



# **The Journal of Life Ascending**

## **2016**



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

**[www.ascentmovement.org.uk](http://www.ascentmovement.org.uk)**

*The cover picture shows the Medway flowing peacefully past the Friary at Aylesford. It was taken during the recent retreat and is indicative of the tranquillity that pervades the 'Land of Carmel'.*

This year is a time of change. We started with a change of name when The Ascent movement became Life Ascending. This is to be followed by a change of personnel. Our President announced that, after 12 years at the helm, she would not be seeking a further term of office. We are fortunate that Ross Roberts has agreed to take over the role and will be elected at the next NPT meeting in October. This Journal will appear in a new format, which will result in a change of size to A5. This will produce a small saving to the cost of production and a greater saving to the cost of distribution. In order to achieve this it will be written in 16 point print on A4 and reduced by the printer to A5 and about 12 point print so that it remains large enough for easy reading by those of us who need a good size of print. This is the first attempt at such a change and I look forward to comments from members as to how this works out.

*The back cover has two pictures. The top one was taken by Frances Hall and shows the 'Ascent' notice board at St Leonard and St Mary, Malton and was accompanied with an article from Bridget Nuttgens of the Malton Group*

*The other was provided by Paula, as was the front page, and depicts the Lampedusa Cross, which is reached by going through the 'Holy Door' at Aylesford. This cross was made from wood that fell from the boats that floundered in the sea as many desperate refugees drowned in their attempts to get to Europe.*



These two pictures show the Present and future President Their articles follow on pages 2 and 3 respectively. We wish Margaret a happy retirement and Ross good luck



## **Margaret writes:**

Dear friends. The year is flying on and, although it is still summer when I am writing, you will not receive this letter until autumn. It will be the last time I will write a letter to you in the journal as president of Life Ascending, as my term of office finishes at the end of December.

The Year of Mercy is moving on, although we know that God's mercy is with us always. As Pope Francis has shown us so often, by his example, we should be open to God's forgiveness and bring love and hope to all, especially those in the greatest need.

Many of you will have been on holiday and I hope you felt the benefits of a break, enabling you to relax and be at peace. I was in Lourdes at the beginning of August and I remembered you in my prayers and by lighting a candle for your intentions. Some members, or someone from our families or communities, have been ill. We all know how difficult this is and appreciate the concern of our friends. We remember also those who have died and all who are mourning the death of a loved one. I wish you all well for the future and I hope you will support the new president Ross Roberts, who is from the Addiscombe Group.

I thank you all for what you have done and continue to do for Life Ascending and for your friendship. I appreciate all that Groups and Associates have done over the years.

My thanks go to the National Planning Team for their work and friendship over many years.

God bless you all.

Margaret

**Ross writes:**

Following Margaret Snowdon after her dozen years as president it seems, if you will forgive the pun, that I have a mountain to climb especially as I am the first man to hold the position.

But it is just a different hand on the tiller; the National Planning Team [NPT] will be largely unchanged and they will keep me in line in the same way that I shall endeavour to coordinate their efforts on behalf of our movement.

Apart from the number of groups, which has shrunk alarmingly from 64 nationwide to 32, I think we have a winning formula.

Life Ascending is a parish-based organisation and meeting with your friends once a fortnight is enough for many of our members. We augment this experience with a diocesan Day of Reflection once or twice a year with Northern and Southern Retreats for those with the time and inclination.

Our participation is limited or dictated by health, piety, family commitments and financial considerations.

In May I attended a Mass which was the Diamond Jubilee Celebration of a priest who had been Assistant priest in my parish from 1994 to 2003 and he remembered that when he was a lad the tallest building in Croydon was the Town Hall [now it is a concrete jungle with "regeneration" adding high-rise buildings by the week]. At the party afterwards I berated another priest [a former parish priest in Addiscombe] because his parish doesn't have a Life Ascending Group. He said his parish had 4 prayer groups and there probably wasn't scope for another.

Life Ascending isn't just a prayer group but how do we get that message across? My gang is better than your gang?

We must have hundreds of thousands of years of experience between us and not everyone can serve on the NPT. If you have any ideas as to how we can get more parishes involved and provide the transfusion we so desperately need please email me at [rosslifeascendingpresident@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:rosslifeascendingpresident@yahoo.co.uk)

## Life Ascending accounts 2015/6

Opening balance 1/6/2015 £8,824.48 £3,035.17 £11,859.65

Income £45 donation Expenditure £2,502.62<sup>1</sup>

Balance as at 4/12/15 £6,366.86<sup>2</sup> Bank £6,366.86

Income £3,624 expenditure £1,624.15<sup>3</sup> balance £8,366.71

as at 23/4/16 income £1,130 expenditure £611.80<sup>4</sup> = £8,884.91

Transferred to Life ascending Nat West £1025.00 = £7,859.91

Barclays Bank £7,859.91 Deposit a/c closed & transferred

Nat West c/a £525 d/a £3553.07 inc interest to date

All 6 associates & 34/36 Groups have renewed in 2016.  
Membership is 354 singles + 18 couples. 354 + 36 + 7  
Associates = 397 income £4,329 expenditure estimated at  
£4,000

M.Palowkar

M.Ryde

P.Conrad

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<sup>1</sup> Cost at NPT meeting

<sup>2</sup> for details see Newsletter 4 2015

<sup>3</sup> Cost of Journal and NPT meeting 16/3/16

<sup>4</sup>Inc Cost of extraordinary NPT meeting £370.80 (Westminster/Southwark self funding)



Mrs Paula Conrad appears above on the left. Mrs Molly Hukin to her right. Sister Margaret Brown is on the far right and Miss Margaret Snowden in the picture below.



- Ascent Presidents**
- Paula Conrad 1980 -1997
  - Molly Hukin 1997 -2000
  - Sister Margaret Brown  
2001 -2005
  - Margaret Snowden  
2005-2016

*These pictures were provided by Paula from the archives as the Ascent Movement changes into Life Ascending and a new President prepares to take up the rains of office. Ed*

## **Better together:**

The above words may bring relief or strike terror into the hearts of any of our readers North of the border but it is used here only to describe one of the events that took earlier this year. A friend of mine, who works at Westminster Cathedral, as a member of the Guild of St. John Southwark, offered to provide a conducted tour of the Cathedral. He is aware of our organisation and thought a few of us may be interested. This plan was well received as a potential visit for the annual outing for the Westminster region and dates were discussed and the 28th of April agreed as suitable. It occurred to me that the venue would be easily accessible to our members from Southwark.

The previous year a number of members of Westminster groups had attended a retreat in Roehampton, which had turned out to be a great success. It was thus decided to make this a Joint Westminster/Southwark venture and to include the hire of a room where we could all meet, eat and talk prior to the tour.

One of the advantages of the joint operation was that we now had several 'organisers' and our president elect was able to arrange for Fr. Brian O'Mahony, who is one of the Chaplains, to deliver a talk on the Cathedral homelessness project. This was a most inspiring session and our members were moved to make a substantial donation to the funds of the project. Our original thoughts had been that 30 or so members would have attended. In reality, 78 people came to the event and it proved to be a great success.

Had we stuck to our original idea it would have been quite a small affair. There would have been no talk, no money raised and a chance for meeting members from 'the other side of the river' would have been missed.

There are now plans for more Joint ventures in the near future and it is to be remembered that many places in central London are easily accessible. One member from Thanet informed me that he found it easier to get to Westminster than Southwark Cathedral or even the regional meeting place at Croydon.

So we are better together.

Mike Palowkar

## **Malton**

I was delighted to find the Ascent Group when we came to this parish. When I was a child I Remember elderly members of the congregation as little old ladies who crept into the back of the church and muttered over their rosaries throughout Mass.

One of the precious legacies of Vatican II, it seems to me, is the recognition that, whatever age we are, we all belong to the People of God; the Faith is our home, and we all have a part to play. So nowadays the little children are taken off for their own Gospel study, they are encouraged to lead the Offertory procession with the gifts, they may even have their own 'nursery corner' with books and crayons and paper to draw on; and girls can now be 'altar boys', and school-age members lead the singing or read lessons for special occasions. I'm sure that children are less disruptive during Mass than they tended to be when my children were little. (Maybe this is a change in social attitude. Today there is no problem about taking children into a cafe or restaurant, as was once quite difficult.)

And what about us, the 'little old ladies'? Men and women, we live longer, are active longer, and need opportunities to socialise and use our brains and think more widely. Indeed, as the name 'Ascent' indicates, at our time of life we need more stimulus and opportunity to reflect with God and man since we

'know not the day nor the hour' when our souls will be required of us. Ascent acts as a very good medium for this.

Although Malton host the North Eastern Regional meetings, sited as we are in the middle of the region and having a very accessible hall, we are a small group, varying from maybe fourteen to five since I've been a member. But we have been lucky in having a succession of good Chair people. Our present Chair, Frances Hall, has a genius for finding interesting places to visit, not at all put off by the fact that she herself has to get around with a zimmer frame: Country houses, wonderful gardens, Ampleforth's apple orchards, the Poor Clare convent outside York and Stanbrook Abbey at Wass, as well as a local Buddhist monastery and the York Islamic centre. (One of the fascinating things we discovered on this visit was that we knew more about Islam than they knew about Christianity.) Frances always takes photographs which are then displayed on the Ascent notice-board at the door of the church. Of course we also have talks from outsiders and once a year Fr Tim talks on one of his many interests from railways to the problems of country parishes to army chaplains who have received medals for bravery.

On days when we stay at home, we also, as John Green reports from the Hallam groups, use the Benedictine Lectio Divina method of exploring the Gospel for the following Sunday. We all seem to get a lot out of this. Perhaps the most important thing of all is the company we bear each other and the support we can give in the inevitable difficulties of our times of life.

Thank you Ascent.

Bridget Nuttgens

*And thank you for this interesting article*

*Ed*

## **Bruges again**

Four years ago I went on a pilgrimage to Bruges & Ghent. I found the experience so uplifting that, when I saw the article in the parish newsletter, which proposed another visit to Belgium, I immediately decided to go again. There is always a danger of disappointment in repeating a joyful occasion, but this was not the case. The format was the same and again the presence of five deaf pilgrims enhanced the process of the pilgrimage. This was most noticeable at the wonderful Masse, which Fr. Shaun celebrated in St Paul's church and the Ghent Cathedral Crypt. The fact that all three of these masses were 'signed' is not just a necessity for the deaf, but also an enhancement of the experience for the hearing. The pace of the readings and the Homily gives an depth and gravity to what is heard and seen by all the pilgrims.

On the Thursday, Ascension Day, which in Belgium is not transferred to the Sunday, we travelled from Ghent to Bruges for the Holy Blood Procession. Morning Mass was celebrated in the Church of St. James as the Cathedral is undergoing repairs. This resulted in a very beautiful intimate service, which was much enjoyed by all our group and another group from Pax travel who we met on our walk to the church. There had obviously been a block booking as the pre allocated seats were next to our block. There was then a surprise when we discovered that the rout of the procession hah been reversed. The procession depicts events from the start of Genesis to the Resurrection and beyond. It took almost two hours to pass our stands and included bands, singers, dancers, actors, horses, sheep, camels and a huge ox towing one of the floats. The guilds of the city were all represented and were identified with several elements of the procession. The highlight, however, was the relic of the 'Holy Blood'. This is associated with Joseph

of Arimathea and Thierry of Alsace, Count of Flanders after the Second Crusade. In 2012 I wrote: 'This pilgrimage had visited two beautiful cities and had provided an opportunity for all those participating to deepen their faith in a friendly and relaxed environment. The inclusive nature of the proceedings added to the experience.

These words apply equally today. - come on 2020? Ed

## **Members**

There two forms of our members: those who belong to groups and associate members who do not. There are 6 associates and they are either too distant form a group or too infirm to attend. The 34 groups range in size from less than 5 members to over 20.

## **Regions**

Group leaders, for example Southwark has 10 groups, meet 2 or 3 times a year to review the start of their members and communicate with the national body.

## **National Planning team (NPT)**

The NPT meet twice a year, (see page 15 for those involved), to transact the business of running the organisation, and to liaise with the international body.

## **International**

Vie Montante Internationale (VMI), which translates as Life Ascending International is the parent body of our organisation. There are now national bodies like our own all over the world and the members are 'Growing in the love of God and each other' as we pursue Spirituality, Friendship and Mission to one and all. Ed

## The Good Old Days!

I remember the corned beef of my Childhood,  
And the bread that we cut with a knife,  
When the Children helped with the housework,  
And the men went to work not the wife.  
The cheese never needed a fridge,  
And the bread was so crusty and hot,  
The Children were seldom unhappy,  
And the Wife was content with her lot.

I remember the milk from the bottle,  
With the yummy cream on the top,  
Our dinner came hot from the oven,  
And not from a freezer; or shop.  
The kids were a lot more contented,  
They didn't need money for kicks,  
Just a game with their friends in the road,  
And sometimes the Saturday flicks.  
I remember the shop on the corner,  
Where biscuits for pennies were sold  
Do you think I'm a bit too nostalgic?  
Or is it....I'm just getting Old?  
Bathing was done in a wash tub,  
With plenty of rich foamy suds  
But the ironing seemed never ending  
As Mum pressed everyone's 'duds'.  
I remember the slap on my backside,  
And the taste of soap if I swore  
Anorexia and diets weren't heard of  
And we hadn't much choice what we wore.  
Do you think that bruised our ego?  
Or our initiative was destroyed?  
We ate what was put on the table  
And I think life was better enjoyed.

Author, Unknown...

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