

Peace on earth, goodwill to all



Pilsdon at Malling

Christmas 2011

Christian communities — the book

This book had its origins in a conference that Peter and Mary attended at the Othona Community at Bradwell, Essex, in September 2010. Fourteen people from seven intentional Christian communities spent a week designing the book and sharing stories. Out of this has come a volume that describes 11 Communities in the UK. They tell their own story but deal with similar issues:

Origins: How did they get going?

Charisms: What are their distinctive gifts and characteristics?

History: How have they developed?

Projects: What enterprises have they built?

Places: Which special places have become "holy" because of them?

Lifestyle: What particular elements of discipleship do they produce?

Membership: What would it mean to join?

Mary and Peter wrote the chapter on the Pilsdon Communities – Dorset, Brook House and Pilsdon at Malling. Peter also wrote the chapter on the history of Christian communities from Jerusalem, in the Acts of the Apostles, through St Benedict, St Francis and Little Gidding to the 20th Century. The book is well illustrated and contains details of how to contact the communities. It is ideal for a retreat house or church library, and useful to give to someone who is testing their vocation or wants to fill a gap year, not to mention avoid a mid-life crisis.

** Christian Communities, edited by John Vincent, published by Ashram Press
£10.00 + £1.50pp*

Available from Pilsdon at Malling Community



We did it!!!!

The morning of October 16th was a bright and chilly day. More than 600 men and women gathered to run the Maidstone half marathon, George and me among them. It was George who encouraged me to run and we both were able to finish in a reasonable time. I would like to thank everyone who supported and encouraged us to do this run. We were able raise some reasonable funds for our community without much advertising. We are looking forward to doing more runs in the future.

Wasantha Hettiarachchi

NEED A MARQUEE?

Ideal for fetes, markets, weddings, etc.

Size: 40ft x 20ft - 15ft high.

The Pilsdon at Malling Community hires out its marquee in return for a donation to the charity. We will deliver, erect and take down. Please contact the community (see back page for details)



From the Guardian

We live in turbulent times. The headlines scream out at us that we're all caught in an economic maelstrom from which we might not recover for many years. Yet while many really are struggling, and we know this first hand from those who contact us for help, many are also doing very well and, generally, are not feeling the pinch. We are not really all in this together. There is a strong sense that the most vulnerable in society are the scapegoats, and always are when things go wrong.

It has always been like this – the poorest are the ones who suffer most when times are bad. In Jesus' time the poor, the disabled and sick, the vulnerable were considered outcasts and given little thought by the comfortably off – not much has changed. Jesus, born in a smelly cow shed, a refugee from a vicious dictator and an occupying power, shows us that God finds his place in the messiness of life - the messier the better. Jesus spent time with people from all levels of society but it

would seem he was most at home with those who were ostracised and looked down upon – the lame, the blind, the prisoners, the sinners. Ultimately, all of us are mortal, we struggle, we doubt, we do not know the answers. And yet in this very struggle we glimpse the greatest truths and God's wisdom: that this Jesus, this king beyond all human understanding and authority, is the king who is with us, down here in the smelly cowshed of our lives. When someone I met recently who had faced many challenges in life and struggled with addiction and mental illness was asked why they wanted to be baptised they answered "Because Jesus is the one who knows what it is like to be me."

As we wait for the coming of our Lord this Christmas perhaps we can reflect that the Incarnation is not just something that happens in the world, but also within us, bringing light and life into the dark places that we hold hidden within us. We wish you a blessed, peaceful and joyful Christmas and may the wonder of the coming of the Christ-child fill us all with light and new life.

Pam Rink

These few months since our last newsletter seem to have flown by. As always, the generosity of our local parishes and schools was overwhelming at Harvest time. Once again we were given a huge amount of dried goods, tins, packets and fresh produce for which we are so grateful – thank you. We have been blessed with gifts of other kinds as well, essentials such as hay for our sheep over the winter and the gifts in cash and kind that we receive at this time of year. They make it possible for us to be generous and ensure that Christmas is a time of celebration for some of those who might otherwise not have much to celebrate.

We continued to host some very successful concerts over the autumn. It was a great privilege to welcome Chamber Domaine to the Barn Chapel as part of the Music at Malling Festival at the beginning of October and the Maidstone Wind Symphony Orchestra a week later. It was also wonderful to welcome back Bazaar over the first weekend in November. The Barn was again transformed with the rainbow colours and marvellous scents of an Indian bazaar. We hope they will return next year.

We completed upgrading most of the heating and hot-water system in the Cloisters building this year – many thanks to those who so generously donated towards this. Unfortunately, we continue to be plagued with heating and hot water problems and we need to look urgently at replacing the boilers in the Cottages because they are working only intermittently. We had hoped to include this in a thorough renovation of the Cottages later next year but it needs immediate attention. We need to begin fundraising soon for all these works in order to achieve our goal of bringing our accommodation up to standard and reducing our carbon footprint.

A new Guardian for Pilsdon at Malling

Bishop James's old diocese, Lynn, had links with a church in Papua New Guinea, he explained at Revd Pam Rink's licensing as the new Guardian of Pilsdon. At special services, what they liked to do was dance.

During the Eucharistic Prayer they would gather around the altar, their arms festooned with feathers and, as the service moved to the prayer where heavenly host joins together saying, 'Holy, holy, holy,' they would raise their arms and those feathers would ruffle and flutter – it was like a little taste of heaven.

Particularly at this time of year, Bishop James added, (on October 30th we celebrated All Saints Day) we are reminded that what separates earth and heaven is very thin indeed. When we think about all the saints who have gone before us, we recognise that life is very fragile; we are aware that this is not all there is to life; there is something else, something more.

When Jesus spoke to the crowds on the mountainside, proclaiming what we now know as the Beatitudes, his message was subversive. The people who he said were blessed were not those who we, from a human perspective, would consider blessed at all – the poor in spirit, the meek, those who mourn, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, those who are persecuted. They were radical statements then; they're radical now. But that's what God's kingdom does – it *is* subversive – it turns human preconceptions and ways of measuring success upside down.

In the same way, Pilsdon is a subversive place; it puts into practice the principle of living in community in the same way that the early church practised it. As a community, those who are struggling are welcomed into its heart



and given time to be – to be accepted for who they are – to contribute to the community as they can – and to mend and heal. It is, in its own way, a little taste of heaven; a demonstration of God's kingdom in action.

Peter Barnett presented Pam with items she might find useful, among which there was a shepherd's crook (not as decorative as Bishop James' but definitely functional, as Peter

demonstrated) and a drain rod – reminders that life at Pilsdon is remarkably practical. Pam presented Peter with gifts to thank him for his time as Guardian, including a lovely caricature of him and Mary.

Mary could not be at the service as she is still undergoing treatment for leukaemia – it is hoped she will be well enough to undergo a bone marrow transplant before

Christmas. Finally, Peter invited Pam to speak. 'I don't have as many words as you,' she said. 'Most would consider that a blessing!' Peter quipped. Pam thanked the congregation for joining her and asked all to stay for refreshments, which were served in the chapel.

Becky Clifford

Editor of St Mary's West Malling parish magazine

News from Peter and Mary

Well, we did not plan 2011 and our retirement from Pilsdon in quite the way it has turned out. At the beginning of 2011 we knew that Peter was to have a new hip in April, and we would retire by the end of the year. The day after Peter was discharged, having exercised his new hip for six weeks, Mary was admitted to the Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead for treatment for leukaemia. This involved about six monthly sessions of chemotherapy, culminating in a bone marrow transplant in November.

The Community, the Kings Hill congregation and the Diocese have been wonderfully supportive and understanding. Peter often visited the hospital three or four times a week, so was not around much in the Community or the Parish. We are very grateful for all the support, encouragement and prayers we have received. The nurses say Mary has the most decorated room on the ward, with so many family photos and cards. They have certainly kept up Mary's spirits, which is a vital part of the treatment. And we cannot praise enough the hospital staff, who often attend Mary every 20 minutes.

In the midst of this Mary's 96-year-old mother was admitted to hospital for the first time in her life, and four weeks later to a nursing home in Cookham. Sadly she died two weeks later. Peter was privileged to take the funeral in Bourne End and Mary, despite the exhausting effects of her chemo, was able to attend the internment and see the family.

We are pleased to report that the new bone marrow (17,000,000 new stem cells from a donor in Germany (to whom we are eternally grateful) has begun to work and as I write (December 8th) we hope Mary will be discharged from hospital within days. She will be an out-patient for several months, with regular blood tests and treatment. We are aware that there is still a long way to go and we

will not know for some time yet whether the leukaemia has completely gone. But as Martyn Begbey put it: "The mountain has been hard to climb, but we hope that we have reached the top and the going should be easier on the way down."

Mary and I formally retired from Pilsdon on October 30th, when the Bishop of Rochester licensed Pam Rink as the new Guardian. I was very happy and confident to hand over the reins to Pam, who with much support from her husband, Dennis (a full-time Community Member), and their children, Caroline and Matthew (who help as volunteers), together with the other Community Members, Livia and Wasantha, will lead the Community into the next chapter of its life. Mary obviously was not present but I received gifts and appreciation on her behalf and we plan to return after Easter to mark our retirement and to celebrate Mary's recovery to health.

Two other events marked my retirement. The Bishop of Rochester invited me to be a member of the Rochester Society of St Andrew in recognition of my 17 years in the Pilsdon Communities and my 39 years of ordained ministry. I was given the award at evensong in Rochester Cathedral on St Andrew's Day (November 30th). The Bishop cited the prophetic role of the Pilsdon Communities and my tendency to say and do "uncomfortable" things in relation to "comfortable Christianity". I appreciated that! On December 4th the Kings Hill congregation had a special service so say thank-you for our time there – this included the Girls' Brigade singing a song they had composed about me and reciting a poem. They gave Mary and me a wonderful "Lutyens" garden bench, something Mary has always wanted. We will remember the people of Kings Hill as we watch the sunsets from our garden on the west coast of the



Time for a change: the cartoon by George Noble that the community gave to Peter and Mary

Gower in South Wales. We plan to have a quiet Christmas with Emily in Kent, with the chance for Mary to get to see the children and grandchildren again, and then to gradually prepare to move house sometime before Easter, depending on Mary's health and the weather. In the meantime I will assist the new priest in West Malling as honorary curate and arrange the final improvements to our retirement house in Wales.

If you would like to continue to help Mary and the many other adult and children leukaemia sufferers, one of the best ways is to become a blood donor (if you are not already). Mary received many pints of blood to compensate for the destructive effects of chemotherapy. If you are fit, aged between 18 and 50, you might consider offering yourself as a bone marrow donor. It is similar to donating blood but takes longer. For details phone 0300 123 2323 or go to the Give Blood website.

So, many thanks for continuing to

support the life and work of the Pilsdon at Malling Community, and especially for the many ways you have enabled these first seven years of this Community to grow and develop. May God continue to bless Pilsdon and all of you this Christmas and for the years to come.

Fr Peter Barnett

Our address after Easter 2012 will be

*Catchpool Cottage
Llanmadoc
Gower
Swansea
SA3 1DE*

In the meantime our address is

*The Vicarage
19 Worcester Ave
Kings Hill
West Malling
ME19 4FL*

Tel: 01732 522976

Email: thebarnettfamily@talktalk.net

What's on

* We will celebrate Midnight Mass at 11.30pm on Christmas Eve in the Barn Chapel. All are welcome to join us.

* Morning, Midday and Evening Prayer will be said at 8.30am, 12 noon and 6.00pm each day in the Barn Chapel during Christmas week.

* There will be Prayers in the Barn Chapel at 11.45pm on New Year's Eve.

* Red Sky will play a concert of contemporary songs in the Chapel Barn at Pilsdon on Saturday the 28th January 2012. Featuring the beautiful voice of Fiona Henry with Peter Gardner on guitars, Gary Briley on keyboards, David Crowley on bass and Stephen Briley on drums. Join us for what will be a special evening.



The Pilsdon at Malling Community

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