



tam tam
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the meetings here (...)

The Abbé Pierre - Emmaus
CENTRE

tam-tam: the Emmaus news wall

“The house has been invaluable on many occasions. And the meetings here (...) have been fruitful and joyful. May this house belong to all of you.”

Abbé Pierre

 **EMMAUS INTERNATIONAL**

Editorial

“A place to live and a place to remember” by Jean Rousseau, President of Emmaus International

The Abbé Pierre - Emmaus Centre has just opened its doors in Esteville, near Rouen in France - a hundred years since Abbé Pierre was born. It's not a “museum” in which to place our founder on a pedestal - something he himself would have rejected. Being dedicated to Abbé Pierre means understanding a life that was exceptionally committed to its time, a personality overflowing with love, open to all

possibilities, a man who brought forth extremely fruitful ideas. Modern societies are overwhelmed by individualism and more than ever they need examples to follow and inspiration for collective action and to serve vulnerable people. That's why Abbé Pierre and the Emmaus movement must keep challenging people in order to create a better world. The Abbé Pierre - Emmaus Centre has a simple, yet great ambition of bringing to

light Abbé Pierre's words and action, which are kept alive by everything the Emmaus movement is doing today... All of this in the very place where Abbé Pierre lived and regained his strength, and where, to this day, unconditional shelter, that we are all viscerally attached to, is still offered. Together, let's let people know about this new creation by Emmaus that was initiated by Abbé Pierre and let's bring it to life.



All aboard

- To visit the Abbé Pierre - Emmaus Centre: Route d'Emmaüs, 76690 Esteville, France. Tel: +33 (0)2 35 23 87 76. www.centre-abbe-pierre-emmaus.org
- The centre is open from Wednesday to Sunday, from 10am until 6pm. Annual closure from 24 December to 3 January and from 15 October to 15 November. There is also a bookshop, coffee shop and restaurant.
- Give yourself about an hour to visit the centre without a guide. You can also book a guided tour.
- Full price: €5. Reduced price: €3.50 Free for under 12s.
- The Abbé Pierre - Emmaus Centre needs the Emmaus Movement. To make a donation, please make a cheque out to ACAPE and send it to 280 route de Cailly, 76690 ESTEVILLE (France).

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Emmaus on the move

For Emmaus, the village of Esteville in France is symbolic. Since Abbé Pierre died in 2007, thousands of people have come to visit the house he lived in and the cemetery he is buried in beside Lucie Coutaz and some of the first companions. On account of this unexpected flood of visitors, the Emmaus movement decided to set up “a place to live and a place to remember”: the Abbé Pierre - Emmaus Centre. Let's go on a guided tour...

Visitors access the centre through a two-hectare wooded park. Large-format photographs line the road outside, challenging poverty and exclusion. A glasshouse serving as a reception area provides the first pieces of information with a press review mural, a relaxation area, film screenings and a bookshop. Visitors then reach the old building, which has been partially converted into a spacious, 10-room exhibition centre with displays, visits of Abbé Pierre's flat and the chapel, areas giving information about Emmaus and an interactive learning area. There are also documents from Abbé Pierre's personal archives that have been digitalised and made freely available on computer workstations. “The aim of the centre is to bear witness to what Emmaus does and to the challenges of our era. It's an integral part of the accommodation centre, which houses around thirty socially excluded people”, explains Centre Director, Philippe Dupont. Visitors are received in Abbé Pierre's haven of peace.

“I've hung up my hat here”

In 1964, Georges Lanfry, an entrepreneur from the Rouen region in France donated a small manor house to Abbé Pierre and Emmaus, who restored and extended it, so that it became “the Emmaus stopping place”. Abbé Pierre invited “anyone who needs somewhere to study or to relax”. The International Secretariat held meetings there, and it was also “a place for Emmaus community members, friends and volunteers to take a break”. Abbé Pierre loved the house. Over forty years, he often went there and decided to live there permanently from 1991 to 1999. “I've hung up my hat here”, he wrote in one of his books. He received several prominent world figures, but shared his daily life with companions who lived there with him. The rooms Abbé Pierre lived in have been kept as he left them. They contain his furniture, shelves, books, cassettes, travel souvenirs, gifts and photos and inimitably vouch for the matchless life he led, the wealth of his personality and the strength of his commitments.

A project set up collectively, with the Movement's solidarity

To manage the centre, Emmaus International, Abbé Pierre's sole legatee, Emmaus France, the Abbé Pierre Foundation, Emmaus Solidarity and representatives of Abbé Pierre's family came together to form an association, ACAPE. Goodwill has been shown throughout the Emmaus Movement - from the people who are accommodated at Esteville, companions from many communities, staff members and volunteers from all over France who, since September 2010 have spent time working onsite. And a building company has offered its skills and know-how, providing a rare opportunity for local skilled workers and people from Emmaus organisations to meet.



A place to live

The house also provides accommodation, which Parisian association, Emmaus Solidarity has been in charge of since 1999. Around thirty people who have suffered exclusion are housed there for a few weeks or more. The opening of the centre has really boosted this social project as residents are involved in all kinds of activities including welcoming visitors, maintenance



and working in the cafeteria, bookshop and restaurant and organising events. The centre's directed at people from all over - it's a real place of cultural action and is living proof of a “movement that's always on the move”. Emmaus is going strong and is still taking action by adapting to the problems of our era, in every country it works in.

Next port of call... Poitiers (France)

Bernard Salzer, President of the Poitiers community, lent a hand renovating the Abbé Pierre - Emmaus centre along with other Emmaus members. Altogether, sixteen Emmaus groups worked on it. He told us about this unifying moment.

Why did you help renovate the centre? As soon as I heard about the renovation work being done here, I wanted to help out. Before retiring, I owned a construction company, and they immediately thought of me to find volunteers and to come and work here. It was essential that companions voluntarily came to help out - this project is a crucial part of community life at the Poitiers community. The ones who got involved have met Abbé Pierre or already knew of the house. With their hands, they wanted to restore something that Abbé Pierre gave them and that the Movement is still giving them. One of them, Jacky, believed he was “indebted” to Abbé Pierre, since “without Emmaus”, he used to say, “I wouldn't be here now and wouldn't have been for a long time”. They still talk about it and want to go back. Helping to work on site with companions, friends, and leaders is very powerful. It makes you bond with and open up to others, so you're not alone, keeping yourself to yourself.

What did you do there? We were part of the first team that began working onsite in September 2010. I came with my wife and four companions and spent ten days there. It wasn't easy - we knocked down walls, cleared the ground, moved



archives.... But it was a symbolic point of departure and there was a very sociable atmosphere. We went back in September 2011 to put the finishing touches on the paintwork and do whatever else needed to be done.

What does the opening of a centre like this represent? Emmaus is like a family. The setting up of a place to remember and a place to live that's open to the Movement and to the world is significant. The centre doesn't aim to be a place of “worship”, but it shows people what Abbé Pierre created and how this is living on today. Emmaus groups and people from all over the world can come and visit Abbé Pierre's grave and find out about everything that is being done today at Emmaus.