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Introduction

Our Mission: *Minsteracres retreat centre provides a space where people feel welcome, can be themselves and are enabled to find healing and wholeness in their relationship with God, themselves, others and creation. We offer a simple and sustainable experience where people are invited to be more with having less.*

We offer you...

- **A warm welcome.**
- **Space to grow and think.**
- **A peaceful and inspiring location.**
- **Simplicity.**

We welcome people of all faiths or none and especially those people who find themselves in situations of suffering, marginalisation and disempowerment.

Our background

In the middle of the eighteenth century the Silvertop family bought land at Minsteracres and built a mansion. The family also established a Roman Catholic mission and made provisions for a priest to look after the spiritual needs of the Roman Catholics in the area. The family encouraged local people to develop their gifts and talents. They also developed the estate which still constitutes an integral part of Minsteracres and is enjoyed by many people.

In 1949 the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ (Passionists) bought the mansion and around 110 acres of the original estate. Under the Passionists, Minsteracres became a centre of formation for candidates to the priesthood. The Passionists also assumed pastoral responsibility for the Catholics in the area which developed into the worshipping community that is known as St. Elizabeth's parish. In the 1960s the old stable block was converted into a retreat house and retreat work gradually became the main activity at Minsteracres.

Our youth centre provides a self-catering facility for groups of young people particularly brownies, cubs, guides, scouts and school children. It remains popular and is used year-round.

Our communities

Minsteracres has a resident community of Passionist priests, sisters and lay people both married and single who are supported by staff and a large group of volunteers and friends.

Prayer times

Prayer is at the heart of what we do at Minsteracres. You are very welcome to join us as we pray each day in the chapel. The prayer times during the week are:

Morning prayer	8:10 am	
Mass	8:30 am	
Midday prayer	12:50 pm	
Rosary	6:00 pm	(Friday at 5:30pm)
Evening prayer	6:15 pm	(Friday at 5:45pm)
Adoration	7:30 pm	
Night prayer	8:00 pm	

On Sundays you are also welcome to join the parish of St. Elizabeth at their eucharist in the church at 8:30 or 10:30am. If you would like to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation (confession), please speak to a member of the community.

Prayer spaces

There are several dedicated prayer spaces in Minsteracres. The environment and nature in which we are situated is prayer itself. Within the main house the chapel may always be used for private prayer. A prayer room is available on the second floor (Room 25) and the Poustinia chapel on the ground floor can often be used. The church of St Elizabeth is open during daylight hours.

In the church and around the cemetery you will find stations of the cross, which have been beautifully made from beech wood from the estate. On the lawn in front of the main house you can walk our labyrinth, which is called 'trasna.' More information on this can be found on the notice board outside the office.

The cross of hope, which symbolises Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection offers a peaceful outdoor space for reflection. It can be found in the field to the north of the main house.

The Minsteracres prayer—written by volunteers

Dear Lord
We thank you for the beauty
and peace of Minsteracres. By your grace,
enable us to be a community of welcome and love,
compassion and healing, hope and reconciliation.
Unite us in friendship that we may follow
the path of your cross and resurrection
and serve you and one another
with joy.
Fill us
with your
Holy Spirit
to live and work
for your praise and glory.
Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen

Health and safety, emergencies

Keys—on arrival please register in the office. Please keep your room key safe and on departure leave it in the door lock. Please leave valuables locked in your room or take with you if you go out. If you do plan to go out for the day, please leave your key in the office. At the end of your stay, please leave your key in the door.

For security reasons the back door to the main house and the front door to the retreat house are secured with automatic keypads. You will be issued with an access code. Please ensure that these doors are closed when leaving the building.

Smoking—no smoking is allowed anywhere indoors. Smoking indoors will activate the fire alarm.

Fire—the main house and retreat house are equipped with a modern, ‘wireless’ operated fire detection and warning system. The youth centre is equipped with ‘wired’ smoke detectors. Emergency lighting, fire extinguishers and clearly marked fire exits are installed in all buildings. Carbon monoxide detectors are installed in the kitchen areas.

If you hear the alarm sound, please leave the building immediately and collect at the main assembly point, the white statue of Our Lady outside the Church.

Please:

- read the instructions in your building/ room regarding fire exits/assembly points
- make sure that fire doors are kept closed at all times
- turn off lights and electrical appliances when they are not in use
- do not remove fire extinguishers or use them to prop open doors
- never use candles in your room. (However, if you wish to use candles in public spaces please ask permission from the retreat administrator or contact person.)

In the event of an emergency please ring 01434 673248 during the hours 9:00am to 5:00pm, Monday to Friday. At all other times, please ring 07770 855334.

All accidents should be reported either to the retreat administrator or to a member of the community. One of our qualified First Aiders will be available to assist you.

Health Care facilities: The nearest local health centre is in Corbridge. The telephone number is: 01434 632011. The nearest accident & emergency department is in Hexham General hospital. The telephone number is 0844 8118111.

Protection of all children, young and vulnerable adults

It is our policy to provide a physically and emotionally safe environment for all children, young people and vulnerable adults. We ask you to work with us to ensure that this is achieved. Please speak to Geoffrey Bockett, the Operations Manager or Sr Therese O’Regan, the local safeguarding officers, if you have any concerns.

Catering

In line with our environment policy we aim to minimise our carbon foot print and wherever possible source food as locally as possible including from our peace garden, the walled garden and local suppliers. All food is freshly prepared on site.

Coffee and tea making facilities: you will find these in the kitchen area of the retreat house, and in the Bethany kitchen, second floor in the main house.

Meals -

Unless otherwise indicated in your retreat programme these are:

Breakfast: 9:00 am
Lunch: 1:00 pm
Supper: 6:30 pm (Friday 7:00pm)

If you require a special diet and you have not already informed us, please inform the retreat administrator as soon as possible. Similarly please let us know if you plan to miss a meal.

Bar: A small, licensed bar is provided in the retreat house kitchen. You are requested not to drink in bedrooms out of respect for fellow retreatants, and for safety reasons due to incidents involving broken glass.

Please do not consume food and drink in your bedroom

A sustainable Minsteracres

Respect for the gift of creation – all the interconnected webs of life – requires us to face up to the impact of our way of living and working. A conversion is all the more urgent as scientists point to a looming environmental crisis. We are especially mindful of the impact on the poor of our world.

The peace garden: in 2009 we started to create the peace garden. It is located at the south side of the walled garden. In the Victorian era espalier fruit trees grew along this wall and a glass house produced exotic fruit and vegetables. The peace garden is a new development which is reviving the horticultural heritage that had been lost to Minsteracres until now.

The peace garden offers our visitors a space for reflection and the opportunity to get involved in growing fruit and vegetables and to (re)connect with nature. It also provides a space to raise awareness about environmental issues. The long term aim is to enable Minsteracres retreat centre to become self-sufficient in organically grown fruit and vegetables. Please feel free to have a look in the garden or get involved –if you wish. Following our environment policy we have installed a compost heap, recycling areas and an energy and water saving policy. We are keeping hens, with the aim of building towards self-sufficiency in eggs.

You can help: First of all we hope that the peace and beauty of Minsteracres will lift your spirit and enrich your relationship with creation. We highly recommend a wander around the shrubbery and the ponds. We would be very grateful if you could help us to take care of our environment.

Recycling: recycling points are situated in the main house (2nd floor landing and Bethany kitchen), retreat house (entrance lobby) and youth centre (kitchen). There are bins for:

- compost (for peelings, serviettes and shredded paper, no cooked food).
- recycling: tins, paper and plastic bottles.
- non-recyclable waste

Energy saving: We have installed energy saving bulbs and apply a switch-off policy. We are trying to keep a balance between safety and saving energy. Please make sure that items such as televisions, additional heaters and chargers are switched off when not in use.

Renewable energy: We have installed a biomass boiler to reduce our dependency on fossil fuels for heating. We are also investigating the possibilities of generating our own electricity from wind and solar power.

Our surroundings

Please enjoy our beautiful grounds. Maps of the grounds are available from the office and the retreat house foyer. ***We would advise that you take due care when walking on both paved and grassed areas.*** Members of the community can advise on walks further afield. Some maps of the immediate surrounding areas are available from the office. If you plan to go for longer walks please inform the retreat administrator or a member of the community where you intend to go. Please keep gates closed at all times.

The shrubbery

Our woodland, known as the Shrubbery is well worth a visit. It was established over 200 years ago by the Silvertop family and extends over 13 acres. It was a favourite place for the family, both for adults and children, with carriage drives and places to play and picnic. In its present form it is largely an arboretum containing rare conifers and deciduous trees.

The shrubbery fell into decline in the twentieth century and the process of bringing it back into full use has only recently begun. The late Frank Neary initiated this restoration work and led a small team of committed volunteers who are carefully revealing the hidden delights of the woodland. Sadly, he died in 2011, but his legacy lives on as we continue his work of restoration with volunteers.

The walled garden

Situated just off the north drive close to the lakes is the walled garden which is leased from us by a charity called Daybreak. They provide daytime activities for people with learning difficulties, and grow fruit and vegetables (which we use) as well as providing computing and arts and crafts facilities for their clients.

Daybreak is keen welcome adult visitors as the clients love to see new faces, so please feel free to visit them (between 10:00am and 2:00pm) and just say that you are on retreat. You can have a look round at the facilities and can also purchase produce in season and you won't get fresher than something picked just for you!

Further afield

Minsteracres is situated just south of the North Pennines area of outstanding natural beauty. We are not far from Hadrian's Wall and the historic villages of Corbridge and Blanchland. The market town of Hexham is an excellent centre for history, culture, and shopping.

General services

Ironing: If you require an iron and ironing board please ask the retreat administrator.

Photocopying: please contact the office or a member of the community if you would like to make use of this facility. We may have to charge for this depending on volume. We would also ask you to copy only in respect to current copyright law.

Library: the library is in the main house near the front entrance. You are welcome to borrow books throughout your stay. Please return them before you depart.

Shop: the shop is in the entrance hall of the retreat house. Books, cards and religious articles, sweets and other gifts are sold. If the shop is not open please ask at the retreat administrator or a member of the community.

Post: please leave any mail on the small table outside the office in the main house before 10:00 am. There is a later post collection from the post box at the south drive at 4.00 pm. Stamps are available to purchase from the shop or office.

Travel: if you require information regarding travel information or details of local taxis please speak to the retreat administrator.

Upon departure

If your departure is on a weekday, please vacate your room by 10:00 am so that we can prepare for our next guests. If this will cause you a problem please contact the retreat administrator. To assist us, please leave your key in the door and if you feel able, remove the pillow case, duvet cover and sheet and leave them on your bed.

Are we getting things right?

We hope you enjoy your stay with us and if there is anything else you would like to know or if you need assistance please do not hesitate to ask a member of the community or staff. We would appreciate it if you would complete the questionnaire left in this information booklet to help us improve our service.

Supporting us

Would you like to get involved?

Apart from the resident community, Minsteracres has a wider community of friends who offer their service on a voluntary basis. We are very grateful for the many volunteers we have and the invaluable contribution they make to Minsteracres. Without our volunteers we wouldn't be able to run this beautiful place of prayer and presence. We are looking for more volunteers, who would like to share their time and presence with the people that come here. If you feel attracted to this place and our way of life and you have some spare time, please let us know.

We are looking for people who would like to offer...

- prayer and service
- hospitality and welcome.
- help to maintain and sustain the beautiful grounds of Minsteracres
- help to make Minsteracres more sustainable.

Donations

To continue our work we are dependent on the generous support of friends, and the money we raise through grants and donations. Any donation however small is very helpful. You can...

- Make a donation to Minsteracres retreat centre online--please go to our donate page
- Donate to our bursary fund, which supports people to attend our retreats.
- Leave a donation to Minsteracres retreat centre in your will
- Make a gift to Minsteracres retreat centre in memory of a loved one
- Gift aid your donation if you are a UK tax payer—a form can be found in this information booklet
- Give regularly through a standing order

Staying in touch

If you wish to be added to our mailing list, please complete one of the forms, which can be found in this information booklet.

You can always catch up on the latest developments at Minsteracres retreat centre by visiting our website: www.minsteracres.org and viewing the news and events section on the home page. We also have Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts and we are always looking for more followers and interaction on line. Come and join us.

Useful contacts

Emergency	999
NHS Direct for non-emergencies	111 (24 hours a day, 365 days a year for when you need help fast)
Hexham hospital	08448 118111
Minsteracres Retreat Centre	01434 673248
Daybreak	01434 673049
Lifespan	01434 673777
Taxis	
Slaley Taxis: 01434 673340	or Acomb Taxis: 01434 605068
Airport	08718 821121
National rail enquiries	08457 484950
Bus information	
Traveline: 0870 6082608	or National Express: 08705 808080
Police	
Northumbria police	101
Consett	0345 606 0365
Doctor (Corbridge)	01434 632011
Dentist (Consett)	01207 503079