

"Come light of the world, come!"

Dear Sisters and Friends,

Each year we hear the same Christmas story: Mary and Joseph, the child in the manger, the shepherds in the fields and the three wise men following the star. But this year our world is different, we are different: joy and sorrow, laughter and tears shared in our community and with our sisters in the UK, the Netherlands and Germany, with our colleagues and friends, sickness in our families and the death of sisters worldwide, the many precious encounters with the homeless, the refugees and the sick in the hospital along our way to Christmas filled our year.

But no matter what changes happen, again the Christmas story speaks to us of a new birth. It may be an old story but it is one that always carries forth new hope, a new understanding of how God reveals himself in our life. A new way of relating to each other is asked of us, taking everyone alongside on our journey to Bethlehem. We follow the star that leads us to what we are called to witness: the new life, wrapped in swaddling clothes.

We sisters in Springfield Community have entered into our third year in London. Relationships are growing and we are grateful for all the many people we got to know and who are helping us to settle in the UK. The multiculturalism of our neighbourhood and in our work enriches our life - and each culture adds a special flavour or a special melody....

Music plays an important role in our life and in the celebrations with our sisters in the UK. Music often goes beyond what sometimes is difficult to express in words. When we play music together with our parish choir, with other young adults or with refugees in the detention centre, the melodies create community and just keep on humming. That's already enough.

Earlier this year the preparation for our upcoming worldwide chapter next year was initiated. Sisters in the UK and in Europe gathered to bring together and discuss what we see are the burning issues of today: How do we focus our mission and respond to the growing poverty and the misery migrants and refugees have to go through? We are fortunate to have so many partners and groups we network with, even beyond our borders.

Agustina Sonda Mase stayed for one year with us until she returned back home to Indonesia in September. She added another sometimes chili hot flavour to our life in Springfield Community! During her time she was curious to get to know life in Europe and worked with the Jesuit Refugee Service and trafficked women in Woman@well: *" Through my voluntary work I got to know a little bit more about the real situation of people in London, especially migrants: I never imagined before that in London there are so many homeless people - for me, London/UK is a rich country like other European countries. My mind was changed when I saw people sleeping in the streets, parks, along the canal, around apartment blocks, even in garbage places. I really felt pity for their situation - but what can I do?? Sometimes I felt hopeless to see so many people who are suffering in this country - and everywhere in the world. On the other hand, I also*



saw and experienced that there are many people and social organizations who are really committed to helping these vulnerable people. I am happy that I could take part in this mission for people in need."

Simone Herrmann highly enjoys working as a doctor in Kingston Hospital and has recently gained some new experience in St Thomas Hospital in London. During summer she participated in a gathering of younger Medical Mission Sisters in Indonesia and beforehand visited our sisters in District Pakistan. *"It was my first visit in an Islamic country and a special time as it was Ramadan, the holy month of fasting. With a little ambulance bus we drove to the brick kiln factories and related villages around Faisalabad and Lahore. Here our sisters held clinics and offered treatment to bonded workers who otherwise struggle to access the health care system. How often we were welcomed into their houses. Although most of the families hardly have enough for themselves we were invited to eat and to drink and to dance with the women. How often we were told: "Your sisters are our friends because they don't make a difference whether we are Muslims or Christians."*

In her outreach work with St Mungo's **Jyoti Kujur** shares the joys and struggles Indian homeless in our borough go through: *"While working with one of our clients by accident I discovered some hidden talents in him: an excellent drummer, a singer and a great comedian. For everything he had a song or a joke. I was left speechless. He should be somewhere in the good place, not on the street. His talent should be honoured, and so I asked him to play for the St Mungo's Diwali celebration in one of the hostels. All through our journey to the venue his face radiated joy. All of us were lost into his rhythm which was so joyful and full of life and laughter. He left everyone in deep amusement with his excellent drumming. I could never ever imagined that a person who is on the street for years could win the heart of everyone. I was so inspired and touched by this sacred moment, to see him playing all throughout the program, carrying the big drum which is so dear to him on his shoulders. He looked so peaceful and self-contented."*

New life appears where ever we are open to discover it. With gratitude and love we wish you and your families a Merry Christmas time and a blessed New Year 2015 to come

Simone Herrmann and Jyoti Kujur