

Sister Eveleen Retreat House

www.sistereretreat.com

The Sister Eveleen Retreat House (SERH) operates under the mandate of its Diocesan Statute (2009) which states that 'the aims and objectives of the SERH Board of Oversight and its staff will be to encourage and promote the widest possible use of the SERH in meeting the spiritual needs of people in the Diocese of Christchurch.' This retreat house is ecumenically run and open to anyone who is seeking a quiet space to connect with God, or simply to be. Sister Eveleen Barklie requested that it be a place of spiritual help and prayer and this continues to undergird all the work we do.

Antje Duda has now served as director of the house for 18 months. The Board are so pleased with the way her gifts and skills are continuing to enhance the prayerful ministry at SERH. Sue Sinclair finished in her role as Retreat House Host (RHH) in August 2024, but continued to help out at the house until the appointment of a new RHH. We were thrilled to welcome Hannah Frauenstein in the role and she brings a youthful vibrancy to the house, great cooking skills and a heart of service and gentle caring for guests and retreatants alike. Both these roles are paid positions.

During this year Dugald Wilson has organised working bees to improve the safety of the house and Annex, upgrading the bathrooms, replacing weatherboards and undertaking exterior painting. We welcomed a group of boys from Christ's College for a day in November and the gardening and table refurbishment which they did are still being much appreciated. We hope this will become an annual event.

We have seen an increase in the number of volunteers coming as a result of SERH being a member of Volunteering Canterbury. This is another way in which the existence of Sister Ev is being shared. Grateful thanks to those who oversee the work done particularly in the gardens.

'Friends of SERH' was launched in April last year and we now have 28 members who pay an annual sub. They are offered a discount on a retreat and a free night's accommodation as well as regular coffee mornings and newsletters. Most importantly they pray for the ministry and for that we are very grateful.

Regular retreats continue to be the focus for the Board and Antje. The full list of these may be found on the website. We are incredibly grateful for the retreat leaders who offer a wide variety of opportunities for contemplative connections with our wonderful God. We have offered 4 opportunities for clergy retreats this year (totalling 24 spaces), hoping that clergy from this Diocese would take these up enthusiastically. Disappointingly that has not been the case, but we will continue to keep these before you all – the time spent quietly, prayerfully and restfully away from parish demands is not time wasted.

Like many ministry units, our budget demands exceed our income. Fixed costs over which we have no control make it impossible for us to be a self-sustaining ministry. We

have applied for grants and are grateful to have received money from the Roy Owen Dixey Trust for salaries, and from the St Luke's fund for enhanced advertising and special retreat events, and will continue to seek funding for day to day expenses.

With the recent resignation of Rev Chris Orczy, numbers on the Board of Oversight are low. We hope to boost numbers this year, so that the work can be shared around, and the principal aim of supporting Antje, Hannah and the ministry at the house not be lost in busyness.

Finally, I remind everyone that the Sister Eveleen Retreat House belongs to the Diocese! It is not a privately run ministry, acting alone, but is yours – here for you, offering a space for you to connect with God in the ways you need to.

Use it, support it and above all else pray for the ministry exercised by it.

Sarah Gardiner
(Board chair)