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Press Release: 21st January 2009

The Trustees have announced that Morley Retreat House is to close later this year.

It is with great sadness and regret that the Trustees of Morley Retreat & Conference House have decided that we must cease trading at a date to be agreed with the Diocesan Board of Finance. The current economic climate and the fact that many guests now expect the en-suite facilities we lack means that Morley is no longer attracting sufficient custom to make it financially viable.

We are aware that many people will deeply regret the loss of Morley as a facility in the Derby Diocese and will have happy memories of days and weekends spent there. Many clergy will have been there for their ordination retreats and it has been used by the Church of England as a resource in the selection of those who will go on for ordination training.

The trustees, in consultation with the Diocesan Board of Finance, will now draw up a programme leading to closure and will work with the staff of the retreat house to see that everything possible is done to help them.

We are particularly sad that the closure of Morley comes in advance of a motion that the Dioceses of Leicester and Peterborough are bringing to General Synod (the Church of England's parliament) to highlight the plight of retreat houses generally and to look at ways in which as many of them as possible can be saved. The problem that the trustees of Morley face is that we do not have sufficient cash flow to finance our work pending the outcome of this motion.

The Rev'd Mike Alexander, Chairman of the Trustees, said: "It is a very sad time for a special place which would have been celebrating its 50th anniversary towards the end of this year. We have worked hard to try and find a way to bring the Retreat House's facilities up to date but the sums needed to develop the building are way beyond the financial resources we could realistically attract. As Vicar of St Matthew's Church, Morley and a trustee for 20 years I know how much the House will be missed locally, as well as by many people in Derbyshire and indeed throughout the country."

The Bishop of Derby said: "Morley has been a wonderful asset in the Diocese of Derby and I want to pay tribute to Mike Alexander, his fellow trustees and staff for their impressive work. However we live in difficult and challenging times, especially with regard to resources and ways of operation. The Diocese is currently looking at how best to make appropriate provision in the area of prayer and spirituality, and we must look to the future with confidence."

ENDS

Note to Editors

Retreat Houses provide Christians and others with a quiet place where they can pray and grow in their spiritual relationship with God.

Morley Retreat House was once the rectory for Morley and when, nearly 50 years ago, this became surplus to requirements it became a retreat house serving the dioceses of Derby and Southwell (now Southwell and Nottingham). It is a grade 2 listed Georgian building that was extended in the 1960s to provide additional bedrooms and other facilities. The buildings were further extended in the early 2000s when a chapel and warden's house were constructed.

In 1999/2000 the Bishop's Council set Morley Retreat House up as a charitable business with a body of trustees to manage it and act as directors of the company. The trustees became responsible for all the running costs of the business and the maintenance of the buildings and grounds. The rising costs of maintaining a Georgian building and other maintenance costs have seriously weakened the ability of the trustees to undertake further developments.

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A Place for Praise, Prayer and Peace