



“Creating Community
-Making for Encounter”

Residential Membership of the Well Community

A Guide for Potential Members and Enquirers

“The Well is a place of encounter...”
Fr Frank Green, SSM. 1997.

"The Well 'creates' community, it makes for encounter. No two people come to a well to fill their buckets without talking and, if that well be the living spirit of Christ, then the Jew talks to the Samaritan, the man to the woman, the prophet to the sinner (with a good deal of banter and laughter), the stranger and the traveller to the locals.

People find one another at the well; share gossip, laughter and deep things as they work at the rope; have time for one another; travel to and from; bring empty buckets and take them away full for the use of others in the house or wherever. Things happen at the well.

The well is the symbol of the life-giving God whom we seek. It is not 'our' well' we may be the locals, but the well is for all as God is for all - the Heart of the matter - a deep, still entry into the vast, inexhaustible, unseen source below"

Are you interested in living in Community? –

If you are reading this leaflet the chances are that you would like to find out more so:

Who are we? – The Well Community Mission Statement

The Well at Willen is a community of single people, couples and families, attempting to live a contemporary expression of religious life through our values of spirituality, hospitality, inclusivity, peace and justice and sustainability. Both in Milton Keynes, and in partnership with our local and global communities.

We are people who want to devote our lives to the service of that which we call God, through the service of others, by offering all who come to The Well the opportunity to discover healing and wholeness and develop gifts they may not have been aware of.

We are committed to valuing and supporting others and ourselves equally, within a spirit of honesty, love, reconciliation and compassion, through reflection, discussion and action, to encourage ways of renewing human community.

A brief history of the site...

The Society of the Sacred Mission (SSM), an Anglo-Catholic religious order relocated from Kelham, Notts, to Willen, Milton Keynes in 1972 where they built a Priory. Since then they have made many good friends in the new Milton Keynes but, in common with many religious orders, found new members few and far between

This is where we come in...

Dilly Baker, who was then the vicar of Willen Church, along with her husband Chris, discussed with SSM their own vision of setting up a lay, family-based, ecumenical community. For three

years a small group explored the possibility of forming a new community and in August 1997, after extensive building work to convert the individual units into family accommodation, the first members finally moved in. The conversion work was funded by SSM who also generously agreed to financially support the new community by offering a three-year start up grant.

The story so far ...We are a non-hierarchical community with a shared leadership. Decisions are made in our community meetings, with important decisions being based on a sense of what is right. In choosing to live so closely together we go against the trend of individualism. Not surprisingly, community life can be very different! But it's never dull!

Home- our community life We currently have nine adult residential members and two younger members. This is made up of one family, one couple and four single people. We have four non-residential members. Each family/individual has their own living space as well as sharing in the communal areas. As community members we aim to have a daily, shared meal and twice daily times of reflection/prayer together, This is led by a different member of the community each week in accordance with their own traditions. The daily tasks of the community (cooking, cleaning, shopping) are based on a rota system. We all pay rent on our private living quarters and contribute towards food each week. We hold a weekly community meeting as well as regular meetings with our Steering Group and Support and Development Group. We are currently a Housing Co-operative but are seeking to obtain charitable status.

Garden...At the back of the house we have an orchard and a large vegetable patch.. We also

grow soft fruit; apples, pears, plums & damsons and we also keep free-range chickens, which provide us with beautiful eggs (providing we can protect them from the local foxes). The garden is a haven for wildlife, with many species of birds, frogs, newts and bats.

Faith traditions.....The community has a Christian base but welcomes people from different faith traditions and none, and is actively working to create and foster dialogue understanding and acceptance. We find ourselves greatly enriched by the traditions and experience of others.

THE VALUES WE ASPIRE TO:

- q **SPIRITUALITY**
- q **HOSPITALITY**
- q **INCLUSIVITY**
- q **PEACE & JUSTICE**
- q **SUSTAINABILITY**

PERSONAL COMMITMENT

Residential Members make:

- q A Financial Commitment
 - q A Spiritual Commitment
 - q A Personal Commitment.
- q Financial Commitment – this involves paying a monthly rent to support the physical needs of the community and the ongoing work. It also involves giving time to support fundraising and charitable activities.
- q Spiritual Commitment – all members sign up to the Well's Mission Statement and also support and enrich the prayer life of the community.

q Personal Commitment – this involves offer a minimum of 10 hours a week of personal time to serve the community. This can be through cleaning, cooking, gardening, personnel management, programme development, supporting events or running retreats, quiet days and workshops. Although we have a paid Facilities & Finance Manager & Caretaker members currently work hard to deliver the three objects of the Well at Willen.

1. TO ESTABLISH A CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY WHERE ORDINARY PEOPLE MAY DEDICATE THEIR LIVES TO THE DIVINE SERVICE THROUGH SERVICE TO OTHERS AND BY ENCOURAGING THE SPREAD OF THEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE.
2. TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT AWARENESS OF THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS FAITH IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY, TO WORK FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF RELIGIOUS HARMONY AND TO DEMONSTRATE FAITH IN ACTION BY OFFERING HOSPITALITY AND THE PROVISION OF SHELTER AND CARE FOR THOSE IN NEED.
3. TO PROVIDE A FORUM TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE THEOLOGICAL STUDY, DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE THEOLOGY OF HOSPITALITY, INCLUSIVITY, PEACE & JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABILITY.

Still Interested – How do I apply?

This couldn't be simpler, if you are interested in the idea of community living and like what you have heard so far you need to take the following steps:

1. Give us a call or write to us at the address below asking for our Members Pack.
2. Come and visit – we suggest you visit us for at least a weekend before applying for probationary membership.
3. Fill in your application forms and return them to us at the address below.
4. You will then be invited to spend more time with us and finally to a potential members weekend where you will have the opportunity to meet community members and ask questions.

5. If you are still interested we will ask you to write to us confirming that you wish to be considered for Probationary Residential Membership. (Please bear in mind you will probably have to wait until a residential place becomes available)
6. We will keep in touch and when space becomes available we will check if you still want to join us and look at your application.
7. If you are successful you will be offered residential accommodation for a 6-month probationary period. As well as an induction period this gives both the community and you a chance to find out about each other.
8. At the end of 6 months your probationary membership will be reviewed and if appropriate, ratified.
9. Full members then sign up to staying at The Well for a period of 1 or 5 years (this can be a renewable commitment)

Do remember If this is not for you there are other ways to share in the work of The Well :

- **As a Non Residential member (see Leaflet)**
- **As a Friend of the Well (see Leaflet).**
- **To live and work for a specified period of time – usually 3 – 9 months or 1 year.**

For further information or just to have a chat contact us at:

The Well at Willen, Newport Road, Willen, Milton Keynes, MK15 9AA.

Tel: 01908 242190

E-mail: enquires@thewellatwillen.org.uk

Website: www.thewellatwillen.org.uk