

Bethany Community:

The Bethany community in East Preston started back when in 1986 Sr Mairead became good friends with Janet Turner who suffered from MS. Janet had expressed a desire to be religious, she was already a Carmelite Secular, but longed to be able to share the prayer of the Divine Office with others in the community.

Sr Mairead felt called to help her achieve this and shared her vision with her congregation – i.e. the setting up of a community especially for people who for one reason or other were not acceptable in the established religious communities. After all, God calls at any age and invites people to follow Him more closely no matter what their health conditions are.

However, Sr Mairead was sent to Ireland to a new foundation and Janet went into a nursing home. When the staff at Janet's nursing home decided that it was not the right place for her and suggested she find somewhere else, Sr Mairead felt it confirmed what she had wanted to do. She requested and received 'leave of absence' from her congregation in November 1992, when Janet and Iris her Mother moved with her to East Preston and the Bethany Community was born.

Bishop Cormac Murphy O'Connor was Bishop at the time and was supportive of the community and after a couple of years gave permission to have the Blessed Sacrament in the little Oratory. In 1996 Ann Boyle joined, who at the age of 76 felt called to community life. Sr Christina from South Korea also stayed for 6- 9 months while studying English. Sr Margaret, Janet's best friend from Oxford days and Sr Bridget, who was recovering from a breakdown also joined the community.

So Bethany, as well as being a house of prayer, became one of hospitality. Anyone who knocked on the door for whatever reason was welcomed and given shelter and food or spiritual nourishment.

The Bethany Community has three community rules – The first rule is to love God. This is done by a prayer life centred on the Eucharist and on the Divine Office recited daily; Rosary and Adoration is part of the daily routine. The second rule is to love and care for one another with special attention and care going to the one who suffers the most. The third rule is never turn anyone away from the door but see them and treat them as our Sisters and Brothers. 'Whatever you do to the least of my Brothers and Sisters, you do to me'. (Matthew 25). This passage of scripture also inspired the community to become pen friends with people on Death Row in Texas by joining the Human Writes Organisation.

Bethany continues to be a place of prayer and daily adoration, an ecumenical faith sharing group on alternative Fridays and a mental health support group called WED (We Embrace Depression) on the Fridays in between.

Contact Details Email mairead@bethanycommunity.org.uk

Phone 01903 773019

Address

63 Roundstone Crescent

East Preston

West Sussex

BN16 1DQ