

Easter Newsletter

April 2021

Hello dear friends of Pilsdon

As we prepare the services for Holy Week and Easter I remember last Easter morning and our dawn service. A small gathering of early risers standing in the lightening darkness. George, the keeper of our fires, lighting the sacred fire, Simon putting the Paschal candle into the fire until it caught was a solemn and moving moment. The world situation was terribly uncertain and we were aware of the privilege given to us to celebrate Easter when so many others were prevented. Carrying the candle into Church entoning 'The Light of Christ' I felt a host of people with us. The joy was there though quiet and more tender as we sang our Easter hymn lighting our baptismal candles from the one flame moved us all. We thought it would be different this year, how much we had to learn. Bringing the light back into the church means bringing the light back into the world, into everyone's world.



Sue, our Warden

What have we learned? I guess I'll be reflecting some of your thoughts here in how vital touch is to our wellbeing; and whilst we have been able to hug here I've missed my family hugely and without FaceTime or WhatsApp would have felt it more. To continue to live with uncertainty has challenged us all, the experience of loss and not being able to say proper goodbyes have been for many a deep and unkind grief.



Potato planting

To trust the mystery we call God in new unfolding ways has called us ever more deeply into letting go of our expectations of what we want and to give thanks for what we have been given and to find a gratefulness in vital and life-giving moments.

Could some of our learning have prepared us for a new way of life? The urgency of our need to wake up to the challenges we face come thick and fast; increasing poverty and oppression caused by the very mechanisms of exclusion Christ came to overturn. The environmental catastrophe from which there is no longer an escape will affect everyone no matter how much personal and corporate wealth is amassed. Here at Pilsdon we are having conversations about our part in changing the way we live personally and as a community.

A dear friend gave me this quote from William Hutchinson Murray:

“Concerning all acts of initiative and creation there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans; that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to one that could not have otherwise have occurred. A whole stream events issues from the decision, raising ones favour of all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance which no-one could have dreamed would have come their way.”.

..and from Goethe: “Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, magic and power in it. Begin it now.”



Welcome to our new piglets



George down at the burn pile

This so challenging, yet exciting and hopeful and I do not think we can rely on the leadership of institutions to show the way. People with passion have almost always led in times of deep change. Percy and Gaynor Smith with others were bold and followed their dream and here we are almost 63 years later living it out as best we can. Those of us committed to living this life find the miraculous happening every day. Turns of events, moments of transformation after hard conversations, donations arriving when the need is greatest, someone literally on our doorstep with the skills and willingness we need to further a project that will benefit the whole community. If we have the eyes to see, and an open heart to receive the connections and creativity of this moment, we can live in hope. All of us can trust we are in a time of spiritual growth for every human being. Jesus said, ‘You will see greater things than these.’ is this his leading us into a Christ consciousness?

Here is what Wangari Maathai says:

"There comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other."

As you, our extended community share our vision please join with us as we endeavour to live out of a new boldness, and undertake a new commitment to making a difference. Everyone is needed to bring change about through prayer and action.

The vocal way some people feel it is all too late and we are doomed is unhelpful and I am comforted by Carolyn Baker's encouragement in her book written with Andrew Harvey, 'Radical Regeneration' and their commitment to live in hope.:

"The only sane response to the death of certainty is to practice being present to life from moment to moment. This does not mean ignoring the failure or failing to connect the dots of the present with those of the future. What it does mean is committing to practising presence while being awake to predicament."

Bringing the light back into the church means bringing the light back into the world, into everyone's world, and as we look toward opening up the community over these next months we hope to see you here for these conversations.

This with our love to you all this Easter
Sue



Thank you and Welcome

Andrew Davey has retired as Chair of Trustees, our thanks to him for his work for the community and my personal thanks for his support, encouragement and friendship. Amanda Streatfeild is thankfully taking over as Chair and introduces her team of Trustees elsewhere in the newsletter. Being a Trustee is a vital role and we are delighted to have three new people to swell their ranks.

A few months ago, Friday afternoon at Pilsdon was given over to crafts, and the cleverly named “crafternoon” was born. With the issues facing the nation lately, it’s been a confusing and sometimes scary time, and at Pilsdon we’re soon to mark one year since having to close our doors to wayfarers and becoming a closer and more self-contained community probably than ever before - and what better response to a change like this than to dedicate even just a few hours a week to creating beautiful things together?

There’s been pottery, where old hands and beginners alike turn pots, mix glazes, and fashion sculptures. There’s been green woodworking, with spoon carving sessions and plenty of drawknife use. And more recently, long hours of sewing have produced shirts, tops, dungarees, and more, along with the occasional quick mend.

They’re satisfying and uplifting activities, they afford plenty of time for a good conversation or for the odd passerby to stick their head in the door for a minute or two, and there’s something about the collaborative act of creating that brings people together in the most rewarding and fundamental of ways. I, for one, hope crafternoon is one of those products of the pandemic that remains tradition long after the pandemic itself is over. *Craig*



Dungaree making, trouser repairing, t-shirt designing; it all happens during crafternoon

A message from our new Chair of Trustees, Amanda Streatfeild

This seems the perfect opportunity to let you know a little about this 'band of brothers' (and sisters) who have the privilege to be the trustees of Pilsdon, as we have just been joined by three new people. But first a very heartfelt thanks to Andy Davey, who has been the chair for the last three years and a trustee for many more. His crowning glory has to be overseeing the appointment of Sue as the new Warden for which we are all so grateful. But his deep knowledge of Pilsdon, and care of the Community, has been appreciated and he will be much missed – though we will be calling on him.

Here is brief introduction to us all:



Els Jolly has been with us for three years and knows Pilsdon from the inside, as she and Ian her husband (who is our invaluable architect) visit Pilsdon for breaks with their fostered downs and autistic daughter Rachel for whom they care with deep devotion. She brings an experience of her stays there, together with "a listening ear as to what God is up to!"

Sue Gibson has been involved with Pilsdon on and off since the 1990s and has that sense of history that is so important to the Community. She currently works at the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services office in Weymouth and lives in Crewkerne.

Eddie Howson moved to Whitchurch Canonorum nearby only three years ago and was spotted by Andy and exhorted to join the Trustees two years ago. He and Anne his wife are 'retired' clergy (do they ever?), though Anne is a vital cog in the Golden Cap benefice. Eddie brings brilliant analytical skills from his time in the automotive industry.

Our next three trustees have all just joined in the last month. I am enormously relieved to have recruited Martin Isaacs as our Treasurer Trustee. If you wanted to describe the exact person in the whole country that you would like to have as a CIO Trustee, it would be Martin; his CV is phenomenal. I have known him from both the Bridport Area Development Trust and the Bridport Museum, and I can't wait for him to be welcomed into the Pilsdon fold where he will keep us on the straight and narrow, particularly with our exciting building project up coming.

Alison Templeton visited Pilsdon last year just before lockdown when she and Mary met to start devising an environmental plan for the Pilsdon farm and garden. Her knowledge of project management, policies and procedures gleaned from many years in local government is going to be crucial to us but her enthusiasm for the countryside and environment will be so helpful in developing this little glorious quarter of West Dorset.

Finally, Simon Keyes is my undiscovered, as yet, treasure! Again, his CV shows how much experience he has in the social services and charitable network, alongside deep spiritual knowledge and his current post is as a lecturer in reconciliation and peacebuilding at the University of Winchester. Most of his career has been with voluntary organisations worrying about failures of the social fabric: homelessness, mental health, crime. We so look forward to working with him.

A short word about me. I am a truly local girl, from Bridport, and moved 4 miles to Broadoak, where I live with husband George and run a 270 hectare farm with two of our daughters, the third living next door to the Community at Pilsdon Dairy Farm! I have been involved with several local charities and social organisations, and hope that this, with the profound awe and admiration I have for Pilsdon, will allow me to work with Sue, the members and guests, backed by my trustees, to keep the ethos of Pilsdon secure for many more years.

I switched from being a volunteer at Pilsdon to becoming a member in February 2021 and I'm really pleased to have been able to take that step. No longer juggling and living in two different places, I've finally been able to establish myself (and my many items of Tupperware!) in one place. And what a place it is! Spring has brought with it a great optimism and excitement for what's around the corner as we plan what's going in the ground, what will take place on the farm and dream of the many plans that are enthusiastically discussed for the year ahead, plus I'm enjoying the stability of the weekly rhythms which ground me and hold us together.

One of the things I've most appreciated since becoming a member is the benefit of our morning meetings as a team. In such a busy place just having a space to check in on each other and to consider what's coming up is not only of practical support but also provides a valuable opportunity to share our vulnerabilities in a way I've not done before. The other members have made me feel really welcome and have been very supportive in helping me find my feet. They will often just chuck out amazing nuggets of gold in conversation, oblivious to how precious and life giving I've found them, as they simply share from their wealth of community experience. They are very inspiring to live with and I've been learning so much.

It's obvious that community life cannot be lived in the shallow end; it demands that you jump in deep, but I'm convinced that the risks are worth it for the richness it provides and the satisfaction that follows. This really has been my experience so far and I'm so grateful to live in a place that encourages me to have a go at living differently, a place that stretches me and asks a lot but gives so much more. It's a privilege to be here learning to love others and to love myself and I'm interested to discover what shape I'll become as Pilsdon continues to do its work in me. *James*

A Good Friday Blessing

*When the governor washes his hands
And the crowd shouts "crucify him,"
Blessed are they who still cry "hosanna."*

*When walls go up
On borderlines and in courtrooms,
Blessed are they who build bridges instead.*

*In a system that sees unskilled workers in box braids
And gangsters in hoodies,
Blessed are they who see only beauty in darker skin.*

*In the endless battle between left and right,
Republican and Democrat, conservative and liberal,
Blessed are they who battle only with humanity and
against hate.*

*Blessed are they who pray to their god for followers of
another,
Who embrace the youth in age and the age in youth,
Who grasp wheelchair handles as lovingly as healthy
hands.*

*Blessed are they who draw lines but don't put up fences,
Who differ but don't damn,
Who contradict but don't crucify.*

Craig





We love our soil!

From composing to decomposing....

My contribution to the last newsletter referred to my composition, alas not sufficiently appreciated by the judges at radio 3, but at least it gives me a tidy little link to my current offering which is about Decomposition.

We have various compost 'stations' around the place – all rotting away nicely.

Our compost bins at Pilsdon have been standing for a couple of years with worms and bacteria working away to turn our green waste vegetation into lovely rich brown friable compost.

We uncovered the heaps and found the contents to be sufficiently decomposed to be used back on the garden. Some has been sieved and is fine enough for seeds or potting-on. Other matter will be used for creating ridges over our potatoes once they emerge – the two trowels found in the bins have been returned to the blue shed and the dense grass clippings, yards of baler twine, twigs and random detritus have been used by Mary as examples of what should not be included when filling the bins.

Whilst adding stuff to our current bin, I was mildly aggravated – no, I was aggravated—to find a load of twigs on top of all the green waste. A deliberate act of horticultural sabotage! I checked myself from “scapegoating” – this was on my mind, as the topic was the most recent chapter of Jonathan’s book (well worth a read!) which I am reading at the moment. When another twig fell from the sky, I looked up and saw the culprits – nesting rooks! Their mocking calls followed me all the way back to the house. *Bob*



Garden meeting in full swing. If only you could hear the enthusiastic cheering each week.

Our Daily Bread

Bread production at Pilsdon has not only been increasing in quantity but has also welcomed plenty of new recipe ideas and creativity. As many bakers will know there's no guarantee of success but when the Aga door is opened to reveal the results of each experiment there's a real sense of excitement and curiosity with each attempt. We now have a continual supply of sourdough loaves, initially introduced during the yeast shortages of 2020, but now enjoyed as a recommended serving suggestion with breakfast and with soup at lunchtime thanks to our faithful sourdough starters that we've named Annie, Doreen, Betty, and Shirley (after some wise women that we know). White sliced bread still has its fan base but 'real' bread is holding its own and gaining interest. Due to its long fermentation process the sourdough is left to do its thing throughout the night, leaving plenty of opportunity to try other breads during the day. Enthusiasm from several guests has resulted in lots of bread chatter and you can often find a couple of people having lively discussions about tips, tricks, methods and crumb structure in the Aga room over a brew whilst the comforting smell of fresh bread fills the air. Frugal as always, and not wanting to throw away resources unnecessarily, we've discovered that we can use a large amount of whey (a waste product from our butter production) in many of the items we bake.

Easter wouldn't be the same without hot cross buns so they've been added to our repertoire, trying various flavour combinations to meet a variety of community requests including those going gluten-free.

Our efforts don't just stop with bread though as Craig got volunteered to make this year's Simnel cake (a medieval fruit cake topped with 11 balls of marzipan to represent the 11 apostles, excluding Judas). Having quickly gained considerable adulation for his ever increasing back catalogue of food successes Craig jumped at the chance to give this challenge a go.

We also must not fail to mention Adam and Joni's stunning contribution to pudding night when they baked beautifully thin biscuits that were then balanced on top of their indulgent orange chocolate mousse desserts. A crowd pleaser that will be remembered for a long time yet to come.

Credit also due to Simon who, although can't claim to name his own loaf yet, is a very much valued member of the baking team who expertly manages our supplies, slices our loaves and just like Jesus, makes sure there's enough to go around for everyone.

So who know where our bug for baking, our boldness for buns and our brilliance for biscuits will take us in the future or how many more guests there will be with a flair for fairy cakes, a patience for pastry or the knowhow for kneading. All we can say is it's been a joy to take part and there's nothing better than sharing the results. *James*



Hot Cross Bunnies



Fundraising

Grateful thanks to our regular donors, you have made such a difference to our finances and the encouragement you give us is tremendous. I wonder though if others of you might consider giving a regular sum each month? For example just ten pounds a month from one hundred people would make a real difference. There are a over a thousand people on our mailing list, if you are one of them and you do not already make donation, please would you consider us when you review your giving for the next financial year?

One person wrote, "I have spent less this year due to Covid 19 and would like the community to have what I haven't needed" it was a beautiful letter full of memories of Pilsdon, their insight warmed us and to them, like everyone who has supported us for many years, we say thank you. Its easy to donate on our website and if you are able to Gift Aid it makes a real difference. www.pilsdon.org.uk

This time last year it was with a heavy heart and some tears that I said goodbye to everyone and started working from home. At my darkest times I felt scared for guests and members and for my family and friends, I also put my own affairs in order and faced my own mortality as I am sure many of us did. Reflecting on life and how we are in this situation I am hopeful that we can create something better out of this, a new and better dream.

Life working from home was so different, I missed the daily connection with everyone and it took a bit of time to get into a rhythm of working but I am very grateful to Mary for holding the fort and giving me the information I needed to be able to keep everything on an even keel at least for the administration.

I was so glad to go back into the office if only for a couple of days a week and now I have a regular lateral flow test I feel much easier about going in. I was so pleased to be able to go back into the house a couple of weeks ago and have lunch with everyone and I will always remember the cheer that went up.

Although I don't live in the Community I feel very blessed to be able to work at and for Pilsdon and I will always hold Pilsdon in my heart. *Jane*

