

The Journal



of the Ascent Movement
(Life Ascending International)



LIFE ASCENDING

**Christian movement for those in their middle and later
years**

2015

www.ascentmovement.org.uk

The front page picture shows the new logo and title for the Ascent Movement

It is 35 years since our first Ascent group met in England. In May 1980, I asked my parish priest whether he would support me if I were to start a group in our parish. He said "La Vie Montante? Oh, just another French idea and with an even funnier title." I wasn't feeling very confident anyway and this was a total 'put down'.

At that time all information about the movement was in French. As I had only learned German at school I was desperate to have something in English and was delighted when I came by a copy of the handbook, put together by Fr Harry Pownall. Fr Harry was a parish priest in Liverpool, who had heard about La Vie Montante and was really keen to see the movement established here in England. He was on his own in this pursuit and therefore he alone had to decide how best to introduce this French idea to the English. In the preface to the handbook he wrote:

"What we have so far is an English name - which is only temporary, The Ascent and a very few elderly men and women experimenting".

A group in Dun Laoghaire, Ireland had started to meet and the group leader Edward O'Reilly wrote to me saying how thrilled he was that we were setting up groups in England. He felt he should let me know that his only reservation was that we were leaving out the word Life from the name.

Bishop Howard Tripp, Auxiliary Bishop in the Southwark Archdiocese at that time, became interested in the movement after visiting our parish and asking what we were doing for the older members of the parish.

Soon afterwards he asked to meet our group and said "Don't worry about the title, as it is more important the idea achieves its objectives. Anyway, The Ascent has a more English ring to it."

Time moved on and, in 1989, I was in communication with Cardinal Hume, then Archbishop of Westminster, who wrote and suggested we call the movement "something like 'Autumn Days', 'A late Spring' or 'Years of Calm'." No, these titles did not have any merit.

As the movement spread internationally, it was interesting to note that the preferred title chosen by the English-speaking countries was Life Ascending International.

In 2007, our groups responded to an enquiry about -a name change and the result was to retain The Ascent.

We are now in 2015 and part of the inescapable, digital world. If our vision is to reach more and more people we have to be part of this present age in the way we communicate and present ourselves. At the moment The Ascent numbers are falling and no new groups are forming. The National Planning Team has decided that a complete image change is necessary to give the movement a fresh impetus. There is always fear in change and casting aside the things we know and love. My husband Mike designed the original logo/symbol and will be sad to see it go, but he sees and agrees with the reason for change and senses that our son-in-law Andy was inspired to come up with this new logo. In the future, potential new members are likely to be computer-literate. For those looking to join a group of like-minded Catholics/Christians, both titles, Ascent and Life Ascending have shortcomings when searching online. However, changing the name to Life Ascending means we are no longer different and we are fully part of a recognized, international movement which is in every continent. Changing our title and logo is a great opportunity to announce afresh the movement to the hierarchy and laity in our country and Life Ascending International.



Let us thank Almighty God for inspiring Andre d'Humieres to start La Vie Montante. We pray for the continued growth of our movement and for God's blessing on each and every precious member, throughout the world.

Paula Conrad

A letter from the president



Dear Friends

I expect many of you have been on holiday this summer and I hope you had the opportunity to relax, even if you stayed at home.

I have recently been to Lourdes at the same time as the Hexham and Newcastle Diocesan pilgrimage and we were blessed with beautiful weather. You were all remembered in our prayers.

During June, some of you will have been on retreat at Aylesford Priory and I am sure you will have felt the benefit of being in such a peaceful place. In October, other members will be going to the retreat at The Briery in Ilkley. Spending a few days in this house of prayer will enrich us.

As you know, our Movement will be known as Life Ascending in future and you will be able to read more about this in The Journal. I hope you like the new leaflets that have been produced and we are hoping that, along with the website, they will be tools for attracting new members. We will, of course, continue to invite new friends and parishioners personally to join us.

There are many tragedies happening in our world today and we should all have compassion for those in great need. Please continue to pray for our brothers and sisters. Our aims are Spirituality, Friendship and Mission and we should endeavour to bear these in mind in our lives as members of the Church.

Many of you know Sister Kathleen Standish, who has done much for us in the past. She visited various Groups in earlier years, helping with training and giving guidance to many members. Sister Kathleen has now resigned from the National Planning Team, as it is difficult for her to travel far. Please keep her in your prayers.

We pray for our members who have died, for all who are grieving, for those who are sick and those who are caring for loved ones.

Pope Francis has recently announced that a 'World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation' is to be celebrated on September 1st. We should always give thanks to God for the world He created and be good custodians of creation.

God bless you all

Love

Margaret

Life before Life Ascending

It is always fascinating to discover what a person has done in their life. During the course of our meetings, particularly when we are reflecting on our lives, something will spark a train of thought in someone's memory.

It is just amazing to see the variety of jobs that have been held down or things that have occupied many years of our members' lives.

In our conversations, amazing stories will come to light.

I regularly pick up Sheila to take her to our Ascent meeting, as she got into the car one day, she had a few words with an elderly man passing by. I asked her if he was a neighbour. She replied that he lived close by and she had known him for years.

Sheila explained how she had met him at the British Library in London. I wondered what she was doing there and she said she spent her last working years, working at The British Library and the man had regularly come in to do research. In her time there, Sheila had about 35 people working under her.

I knew Sheila had been a priest's housekeeper, had trained a troupe of young people in Irish dancing (they went on to win many competitions), had been (and still is) an incredible needlewoman, but her stories keep coming.

We did in fact have a member who had been to the Royal School of Needlework. With encouragement, Daisy brought her incredible samplers to the meeting one day. She was often downhearted so I suggested that she might like to embroider some new altar linen for our priest. She was really delighted when I told her that Father would be using her embroidered purificator and corporal for the First Holy Communion Mass. Another aspect of Daisy's life was the fact that she had been a Tiller girl. She ended her days in Brinsworth House, a retirement home for those in the entertainment business and funded by The Royal Variety Performance.

Cynthia is a lively member who enjoys retelling stories of her days with Air India in Bond Street. Even now Cynthia will travel to India to catch up and spend time with her much-loved colleagues. Yet Sabina, a fellow Goan, spent many years working for a funeral director. How different is that?

These are just a few little stories and tiny cameos of people's lives. Perhaps your members have some exciting tales to tell of their working life. We would love to hear about them



Paula Conrad

A search of the archives produced the following article.

When the Ascent Movement was getting off the ground here ten years ago, Miss Elsa Woodward agreed to be Secretary. She kept a perfect record of every person, every meeting and every letter received and written. It gave her enormous pleasure to think that she played such an important part in getting the movement going in England. At the end of her life, as her emphysema became more disabling, she found it necessary to move into sheltered housing. She never complained and in fact was great fun to be with.

On Elsa's good days, she would take a walk to the local green and sit on a favourite seat. One day in the spring of 1989, she was surprised to find the seat occupied by a young West Indian woman weeping bitterly. Beside her was a tiny baby. Elsa discovered that baby Per-Morton was far from well and needed major surgery. Elsa asked Claudette if she had a faith. Claudette said she had tried various churches but had not found peace. She had asked God to direct her - only the day before meeting Elsa. 'Would it console you to have your little son baptized?' Elsa asked. 'I suppose it would.' replied Claudette, 'but how would I go about it?' 'The only church I know is the Catholic Church of St. Chad's.' said Elsa. This was enough to set Claudette thinking. She wasted no time and, in October 1989 little Per-Morton was christened during the Sunday morning Mass.

That Christmas I popped in to see Elsa. Her spirits were high. She had decorated her little flat with festoons of cards. She wanted me to read them all. 'To our lovely Elsa, love Claudette and Peter Martin' read one. 'Who are they?' I asked. 'There is a story behind that card.' Elsa replied. 'You know how I have longed to be the means of someone coming into the Church, ever since a Franciscan priest said "When God meets you at the gates of heaven He is not going to ask you how many novenas you have said. No, He is going to ask you whom have you brought with you?" I felt this happiness was never going to be mine - until one day this spring'.

Dear Elsa was taken to Heaven on 23rd December, the day after my visit. Despite her great suffering Our Lord still had work for her to do. Claudette was received into the Church during the Easter Vigil the following year.

This article was sent in by Paula and it describes her encounter with Elsa over a protracted period. It may have appeared in an earlier Journal about 25 years ago, but I believe it is worth repeating as it gives a fine example of the mysterious working of God.

Aylesford Retreat 15 – 18 June 2015

We arrived at Aylesford at 1 o'clock and joined the rest of the Ascent Groups from different parishes for the first of all the mouth-watering meals we received during the week. Everybody appeared to be elated happy and friendly. No wonder we all had come to this spiritual, peaceful place. The weather was lovely, warm with a gentle breeze. The whole place was beautiful – the lake, the beautiful flowers, the comfortable rooms in cottages steeped in history. We attended Mass each day either in the Cloister Chapel or the Choir Chapel. We had uplifting words from Fr. Francis Kemsley – “In my Father’s House there are many rooms. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” As senior members of the Church it seemed appropriate that we come to this spiritual place to let us know what blessings lie in store for us. Thank you Keith, Angela, Paula and Molly for Quiz Night. God bless you all. Amen.

Josephine Petrou (Stroud Green Ascent Group)

An Obituary for Irene Rytter(13 Nov. 1926 – 3 April 2015)

Irene Rytter was French, a valued and loyal member of Stroud Green Ascent Group for many years. She was a woman of deep faith who had a complete trust in God. Her most favoured prayers were those of praise and thanksgiving, which she regularly shared at meetings. This was reflected in her funeral brochure where her handwritten prayer of thanks was printed. Irene was preparing to emigrate to Australia where she hoped to enjoy the company of her daughter and family but she was taken ill a few days before her departure. She died on Good Friday, 3rd April, and her funeral took place on 14th April. She will be sorely missed. May she rest in peace. Amen. Her daughter and her husband have since returned to Australia and sent us the following note.



“Dear Ascent Group. It was lovely meeting you all at mum’s funeral. Many treasured moments I will never forget. You are such a special group – wonderful to see such beautiful people! Thank you for all your kind wishes, the Masses for mum, the cards and flowers. All the best to you. Love, Janine and John” May God bless Janine, John and family.

from Stroud Green Ascent Group

Redhill Ascent Group

report that Christine Ghislaine Hughes died on 21st July 2015 aged 94. She was one of the first members of the Group and was Treasurer for several years.

During the second World War she was in the Auxillary Fire Service. She trained as a nurse. In 1953, she went with the WVS to Malaysia to help during the uprising. She nursed her father and, then her mother, through years of ill health. She was very artistic, a good needlewoman (she made the parish banner) and organised parish musical events. She was the Parish Coordinator and was very involved with Life and with Justice & Peace.

May she rest in peace

Sad news from Blackpool

Holy Family Ascent Group, Blackpool, has lost a very faithful couple, Janet and Bob Clewlow, who joined the group in 1996. Janet, musician and parish choir mistress, died last year. Bob, a very sensitive and gentlemanly GP, whose hobby was carpentry, died on June 25th. His funeral was on July 24th. Both are sadly missed. Bob's gift of carpentry is evident in our garden. He made a beautiful wooden cover for the statue of Our Lady. He not only made the cover but made a solid foundation of concrete for the statue to stand on. Knowing that Sister Kathleen and I were teaching healing he offered to make a fold-up bed for us. This resulted in the following written by his daughter.

Sister Kath and Sister Margaret, a nunly duo strong, have expressed in healing hands so elegant and long. To heal the sick their mission true for everything from piles to flu, Or throbbing head to wake the dead. 'But wait' cried Sister Margaret 'A plinth we need, and strong.

'No fear or worry need be ours,' her nunsome friend replied. 'For we could have one built for us - a prototype!' she cried. 'We'll have it strong but very light, so we don't slip our discs - all right?' 'But who to ask?' her erstwhile friend so very wisely sighed. 'No, wait!' cried Sister Kathleen, 'we have within our midst a carpenter who's registered on Jesus' colleagues list! (He keeps a record, as he should, of all those blokes who work with wood). A medic, too! for Hippocrates insists!

So off to Badgers' Wood they strode, so keenly was their bent, and speedily relayed to him the news of their intent. 'It must be wood, say elm or ash, - and folding - in a car to stash. What say you, doc? Is this ad hoc?' 'Oh no', he said, 'I'll do it; it will count towards next Lent.'

And very soon the plinth was standing proudly in the shed. They gathered in a group to see the doctor test the bed. No sooner was he climbing on, then snap! It all went badly wrong. 'Descent' rang true as down it flew. 'Dear Lord!' said Sister Margaret, 'We cannot raise the dead!!!'

The nuns collapsed and Janet laughed - nay, everybody roared. To see the doctor lying on those sorry broken boards. With tears in their eyes they helped him rise but chortled, grinned and split their sides but for your bruises, Doctor, there's the best of heaven's rewards!

And so the doctor will relate to all you happy listeners. Of how he was picked up one day by two devout-ish sisters: A path to glory, with their bed. A path uphill to heal the ill of flu or chill or blisters.

And so this story shall be told, a hugely funny joke, of plinths collapsing under Doc, a kind obliging bloke. But if to you I must speak true- the Doctor is no whippet! He should have made the blessed thing out of a piece of oak!

Penned with mild irreverence by Frances Mary Clewlow-Whittle

Our thanks go to Sister Margaret for sending this lovely story

Ed

It was a dark and stormy night

Bob Hill and his new wife Betty were vacationing in Europe, as it happens, near Transylvania. They were driving in a rental car along a rather deserted highway. It was late and raining very hard. Bob could barely see the road in front of the car. Suddenly, it skidded out of control! Bob attempted to control the car but to no avail! The car swerved and smashed into a tree.

Moments later, Bob shook his head to clear the fog. Dazed, he looked over at the passenger seat and saw his wife unconscious, with her head bleeding! Despite the rain and the unfamiliar countryside, Bob knew he had to get her medical assistance. He carefully picked his wife up and began trudging down the road. After a short while, he saw a light. He headed towards it and saw that it was coming from a large old house. He approached the door and knocked.

A minute passed and a small hunched man opened the door. Bob immediately blurted: 'Hello my name is Bob Hill and this is my wife Betty. We've been in a terrible accident and my wife has been seriously hurt. Can I please use your phone?' 'I'm sorry', replied the hunchback, 'but we don't have a phone. My master is a doctor, so come in, and I will get him.' Bob brought his wife in. An older man came down the stairs and said: 'I'm afraid my assistant may have misled you: I am not a medical doctor but a scientist. However, it is many miles to the nearest clinic and I have a basic medical training. I will see what I can do. Igor, bring them down to the laboratory.' With that, Igor picked up Betty and carried her downstairs, Bob following closely. Igor placed Betty on a table in the lab. Bob collapsed from exhaustion and his own injuries, so Igor placed him on an adjoining table.

After a brief examination, Igor's master looked worried. 'Things are serious, Igor: prepare a transfusion.' Igor and his master worked feverishly, but to no avail: Bob and Betty are no more. Their deaths upset Igor's master greatly. Wearily he climbed the steps to his conservatory, which housed his grand piano: it was here that he always found solace. He began to play and a stirring, almost haunting, melody filled the house.

Igor was still in the lab tidying up. He noticed the fingers on Betty's hand twitch as they kept time with the music. Stunned, he watched as Bob's arm began to rise and marked the beat! He was further amazed as Betty and Bob both sat up straight! Unable to contain himself, he dashed up the stairs to the conservatory and shouted to his master, Master! Master! 'The Hills are alive with the sound of music!'

Ascent accounts 2014/5

Opening balance 27/5/14 **£10,333.41** deposit a/c **£3,021.36** total **£13,354.77**
Moneys paid in $£438^1 + £5,012^2 = \mathbf{£5,450}$
Moneys paid out $£3,675.60^3 + £2,294.49^4 + £988.84^5 = \mathbf{£6,958.93}$
Deficit (excess of expenditure over income) **£6958.93** - **£5,450** = **£1,508.93**
C/A $£10,333.41 - £1,508.93^6 = \mathbf{£8,824.48}^7$ deposit a/c **£3,035.17** total **£11,859.65**
Closing balance 1/6/2015 $£8,824.48$ deposit a/c $£3,035.17$ (inc. interest) $£11,859.65$

All 36 Groups have renewed. Membership is 488 + 8 Associates - a net loss of 11 members.

Budget for 2015/6

Income £5,000		Expenditure	
			Subscription to VMI £0,140
			NPT 13-14/10/15 £1,000
			Journal ⁸ £1,000
			Leaflets & Posters £0,500
			NPT March 2016 £1,000
			Website £0,130
			NCLA <u>£0.125</u>
			£3,895
		Excess of Income over Expenditure	£1,105

This will be offset against the cost of an expected European Conference in 2016

VMI is Life Ascending International (our parent body)
NPT is The National Planning Team (the national body)
NCLA is The National Council for Lay Associations

N.B The bank account is in the name: ASCENT and is expected to remain so.
Please ensure that all cheques are made out to **ASCENT**.

M.Palowkar

M.Ryde

P.Conrad

¹ £410 donation from groups to KV on retirement + £8 late subscription +£20 payment carried forward

² Subscriptions for 2015 (inc donations of £452)

³ VMI £2687 NPT £66 Journal £797.60 NCLA £125

⁴ all paid by end of 10/2014

⁵ all paid at NPT meeting 5/11/14

⁶ indicates excess of expenditure over income

⁷ This is the highpoint of the year as all income has been received and outgoings have yet to take place

⁸ Includes cost of distribution

New Movements Conference at Holyrood. 19th & 20th June 2015

Anne Mooney and Teresa Corcoran attended the above conference organised by the Community of the Risen Christ to bring together movements within the Catholic Church to promote the mission of evangelism in Scotland.

Over 200 people from a wide cross-section of the Catholic Church in Scotland attended, ranging from the more traditional lay-apostolate groups to those of a more Charismatic nature. Many of them laid out stalls in the conference hall.

Anne and Teresa, with the help of friends, set up a stall and display of Ascent materials and answered questions about the Ascent Movement in general and the Partick group in particular. They also gave out leaflets and posters with both Scottish and national contacts. The opening address, by Bishop Joseph Toal of Motherwell, was followed by prayers, music and singing heralding a tightly-packed programme of events. The theme was 'How the Holy Spirit works in individual lives, in their faithfulness to the call of God, and in the life of the Church, in response to the needs of the time'. The first guest speaker was Mr Bruce Yocum, well known in the Charismatic world and acclaimed as a speaker at International conferences. He is a founder member of the lay community of the Servants of the Word, which has close ties with the Community of The Risen Christ in Glasgow. His talk, 'The Call of God' asserted 'if God calls us to do something, we need to respond and when we do, he will equip us with the grace and charisma to fulfil that call'. He delivered an interesting and personal account to support these statements, as well as drawing on the lives of well-known figures from the Old and New Testaments who rose from the 'ordinary' to become great leaders and servants of the people of God.

The speaker on Saturday was Mgr Bob Oliver, an eminent canon lawyer and Vatican official. He is a member of the Brotherhood of Hope, a community of Catholic brothers consecrated to Christ and committed to the work of New Evangelisation in the Catholic Church. His focus was the Church, its enduring structure giving growth, renewal and reinvigoration throughout history - by the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people, communities and movements. These are described by Pope Benedict as 'waves of the Spirit'. A new age with a new need is being felt today. He again quoted Pope Benedict who described this as an 'age of apostasy' but one in which God is raising up today's people and communities to respond. Mgr. Oliver described it as: 'this fifth wave of the Spirit' and concluded by saying that it is now time; for new movements to grow in maturity; to listen to what God wants us to know: to verify what we are doing and to ask: are we living up to His call?

Archbishop Tartaglia celebrated Mass to close the conference and said: 'The gift of the new movements in the Church, fixed on Christ and His new world brings faith, hope and energy to the Church'. He also asked that they 'insert themselves into communion with their local churches to provide new energy, vision and hope by playing their full part in pastoral action'.
Anne Mooney

Teacher arrested at London Heathrow Airport and held in isolation

A secondary school teacher was arrested today at London's Heathrow International airport as he attempted to board an international flight while in possession of a ruler, a protractor, a pair of compasses, a slide-rule and a calculator. At a press conference, a UK Border Control spokesman said he believed the man to be a member of the notorious extremist Al-Gebra movement. He did not identify the man, who has been charged by the police with carrying weapons of maths instruction. 'Al-Gebra is a problem for us', the spokesman said. 'They derive solutions by means and extremes, and sometimes go off on tangents in search of absolute values.' They use secret code names like "X" and "Y" and refer to themselves as "unknowns", but we have determined that they belong to a common denominator of the axis of medieval with coordinates in every country. As the Greek philosopher Isosceles used to say: 'There are three sides to every triangle'.

When asked to comment on the arrest, a parliamentary party leader said: 'if God had wanted us to have better weapons of maths instruction, He would have given us more fingers and toes.' Fellow party colleagues told reporters they could not recall a more intelligent or profound statement by their leader.

Glasgow

The Glasgow Ascent Group report the sad death of Cathy McCarry on 15th May 2015 at the grand age of 97. May her soul and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

This follows the death in April 2013 of Dr. Suzanne Ullmann. In issue no. 248 (April 2015) of 'Open House' a magazine for 'comments and debate on faith issues in Scotland', there appears detailed history of her life and I reproduce the opening paragraph by kind permission of the publishers.

Zoologist Dr. Susanne L. Ullmann, who was born of Jewish parents in Budapest in 1935, lectured for many years at the University of Glasgow. She died in April last year and left behind a remarkable account of surviving Nazi occupation. Her father, a jeweller, had gone to London in the hope of establishing a business and her mother, who went to visit him, was unable to get back to Hungary when war broke out. Suzanne and her twin brothers were in Budapest with their grandmothers.

There follows a fascinating story which, unfortunately, is too long to present here, but I would advise members to try to obtain a copy. I am very grateful to Anne Mooney, Group leader in Glasgow for sending this to me. Ed

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Ascent Ideas

When we've met members of other Ascent Groups, we've found that they all do different things. Variety is the spice of life, they say, but some do the same things every time. It is so easy to do the same routine.

Our Parish started a **Lectio Divina** group which met on Monday morning after Mass for an hour. We start with prayer, read the Gospel for the following Sunday three times slowly before trying to discern what the passage was saying to us. We then read the passage a final time before ending with further prayers for specific intentions.

One of the 'problems' with reading the Sunday Gospel readings is that sometimes they are edited, or don't follow on from one week to the next. This means that you often lose the context of the passage or don't know what came before or after. So when we came to the end of the three-year cycle, we wondered what to do next. We decided to read through one of the Gospels and chose Mark. For events which are covered by more than one Gospel, notably the arrest and death of Jesus, it is worth looking at the others for further explanation. Having a good Bible commentary to hand is a great help. Just to reassure you, we did not have a priest or nun in our little group. Although our Lectio Divina group is not part of Ascent, it certainly is something that any Ascent Group could do if running short of ideas. Incidentally, having read the Gospel of St Mark and then Acts we are now reading some of St Paul's letters which are excellent teaching on the life of the early Church and sometimes offer lessons for us today, the Bible commentary is vital here.

Other groups say the Morning or Evening Office or have their meeting immediately after morning Mass as part of their routine.

You can see from our past and current programmes that some things come up regularly, especially during Advent, Ash Wednesday and our Annual Retreat, but we often try new things. One All Saints Day, various members came up with the life stories of favourite saints: this remains one of my favourite meetings. Another topic was local Catholic history, which we have followed with visits to various centres of Catholic recusancy.

John Green

Thanks go to Hallam Group for providing these ideas, which other Groups may find of interest when planning their own programmes.

The back page shows a picture taken at a social event, which will be familiar to many other Groups.

The second picture was taken at Aylesford on the occasion of the annual retreat, when several Groups from Southwalk and Westminster combine. The link between the two is Stroud Green Group. (see page 6)

Ed



Stroud Green Ascent enjoying a relaxing day out at Southend on Sea.

