

New Year, 2019



Dear friend,

A very **Happy New Year** to you from the Pilsdon Community!

2018 was a busy year and we are so grateful for all the many ways in which our friends and supporters have journeyed with us.

Pilsdon at 60

On Sunday the 14th October we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the community. We were delighted that so many of you were able to be with us. Bishop Nicholas Holtam, Bishop of Salisbury joined the community as the celebrant and preached to us about the need for more love in the world; love for each other and love for creation. His sermon touched people's hearts, and highlighted the work of the Pilsdon Community in the midst of this great need.

The service was followed by a wonderful lunch in the large marquee (supplied by Hilfield Friary) of a hog (and a half) roast, a variety of amazing salads and Dorset Apple Cake with fresh cream! All of the pork, apples, and vegetables were home grown within the community. And of course, after serving 180 people, we still had left overs! We live with such abundance.

The Pilsdon Memory Project

In October of 2017, with the help of a grant from The Heritage Lottery Fund, we started work on a project to capture an oral history of the Pilsdon Community.

Having recorded over 60 hours of conversations and interviews with over 40 past wardens, members, volunteers, trustees, guests, and wayfarers, we used the Anniversary as a time to tell Pilsdon's 60 year history. The *Stations of our Story* offered an opportunity for people to take a meditative walk or pilgrimage through the house, gardens and farm where 14 stations were set up reflecting some of the key themes that had emerged from the interviews. People were invited to reflect on Pilsdon as a place of: anchoring, creativity, hope, acceptance, brokenness, faith, and celebration, to name a few. Each station was set up with images and words drawn from the interviews which demonstrated people's experiences.

This year of work also gave us the incentive and opportunity to begin to organise the Pilsdon Archive of images, documents, and newspaper clippings, some of which were on display in “The Memory Shed”, a cabin where interviews had taken place. For the anniversary this shed housed a small exhibition where people took time to think, reminisce and chat with other visitors about their experiences. The material has remained on display and we hope this year to move it into a more permanent space.

‘The Unknown Remembered Gate’

In the afternoon of the anniversary current residents of the community put on a performance inspired by the weaving together of research from the history project, and their experiences of day-to-day life at Pilsdon. The script for the play was developed with Sharon “Muiruri” Coyne, a community theatre director who worked on creating a piece of theatre with us that truly reflected the life and spirit of the community. What emerged in this process was something far more dynamic than the retelling of a history.

The performance of ‘The Unknown Remembered Gate’ captured many stories and themes, some passed down from prior eras and some that are being lived out in present time. The words and stories from several of the dramatised monologues reflected the lived experience of the person delivering them. It reminded us of the strength of the original Pilsdon vision. It was also a powerful demonstration of what this place has meant to so many and reflected how as a community we continue to struggle alongside each other in our common life.

We thank everyone who participated in the preparations for the anniversary, and on the day itself. For all those who were unable to be there we hope that the small booklet we have put together to commemorate the event will give you a flavour of the celebration.

We are grateful for...



...New members and volunteers

Last year we welcomed new members and volunteers into the community. The Johnson-Hills family joined us in August as new members. Melissa, Jim and their daughters Madeleine and Roxanna came to us from a community house in Bristol. They bring with them amazing gardening expertise and lots of energy, and they are excited to be living with us in the beautiful Dorset countryside. Melissa has taken on vehicle maintenance with great gusto (car windows have never been so clean), Jim is enjoying the pottery and makes a mean chilli sauce! Madeleine has been settling in to Marshwood Primary School this year too.

Frantisek Sindelka joined us as a volunteer in June. Frantisek is from the Czech Republic and he has embraced the many challenges and joys of living in community since he arrived. We are grateful for Frantisek's sense of humour and the great connections that he makes with people. Jackie Noel came as a volunteer in September; prior to being here she lived and worked at both the Lee Abbey and Scargill Communities. Jackie has taken on a lot of housekeeping responsibilities; we are grateful for her wonderful cleaning skills! Warm-hearted and friendly Jackie enjoys playing cards with people, and occasionally winning.



So many of our past volunteers and members continue to take part in the Pilsdon Community through prayer, and visits, and work. We are thankful for the ways in which they stay connected and share our sorrows and joys.

...Heating and Harvest

At last the Manor House has heating and hot water on demand after a cold winter and a year of hard work trying to get things sorted. We have to thank the generosity of many who helped get it up and running. We are grateful to CRASH and their trustees, to Richard of Pilsdon Plumbing, and to the many people who generously donated to this project.

Both in harvest season and all through the year we receive many gifts of fresh produce, canned goods, biscuits and chocolate. We also received donations of clothing, toiletries, and gifts for children. We are grateful for our friends & neighbours, and for the clubs, churches and schools who support us in so many creative and nurturing ways.

...For all of our Guests

The common life of this community is daily enriched by the guests who come to live alongside us for a time of rest along their journey. Each person comes to the community for their own unique reason. And, while we are together, they share their skills, their stories, their laughter, and their lives. We are each changed by being truly in community with one another and we come to realise that through our new friendships with each other we are nurtured, supported and strengthened in unexpected and surprising ways.

...For all of you our friends

Pilsdon has always been enriched by our wider networks of support and prayer. From day one committed friends and neighbours have contributed time and resources to ensure that the community could continue to provide shelter and safety to so many.

Pilsdon would not have been able to endure for 60 years without this. So we thank you once again for all the ways in which you hold the community, and enable us to do that which has been placed before us: worship, work and hospitality. We also thank you for the ways in which you take Pilsdon's hopeful witness in the world into your families and local communities. Pilsdon shapes and changes us all in unpredictable and unexpected ways.

We have committed to remain independent of any agency or institution forcing our decision making. In order for this to continue through both the renewal of the fabric of the farm and to deal with the ever increasing costs of living in community we ask for your continued support. There are several ways to do this: making a free will donation by setting up a monthly direct debit through our website; by supporting a guests stay in the community though bursary; or, perhaps in your future planning, you might consider leaving Pilsdon Community a gift in your will. We do also have a new Pilsdon calendar available to buy. At just £5 plus £1.50 p&p each, it is a great way to support us. Do go to our website at www.pilsdon.org.uk where you can place an order for calendars and make a contribution by using the DONATE button.

Pilsdon has just celebrated Christmas and New Year in a joyous way. Over the two holidays we welcomed 21 wayfarers for a total of 11 nights; we feel glad that we were able to offer such hospitality during this season. It is our hope that our visitors experienced a time of rest and belonging as they celebrated with us here. Creating a safe environment for people needing shelter and companionship is what Pilsdon does best. We feel privileged to be able to enjoy the holiday with old and new friends alike. What an opportunity to celebrate our great abundance and share it with all who are willing to come here in friendship and peace.

We look forward to 2019 and sharing more about our life and all that we are learning by living together in this place. Thank you to everyone at Pilsdon and those outside the community who make this possible!

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael', with a small mark above the 'i'.

The Revd Michael Deegan
Warden of The Pilsdon Community