

Living as an Alongsider at Malling Abbey

As an alonsider you will live with us in the enclosure of the Abbey, attending the daily offices with us, working with us and taking your meals in our refectory. It is an opportunity for you to grow spiritually and to deepen your prayer life by living the monastic pattern of life and “unplugging” from all the distractions of life in the outside world. You will be given a sister who will support you through your time with us and help you with the practicalities of our life. She will also be able to share monastic insights and experience of prayer with you (but please note that we are not trained as spiritual directors).

You will be assigned practical work during the mornings and afternoons, which may be in the kitchen or laundry, general housework and gardening. Much of the work is physically demanding so you will need to be in good health. You will join us for our shared times of recreation, usually three times per week, where we share community news and have a bit of time for informal conversation. There will also be some free time each day for you to use as you wish within the enclosure, for example to read or pursue some craft or simply to enjoy the garden. We do not have TV, radio or personal internet access although we take a variety of periodicals (religious and secular) that will keep you in touch with the wider world. We have a well-stocked library with books on theology, monastic life and spirituality as well as a collection of lighter fiction and non-fiction.

You will have a small bedroom alongside other members of the community and will share our bathroom facilities. Alongsiders also have the use of another room as a study and sitting room, which might be shared with other alongsiders. We do not have electronic equipment such as laptops, iPods or mobile phones in our bedrooms, in order to help us respect the silence and prayerful focus of the Greater Silence from Compline to breakfast. Ideally our life here is lived “offline” but we realise that you may have commitments

outside that require occasional use of the internet or phone, for example to manage a bank account or to contact family members. Your assigned sister will help you to discern what is appropriate for you and will support you in protecting your time in enclosure from needless intrusion.

We remain within the enclosure apart from medical appointments or family emergencies. Alongsiders have time arranged when they can go out, for example for haircuts or shopping for toiletries. If you are with us for longer than 6 months then you may arrange to be away for a week’s break during your time with us.

We review the situation every month and you are free to leave or we may ask you to leave if we think it best for you. We charge no fees for your time with us and pay no wages or allowance. Please bring enough money for essential toiletries and medication.

Becoming an Alongsider

Please download and complete the application form on our website and send it to the address given below. If you have not yet done so, we encourage you to come and stay at the Abbey as a guest so that you can get to know a bit about our life before coming as an alonsider. We will contact you to arrange this once we have received your application form.

Write to:

Mother Abbess, St. Mary's Abbey, 52 Swan Street
West Malling, Kent ME19 6JX, United Kingdom