

## Meeting Jim — Mary Pearson

One of the unexpected consequences of attending a Merton retreat at Oakham is that you get to meet your heroes. Thus it was that I found myself in conversation with Jim Forest a few years ago. Jim enquired what I did and I replied that I worked in a women's prison which was shortly changing its population from female to male. Jim's response was quick and immediate, 'What's going to happen to them (the women)?' I replied truthfully that I didn't know. Jim had highlighted the plight of young vulnerable women who had already led lives of desperate insecurity now being faced with another disruption. I was struck by his immediate grasp of the situation and context. A few days ago we lost another connection with Merton, Thich Nhat Hanh. Jim was an early visitor to Hanh's monastery in France, Plum Village, and together they joined forces on peace marches. Oh, and Jim, the prison has since been pulled down and is now luxury housing.

**Mary Pearson** came to Merton after studying Zen whilst living and working in the Far East. By coincidence she was in Bangkok the year Merton died although he was unknown to her then. A high spot for her was visiting the Hermitage in 2015. To her Merton remains both contemporary and visionary.