

# ASHLEY NEWS EXTRA

## November 2007



**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> December**

Anita's talk will be especially for the young people and will look at theme park rides and life and God!



### *Beau Sejour*

**Care home for adults with learning disabilities, Castle Road**

### Christmas Party

*Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> December 4.30pm*

We have been invited to join the residents for their Christmas party. They have room for about six of us. If you would be interested in going please see Roy.

### Carol Singing

*Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> December 7-8.30pm*

Roy would like about fifteen people to join him for carol singing with the residents at their home. He would really love you to sing with him! See him if you can.



**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> December**

### *Advent Community Sermon*

*Autumn, Winter and Advent*

The theme for our next Community Sermon is *Autumn, Winter and Advent*: looking back and/or forward through the last three months of the year and God's place in all that for us. Please bring readings, thoughts, songs, dances, PowerPoint etc. Your contributions could also be associated with the Gospel of John as well as anything else.

Roy

### **Debbie Wilkinson goes to Nigeria**

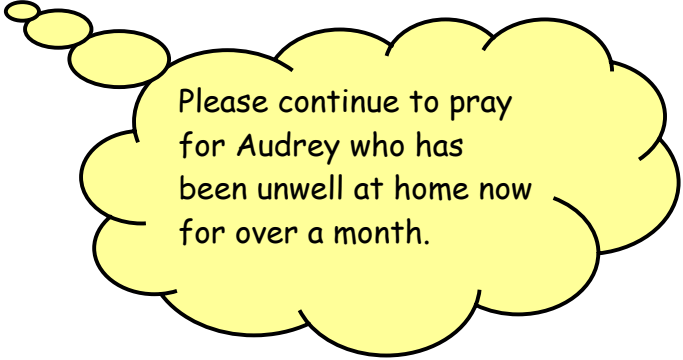
I'm going to Jos in Nigeria on 10th January for six months with Mission Africa to work in a school for children with learning disabilities and at a drop-in centre for street children. I will do crafts, music and sport with them and help with their academic lessons. There will also be opportunities for me to teach English and spend time with widows who are learning to earn their living by tailoring. I will be living on a missionary compound and sharing a house with 3 other girls from England and Ireland. I need to raise about £3000 for the cost of the trip and materials to take out there. We are planning the following fund raising events:

- a lunch after church on **Sunday 2nd December** with a live string quartet
- making and selling hand made cards
- sponsorship scheme where people can pray and sponsor me for a week. I will contact sponsors with prayer requests.

Any idea of things I can take or activities I can do with the children would also be welcome.

Debbie Wilkinson

We will continue to look at the Gospel of John during the spring, culminating with the resurrection on Easter Sunday.



Please continue to pray for Audrey who has been unwell at home now for over a month.

## greenbelt\_festival®

I have already talked about my involvement with Greenbelt this year and although Ashley does not directly sponsor this work it provides some support for me and this helps release me to spend time co-ordinating the work. This year we have written a report for sponsors to show our appreciation of the support they give and also to involve them in the excitement of the ministry. I hope the report does that for all at Ashley.

**Roy Gregory**

### ***Soul Space* Spiritual Directors' Report: Greenbelt Arts Festival 2007, Cheltenham Race Course**

#### **Background**

This year 25 000 people attended the three and half days of the Greenbelt Festival which, as usual, brilliantly encompassed music, seminars and workshops from a wide range of spiritual traditions with an emphasis on reality, inclusion and social justice.

The *Soul Space* initiative at Greenbelt has been developed over the last seven years. It is run by a team of spiritual directors who offer half-hour spiritual direction sessions throughout the festival and also create an area for prayer and quiet contemplation.

*Soul Space* has a stunning venue, high in the main grandstand of the Cheltenham Racecourse site, with wonderful views of the site and the surrounding hills. The venue is big enough for us to provide private individual spiritual direction in addition to the other related activities.

The aim of *Soul Space* is to introduce people to a wide range of different ways into prayer and to create an atmosphere in which people can pray easily and naturally. It also seeks to provide a non-threatening environment for individuals to engage with the activities offered at whatever level they feel comfortable.

#### **2007 Operation: The Team View**

We conducted 219 spiritual direction sessions during the festival and we estimated that approximately three thousand people visited the venue. The written feedback was overwhelmingly good and, in addition, many people thanked us personally on the last day. Typical comments were:

*My children, aged 7 and 4, made us come here 2-3 times every day. They were quiet and reverent, and this place is lovely. The youngest says she wishes we could "take Level 5 with us."*

*Thank you for this space. In a busy buzzing festival this place is profound and profoundly beautiful. God touched and refreshed me here.*

*This place feels like the soul of Greenbelt. It has been very healing for me to spend time here and think and pray about my life. Very beautiful and very special. Some of the spiritual/prayer exercises such as the tree of life and four seasons would be wonderful exercises to take back to our churches and homegroups.*

*A lovely space. Very peaceful with lots of variety and ways to connect. Wonderful resource ideas.*

*Fantastic books!* (Reference to the browsing table we provide)

*Thank you for creating this sacred space. Being listened to sensitively and compassionately was wonderful – thank you to the lovely Spiritual Director who listened to me.*

The activities and the space represented an important point of contact for people who wanted to talk about their spiritual journey, wanted a space just pray or just ‘be’, and/or wanted to find out more about spiritual direction. We provide a space that includes activities for children and adults, which we believe, creates an ‘all age’ spiritually helpful environment.

Each year we compile a list of contacts for those who would like to consider having spiritual direction on a more permanent basis. This facility was again well used and makes an important contribution to raising the awareness and accessibility of this ministry. We also publish a leaflet on ‘What is Spiritual Direction’ and present a workshop on the same theme.

This year, for the first time, we provided a website (sponsored by Annunciation Trust) to support our work and this was well used. It is linked from the main Greenbelt website and includes a list of the resources used in *Soul Space* (including downloadable copies), a list of the books that were available in *Soul Space* on the browsing table, a biographical description of the spiritual directors, and information on spiritual direction. This we would expect to continue and expand for next year. (The web address is <http://www.annunciationtrust.org.uk/SoulSpace/>)

## **Finance**

Our team of eight spiritual directors and a venue manager are expecting to return next year and in order to do this we need to maintain the same total level of funding from Greenbelt and outside sponsors. This funding allows us to provide off site B & B accommodation and to cover ‘out of pocket’ expenses. The B & B accommodation supports the team who all work very long hours in *Soul Space* and see many directees with a vast array of presenting stories.

## **Evaluation/Conclusions**

The team provides an excellent arena for the planning and the creation of *Soul Space*, before the festival. It also provides both support and accountability for the spiritual direction during the festival. The space and the short spiritual direction sessions provide a unique facility for those attending and offer an introduction to a model of spiritual formation that they might not have experienced before.

Roy Gregory  
(For the *Soul Space* Spiritual Directors Team)