

Introduction

“A Time For Optimism?”

The Revd Trevor Thurston-Smith, Director of Faith in People with HIV writes...



A few months ago, I was asked to address a national conference on the subject of the relationship between faith and spirituality and the use of anti-retrovirals in the treatment of HIV. The conference took place not only on a Friday but at the start of a bank holiday weekend, and my “slot” was set for late afternoon. The pessimist (or cynic) in me was firmly convinced that most delegates would quietly slink away during the course of the afternoon, leaving only a small “faithful remnant” to hear my address.

I was mistaken. In the event, the vast majority of delegates stayed, and several commented to me afterwards that my address was one of the main attractions of the day.

More recently I was invited to give a similar address to a group of clinicians at Birmingham’s Heartlands Hospital. I expected a handful of people, but was greeted instead by a room packed with genuinely interested participants who had gladly given up their lunch break and who engaged with my talk and the following discussion with great enthusiasm.

Could it be that matters of faith and spirituality in relation to HIV treatment and care are becoming major concerns within the mainstream?

Over the last few years, I have certainly sensed a growing recognition within the medical and social care professions of the key role that spirituality can play in the treatment of HIV, and of how a person’s religious beliefs can impact, for good or ill, upon their attitude to their condition and its treatment.

Whilst many have paid lip-service to the principle of holistic care, they have often regarded faith and the role of chaplains and faith leaders as something at best to be tolerated and at worst to be treated with grave suspicion. This rather myopic view potentially undermines a lot of the work being done with people living with or affected by HIV, not least those from African and other nations where religious conviction is held very deeply and borne very publicly.

As a person of faith, and as a priest, I am heartened by these developments; as Director of a small charity at a time of grave economic uncertainty when some NHS Trusts are questioning the value of their in-house chaplaincy services, I am often tempted to feel less optimistic.

There are those who naively argue that our work falls simply within the category of “psycho-social support” or that our broad and inclusive ethos negates any claim of specialist input. Of them I would ask, “How is it that when I enter a situation with the authority of an ordained minister of religion, I can often sway people in their attitude to taking medication or their understanding of how God has healed them? Or how is it that a person of no particular faith can still find renewed strength and peace of

mind through a healing service in the chapel at Launde Abbey on one of our 'Quiet Days' or that a home visit from a volunteer chaplain ending with a time of prayer, reflection or meditation, can help a service user to feel renewed?"

Others might argue that having an Anglican priest running a charity is a barrier to working with other faiths; but this runs counter to decades of experience of inter-faith work nationally, and in Leicester in particular, where people of faith respect other people of faith, despite their different religious affiliations. As the writer of the Psalms says, "Deep calls unto deep" (ps42:7a). We of differing faiths communicate with one another on the basis of what we have in common i.e. a world view that includes the spiritual and supernatural, and *not* what divides us. Those with a secular perspective come with a totally different and narrower world view which is potentially far more of a barrier than any theological or doctrinal difference.

The foregoing sums up the philosophy underlying the work that we have been doing for the last twelve months, as in previous years. The pages that follow demonstrate some of the mechanisms and activities by which we have undertaken this work. I hope you will enjoy reading this review and that it will help you to gain an insight into how we continue to make a unique contribution to the support of men, women and children of all faiths and none who are living with or affected by HIV in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Amidst all the uncertainties of the current financial climate, there may be challenges ahead regarding the ongoing funding of our current activities, but the growing interest in our work and the increasing demand for our specialist input, at both a regional and national level, clearly indicates a need for our service and is, I believe, cause for optimism. In looking to the future we must seek ways to harness this interest and meet this new demand, confident that we have something invaluable to offer.

Trevor Taunton-Smith

Director's principal engagements during 2009/10

The engagements listed below are in addition to the regular day to day management of the charity and routine service delivery.

April 2009

- 1 Meeting with CEO, UK /Youth



May 2009

- 6 Opening of new "TAGADERE" HIV Support Day Centre, Nottingham
- 7 Equalities Workshop, Leicester City Council
- 11 Presentation to GUM clinic staff, LRI, Leicester
- 12 St Phillip's Centre, Leicester : HIV and Faith (joint training with LASS)
- 16 "Faith, Homophobia, Transphobia and Human Rights" Conference, London
- 19 Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Healthcare Chaplains' Study Day

June 2009

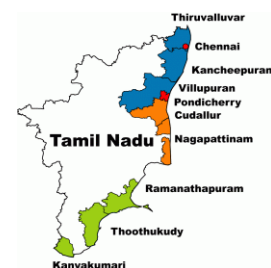
- 2 “Daring to Speak : HIV Prevention work with African MSM” London
- 10 Business Planning Seminar, Voluntary Action Leicestershire
- 18 “Beyond a Single Identity : Meeting the needs of the LGBT Community” Conference
University of Leicester/Leicester LGBT Centre
- 19 Regional CHIVA Meeting : Presentation “ARVs or Prayer?” Leicester

July 2009

- 16 Review of “Action Deafness” chaplaincy service
- 21 HIV Managers’ Meeting and World AIDS Day Planning Meeting,
Leicester

August 2009

- 6 Consultation meeting with Trichy Tanjore HIV project visitors
- 13 Midweek Eucharist and address, St Deny’s Church,
Evington



September 2009

- 3 Diocese of Leicester Deliverance Ministry Group
- 4 Presentation to “Summit House”, Dudley re HIV and Faith
- 8 World AIDS Day Planning Meeting, Leicester
- 11 Planning meeting : Blaby Street Pastors HIV awareness training
- 14 Society of Catholic Priests, Peterborough (Chapter Meeting)

October 2009

- 7 World AIDS Day Planning Meeting, Leicester
- 10 Blaby Street Pastors Training Day : HIV Awareness and working with marginalised groups (Whetstone)
- 12 World AIDS Day Planning Meeting
- 28 “Christian Praise” lunchtime event for local dignitaries : De Montfort Hall, Leicester.

November 2009

- 10 Eucharist, De Montfort University, World AIDS Day planning meeting,
Leicester
- 12 Meeting with CEO, UK Youth , London
and Meeting with Executive Director “Mildmay International”, London
- 18 Seminar : “Assessing the needs of BME and Faith Communities”,
Birmingham
- 23 Nursing and Midwifery Council, London
- 29 BBC Radio Leicester Interview
- 30 St Phillip’s Centre : “HIV and Spirituality” interfaith training for medical students

December 2009

- 2 Wellbeck 6th form Defence College, Woodhouse Eaves: Assembly and Study Groups
- 3 De Montfort University : Film Students : HIV awareness assignment.
- 9 Society of Catholic Priests, Southwell & Nottingham, Wysall, Notts (Chapter Meeting)
- 10 De Montfort University : Film students : HIV awareness assignment
- 11 Diocese of Leicester Deliverance Ministry Group

January 2010

- 19 Leicester Diocesan Clergy Conference, Swanwick
- 20 Leicester Diocesan Clergy Conference, Swanwick
- 21 Leicester Diocesan Clergy Conference, Swanwick
- 27 "Provider Engagement" Event : Leicestershire County Council, Oadby

February 2010

- 5 Project SIGMA Workshop : TRADE, Leicester
- 9 Faith Action Conference : "Focus on Family Health", London
- 10 Leicestershire County Council SRE Scrutiny Committee
- 11 De Montfort University : Film students : HIV awareness assignment
- 18 Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Healthcare Chaplains' Meeting
- 23 De Montfort University : Eucharist, Leicester
- 26 De Montfort University : Film students : HIV awareness assignment

March 2010

- 1 Nursing and Midwifery Council, London
- 11 De Montfort University : Film students : HIV awareness assignment
- 16 De Montfort University, Eucharist
- 17 "Faith and Social Action" : Conference, Westminster
- 23 "The Knowledge, The Will and The Power" African HIV prevention seminar, Leicester
- 25 Emmanuel Church Loughborough, Clergy Study Day, "Deliverance Ministry"

In addition, the Director regularly attended the following meetings/groups:

- Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Faiths Support Group for Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- Leicester Diocesan HIV Interagency Group (Chair)
- Leicester Diocesan World Development Group
- Leicester Diocesan International Committee

EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

“Quiet Days”

Launde Abbey and Offa House

We are greatly relieved that, following a period of grave uncertainty, the future of Launde Abbey (the Diocesan Retreat House for the Leicester and Peterborough dioceses) is now secured. The renovation and expansion works are now underway and there may be some disruption to our “Quiet Days” over the coming months. Nevertheless, it will be good to know that in the future Launde will still be available to us, and with much improved facilities.

Over the last year, we have held three Quiet Days at Launde (on 26th June, 11th August and 5th November) attended by a total of sixty-six people, and benefiting thirty-eight service users.

Service users who do not have their own car are transported by taxi and/or coach to and from the venue and a three course lunch is provided. The day runs from 11.00am until 4.30pm and includes a range of activities, including various complementary therapies, an arts and crafts workshop, a guided (non-religious) meditation, a service of prayer and healing for people of all faiths and one-to-one pastoral counselling. The meditation and healing service have grown increasingly popular over recent years, and are now the principle focus of the day for the majority of service users, regardless of their religious affiliation or spirituality.



As an experiment, and in view of the possible closure of Launde Abbey, we also held one Quiet Day at the Coventry Diocesan Retreat House, Offa House, near Leamington Spa (on 26th August), which was attended by twelve service users.

The facilities are very similar to those of Launde, and the day followed our traditional pattern. Although it was a successful and enjoyable event, the service user

evaluations indicated that the travelling time to Offa House was too great and made the day rather too long and tiring. We do not, therefore plan to repeat this activity.

Amida Trust Buddhist House, Narborough

As usual, four Quiet Days have been held at the Buddhist House over the last year, (on 22nd April, 15th July, 21st October and 16th December) with a total attendance of thirty-one service users). On a more intimate scale than the Launde Abbey Days, these events focus on a structured discussion group in the morning, which



addresses a whole range of emotional and spiritual issues, followed by complementary therapies, one-to-one pastoral counselling, informal discussions and, sometimes, a guided meditation.

Those who regularly attend the Buddhist House Quiet Days invariably testify to their peaceful, reflective nature and the sense of inner renewal that they seem to generate.

Our thanks go to the Community who make us most welcome and also provide us with a healthy two course lunch.

Complementary Therapies

We recognise the significant contribution that non-invasive Complementary Therapies can make to the spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing of someone living with HIV and its attendant pressures. As well as maintaining the provision of such therapies at our Quiet Days, we have sought to expand this provision and have offered a limited number of “stand-alone” therapies for those in particular need. These therapies are normally offered at The Lodge, usually on the third Thursday of the month, although in exceptional circumstances they can be provided in the service user’s home. Over the last year, we have provided a total of sixteen therapies on this basis.

Therapies offered include:

- *Aromatherapy*
- *Reflexology*
- *Reiki*
- *Shiatsu*
- *Indian Head Massage*
- *Colour Therapy*

Our pool of loyal and dedicated volunteer therapists are no longer able to keep pace with the growing demand for therapies so we now supplement their services by paying other therapists on a sessional basis. This has a significant cost implication, and one of our challenges for the future is how best to maintain and expand our Complementary Therapies Service which sits so obviously and naturally within our Spirituality/Wellbeing remit.

World AIDS Day

This year, our contribution to the local observance of World AIDS Day focussed on three events.

Young People's Art Exhibition at "CURVE", Leicester Saturday 28th November to Friday 4th December



In the weeks leading up to World AIDS Day, our young people's group ("SaW") aided by various volunteers, created a powerful and moving collection of art works expressing how they felt about living with HIV. The works that they produced were as notable for their impact as for their artistic excellence, and many people commented that our young people should be complemented on both their talent and their insight. The works were then exhibited for a week on the Mezzanine at CURVE theatre in Leicester. It's difficult to know how many people visited the exhibition, but thirty-five visitors took the trouble to post their comments, which were overwhelmingly positive.

The exhibition is currently in storage, and we are seeking ways of using it in future work with faith communities, schools and youth clubs. One of our partner agencies, UK Youth, ran a feature on the exhibition in their on-line magazine.

You can read more about the exhibition on page 11

Service for World AIDS Day at Leicester Cathedral Saturday 28th November



It is now five years since twenty or so people gathered rather self-consciously in Leicester Cathedral for the first World AIDS Day service. Over the years the service has grown in popularity, and this year was attended by a congregation of over a hundred and twenty people of all faiths. Our guest speaker was Catherine O'Keeffe from Mildmay International. Catherine spoke movingly about the pioneering work of The Mildmay Hospital in London and the expanding work of the international branch of the charity.

Following the service, a buffet lunch was served in the Cathedral Centre, after which Catherine spoke in more depth to a group of fifty or so people. There was a lively discussion, covering many aspects of HIV and in particular the spiritual challenges that it presents.

Many service users commented afterwards that they had found the service an inspiring demonstration of support and a source of renewed hope, and that Catherine's words had also encouraged them greatly. Others commented on how much they had learnt during the afternoon session. As an organisation, we too were much encouraged when Catherine told us that the service and discussion session afterwards compared very favourably with World AIDS Day events held in London.



**The 1.12 Two-Minute Silence
Leicester Market Square
Monday 1st December (WORLD AIDS DAY)**

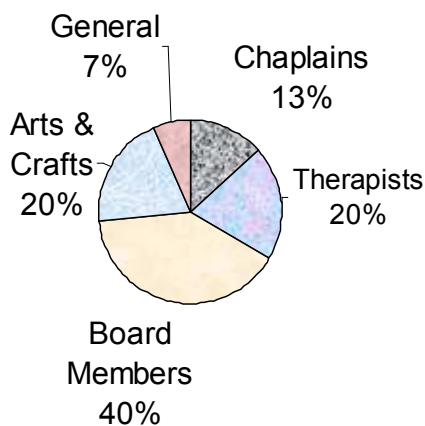
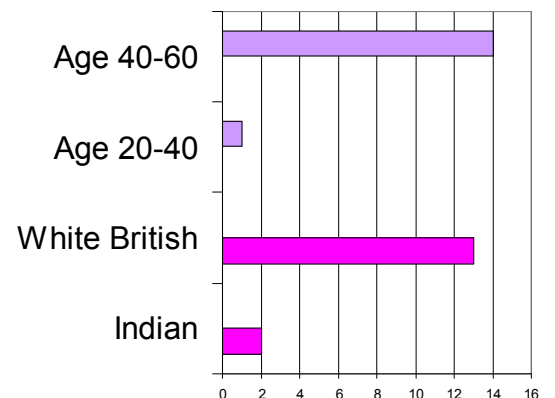
This was the third year in which we gathered in the Market Square as a public act of solidarity with people living with HIV, and to remember all who have died as a result of HIV-related illness. Once again, numbers attending the event are steadily increasing. We were pleased to be well supported by some of our local partner agencies, including LASS (Leicestershire AIDS Support Services) who ran their traditional market stall, and 'Trade'. Members of a Gospel Choir from De Montfort University provided some stirring music to contrast with the solemnity of the silence.

So much of our work is "hidden" and has to take place in private, so it is good to have this annual opportunity to "go public" and to rally tangible support. This sends an encouraging message to service users who still often feel stigmatised by their HIV and presents a challenge to the wider community that is still too ready to be indifferent.

We are delighted that our profile is raised year on year and would like to express our thanks for all who supported our World AIDS Day observances in any way.

Volunteers

Our work remains heavily dependent upon the contribution of our small team of dedicated and gifted volunteers. We are very grateful to our Volunteer Chaplains, Volunteer Complementary Therapists, Our Arts and Crafts facilitators, General Support Volunteers, and, of course, our Board of Trustees who also give freely of their time and talents.



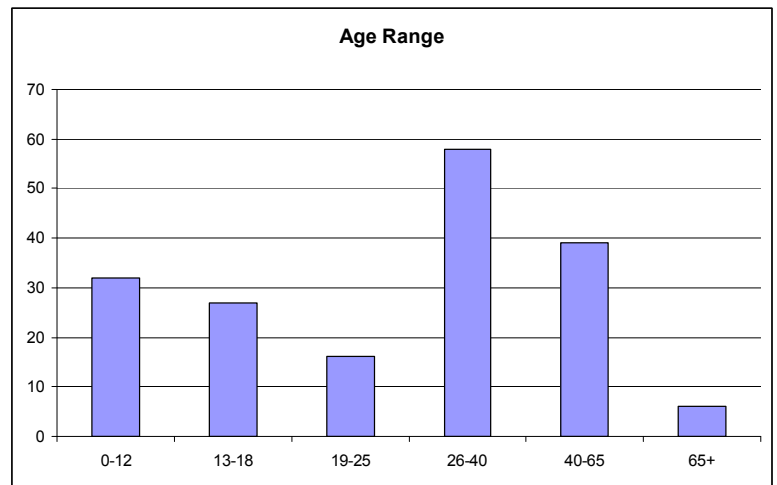
We are always delighted to hear from potential new volunteers for any of these roles. Given the sensitive and specialised nature of our work, however, we exercise a rigorous selection process and never sacrifice quality in the interests of quantity, and we are delighted to have volunteers who work to a professional standard and of whom we can be very proud.

Service Users

Julie White, Administrator, writes...

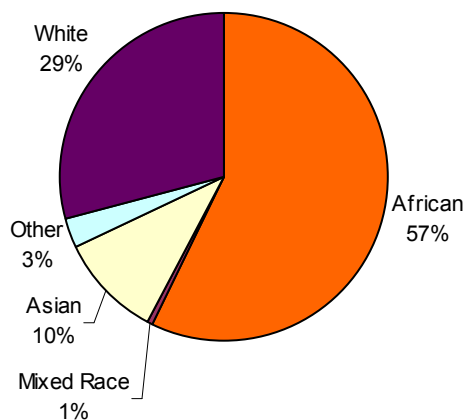
'Faith in People with HIV' was founded 13 years ago and throughout this time we have seen many changes.

Although we have a very varied age difference amongst our service users, the one thing they have in common is their ability to overcome problems whether they be financial hardship, side effects from medication, language or isolation.



By providing events that we hope appeal to all tastes, we endeavour to give the opportunity to meet others and form lasting friendships and peer support.

Growing self-confidence has encouraged many service users to enrol in further education, leading to qualifications which have enabled them to grow further in self-esteem and to feel that they are valued member of the community.



We have heard some sad tales - and shared some very amusing stories.

We have written poetry and created artwork – to the sound of laughter.

We have explored and accepted other religions – and found peace.

Thank you to our service users for their support and input into our work.

Julie White

Women and Families Support Worker

Michelle Overton writes...



Faith in Women Group



The women's group has remained a success and is now held on the first Wednesday of every month at the Lodge. We have had the pleasure of watching service users become empowered and move on into further education and employment and we have welcomed new members to the group. We would like to thank The Reverend Pam Bolas, our volunteer assistant Chaplain who co-facilitates the group with the women and families support worker.

Being a faith based organisation, we begin each session with a time of relaxation and meditation where the group members who follow a variety of religions can find a spiritual focus. The meditation will set up the theme for the day and this then leads into various activities ranging from art therapy to creative writing.

The women created a moving poem for the 2009 World AIDS Day Service at Leicester Cathedral which was read by members of the group as part of the service.

“I really enjoy coming here, where I can be myself and share my feelings.”

“Together as one”

“SaW – Survivors and Warriors” : Young People’s Group



The “SaW group” is a group for young people aged 10-17 years who are living with a positive status. The group is run in partnership with The University Hospitals Leicester NHS Trust (UHL) and Leicestershire AIDS Support Services (LASS). We would like to thank Matt Tomlin of LASS for his help and to welcome the new Specialist Nurse Wazir Ausalut to the group.

Over the last twelve months the “SaW” members have been busy bees! They have worked hard to create an art project addressing how they felt about the stigma and discrimination that is still attached to HIV/AIDS. The project was exhibited in the Curve Theatre during the week of World AIDS Day.



Part of the “Saw” Group Art Exhibition

The art project consisted of a collection of masks, poems and art work that gave a moving and true picture of how the young people are affected by the stigma and discrimination that they face.

One of the young people wrote a poem that was profoundly moving:

“I may be different

But I am human

I have feelings, just like you

What makes me different

Is not my disease

But the wicked thoughts

In your HEAD”

One member of the group said:

“The art project has given me some thing to focus on and I have enjoyed exploring how I feel in different ways. I am only fourteen and I have something that was not intentional and I have to live with.



In August 2009 The Big Lottery generously funded the “SaW” group to develop their own child friendly website that will act as a support mechanism to other young people who are living with a positive status. The young people are leading on this project and the website will be launched on December 1st 2010.

Families Clinic at the University Hospitals Leicester NHS Trust

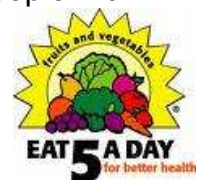


The families’ clinic takes place on the first Tuesday of every month and is held outside school hours. It is attended by consultants from the Infectious Disease unit (IDU), Genito Urinary Medicine (GUM), the Paediatric Consultant, the Specialist Nurse and the play therapist.

The Chaplain and Women and Families Support Worker of Faith in People with HIV



are present at the clinic each month and work in partnership to provide a seamless service to the families who attend. We are able to offer on hand support, meet new service users and really engage with the young people whilst working with the play



therapists. We also fund healthy snacks that are served for the children which also provide fun for all as well as having a health education value.

“Faith in Families” Project



In May 2009 we attended the Black Country museum, the weather was grand and the day gave the service users a taste of the Black Country history.

Back by popular demand in July 2009 we invited our service users to come and enjoy Drayton Manor Park with us. This was very well attended with a full coach and the day was thoroughly enjoyed by the adults and children alike.



Home visits



The women and families support worker is currently working with fifty-two people and regularly visits service users in their homes as and when required. Some of our service users have mobility problems, whilst some of those living in the County find it easier to be visited at home.

The courage shown by our service users as they cope with a chronic condition and forge a way through life dealing with stigmatisation and discrimination is admirable. Our underlying goal is always to empower individuals and groups to confidently overcome and challenge negative responses to HIV, to gain in self-esteem and to “normalise” their life as much as possible.

Michelle Overton

Volunteer Chaplain's Report

The Revd Frances Knight writes...

Over the last twelve months I have continued to visit service users on Thursday, my designated day for working with *Faith in people with HIV*.



The good news is that many of the people that I have been visiting who were asylum seekers have now been granted leave to remain and are gradually being placed in permanent housing. It has been wonderful to watch many of the service users grow in confidence and start to recreate their lives in this country. The downside for me is that they are then busy getting on with their lives, attending college courses or working and are thus no longer able to accommodate my visits.

However from time to time a different situation arises that still requires our intervention, for example some service users find themselves living in accommodation which does not have the furniture that Refugee Action provides and so they are often in need of help in equipping their new homes. This is often more difficult for the older, less active service users who are not as physically able to go out and bargain hunt, or to channel their energies into painting, decorating and gardening.

The wonderful part of all the visits I am able to make is the spiritual strength of the service users. The majority of them will ask me to pray with them and for them, and they are so grateful to God for all that they receive. The interesting thing is that even those service users of other faiths take great delight in sharing reflections and thoughts about their own faith whilst accepting me warmly as a priest of the Christian faith. Indeed we often end up having quite in depth theological discussions which are of mutual interest and help. It is clear that faith is central to the lives of these service users and central to how they live with their HIV.

Although I personally have only a handful of service users to visit at present, it is a great privilege to meet these people, many of whom have undergone amazingly courageous journeys to reach this country. I might only be visiting an area of about a fifteen mile radius of the city of Leicester but I have learned a great deal about many countries of the world, particularly about various African nations and India. Since starting this work the service users whom I have known since I first joined the charity have grown to know and trust me, and at times they will open up and share with me all sorts of news about themselves and their families.

I have also supported *Faith in people with HIV* by assisting in the facilitation of some of the Quiet Days alongside the staff and other volunteers. These have been at either the Buddhist House in Narborough or the retreat house at Launde Abbey.

Finally, once again I would like to thank Julie, Michelle and Trevor for all the support they give me from the Lodge.

Frances Knight



We wish to record particular thanks to:

- **Leicester City NHS PCT**
- **Leicestershire County and Rutland Primary Care Trust**
- **Leicester City Council**
- **Leicestershire County Council**
- **The Big Lottery**
- **University Hospitals Leicester NHS Trust : Families Clinic**
- **Colleagues at Leicestershire AIDS Support Services**
- **Colleagues in Social Services**
- **Clear and Lane (Accountants) Ltd**
- **The Dean and Chapter of Leicester Cathedral**
- **Church House, The Diocese of Leicester**
- **UK YOUTH**
- **Mr Steve Nicholls Dip Counselling & Therapy, Dip Supervision, BACP accredited**
- **The Revd Prebendary Duncan Ross, Diocese of London**
- **The AMIDA Trust**
- **The Warden and staff of Launde Abbey**
- **Task Displays Ltd**
- **"Curve"**
- **Trinity Methodist Church Choir, Markfield**
- **Catherine O'Keeffe, Mildmay International**
- **Julie White**
- **Michelle Overton**
- **All our VOLUNTEERS and FRIENDS**

Welcome donations received from:

- ❖ **'The Monday Club' Burbage**
- ❖ **Glenfield Methodist Church Ladies Meeting**
- ❖ **Mrs L Morjaria**
- ❖ **Braunstone Baptist Church**
- ❖ **Mr & Mrs Pandya**

In God's Love

*Divine Lover,
So fill me with yourself that I may be all love.
Transform my self-centredness
In your penetrating love and compassion.*

*In the power of your love dwelling in me,
May I now radiate*

*Love...
Compassion...
Joy...
Peace...*

*Within this radiation of love I place
my family...
my friends...
my colleagues...
those who have trusted me with their secrets...
those whom I love and like...
those whom I cannot yet like...
those who are my enemies...
those to whom are entrusted power, influence, decision...
those in trouble...sorrow...anxiety...illness...
those who are jubilant...
those who are quietly contented...
those who are dying...
those who have died...
all humankind...
all creation...*

*Divine Lover,
Whom the heavens adore,
may the whole earth worship you,
all tongues confess you,
all people obey you,
and all your friends love and serve you
in unity, trust and peace.*

Jim Cotter