

## **From the Monastery     Sybil Gibson**

### **Monastic Hospitality at Kopua Monastery:**

The Cistercian Companions of Kopua are blessed to serve God as part of the ministry of hospitality offered to Guests on retreat at Kopua. There are four Companions at the moment – Jim, Sybil, Ian and Maria, and we try to live out the Rule in our daily lives and through the ways we offer hospitality to Guests on behalf of the Monks.

One of the most important things for Companions to understand is that monastic hospitality is not the same as social or secular hospitality and the differences matter. Monastic hospitality sincerely welcomes every Guest as Christ, there is no hierarchy, and all Guests are accepted for who they are in this moment of time and for the Christ in them. I believe this is the most important gift we can offer to any Guest who comes here, and there are many little often unseen ways we do this.

The Companions try to listen and see with the ears and eyes of our hearts more than to talk, and to remember that the Guests come to Kopua to meet God. Sometimes people see God through other people, and we try to be open and available to people and to God at the right time and in the right ways.

Monastic hospitality is a call to openness, and we are repeatedly blessed by the beauty of Christ we see in people. Some real and beautiful conversations take place, and we are blessed by the fellowship that spontaneously occurs here, but always with the needs of the Guests uppermost, not our own needs.

Confidentiality is essential for obvious reasons – we do not talk with Guests about the Monks or other Guests – everyone deserves a safe place and the grace to choose when to share their information and with whom. So we do not ask personal questions or have any expectations of Guests other than that they respect the Monastery and the Monks' way of life.

The Companions' roles are framed within a Code of Conduct which we helped develop, and this real life application of the Rule to our ministry is not only helpful in our everyday work, but in our spiritual formation. For Jim and I the call to serve in full time unpaid ministry at Kopua was clear and undeniable, and the years we have been here have been a blessing to us and a source of growth as disciples of Christ.

Grace and peace