year has seemed to be in chunks.

Katharine was off mostly sick for three months, that was a clunky chunk! I learned to manage, doubtless good for me!

We have had numerous delightful people living with us, Oblates and Associates who want to stay longer than the normal visit, and Alongsiders, a host of fascinating and lovely young women from all over the world who wanted for all sorts of reasons to live the life we lead. Lovely to glance round chapel at so many young faces. And they can sing! I am supposed to take them for singing once a week, but not actually to sing, so much as to find out what they were meant to be singing that week! But such a joy. They could now answer the question 'but what do you do all day!!

I went to Wantage to give a retreat to their Oblates, of which I was one for many years. That's where my monastic journey began. That was lovely, and included oodles of time for prayer. I hope to have some more of that when we move up to Michaelgarth. In the write up in the CSMV magazine they said I was 'gentle and sensitive' ... words I shall treasure having been given hedgehog cards all my life! This picture is almost the same as one taken here last year, but the oblates are different, and beaming beside me is my friend Joan, from Lincoln!



I had a lovely few days and came back rested, and also keen to resume the prayer whenever possible. It might be in the Spring. Michaelgarth was built for the first chaplain and his wife and left to the community, and we use it for self-catering groups. It is a lovely house with a beautiful view. It will also be the middle of winter. We will have some access to our chapel, a couple of minutes down across the field. But there is no loo there and the nearest will be the other side of the convent where we hope to use the Old Print House for computers etc.

So reality remains to be seen. I HOPE to use some hours in the morning for prayer, go down to the computers and work in the afternoons, take a bit of time to learn on line Welsh – not that I hear it except for blessings and the like at the beginning and end of the Eucharist and I would know what that meant in any language! Worship (logistically) is uncertain, between chapel and Michaelgarth, we hope to get down three times a day and have the two little offices up at the house. We will be living VERY closely together ALL the time.

Meanwhile the builders who have already been working in the grounds putting in cables and pipes for some time, will be in the Convent and we will be Out! The last major bit. The Lodge has been done (insulation etc, solar, and Air source pump,) Michaelgarth also and now it is the convent which is a major undertaking. The chapel is already done. But we preach climate action and are bound to 'walk the talk'.

Very sadly Catrin and Pete split up early this year, the girls spend their time pretty evenly split between Mum and Dad and the dance school!



Mair visited, she visited me in the middle of a carefully planned trip that took in relatives and friends in Bournemouth and Portsmouth, then a German folk dance weekend in Devon, then me, calling in at Gloucester on the way, after which London and Pip's daughter and family,. Then I got a stunning picture – from Switzerland where her cousin lives in French speaking Switzerland, real tourist picture, and finally on to Basel for a ball (Scottish dancing). She works on line so has no ties, but a lovely house in the hills, and a garden. Thinking correctly I would be interested but know nothing about maths, Mair showed me a little video she made for her mathematics project, and before you think, 'Golly,' it had Scottish Dancing on it (examples of braids!). I was interested!





Rather to my delight we can't yet afford to carpet the sanctuary, so we continue to get wonderful displays for feasts, Holy Cross, harvest and from Advent to Candlemas, changing as the seasons go by.



As I write this we have an Associates' Retreat in and are feeding 20 people. The number of visitors that come here has more than doubled this year, a lot of new people for short stays but our Bishop Visitor tells me that even two days in a monastic setting has an impact. I plod on! Funnily enough what keeps me going, more or less, is early morning silence in chapel – never would I have thought I would be saying that!

As Guest Sister I do bookings not only for the Convent and Michaelgarth but for the Old Print House (day use only) and for the Eucharist, as the way we are celebrating the Eucharist now, sitting in a semi-circle round the altar, means preparing chapel every day, chairs and wafers! But we like it, and if it is a big group like now, over 20, the silence gets deeper and deeper.

Well this is supposed to be for Christmas only I never thought I would get it done, so I will send love, prayers and blessings for Christmas, and oh hopes that next year in the world might show signs of healing. Little pockets – Sue Parfitt, quite well known to some, is one of our Associates and one of those little pockets, there are others, in the Ukraine, the Middle East, people doing their utmost to bring love where love is not.

Lizzie/Elizabeth Advent 24



(Alternative use for a veil? Peekaboo)