

Message from the Community

Welcome to the **Sixth Edition** of our newsletter.

The amount of news we have to report to you from Africa grows each year. We have news to fill many more pages than appear here!

Our Priory in Mirhi, D R Congo celebrated a landmark 50th year since foundation this year and this coincided with the elections of a new Prioress, S. Floride.

S. Floride takes over from S. Petronella. Prioress for 12 years, Petronella has faced many challenges during her term of office and has always demonstrated great strength and character. During her years as Prioress, we have seen continuous growth in outreach of the Priory including the building of the Nutritional Centre and the setting up of two new Community houses in Kindu.

We are excited in this newsletter to tell you about quite a different project for our sisters - the opening of a new African Community house in Dunkirk, with a specific mission to work in the refugee and migrant encampment there.

In Rwanda, after a year of concern about funding, work has started again on the building of the school in Masaka, which we are pleased to say is scheduled to complete in early 2017.

We are also delighted to have 2 two volunteers travelling out to Rwanda in early 2017 for 6 months to teach English to the sisters. Another volunteer travelled to Rwanda in October, in advance of their visit, to provide a refresher course and assess learning needs.

Some of the Community here are privileged to bear witness directly to the work being done by our African sisters and we are able therefore to share their accounts with you. We are, however, also encouraged to see that improvements in technology, and closer connections by email, are enabling some of the African sisters to provide reports directly to us.

We hope that the newsletter goes some way to giving you an update on the day-to-day work of the sisters and something of the vision for the future.

We take this opportunity on behalf of our African Community to thank each of you for your support, whether it be financially, in friendship or in prayer.

With love from the Community



S. Margaret Mary and newly elected S. Floride

Contents

Message from the Community	1
S. Petronella, DR Congo	2
DRC Community celebrates 50 years	3
New project in Dunkirk	4
Mirhi Nutritional Centre	4
Rwanda volunteer project	5
Our adventures in Kindu	8
School in Masaka	11
In the News	12
Fundraising	13

S. PETRONELLA (D R CONGO)



In August 2016 Sister Petronella concluded her 12 years as Prioress of Mirhi in Congo, the largest of the Priors in the Association. The mandate of our Prioresses is six years. Petronella was re-elected in 2010 and was the first of our African sisters to do a second mandate – a measure of her competence and the confidence of her numerous sisters. And it was fitting that the end of this second mandate coincided with the conclusion of Mirhi's year of great celebration, marking the Golden Jubilee of their birth as an independent Priory.

Petronella's first concern has always been the welfare of her sisters and to this end she has travelled many thousands of miles within Congo, within two other African countries, and between Africa, Europe and S. America. On these visits to the different communities she has taken great trouble to assure herself that each sister has all she needs to live out the essential aspects of our life – community, prayer and service. This incessant travelling has taken its toll in terms of exhaustion, but has been seen by Petronella as essential to her role. She has shown particular compassion for the oldest sisters, and for sick sisters, several of whom have been younger and have died of conditions that are not fatal in Europe.

Alongside this Petronella has had to carry the burden of knowing that her sisters in Congo are living in a very dangerous part of a dangerous country. There have been raids on some of their houses and during her time as Prioress they have had to take difficult decisions to close some houses on account of the danger to her sisters. Such decisions were never taken lightly, since the desire has always been to remain with the people whatever the danger.

Finance has always been a serious worry – not just the funds for the various projects, but the everyday concern that there will be enough money for the very basic daily needs of the sisters. And additionally the finance needed so that each sister had the opportunity for an annual retreat – another key aspect of our life.

When members of the Association visit Mirhi, Petronella is an excellent hostess ensuring that all visits achieve their purpose, that she, herself, makes time for the guests, and that opportunities to spend relaxed time with the sisters are found. The new Guest House was one of Petronella's building projects.

Probably one of Petronella's greatest achievements has been to espouse the concept of founding new independent autonomous Priors, and Rwanda was the first of these. Currently Kindu is in a process that we hope will lead to autonomy. There is a plan for others to follow. This is ensuring the Association will live on for another epoch.

Another way in which Petronella has played a significant part in ensuring the future of the Association has been her promotion and support of our two first African General Councillors, Véronique and Thérèse. She has enabled them to play important roles in the on-going formation of the African sisters whose understanding of our charism, spirituality and Association-life has grown and deepened as a result in these last years.

This very inadequate sketch of some of Petronella's achievements over these last twelve years only hints at the person she is: a strong, courageous, persevering, wise and compassionate woman whose life is founded on, and energised by, prayer.

Her understanding of leadership is clearly that of the servant-leader. We and so many others are immensely proud of her and we hope that before she starts any new task she will have an extended rest and a time of renewal.

Sister Floride was elected as the new Prioress of Mirhi on 24 August 2016.

MIRHI 50 YEAR CELEBRATION: 1966 - 2016

The Priory of Mirhi has spent the past twelve months celebrating 50 years since its foundation in 1966, and August 21st 2016 was the date of the final celebration.



The day began with Mass at 9.30am and there was a long procession into the church – around 200 Daughters of the Resurrection were present, including a large contingent from Rwanda who had travelled overnight and arrived at about 9am. There were 7 of us European sisters, and a large number of priests and the Archbishop of Bukavu.



The main celebrants wore vestments bordered by the special material printed for the Jubilee which told the story of the 50 years. Many of the guests had bought this material too and skirts, dresses, blouses, shirts, jackets, hats, bags, had been made out of it!



The Mass itself was magnificent. The music had been very well rehearsed and was wonderful. Children danced, dressed in the same jubilee material – the joy was palpable throughout. The church was more than full and many people were outside around the church. It was a true Eucharist – a great prayer of thanksgiving. Towards the end some people spoke: a representative of Aid to the Church in Need; an original Belgian missionary sister who had been present in 1966; the Archbishop; and Margaret Mary as the Prioress General.

Some of the memories of these 50 years recalled the joy of the huge expansion of the Community and their service of the poor across many Dioceses. Others reflected on the sadnesses – the sisters who had been murdered in the 1990s in Kasika and Busasamana; the communities which had had to close because of surrounding danger and insecurity; the sisters who had died before their time because of the lack of appropriate medical care. One speaker described the years as a cloth of gold with red threads running through it.



Following Mass the hundreds of participants were ushered towards a transformed farmyard where the feast took place. It was extraordinary and it was difficult to believe where we were. As special guests we were given comfortable seating in the shade and were incredibly well looked after throughout – looked after by sisters and by members of FAXR, the associated lay group, who were a quite excellent help to the sisters, taking responsibility for many aspects of the day.



The provision of food and drink was incredibly generous and the hundreds of people there all had a very good hot meal. How that was achieved remains a mystery. Throughout the meal there was entertainment – song, dance, recitations, drama, presentations etc. At one moment an enormous cake with 50 candles arrived on the head of a sister. Petronella, the Bishop and Margaret Mary blew out the candles and made the first incision into the cake. The feast ended around six o'clock – some eight and a half hours after it began!



It had been an extraordinary day – a most wonderful celebration – both the Mass and the Feast, full of Resurrection joy – superbly imagined and organised – we could only marvel at it all and congratulate everyone involved!



A NEW COMMUNITY IN DUNKIRK!

As the Congolese sisters end their Golden Jubilee celebrations, we are excited to tell you about their new venture in France. Invited by the Diocese of Lille, some of our Congolese sisters will be establishing a Community house in Dunkirk.

The express mission of the Community in Dunkirk will be to work towards improving the conditions of the lives of migrants there. It follows the establishment of a worldwide network of sisters at the service of migrant people. The promise to provide help for migrant people was made by the International Union of Superior Generals who met in Rome in May 2016, at a celebration to mark the end of the 'Year of Consecrated Life'.

It is currently envisaged that the sisters will arrive in January 2017 and we will report on their progress in our next Edition.

NUTRITIONAL CENTRE IN MIRHI, DRC

You may remember that last year for the first time the Community in D R Congoshared statistical evidence with us, which demonstrated that the Nutritional Centre was having a positive effect on the children it was treating.

We have now received the report for 2015. Throughout 2015 the sisters treated 78 children (67 in 2014) between the ages of 1 month and 11 years old. The majority were successfully treated for malnutrition and all the others are listed as having improved. The latter are those treated more recently and many will still be undergoing treatment. None of children treated died of their condition.

Between January and May 2016 there were 25 children being treated and we will report again next year. The Mirhi sisters thank you for your support.

RWANDA VOLUNTEER PROJECT

Phoebe Lim, our first volunteer in Rwanda, returned to the UK just after Easter this year. Phoebe's visit was a great success and has laid the path for future visits.



The objective of the Rwanda volunteer project is to help our sisters improve their spoken and written English. This is because the Rwandan government, in 2008, made the decision to change the official teaching language from French to English, in order to bring Rwanda into the Anglophone world.

It has meant that Rwandan nurses must now train in English, and thus several of the sisters, who are nurses, have had to retrain in English. Likewise, Rwandan teachers are now expected to teach mostly or completely in English.

In September this year, after her 6 month teaching assignment in Rwanda had finished, Phoebe returned to give a talk to Community and friends about her experiences.

Just before Phoebe departed for Rwanda in October 2015, the English Community held a special commissioning ceremony for Phoebe, with her family and friends to send her on her way to Rwanda.

This was Phoebe's first visit to Africa, indeed at 18 and having only just sat her A levels, she had not travelled too far from home. So her memories of Africa were all the more vivid. Her first impressions were of seeing lizards

everywhere, red ground, a lot of trees and greenery.

She recalled a stillness, sometimes the sound of owls and birds and other animals, people chopping wood or cutting the grass, the nuns praying or singing. The smell of soap from the floors being cleaned; smoke from the kitchen; so much sweat in church. And of course, there was much dancing, drums and singing.



Phoebe stayed in the communities of Busasamana and Masaka, where the sisters cared for her so well she had to fight to get involved with the household chores!

She taught different groups of postulants and novices in the morning and the sisters in the afternoon.



At weekends she kept herself busy with lesson planning, walking round the fields, reading, writing her diary, and playing the ukulele. She also had the occasional delight of making pineapple jam with the sisters and learning lots of ways to cook potatoes! She advises future volunteers to take things to do, as time takes on a different dimension without the distractions of the "developed world".

Phoebe also visited other parts of Rwanda; different villages along Lake Kivu and Kibeho, where there is a Catholic Shrine. A visit to the genocide memorial in Kigali was particularly harrowing but very informative. The exhibition was in English, French and Kinyarwanda. Outside the memorial were the graves of 200,000 people - a very peaceful and beautiful place, though the hush was definitely tinged with a deep and tangible sorrow.

Reflecting on the attitude of the sisters to learning, Phoebe remarked "The sisters take education very seriously and often pray before studying. They see the opportunity of education as an honour and its fruits as a gift from God and a way to glorify God."

Phoebe saw the progress the sisters, novices and postulants made in the time she was there. She saw how keen they were to learn, and how vital English is to them in their work.

Thank you Phoebe on behalf of our sisters.

THREE MORE VOLUNTEERS



Sarah Stevenson, Jackie Nevill, Marilyn Hickie

And so, it was wonderful when we found two more volunteers, Jackie and Marilyn, to continue with the teaching and another, Sarah, who, in October this year, went for two weeks to do a refresher course and assess learning needs. We will report again in the next Edition!

We would also like to thank an 'Old Fish' who generously donated money for this project, when she was finally not able to take part. We will be putting those funds to good use for language training in Rwanda.

MY TIME IN RWANDA – by Sarah Stevenson



So how did I get to go to Rwanda to teach English to the nuns at a convent near Kigali? Well, more than twenty years ago, I worked with the English nuns at New Hall School in Chelmsford. I was the school's first Marketing Manager and that was the mid 90s when the internet was just beginning.

I went on to work for other schools and colleges and eventually decided to become a teacher of English as a foreign language. I remember Sister Pauline being a big influence on me many years ago and that was her subject.

Several months ago I read about the opportunity to teach the nuns in Rwanda and I thought what a wonderful opportunity that would be. I was only able to commit for two weeks recently but the experience certainly did live up to expectations

In Rwanda it was so peaceful and quiet at the convent and in the gardens, and often I could hear the nuns singing in the chapel as I walked around. It was a very special place. I absolutely loved it. There was no wifi, no email, no facebook. It was a pure internet detox. There was no TV, and no computers. I taught with blackboard and chalk for about six hours a day and absolutely loved it. Luckily I had brought along lots of games, song books, handouts and dictionaries.

I felt very much at home with the Rwandans, in a strange way even more so than with the

British in the UK where I have lived for the past 25 years (I am originally from Australia). Rwandan people love to laugh, to dance and sing and to tease one another in a gentle good-humoured way. It was very refreshing. They are also very affectionate and confident and they are the most wonderful hosts. The food was amazing. Everything was home-cooked and most of the produce came directly from the garden and their little farm, including the most delicious tropical fruit.



My husband went to India last year with a charity called “The Lotus Flower Trust”. They wrote on their website “Go to the people, live among them, learn from them, plan with them, start with what they know, build with what they have”. I believe that we can learn so much from others who live in such different worlds and in that way, we can become better teachers and better at helping others. I have made friends for life, with the novices and the sisters at the convent in Masaka, and I will never forget them. I will definitely visit them again soon.

What struck me the most was how much happier Rwandans are compared with Europeans in general. It seems that the more you have in life, the more possessions, the more career opportunities, the more education, the more money you have, the less happy you become as a nation. I hope that as Rwanda continues to prosper and grow, it retains its joy.

Rwandans are close to God, they trust in God, and they enjoy their life. They sing and worship and pray together, and they certainly know how to laugh together. I will never forget their kindness and generosity, and I will try to remember in the future the happy sociable Rwandan people living their good life without First World problems.

As Europeans and Australians we sometimes think we should help and change the lives of others in far flung countries but it is often the case that they can show us way more than we can show them.



A sketch by Sarah's husband!

OUR ADVENTURES IN KINDU

In the last Newsletter we told you about our new house in the east of D R Congo and the exciting prospect of Kindu working towards becoming an autonomous Priory.

We are pleased to share with you a report which has come directly from our sisters in Kindu.



Four years ago, we established a new house in the landlocked diocese of Kindu in the east of DR Congo. There were 7 of us to begin with.

The local bishop was very keen for us to come to Kindu. The local people have suffered so much. Being a largely pagan area, people were unfamiliar with the work of Religious but we have now become established in the area.

The services we are providing have increased and with that so has the number of sisters. There are now 12 of us here, and with the help of the Association and our Mirhi-Bukavu Priory, we have bought a second house and established a second Community.

As well as working alongside the local people, we manufacture Hosts for 19 parishes; work with the small diocesan seminary and manufacture pharmaceutical products. So we need to live near the places where this work is situated and we needed to buy a house which had access to electricity.

Our second Community house ("Emmanuel") has structural problems due to being built from clay, so is going to have to be rebuilt. However, we hope it will soon become a real

centre for our apostolic life of prayer and service to the local people.

The needs here are enormous and multiple. Our presence and our action is limited, but for us, we really feel we are living out an adventure. We feel touched by the charism of our Founders, "Being with and among the people, where God weeps and serving God and every person He puts in our way."

Wherever we look there are challenges, especially for women and young people which make up about half of the population.

The plight of women and girls touched us right from the start: girls marry and become mothers early and are often abandoned by the fathers during or after the birth of their babies.

In our efforts to help them, we began by getting them together and also visited them at home. From there came the solution that in order to help them we needed to start a women's Training Centre, where they could meet each other and get training.

Our goal since then is: to help them to pick themselves up, help them learn to take responsibility and make a living through skills based training. To give them hope in life.

The Training Centre has been running now for two years. It has its ups and downs with regard to active participation of the group but we go on anyway.

We have also taught them to plow and we have created a model vegetable garden together where they learn to grow food and afterwards use the products for their families.



Two sisters are at their disposal. They meet twice a week and hopefully more often into the future.

Here are a few examples of our work in Kindu:

Sewing workshop

We have already made uniforms for students in the primary school, albs and chasubles for priests and other garments for men, women and children. Slowly but surely!

The barnyard

We manage the agricultural centre at Katako, rearing cattle and pigs.



We grow maize, soybeans, bananas and other crops in the location and look after the diocesan vegetable garden.

We also manage the production of palm oil which is important for the manufacturing of soap and provides the finances to pay the wages of our workers.



Education

We have a presence in the school, in the coordination of Catholic schools as Diocesan Advisor and in the running of children's activities and youth groups.

Two sisters are catechists in Katako, three at our 'Emmanuel' community and one is responsible for the liturgy of the Parish.

Another sister works at the Diocesan Pastoral, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (CDPCL) and on request runs meetings and sessions for Catechists and heads of Foundation Communities or Catholic Action movements.

Health Centre and Maternity Unit

We have a vision and hope for the future. This vision is of building a Health Centre and Maternity Unit. This gives us inspiration, as we know it would help us to better serve the local people. There are so many reasons and stories behind us wanting to bring this project to fruition but it would take too long to put them all down on paper!

Well or water tank

Planting ourselves in the heart of Kindu, we have unearthed a 'brick wall' of a problem – that of a lack of water, especially during the dry season.

A water tank is very important in order to have the water of life!



We dug wells in our two Communities but alas, they all dried up in the high season! I enclose a photo of linking barrels which we made and which give us a few litres of water during the rainy season. Another of a sister returning from the water source!



Recently the local people have suffered. Some have even lost their lives, following an outbreak of cholera caused by the lack of clean water in the area. They had been forced to drink water from the river and we saw what happened as a consequence...

Apart from this concern, we continue our journey, remaining attentive to the Risen One who visits us every day, explains the Scriptures to us and breaks Bread for us.

Sr. Anne Marie, Kindu

Please see the website for more photos of our sisters at work in Kindu.

<http://www.canonesses.co.uk/media/38916/kindu - photos 2016.pdf>

Here are some of the specific projects our fundraising campaigns and donations have paid for:

TRANSPORT IN KINDU



The sisters in Kindu have to rely on the generosity of the local people to get them from A to B.

This is the vehicle bought earlier this year with donations for Kindu. It is so important to the sisters and has given them independence.



Hopefully it will also avoid too many of these situations happening again...



MEDICAL CENTRE IN KINDU

Other fundraising has made it possible to build a 'poste de santé' (Health Centre). It will be built over the next year and we will have photos to show you next year.

The sisters now need medicines and equipment for the Centre

If you would like to sponsor any of the items
http://www.canonesses.co.uk/media/38853/kindu_health_centre.doc.pdf

please contact

projects@canonesses.co.uk.

THE SCHOOL IN MASAKA, RWANDA



We are pleased to be able to report that in April 2016, construction of the school in Masaka commenced. Last year due to lack of funds, the development of the school had to be halted.

Our Community in Rwanda predict they will need 12 classes given the number of children in the area.



S. Marie Rose, Prioress in Rwanda, reports:

“As funding is limited we are starting by building 6 classes. The contractor promised that by August the first section of the building will have a roof on. We have so far paid for the laying of the foundations. Now we need to pay a second and third instalment. We rely on divine providence!”

STOP PRESS!



As we were about to publish the newsletter, we had news that we now have funds and the go ahead to complete the building. We can now confirm that the building will also house a Senior School. The Community and the people of Masaka are overjoyed.



*Sister Margaret Mary, with Sister Marie Rose
visiting the building site – August 2016*

IN THE NEWS

ELECTIONS IN D R CONGO

D R Congo presidential elections due in November 2016 have been postponed

There have been violent protests in recent weeks over fears that President Joseph Kabila was trying to delay polls. Under the Constitution, he cannot stand for a third elected term and his presidential term is due to terminate in December this year.



Angry protesters accuse the president of trying to cling to power

Both the presidential and parliamentary elections had been due to take place on 27 November 2016.

Many people have died in the protests in Kinshasa and other cities in the past few months. The demonstrators wanted to block parliament from adopting a new electoral law which would have required that a national census be held before elections and fear that the delay will allow changes to be made to the Constitution to allow the President to stand for a third term.

However the D R Congo's ruling coalition and one opposition faction have now agreed to delay the vote from this November to April 2018, citing logistical and budgetary difficulties enrolling millions of voters.

The security situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo appears to be deteriorating.

Opposition leaders have promised further protests, raising fears of a return to widespread violence in a country where millions have died in civil conflicts since the 1990s and rebel groups continue to wreak anarchy in eastern regions.

The Kivu area around Bukavu has become very dangerous and there have been several attacks and deaths. The sisters are very anxious for their own safety and that of their people.

SISTER GÉORGINE



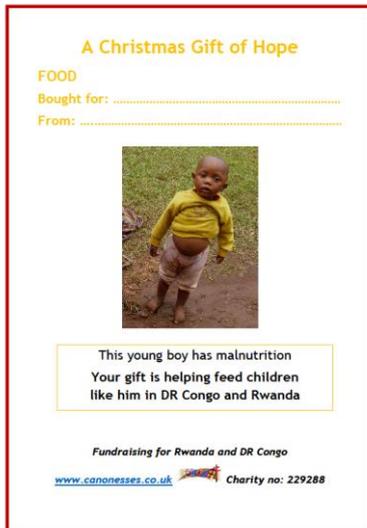
We were shocked and saddened by the news that Sister Géorgine Wango was tragically killed in a hit and run incident in Liège.

Sister Géorgine was one of our sisters in Rwanda. She had survived the attack on our sisters in Busasamana in 1998, in which several of our sisters were killed. She had sustained major injuries from that attack. After the massacre, Géorgine gained Belgian nationality and had been living there, since fleeing Rwanda in 1998.

Her funeral took place in July and we pray that she now rests in peace.

FUNDRAISING

CHRISTMAS GIVING



Attached to this Newsletter is a poster advertising our 'Christmas Giving' fundraising for Africa campaign.

We piloted this initiative last year and are pleased to report that we raised £825 excluding Gift Aid.

Thank you to all who bought the gifts and hope you will consider doing so again this year.

See <http://www.canonesses.co.uk/news-events/africa-fundraising/> for more details.

This year we have a wider choice of Certificates.

Money raised from this initiative goes directly to the sisters in D R Congo and Rwanda for the work they are involved in, which we report on in our Newsletter. 100% of the proceeds go directly to Africa.

To purchase any of the 'gifts' go to our website SHOP:

[http://www.canonesses.co.uk/shop-\(plusdonate\)/](http://www.canonesses.co.uk/shop-(plusdonate)/) .

Select and pay for the item you want, then we will send you the Gift Certificate in the post. We have left a space on the Certificate for you to fill in who the gift is to and then you can give it or post it to them. Simple as that.

We hope it helps you with ideas for a slightly different Christmas present. Many people have remarked that they make good stocking fillers!

We thank one of our friends for suggesting we set this up and for her help in developing the idea further.

NEW HALL FUNDRAISING

We send our thanks to the pupils, parents and staff for monies raised through their fundraising for Africa this year.



The Prep school raised an amazing sum of £1,308 for their sister school in the Congo. They held a disco and also attended the Chelmsford School Sport Partnership 'Mini Games' where each school chose a country to represent. New Hall chose the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The senior school continues to raise funds for Rwanda as part of their chosen charitable giving.

MUSICAL CONCERT AND GARDEN PARTY 2016

As always we thank our friends and supporters of the Musical Concert held earlier this year and for the generosity of the Willis family in arranging the Garden Party.

THE GIVING MACHINE

Don't forget about the **Giving Machine** when you are internet shopping throughout the year. It costs you nothing and is simple to use, see the guide on our website:

http://www.canonesses.co.uk/media/13103/the_giving_machine_-_easy_instructions.pdf

Alternatively you can donate directly via our website:

[http://www.canonesses.co.uk/shop-\(plusdonate\)/](http://www.canonesses.co.uk/shop-(plusdonate)/)

Contact us:

crssuk@canonesses.co.uk

www.canonesses.co.uk

Charity No: 1167869

CHRISTMAS GIVING POSTER

If you would like a poster to display please contact projects@canonesses.co.uk

Give a Gift of Hope this Christmas

For more information and how to buy a Gift, go to:
[www.canonesses.co.uk/shop-\(plusdonate\)/](http://www.canonesses.co.uk/shop-(plusdonate)/)

FOOD Feed a malnourished child From £5	EDUCATION Provide schooling for children From £5
SKILLS Teach new skills to young adults From £5	HEALTH Provide vital healthcare: maternity care, vaccinations, malaria treatment, HIV testing From £5

Fundraising for Rwanda and DR Congo

Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre  Charity No 1167869
100% of the proceeds go to Africa!

**With huge gratitude,
love and prayer
The Community**