

deaths

ELIZABETH CSF. — On 9 September, Sister Elizabeth CSF (the Revd Marjorie Valentine Webb): Member of the Community of St Francis since 1955; Minister General (1971-86); aged 92.

LAST. — On 11 September, the Revd Eric Cyril Last: Vicar of St Andrew's, Earlsfield (1983-88); All Saints', South Merstham (1988-96); Assistant Rural Dean of Reigate (1992-96); Hon. Assistant Curate of Upper Tean (1996-2010); aged 92.

LIDDELOW. — On 22 August, the Revd Peter William Liddelow: NSM of Christ Church, Finchley (1982-84); Christ Church, South Mimms (1984-2011); Chaplain to the Magic Circle (2002-16); aged 90.

RIDGWAY. — On 11 September, the Revd Janet Elizabeth Knight Ridgway: Deaconess in the Tring Team Ministry (1986-87); Hon. Parish Deacon (1987-94); Hon. Assistant Curate (1995-2005); aged 83.

SOMMERVILLE. — On 3 September, the Revd Professor Robert Gardner Sommerville: Priest-in-Charge of St Fillan's, Killin (1997-99); St Margaret of Scotland, Tayport (2001-09); aged 96.

STREET. — On 8 September, the Revd Peter Jarman Street: Lecturer of Cheshire College of Education (1962-66); St Peter's College of Education, Birmingham (1966-70); Religious Education Adviser of Essex County Council (1970-92); Hon. Assistant Curate of Great Dunmow (1971-85); Senior Inspector of Religious Education and Humanities (1974-82); Rector of Great with Little Yeldham (1985-92); Rural Dean of Belchamp (1990-92); aged 93.

gazette@churchtimes.co.uk

obituary

The Revd Sister Rosemary CHN

The Revd Sister Diana CHN writes: ROSEMARY HOWARTH was incredibly talented and used her many gifts to serve God and the Church. She was born in Coventry in 1944. Her parents were strict Baptists and were politically and socially motivated — a great love of hymns and a concern for justice and for a fair world were passed on to Rosemary and remained with her throughout her life.

Rosemary was an only child who loved to read and read and read. She once said that she could read before she could walk: she always had her nose in a book, and there's no doubt that she preferred reading to walking or any physical activity — neither sport nor exercise was ever on her agenda. In later life, she was diagnosed with dyspraxia.

Rosemary did well at school both academically and musically. Her musical competence (piano, oboe, and recorder) stood her in good stead after she joined the Community. She served as choir mistress for some years and composed many hymns and hymn tunes.

Rosemary went on from Barr's Hill School, in Coventry, to read Classics at Newnham College, Cambridge. She graduated with a BA in 1966, followed by a PCGE and an MA in 1970. During her Cambridge days, Rosemary began attending the very high Little St Mary's and so moved "right up the candle" from her Baptist roots. We assume she was confirmed at that time.

Rosemary went on to teach Classics for a few years, before arriving at



before they became mainstream in the Church.

Rosemary trained for ordination at Westcott House. She was ordained in 1998 and served her title at St Osmund's Derby, with Donald McDonald as her training incumbent. They talked long into the night in deep theological discussion. Rosemary then moved to Nottingham, and helped at St Peter's, in Radford. On returning to the convent in Derby, she was licensed to the rural parishes of Morley and Smalley. She was an enthusiastic member of the Bach Choir in Derby.

Rosemary was once a contestant on the BBC quiz *Brain of Britain*, but she didn't win. She had contemplated applying to go on *Mastermind*, but decided that the cost of the books that she would have needed to buy

the Convent of the Holy Name (then in Malvern Link) to test her vocation. She was professed as a Sister 1979 and spent time in branch houses in Newcastle and Basingstoke.

After the CHN moved to Derby in 1990, Rosemary was invited by various dioceses and colleges to help with tutoring, including Bishop's certificate, New Testament Greek, Reader training, and study days. This is where she really did flourish and was always an excellent teacher. She led retreats and gave spiritual direction.

She loved study and theological debate and was way ahead of her time: she embraced feminist theology and championed the LGBT cause (welcoming Changing Attitude groups to the convent) long

to research her specialist subjects did not sit happily with her vow of poverty.

Unlike most of us, Rosemary just loved meetings. She represented religious communities on the General Synod for several years; her photograph frequently appeared in the *Church Times* after a Synod meeting, though she would never have claimed to be photogenic.

Rosemary was a prolific writer of poetry, hymns, a diary column for the *Church Times*, and songs to celebrate significant birthdays and anniversaries. Her last piece of creative writing was for this summer's CHN magazine, when she wrote about a visit from Furry Friends to the care home where she was living; she appeared very briefly on *Look North*, in her wheelchair (supposedly) leading a Shetland pony down the corridor. She had an apt word for every occasion.

A friend from Derby sums it all up: "There she was, off to General Synod with a case crammed full of papers, thorough, a bit pedantic, courageous, courteous . . . on the side of the angels. . . How we need her today. As she prayed in life, so she will pray for us now."

The Revd Sister Rosemary CHN died on 22 August, aged 78.

Correction. Canon Timothy Lipscomb (Obituary, 15 September) served his title at St John the Baptist, Sevenoaks, not at St Thomas's, Stanningley, as stated. We apologise for the error.

resignations and retirements *continued from previous page*

Area Dean of South East Derbyshire: 1 October, remaining Vicar of Marlpool, and Priest-in-Charge of Heanor, Langley Mill and Aldercar (Derby).

PARK. The Revd John Park, Rector of Bothal and Pegswood with Longhirst, and Hon. Canon of Newcastle Cathedral (Newcastle): 6 November.

SAVAGE. The Revd Dr Helen Savage, Vicar of Slaley, Healey and

Whittonstall, and Rector of Blanchland with Hunstanworth and Edmundbyers and Muggleswick (Newcastle): 22 October.

SINCLAIR. The Revd John Sinclair, Rector of the Upper Coquetdale Benefice, and Hon. Canon of Newcastle Cathedral (Newcastle): 8 October.

WALDEN. The Revd Alan Walden, Vicar of Madeley (Hereford): 1 October.

Into light

Continued from page 19

and "incredibly important" to her brother. He was also an enthusiast for Norfolk churches, and had various ideas about helping to revive them through a combination of pil-

grim routes and music. We talk about the healing power of music, and how accessible great choral music is to those who haven't grown up with it. "I was listening the other day to Handel's *Messiah* — 'He was despised' — and I think anyone experiencing great grief, and listening to that, must kind of connect with it. I don't think something has to be familiar in order for people to feel it."

Music and nature — or, indeed, a combination — can lead to contemplation or comfort, she says. Her brother had a plan to combine both: he was involved in a conservation project on a lake, a former quarry. "I went to look at it after he died, and the view is absolutely to die for, if you needed to detox. That's why he would have loved it. So, we're planning an event next year, that we do a pilgrim route from his vestry straight up the river, stop at the lake, and have a place of contemplation, and there will be music."

There has not, so far, been a funeral for her former husband, although there will be a memorial service at some point. But, at the moment, not having had the chance for people to gather in that way leaves a gap.

There's a lesson here in the life of the hedgehog, she says, referring to the example of a friend who became involved in hedgehog conservation

in response to the death of her teenage son.

"Because the first thing is, you go to a neighbour and say, 'Can we drill a hole?' and then you're talking to your neighbour and you've got a sort of common purpose. So, there is something sort of benign about hedgehogs. They can bring people together."

In 2021, Ms Sands published *The Interior Silence: 10 Lessons from monastic life*, in which, inspired by the remains of a Cistercian monastery at the end of her garden, she documented the first tentative steps of her own spiritual journey. What, if anything, has changed since then?

"I would always have said that religion is far beyond me. You know, I can observe and I can understand, I can appreciate the aesthetics of it. But there was a slight reserve, because it was just a sort of travel memoir. I think now I feel much more part of it." The next book will probably explore sacred music, because it has helped her to come to terms with loss.

"I think that's what I would say: I'm much closer to faith than I was."

The Hedgehog Diaries: A Story of faith, hope and bristle by Sarah Sands is published by New River Books at £14.99 (CT Bookshop £13.49); 978-1-915780-02-7.

CHURCH
TIMES

Podcast

News, interviews, book reviews, and discussion each week from the Church Times - the world's leading newspaper on faith and the Church.



Also available on all major podcast platforms.

churchtimes.co.uk/podcast

new titles just published

The Power of Ideas: Words of faith and wisdom by Jonathan Sacks (Hodder & Stoughton, £12.99 (£11.69); 978-1-399-80002-0). *New in paperback*

Breathers of an Ampler Day: Victorian views of heaven by Ian Bradley (Sacristy Press, £14.99 (£13.49); 978-1-78959-291-7).

Breaking Bread: The emergence of eucharist and agape in early Christian communities by Alistair C. Stewart (Eerdmans, £39.99 (£35.99); 978-0-8028-8302-5).

Selected by Frank Nugent, of the Church House Bookshop, which operates the Church Times Bookshop.