

House News

Our last newsletter reached you just before Christmas, and that's where we'll begin. Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve being on Monday, we went out on our usual sandwich run to the people on the streets in the centre of Oxford. Christmas Eve was still and quiet, New Year's Eve buzzing with revellers; but our friends on the street still needed our sandwiches, Christmas cake, mince pies, coffee and tea. On Christmas Eve Daniel and Susan arrived back at the house about ten, and Tom, who lived here last year, came and we all went to Midnight Mass at the Catholic Chaplaincy. It was lovely seeing Tom again and hearing news of his life in Leeds teaching philosophy at the university.

On Christmas Day Daniel cooked lunch and we were joined by one of our guests, and other people connected to the house who would have been alone otherwise. We had open house in the afternoon and two people popped in. In the evening we went to Minster Road and watched a Lewis DVD with the family there.

Susan joined the London Catholic Workers for the feast of Holy Innocents and was one of four people arrested at

Northwood Joint military Headquarters near Watford for a nonviolent direct action. The four were held for fourteen hours in the cells and will go to court in Watford on 9 April.

Soon after Christmas another guest came to join us, a young Afghan asylum seeker called Dawood whose poems you will find elsewhere in this issue. Our three regular guests continue to share our home and give us much joy in return by their presence. They are resilient, and despite personal tragedy in their lives they keep themselves occupied improving their English and pursuing their interests, whether it be writing poetry or watching football! They are also keen to help with daily chores in the house.

We have turned the large bedroom in the house into a visitors' room. This means we can welcome visitors who come for the night or a few days, but we have also offered it to Asylum Welcome as a room where someone in crisis can find shelter for up to two weeks while their situation is being sorted. Over the past few weeks we've had a single woman, a single man and a mother with two young children in the room at different times, and it seems there is a real need for such a space.

We've had a few friends visiting, too, including Martin and Ciaron from the London Catholic Worker. Martin came to speak to the Newman Society at the Catholic Chaplaincy, and gave a moving and comprehensive overview of Catholic Worker philosophy and practice. Many people were surprised to learn that there had been a Catholic Worker community in Oxford since 1993, which just goes to show...! We now have a page on the London Catholic Worker website, and have already been contacted by someone who found us there.

People continue to join us for our evening meal, and it is certainly good to be able to invite people who show an interest in our work to eat with us. We have had two more social evenings since our last newsletter. In January we watched the film *Amazing Grace*, and in February we celebrated the feast of St Caedmon by sharing poems, readings and stories with an Anglo Saxon/Celtic theme. We have also had two Catholic Worker study nights. The first involved a showing of the DVD of the one woman play *Fool for Christ* about Dorothy Day. In February we began to look at Peter Maurin's influence on Dorothy and the early development of the Catholic Worker.

As well as our hospitality and beginnings of round table discussions we continue our work of resistance to all forms of war and warmaking. The two weekly local vigils continue, and we have been joining with our friends at the London Catholic Worker as well as Pax Christi, the Fellowship of Reconciliation and Voices in the Wilderness, in witnessing to our vision of a world without war or violence.

On Ash Wednesday Susan joined about sixty members of Pax Christi and friends for a reflection and prayer at the Ministry of Defence in London. During the service some of us attempted to mark the building with charcoal and ash, symbols of the Lenten call to repentance. Despite stern warnings from the police they did not arrest us, but confiscated the charcoal of those they searched.

Last Easter Susan was arrested at Aldermaston, the Atomic Weapons Establishment, for blocking the road. On being found guilty later in the year she refused to pay court costs of £250, maintaining that the people who should be prosecuted are those who authorise the production of nuclear weapons. Each time a letter came to demand payment she answered stating the same

objection. She went to court in January to plead her case. The Court Services transferred the hearing to Oxford at Susan's request and the magistrates gave her a fair hearing, acknowledging that she knew what she was doing in wilfully refusing to pay. They sentenced her to spending the rest of the day on court premises! During the day eleven people came and supported Susan, and four remained for the whole day.

Miriam is still with us and her involvement in local environmental issues and the national campaign to support Burma adds to our awareness of the issues which should be addressed if we want to create "a new society in the shell of the old".

We would like to wish all of you a prayerful Holy Week and a joyous and peaceful Eastertide and springtime!