

Sister Valerie: Memories (2015–2024)

I'm Sister Valerie, a member of the House of Bread Monastery, and I'm going to share some events that occurred between the years of 2015 and 2024.

The renovation of the Monastery began in 2013 and was completed in 2014. We had decided to combine our two houses into one because it had been apparent to us for some time that we could not keep moving between the houses for meals and prayer. In winter, the short walk became an invitation for a fall on icy ground and our bones, aging now, wanted to decline that invitation. By joining the houses, we were able to share meals and prayer more easily with friends and associates.

The year 2014 was momentous for us at the House of Bread. It was the year it became clear to us that we would no longer be able to continue to staff the Bethlehem Retreat Centre and that it was time to say goodbye to our ministry of twenty-eight years. In 2015, the centre was purchased by a group who wanted it to continue as a retreat centre and we were able to continue to gather for many years in this Chapel each week to celebrate our faith community.

2020, as we all know, was the beginning of COVID. It was also a time when we began to implement a plan to become a residential community, called Abbeyfield, that would allow us to age in place while welcoming others to our residence. An effect of COVID was to show us that this would not be viable in the long run, and so we began to work with a group called Canadian Religious Stewardship and eventually hired an Executive Director who assists us in managing the Monastery.

In the last few years, several of us have experienced various health challenges as we know many of you have as well. Our sister, Jean Anne, is now in extended care in Eden Gardens. She continues to be her gracious self and now recognizes two communities, the community of Eden Gardens and the House of Bread. She is dearly missed, and we visit her often.

We continue to pray, share and live in community each day. The Prologue to the Rule of Benedict says, "we shall run on the path of God's commandments our hearts overflowing

with inexpressible delight of love.” At this stage in our lives, we will take liberties with the word run and say instead we will walk (sometimes with the aid of a walker) the path of God’s commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love.

We are grateful to each of you gathered here today, as well as those who are unable to be here, for the part you have played in travelling this road with us over these past fifty years.