



## ***Friends of Morley Newsletter – January 2009***

Many of you will by now have already heard the very sad news that Morley Retreat House is to close at the end of April. If you have not then this will come as a great shock to you (see enclosed copy of Press Release dated 20 January). The Bishop of Repton, the Rt Reverend Humphrey Southern, offers the following words to help us all try and come to terms with the situation in which we now find ourselves:

Dear Friends

These are dark and depressing days in all sorts of senses of those words. As the world struggles with recession, global warming, war, misgovernment and travails of all kinds, we at Morley have to come to terms with the devastating news of the House's closure together with the grim implications of this for those who live and work here. These are not circumstances that can be "spun" positively and it is important that we take proper space and time to grieve, to give thanks for and express pride in the work that has been done here and to appreciate properly the contribution to the life of the House and its visitors that so many staff and volunteers – current and past – have made over the years.

At the global level the inauguration of Barack Obama as President of the United States was a shining event amid the encircling gloom and there is one phrase from his inspiring speech that I want to dwell on as we reflect on the circumstances we find ourselves in. "The time has come," he said, "... to choose our better history". It's a phrase that merits careful thinking about.

I'm not talking (nor, I think, was the President) about choosing history in the sense of selectively telling the story of the past, but about how much we are in control of our destiny: the shaping of history yet to come. It's very easy to see ourselves – and Morley at the moment – as hapless victims of forces beyond our control: the vagaries of markets, the changing habits and preferences of retreatants and conference-goers, the decisions of finance directors. It's easy, in a word, to become fatalists, always in reaction mode to what Hamlet called "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune", and I suppose there's an inevitability to that feeling, at least to an extent.

But Obama's challenge – which is a Gospel challenge too, I suggest – is to refuse the status of victimhood. The history of Morley is not the history of a victim but of a community and a foundation that has been shaped and directed by those who have inhabited it to make a significant contribution to the praying, witnessing and thinking life of generations of Christians in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and further afield. That's a history to be told with pride and celebration. The Gospel promise – our sure and certain Hope – is that the future history of those involved in the Morley project, and the work itself of prayer, hospitality, witness and service, is a story that by the grace of God is there to be shaped and developed into the future which is God's future. There is a future for those purposes for which Morley has stood and we have the responsibility to discover it and live it. I am sure this insight and challenge is a significant theme to the prayers of all who are reading this, along with the prayers that we are also offering of regret and anxiety about the present and thankfulness and pride for what has gone before.

The Christian Faith is rooted in Death and Resurrection. The one does not cancel out the other and that is why death – whether of loved people or loved institutions – is devastating and we who love Morley are facing real bereavement with all that that brings. But Resurrection Hope assures us that by God's grace there is a future history to be chosen; and we who are people of faith need to allow this insight to characterise our planning, as well as our grieving.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Humphrey Southern'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned at the bottom left of the page.

## ***A Letter from The Warden***

## ***Celebration Event***

We are organising a service to recall and celebrate all the good things that Morley has been for us over the years.

This will take place in the chapel at The Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick on Saturday 30 May 2009 at 3.00pm (Morley Retreat House will be closed by then and we anticipate that our chapel would have been far too small anyway!)

The staff at The Hayes have been generous in their support for us and are also going to provide a buffet tea after the service so that we will have a chance to chat with old friends. We will be making a small charge for this and will send out invitations shortly once detailed arrangements are finalised.

If you have particular memories or photographs that you would like to share please send them to Jeff and Catherine at the Retreat House by post or email by 20<sup>th</sup> April. We would like to put together a selection of pictures to show during the service and possibly a small souvenir booklet for you all.

## ***Repayment of 2009 Subscriptions***

The Committee has decided that there will not be a subscription due for 2009. Consequently we are returning all subscriptions paid for 2009 except for those received towards the end of 2008 on which Gift Aid has already been claimed.

The funds remaining in the Friends' account will be used for the expenses incurred in arranging and publicising the celebration event at Swanwick.

## ***Closure of Chair Appeal***

As no further chairs will now be purchased, the Committee agreed to also repay any money that had been given specifically for chairs in 2009 and to close the appeal.

The new chairs in the Long Room have been very much appreciated by guests attending since November 2008

## ***Items donated to House***

If Friends have donated items to the House over the years and would like to reclaim them before the House closes on the 30 April 2009, would they please let Jeff and Catherine know as soon as possible to make the necessary arrangements

## ***Prayer Focus***

### **Give thanks for:**

- The encouragement and spiritual refreshment that so many have found at Morley over the years
- God's faithfulness in all circumstances
- All Wardens, Chaplains, Staff and Trustees who have served the House and those who visit it.

### **Please pray for:**

- Jeff and Catherine as they close the House and move into the future wherever that may lead them
- All Staff as they seek new employment
- The Trustees and the Derby Diocesan Board of Finance as they make decisions about the future use of the House.

## **A Prayer for the Friends of Morley**

(Taken from a Prayer Card issued in 1960)

**LORD of the pilgrim way,  
Make this House beautiful with Thine abiding presence:  
May all who come find welcome, refreshment and rest in Thee:  
May Thy wisdom and understanding fill our minds:  
May Thy joy and peace renew our hearts:  
May Thy grace and love possess our souls:  
May we live and strive for the good of Thy Church, and the glory of Thy Name.  
Amen**