



Dear Companion

This is our third official newsletter and I would particularly like to welcome all our new Companions who have joined since the summer. We are steadily increasing in numbers which is excellent news.

There is a lot to cover in this newsletter. I have divided everything under headings so that if you don't have time to read it all at once, you can hopefully find something of interest quickly.

St Patrick's Evening Concert

We had a very successful evening concert at St Patrick's Soho Square in London on 7th October to which many Companions came. As you know, we have taken on St Patrick's as one of our volunteer projects and I am delighted to say that we have one Companion volunteering there now. Even though the evening was not a fundraising event, £2,000 was given in the form of donations at the end of the concert and I would like to thank all Companions who were there for their kind generosity.

Kenya Projects

You will have been sent the 1st edition of 'Drumbeat', the newsletter covering the Kenyan projects that Alice Murphy, one of our Companions, is involved in. We have now finished sponsoring her in the initial stages of her time in Nairobi but we remain committed to supporting her projects in whatever way we can. I know that some of you have already been very generous for which I know Alice is extremely grateful and I would like to see our support continuing.

Volunteers for OSJ Care Homes

I have spent some of my time visiting a number of Care Homes in the Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire areas. What struck me was the caring nature of the staff and the happy atmosphere in the various Homes was. However, I was also struck by how few volunteers there are for each of the Homes I visited. What I learned was that no volunteer needs to visit on the same day every week, nor commit to the same hours every visit. You can literally 'pop' in for as long as you can. Each Home has an Activities Co-ordinator who you will liaise with and they will guide you as to what you can do in the time you are there. There are 74 Care Homes co-run by the Order of Malta in the UK and if you (your family and friends) would like to visit one of them please register your interest with Shelagh Martell or myself so that we can organise this with you. You can find the locations of the Homes on osjct.co.uk.

Volunteering Generally

It is certainly not a prerequisite to be a Companion to visit one of the OSJ Care Homes or indeed any local care home/hospice/hospital or prison. Our aim however is for local groups of Companions to form naturally and become effective in the local community and we can only achieve this if one or two of you start the ball rolling. Please do let us know what you are doing locally and

we can put you in touch with other Companions in the area. For example, I and another Companion are going to start visiting an OSJ Care Home in Chipping Norton. We would be delighted for others to join us who live locally.

Scottish Companions - St Valentine's Ball 13th February 2010

You will all have received an invitation to this wonderful initiative by the Scottish based Companions. I hope that as many of you can come to it or at least support it in any way that you can. There are various other initiatives that the Scottish Companions are pursuing including an evening of Carols with supper on 22nd December at Lundie Castle. An invitation will follow.

Advent evening of Recollection – 10th December 2009

This will take place at the Conventual Church of St John of Jerusalem at the Hospital of St John and St Elizabeth in London beginning with Mass at 6.30pm followed by a conference and Holy Hour concluding with Benediction led by Canon John Macdonald. There will be a light supper in the Chancellery after the Holy Hour for which a charge of £10 per head will be made on the night. If you would like to go, please contact Caroline de la Force on basmom@btconnect.com or tel: 020 7286 1414 before 8th December.

Order of Malta Annual Carol Service – 15th December 2009

You are all very welcome to come to this held at the Conventual Church of St John of Jerusalem at the Hospital of St John and St Elizabeth in London at 6.30pm. The Choir, Cantores Missae, will sing some Advent and Christmas music within the usual Service of Lessons and Carols followed by Benediction. You are also invited up to Fortescue House afterwards for wine and mince pies for which you will be asked at the time to contribute £5 towards the cost. Please let Caroline de la Force know (details above) if you can come.

Companions Induction – 17th April 2010

This is an opportunity for us to get together to talk about and exchange ideas and thoughts on the Companions and our development and future. It will be held at St Wilfrid's Hall, Brompton Oratory, London at 2.30pm followed by Mass. Please save the date - more details in the next newsletter but your contribution to our discussions will be invaluable.

Lourdes Pilgrimage – 30th April to 7th May 2010

You will have had details of the Pilgrimage already. Note however that if you are a fully paid up Companion, you will not have to pay the Lourdes levy of £50.

First Aid Post at Santiago de Compostela, Spain - 2010

It would be wonderful if one or two of you could volunteer your time to help man the First Aid Post outside the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela as part of a contingent from the British Order of Malta. It would be for a week at almost any stage between 1st June and 10th October 2010. The Spanish Association will arrange modest (and modestly priced) accommodation nearby. One of our number has undertaken this duty and would be happy to

share her experience. If you are interested in knowing more about this please can you let Shelagh or myself know.

International Holiday Camp-Wales 10th to 17th July 2010

The British Order of Malta is hosting this next year at Bluestone in Wales. The camp will bring together over 400 people from 20 different countries aged between 18 and 35 from a range of backgrounds and disabilities. Although there is a dedicated team who are running the event, the Companions have been asked to provide a supporting role not only in the form of funding but also in terms of hands-on work either to help 'meet and greet' at Heathrow or Bristol Airports or at the camp itself. All this would happen on 10th July 2010. You will not be needed at the camp beyond the weekend of 9th/11th July. More details will follow but if you are interested in principle to help, please let us know.

Thank you for all your enthusiasm and commitment. I really believe that we can make a difference on a lot of fronts and I look forward to increasing our membership and our influence both in our local communities and beyond. I am always interested in your ideas for new projects and the introduction of new members so do please get in touch with either Shelagh Martell or myself at any time.

With best wishes

Millie Wentworth-Stanley
(Chairman)