

## Carols in The Cloisters - the origins

This annual tradition started in the 1980s when the Focolare had recently acquired the Mater Dei school building that is now the Focolare Centre for Unity. It was a simple Christmas gesture of goodwill to our neighbours in The Cloisters (the road adjoining the Centre), who were living in the little newly built houses on what was originally part of the school building, tennis courts, etc. The very first people who came to live there were a focolarina from Korea and one from Thailand, which was met with some puzzlement, and even a little suspicion. Towards Christmas, with a few young people who had later also moved to Welwyn to support the new Centre, they sang carols outside each house in The Cloisters. People loved it and one resident even came out into the cold with a tray of sherry for them all! The neighbours joined in the singing and they were then invited into the Centre for a cup of tea. If there had been any lingering trepidation, it was allayed!

Everybody enjoyed the carols and from then on, the annual tradition of ***“Carols in The Cloisters”*** continued and has grown. People invite their friends, colleagues, neighbours, and on average about 100 people come of all ages. With a Bring and Share festive feast, sitting together at candle lit tables, we all participate in a varied programme, also always tailored to children, from light hearted moments, meditative moments and of course singing carols together, finishing with what everyone looks forward to – Silent Night sung in turn by each of the many languages of our friends present. That is always a sacred moment.

Venue: The Cloisters AL8 6DU (off Parkway)  
Focolare Centre for Unity  
69 Parkway, Welwyn Garden City AL8 6JG

If you have a torch, please bring it along.  
Families and friends all welcome!