

# accord extra

Association of Christian Counsellors and Pastoral Care UK

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## Anglican retreat centre in Spain

By Jean Rea

When my husband who is an Anglican priest told me in 2015 that he felt called to start a Christian retreat, I was overjoyed. We had lived in Spain for three years, on an urbanisation near Torrevieja. We realised there would be difficulties ahead, selling our house and finding suitable land. It took two years to do so but the result is worth all the effort. We have a peaceful Retreat centre in a beautiful olive grove in Calasparra, Murcia with a comfortable wooden cabin comprising bedroom with twin beds, lounge with kitchen area and a bathroom. And a wooden chapel. I completed an introduction to Christian counselling in the UK and trained as a pastoral carer, and in the churches I have attended offered pastoral care through my prayer ministry. In the UK I helped through personal meetings and praying with people in the church who were going through difficult times.



This continued in Spain as people came asking for prayer and support. One of the challenges being most people have no extended family living in Spain, and therefore little chance of talking through worries before they become major problems. During Safeguarding training, I was asked to be available for those for whom the training brought back painful memories and who needed someone to talk to. It reminded me of the time in England when a woman had problems due to childhood involvement in devil worship with her family. Whilst I could not counsel her (she had in fact undergone counselling) she wanted someone to pray with

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her and someone she could talk to in confidence. I was conscious of the trust she put in me and how much I needed my own faith.

Because of the distances involved in Spain, my ministry has developed by using social media. I was diagnosed with colon cancer just after we moved to the Retreat land, and after a successful operation had chemotherapy, whilst living in a caravan on the land in forty degrees with no running water. This experience gave me valuable insight into suffering from cancer and has enabled me to talk with many people about their experience both personally and via social media. One woman in particular will WhatsApp when she is feeling low, this can be quite late at night when her fears about losing her fight with cancer are heightened.

My husband has started weekly Anglican services in the wooden chapel we have built on the land, and of the initial small congregation two ladies were diagnosed with breast cancer and had mastectomies and chemotherapy. My own experience was useful in helping me to focus and offer empathy. People who come on Retreat have differing personal issues and wish to talk confidentially. These include family, health and relationship problems which are common in all pastoral care work. My faith and prayer life are essential to this ministry. The chapel at The Olive Grove Retreat gives a special place to pray, as do the olive groves. Seeing God's creation in all its beauty makes a wonderful

backdrop for prayer, and the quiet walks nearby with mountain views helps to get one's life into perspective. The peace of our surroundings enables people to open up allow healing to begin. As I wander, I often reflect on the time of Jesus, imagining him walking through olive groves and praying.

People who come range from clergy who feel the demands of ministry and how these affect their personal family life, to those who are just seeking some quiet time to those with specific personal difficulties who need a confidential listening ear. Confidentiality is the key. Some struggle with being gay, how to talk to their families - and their church congregation. Some question their faith. A problem shared is a problem halved. It takes time, so initially simply to relax and enjoy God's nature is important. Then if trust is gained, some issues may be raised as a signal that a sensitive listening ear would be appreciated. A few come and go without saying much. The main hope is that when people leave, they will feel refreshed and at peace with life, ready to move on.

The retreat website can be found at:  
[www.olive-grove-retreat.com](http://www.olive-grove-retreat.com)

### **About the Author**

Jean taught physics and maths in senior schools in the UK and Mallorca where she became Head Teacher. In 2007, she qualified in pastoral care work and has been involved in churches in the UK and Spain.

