Retreat
Handbook

Carmelite Priory

Chilswell House, Boars Hill, Oxford



You're Always
Welcome

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Welcome to the **Carmelite Priory**

Chilswell House, Boars Hill, Oxford

We welcome you to the Carmelite Priory. We hope that your stay with us will be a rich and pleasant one. Please take a moment to go through the following guidelines.

The great Carmelite mystics—St. Teresa of Ávila, St. John of the Cross, St. Thérèse of Lisieux and others—have provided spiritual guidance and nourishment to many over the centuries. We endeavour to sustain their vision in our apostolate and ministries at the Priory. Over the years, the mission of our community has developed, reaching a point where we now minister across the globe both online and onsite in what is called “a Cathedral without walls.” The friars at the Priory are from three continents, reflecting the internationality of the Boars Hill community.

Our **Mission**

Our mission continues to offer a silent and sacred space to all who use our facility, whether as a group or as an individual. As a community, we dedicate ourselves to a life of prayer, which you are welcome to join and participate in while on retreat.

- **Programmes:** Besides our retreat house and 'in-person' events, we run a variety of online programmes on prayer and the spiritual life. Our annual conferences and events present wider opportunities to deepen your spiritual life.
- **Media:** Visit our website (www.carmelite.uk.net) for our Podcast series (*rooted-in-love-series*) and YouTube channels (@carmelitepriory877 and @CACSOxford).
- **Environment:** We are committed to a Sacred and Safe environment. Our safeguarding policy is displayed on the retreat house notice board and our website.

Scan QR code to access link

Our website, podcasts and YouTube channels:
www.carmelite.uk.net

Spiritual **Guidance**

If you wish to speak privately with a member of the community or request the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession), this can usually be arranged by speaking with the friar who welcomes you or to a friar after prayer or Mass in the chapel.

We hope you enjoy the peace and beauty of our grounds and surrounding countryside. And we wish you a spirit-filled and graceful stay with us.

Fr. Savariyar OCD

Retreat Director

Email: retreat@carmelite.org.uk

- **Office Hours:** Mon–Fri: 10 am – 3 pm. This is an answerphone service which picks up messages. We aim to get back to you within 3 working days.
- **Emergency telephone number if a problem arises during the night whilst on retreat:** This is displayed in the notice boards in the three residential areas of the retreat house.

Arrival and **Departure**

Check-in: 3:00 pm · **Check-out:** 10:00 am
(unless by special arrangement, which may merit extra payment)

Group Arrival

Guests should proceed to the **Pyramid building** and wait in the dining room. If staff are not present, the group leader should ring the doorbell of the Priory (the first white house on the road as you enter). A friar will then meet you at the Pyramid to show you to your rooms.

Individual Arrival

Proceed to the **Pyramid building**. If nobody is present, please call your retreat host or return to the main Priory building (large white building on the roadway) and ring the doorbell.

- Please advise at the time of booking if you will arrive prior to 3:00 pm. Your room may not be available, but you may use the coffee room, restrooms, and chapel.
- Inform your retreat host if you will be arriving late. Note that the main gate is normally **locked at 8:00 pm**.

Departure (All Guests)

Latest Check-out: 10:00 am (Monday to Saturday) and 3:00 pm (Sundays).

Keys: Hand keys to your retreat host in the Pyramid dining room at 10:00 am.

Room Care: If able, please remove all sheets and duvet covers and place them on the floor with used towels to assist the cleaning team.

Luggage: If you wish to stay longer after checking out, you may leave luggage in the Pyramid meeting room (next to the dining room), but please keep your valuables with you.

Ensuring **Accessibility**

We are committed to providing a safe and accessible environment for all.

Facilities: The Pyramid building has an accessible toilet on the ground floor with an emergency cord. Ground floor guest rooms are available on request.

Carers: We aim to allocate carers an adjacent room to those in need.

Chapel: The chapel is wheelchair accessible. Please ask for assistance if you need help positioning your chair to enable you to participate fully.

Neurodiversity: Our programmes are sensitive to those who are neurodiverse. Please let us know of any personal adjustments needed before arrival. We will do our best to provide any personal adjustment particular to your needs whilst onsite.

Special assistance: If special assistance during your stay at the centre is needed, please ask a friar or lay leader who will do their best to assist you during your stay. E.g. directions to conference rooms, dining room or to ask for confession.

Please note: The Cottage is a little distance from other buildings. We do not yet have a hearing loop system.

Grounds

The grounds are open to all, but please take care as some areas have uneven ground.

Assistance Dogs

Assistance dogs are welcome; please inform the administrator in advance. Dogs must always be on a lead, and waste should be collected and disposed of in the large bin caddies outside the Priory.

A **Sacred** and **Safe** Community

Liturgy and Prayer

You are most welcome to join the community for Mass and Divine Office or use the Chapel for private prayer. We ask for a climate of silence to be preserved around the Chapel. Prayer books are available outside the Chapel. Kindly return them after use.

If you would like to speak privately with a member of the community, or to avail of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession), this can usually be arranged upon request by speaking to the friar who welcomes you. Or ask a friar after prayer in the Chapel.

Mass and Prayer Timetable

Day	Time	Service
Monday	06:00	Office of Readings, Lauds and Mass (other prayers private)
Tues to Fri	06:00	Office of Readings & Lauds
	06:30	Silent Prayer
	12:00	Sext (Midday Prayer)
	17:00	Carmelite Commemorations and Silent Prayer
	18:00	Holy Mass with Vespers
	18:40	Compline (Night Prayer)
Sat & Sun	07:00	Office of Readings and Lauds
	07:30	Silent Prayer
	11:00	Holy Mass
	19:00	Vespers followed by Compline

The Retreat Centre and **Priory Grounds**

Guidance on spaces

The Chapel, coffee lounge (near the chapel), dining room and restrooms are open to all.

The Priory building itself is closed to those on retreat except by a specific invitation or appointment. However, you may ring the doorbell if you need to speak to a friar.

The grounds, including Our Lady's grotto are open to visitors, except for the small patio outside the priory which overlooks the grotto.

Children on-site must be always accompanied by an adult: in a building or in the grounds.

Silence and Individual Retreats

Silence

We would appreciate that an atmosphere of silence be kept in the premises in the vicinity of the Chapel and guest rooms, as peace and tranquillity are highly valued by all our guests. This does not mean that you must keep total silence, but to be sensitive to others' needs and wishes e.g. when walking in the grounds, using your mobile phone or using the cottage kitchen.

There will be periods in group retreats and CACS programmes when silence is not observed, e.g. during some mealtimes, at coffee breaks and during teaching or group sharing elements of the programme.

Please feel free to talk around the grounds, or in the common room, but do try to keep your voice down. At night, opening and closing doors may be clearly heard in the guest rooms. Please try to open and close the doors gently to avoid disturbing other who may be asleep.

Individual Retreats

Those who have booked a personal retreat with a retreat director will be informed of upon the details on their arrival. During the retreat, you will meet daily or according to arrangement, with a spiritual director who will guide your prayer and reflection.

Much of the retreat is spent in silence, with meals also observed in silence.

Guests are encouraged to immerse themselves in prayer and reflection and are invited to participate in the monastic community's daily cycle of prayer and liturgy.

Safeguarding

A statement by Fr Alexander Ezechukwu, OCD — Director of CACS, Chair of Safeguarding Committee

Here at the Centre for Applied Carmelite Spirituality (CACS) safeguarding is a core part of our mission to always be a safe and sacred community.

Carmelite spirituality is founded on a deep thirst for spiritual intimacy and friendship, recognising the divine indwelling in every single person. Because of this, we see every encounter as a kind of theophany — a manifestation of God — that must be respected and safeguarded. The dignity and sacredness of each person is paramount.

For us, safeguarding work takes many dimensions. It is not just a policy on a shelf or a box-ticking exercise. Instead, we are committed to promoting a genuine spirituality of care. As an international community of friars, laity, experts and volunteers, this work is challenging and demanding. But it is a journey we are committed to; a journey towards creating a sacred and safe place for spiritual growth, formation and wholeness for everyone.

We welcome you to be part of this journey during your stay. Clearly displayed on notice boards in the corridor near the chapel, on our website, and in the retreat coffee room is detailed information on our safeguarding policy and support communities. Below are the names of our safeguarding leads and our mobile number and email address. One of the safeguarding leads is always on duty in the retreat centre, and their name is on the information board outside the dining room in the pyramid building.

The safeguarding leads can be contacted on the number below or by ringing the bell on the priory door in the case of an emergency.

Safeguarding Leads

- Kate Keefe
- Fr. Liam Finnerty, OCD
- Fr. Clement Obiorah, OCD

Contact Information

Email: safe@cacs.org.uk

Tel: 073003 19055 (Operated 9 am – 5 pm, Monday – Sunday).

Safeguarding duty member in retreat house: Fr. Liam is always the safeguarding duty member, except if he is away, in which case the safeguarding duty member will be Fr. Clement. They can be contacted for immediate allegations via the details above or by ringing the Priory doorbell. If both are away, a friar will contact Kate Keefe who will respond.

Send any feedback on your stay to: retreat@carmelite.org.uk

Hospitality

Meals

Breakfast: Recommended time is between 8.00 to 9.00 am when friars are available to assist. Self-service items (bread, milk, cereals, etc.) are in the Pyramid dining room and Cottage kitchen. Gluten and dairy free options are available upon request.

Group Full Board: Breakfast (8:00 am), Lunch (12:30 pm), Dinner (6:30 pm).

Washing Up after Breakfast & Refreshments: Please wash up your plates and cutlery immediately after use and leave them on the trolley (Pyramid dining room) or on the draining board (or dried and replaced in drawers / cupboards) in the Cottage.

Groups Lunch & Dinner: No need to wash up your plates and cutlery after lunch or dinner as the caterer takes care of this, but please stack your plates on the trolley.

General: Please help to keep the dining room / cottage kitchen clean and tidy.

Self-Catering (Cottage)

Storage is limited; please bring only 2 days of supplies initially. Breakfast provisions, tea and coffee are provided. If supplies run low, please inform a friar. Please keep the shared kitchen tidy.

Note: If you made an individual booking it is possible that you will share the cottage building (which has 5 rooms) and its kitchen with other guests.

Dietary requirements – groups

Please inform us at the time of booking of any dietary requirements, our caterers can accommodate most of the special requests.

Refreshments

Tea and Coffee during the day. Help yourself to tea or coffee from the lounge / coffee room in the Annexe or cottage kitchen (for guests accommodated there). Please wash up your mugs after use.

Silence during mealtimes

Silence is generally observed at mealtimes, except for the first evening of group retreats.

Practical **Information**

Amenities

Toiletries: Hand soap is provided. Emergency supplies (toothbrushes etc.) are available in the chapel restrooms. Donations for replacement are welcome.

Wi-Fi: Codes are on room tables and Annexe notice boards, in the Chapel entrance and Cottage kitchen.

Bookshop: Access to the onsite bookshop is by arrangement via your Retreat host.

Scan QR code to access link
Our online Book service:
www.carmelite.uk.net/books-and-publications
Or Email: bookservice@carmelite.org.uk

Local restaurants and pubs

- Hickories Smokehouse, Besselsleigh Rd, Wootton, OX13 6DN (7 min by car)
- The Fox Inn, Wootton Village, OX1 5DR (10 min drive by car)
- The Flowing well, Sunningwell, Abingdon OX13 6RB (15 min drive by car)

Local shop

The Co-op: Besselsleigh Rd, Wootton, Boars Hill, OX13 6DN (7 min drive/35 min walk)

Health and **Safety**

Emergencies (urgent): 999 (Police, fire and medical)
Non-urgent: 101 (Police) or 111 (Medical)

Fire: Make sure you read the **fire notices** in the cottage, pyramid building and annexe.

Call 999 and go immediately to the assembly point: signpost on the grass in front of the cottage by the car park (near monkey puzzle tree). Notify a friar at the Priory: ring the doorbell and/or call the emergency number on all three building notice boards in residential houses.

First Aid: Kits are in the building kitchenettes and the Annexe restroom.

Security

Lock your room when leaving and overnight, always keep your keys with you. Guests in the Cottage have their own front door key, attached to their room key. Exterior doors lock at 10:00 pm; access is via keypad (code provided by your retreat host).

The main gate is locked 8:00 pm – 5:30 am. To enter/leave outside these times, call the retreat house number.

Getting to the **Retreat Centre**

By Car: Follow the signs to Reception and park your car in front of the Pyramid building or on the grass nearby if overflow parking is needed.

By Train/Bus: Oxford is the nearest station. A taxi takes approximately 20 minutes.

For those self-catering, there is a Marks and Spencer outlet inside the train station and a small Sainsbury's between the station and not far from Gloucester Green Coach station. Turn left after you leave the train station. Walk to the right of the Royal Oxford Hotel.

By Taxi: Black cabs are outside stations (approx. £20). **Private hire**: Royal Cars +44 1865 777333 (approx. £17). Uber now operates in Oxford, but costs depend on time of day and demand.

Arrival by Air: Airline coaches run very regularly between Heathrow and Gatwick Airports (all terminals) and Oxford. Alight at Gloucester Green and proceed by taxi.

Alternatively, travel by rail from the airports via Reading or London to Oxford. (Changing at Reading avoids crossing London by Tube (subway).

Passengers arriving at Birmingham Airport can take a train direct from Birmingham International to Oxford (reservation is advised).

On Foot: To walk to the Priory from the bus stop in Wootton (Osney Island, S9, see below) takes at least 40 minutes and includes a steep hill.

Directions for those arriving on foot

On leaving the railway station turn right onto Botley Rd A420 (NB. the road may be closed to vehicle traffic at that point due to bridge works but is accessible to pedestrians). Continue along Botley Rd.

Find the S9 stop marked Osney Island, stop WW. Bus destination Wantage. Alight at Colegrove Down and walk for 30 minutes heading northeast on Cumnor Hill towards the Longmoor Brake Trail.

Turn onto Hurst Lane and then Chilswell Lane. The Priory is on Chilswell Lane.

Carmelite Priory
Map



Fundraising

We hope you enjoy the beauty and tranquillity of the Carmelite Priory.

Our vision is to enhance our retreat centre, protect our natural environment, and expand our educational programmes. If you feel moved to support this mission, you can make a gift by scanning the QR codes on the next page.

To find out about our fundraising campaign, please get in touch: fundraising@cacs.org.uk

Explore Our **Online Offerings**

Continue your journey after your stay. The Centre for Applied Carmelite Spirituality (CACS) runs a variety of online programmes on prayer and the spiritual life, open to all wherever you are.

www.carmelite.uk.net/cacs-offerings

Scan QR code to access link



The Vision for a New Mount Carmel

The vision for the New Mount Carmel and the mission of the Centre for Applied Carmelite Spirituality motivates us to reach out to you and ask for your support. We invite you to join us by making God's vision for our times a reality and a secure legacy for future generations.

Our initial £10 million capital campaign to provide a solid foundation for future growth which will focus on developing the capacity, quality and outreach of our spiritual formation programmes, as well as the physical infrastructure and technology that support these programmes.

THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN WILL:

- Support the formation of 300 new Spiritual Directors in the Carmelite Tradition.
- Develop a range of new study and spiritual formation programmes.
- Subsidise the cost to ensure more people benePts to serve their local communities.
- Sponsor a new generation of 33 Carmelite scholars and practitioners whose research, teaching and practice will sustain and validate Carmelite spirituality and its message into the future.

A major gift is a generous and creative act of love that will help enable the New Mount Carmel Project to be of spiritual and practical service to others for many generations to come. A Naming gift recognises not only your support for the work of the Carmelites but your shared belief in our commitment to the legacy and inspiration of the great Carmelite saints.



"A spiritual director who intimately knows and loves Christ can help the directee to achieve that same love and intimacy"
Pope Benedict XVI

SUPPORT US

The Spiritual Direction Formation Programme offered by the Centre for Applied Carmelite Spirituality (CACS) forms spiritual directors who can support, accompany and guide people along the path of knowing and becoming intimate with God. The formation prepares them to be attentive to and depend completely on the Holy Spirit whom Saint John of the Cross calls 'The Real Director'. It is the Spirit who in prayer and exercise of the virtues of contemplative docility and humility, inspires the wisdom and insight that enable a spiritual director to see the truth of what God is doing in another's life and where God may be leading.

HOW TO SUPPORT OUR WORK?

By donating to our Growth in Holiness Fund you can help us:

- Form spiritual directors who can lead others towards intimacy with Christ and holiness of life.
- Ensure that more spiritual directors are accessible to people in parishes and online
- Provide ongoing in-depth spiritual formation for spiritual directors
- Ensure that spiritual direction as the Spirit's gift for holiness remains free and accessible to all

St John of the Cross, the patron of this fund, was from a poor home. Through the generosity of a benefactor, he had the opportunity to get educated and this enhanced his ability to guide many souls in holiness towards union with God. This Growth in Holiness Fund will support hardship cases. Through it many who need Pnancial support can benePt from our Spiritual Direction Formation Programme which prepares them to journey with others and guide them towards union with God in the footsteps of St John of the Cross.

SCAN CODE FOR THE NEW MOUNT CARMEL

Find out more,
Kindly scan or write to admin@carmelite.org.uk
Cheques Payable to Carmelite Priory and send to -
Carmelite Priory, Boars Hill, Oxford, OX1 5HB
OR Online Bank Transfer
Account Name: Carmelite Priory Sort Code: 20-65-18 Account number: 80251216 SWIFTBIC: BUKBGB22 IBAN: GB94 BUKB 2065 1880 2512 16
Thank you.

SCAN CODE FOR THE HOLINESS FUND



Follow us on our social media platforms to stay up to date with all our activities, events, and reflections. Together, we explore how the Church can continue to play a vital role in shaping societal growth and addressing modern challenges. Let's journey as a community, sharing hope, peace, and love in a world that needs it more than ever. Be part of the conversation and our mission. Join us today! YouTube/Twitter/TikTok: @cacsoxford; Facebook: Centre for Applied Carmelite Spirituality Instagram: @carmeliteuk

Contact Information

Fr. Savariyar OCD
Retreat Director
Email: retreat@carmelite.org.uk
Office Hours: Mon–Fri: 10 am – 3 pm

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fundraising@cacs.org.uk

Book Service
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In an emergency, call 999.
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