

THE PILGRIMS' magazine

SPRING 2026

INCLUDES
A toolkit for Easter

You're invited to...
EVERGREEN

A conference for
Christians serving
older people

Find your
**PRAYER
GUIDE**
inside


**PILGRIMS'
FRIEND
SOCIETY**

7 truths
to hold onto in dementia

from Mark Wormell

"It was family"

A daughter's special letter of thanks





Fulfilled living in later life

Pilgrims' Friend Society exists to provide excellent care and support for older people, inspiring and encouraging them to live fulfilled lives. Rooted in the Christian faith, Pilgrims' Friend Society is committed to creating Christian communities in residential care homes and independent living housing schemes in England and Scotland.

Got a great story?

Email our editor Helen on

✉ helen.nathan@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk



Sign up for our magazine



If you don't yet get the magazine, you can sign up here:

🌐 www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/magazine

Or contact us via the details below:

Pilgrims' Friend Society,
175 Tower Bridge Road, London SE1 2AL

☎ **0300 303 1403**

✉ info@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

🌐 www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

The Pilgrims' Magazine is published quarterly. Except where specified, all content is copyright of Pilgrims' Friend Society 2026. No part of its content may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publishers.

Pilgrims' Friend Society is a registered charity and a company registered in England and Wales. Charity No: 1045920. Company No: 03027071

Cover stories



8

7 truths to hold onto in dementia

Mark Wormell draws out hope and comfort



12

Evergreen

Come to our conference for Christians serving older people



14

A special thank you

How we cared for Henrietta's father Guy

*"He is not here:
for He is risen, as
He said. Come, see
the place where the
Lord lay."*

Matthew 28:6

In this issue...

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>4 News
All the latest happenings</p> <p>6 Live with us
Contact details for our homes and schemes</p> <p>18 The Way We Live
Life in our independent housing schemes</p> <p>20 Outrageously bold
Alison's love of poetry</p> | <p>23 Reflecting on Easter
A simple toolkit to share</p> <p>24 Meet a volunteer...
Tim has been with us since 1985</p> <p>26 A prescription with a difference
All about social prescribing</p> <p>29 My story: Margaret
A lifetime in the Lakes</p> <p>32 Giving
Could you donate this Spring?</p> |
|---|---|



NEWS round-up

All the latest news from across our organisation

Two care homes to join our family

Pilgrims' Friend Society is delighted to announce that we will be the new operator of Furze Hill House in North Walsham, Norfolk, and Villa Adastra in Hassocks, West Sussex. Both care homes are currently run by The Salvation Army.

Stephen Hammersley, Chief Executive of Pilgrims' Friend Society, said, "I am very pleased that Furze Hill House and Villa Adastra will be joining our network of Christian care homes and housing schemes. We are looking forward to building on the legacy of Christian care in North Walsham and Hassocks as we ensure provision for older people for the foreseeable future."

The Salvation Army's Director of Older People's Services Glenda Roberts said, "Furze Hill House and Villa Adastra are places of great love and care and so we are pleased that this can continue under new management. As a Christian organisation, Pilgrims' Friend Society are well placed to continue the work we have started in providing care that is rooted in love while ensuring residents' spiritual needs are met."

The addition of these new homes is part of Pilgrims' Friend Society's Growth and Renewal Programme and our ongoing commitment to providing Christian care and community for more older people.



With transfer preparation underway, the transition to Pilgrims' Friend Society is expected to take effect on 1st May 2026, subject to final completion.

Please pray



- For all those living and working at Furze Hill House and Villa Adastra as they prepare for this change
- For Pilgrims' Friend Society and The Salvation Army staff as they work through all the necessary arrangements
- For a smooth transition for all involved when the change takes effect in May



A gold medal for Doris!

With Winter Olympics fever in the air, Emmaus House, Whitehaven staged their own ski prep challenge. Doris stepped up to the plate, donning hat, gloves and scarf, cheered on by care home staff. The moment was caught on camera and has since gone viral on social media, with viewers commenting on Doris's winning attitude. She even attracted a few celebrity admirers...

Well done, Doris!

Staff updates...

Sasha Manalo is our new Care Manager at Bridgemead in Bath. In our Support Office, Kay De Torvy joins as HR Assistant and Miranda Davies is our new Commercial Financial Accountant.



Pictured: Pancake fun at Evington Home, Leicester

Pancake Day

To mark the start of Lent, many of our homes took part in some Pancake Day fun, with lots of flips and just a few flops...

Follow us on social media:



Contact details

*Could you or a loved one
come to live with us?*

Here are the contact details for our homes and housing schemes. If you'd like to find out more, do get in touch. Each location also has its own page on our website:

www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/homes
www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/housing

Residential care homes

BETHANY HOUSE, PRESTON

☎ 0300 3031724
✉ bethanypreston@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

BRIDGEMEAD, BATH

☎ 0300 1319115
✉ bridgemean@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

EMMAUS HOUSE, HARROGATE

☎ 0300 3038450
✉ emmaushouse@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

EMMAUS HOUSE, WHITEHAVEN

☎ 0300 3031440
✉ emmauscumbria@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

EVINGTON HOME, LEICESTER

☎ 0300 3031455
✉ evington@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

FINBOROUGH COURT, GREAT FINBOROUGH

☎ 0300 3031450
✉ finboroughcourt@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

FRAMLAND, WANTAGE

☎ 0300 3031470
✉ wantage@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

KOINONIA CHRISTIAN CARE HOME, WORTHING

☎ 0300 3038480
✉ koinonia@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

LUFF HOUSE, WALTON-ON-THE-NAZE

☎ 0300 3031495
✉ luffhouse@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

MIDDLEFIELDS HOUSE, CHIPPENHAM

☎ 0300 3038470
✉ middlefieldshouse@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

MILWARD HOUSE, TUNBRIDGE WELLS

☎ 0300 3031460
✉ milward@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

SHOTTERMILL HOUSE, HASLEMERE

☎ 0300 3031475
✉ shottermill@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

Independent living housing schemes

CAREY GARDENS, KIRBY MUXLOE

☎ 0300 3038455
✉ carey.gardens@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

DOROTHEA COURT, BEDFORD

☎ 0300 3031490
✉ dorothea@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

FINBOROUGH COURT HOUSING, GREAT FINBOROUGH

☎ 0300 3031450
✉ housingmanager.finborough@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

HOMESDALE, WANSTEAD, LONDON

☎ 0300 3038485
✉ homesdale@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

LUFF MEWS & SELHURST COURT, WALTON-ON-THE-NAZE

☎ 0300 3031495
✉ luffhouse@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

MILWARD HOUSE HOUSING, TUNBRIDGE WELLS

☎ 0300 3031460
✉ milward@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

PILGRIM GARDENS, LEICESTER

☎ 0300 3038455
✉ andy.harrison@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

ROYD COURT, MIRFIELD

☎ 0300 3031480
✉ roydcourt@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

STRATHCLYDE HOUSE, SKELMORLIE

☎ 0300 3038465
✉ strathclyde@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

STRATHCLYDE
HOUSE

EMMAUS HOUSE

EMMAUS HOUSE

BETHANY HOUSE

ROYD COURT

EVINGTON HOME PILGRIM GARDENS

CAREY GARDENS

DOROTHEA COURT

FINBOROUGH COURT
FINBOROUGH
COURT HOUSING

LUFF HOUSE
LUFF MEWS &
SELHURST COURT

FRAMLAND

BRIDGEMEAD MIDDLEFIELDS
HOUSE

HOMESDALE

MILWARD HOUSE
MILWARD HOUSE HOUSING

SHOTTERMILL HOUSE

KOINONIA CHRISTIAN
CARE HOME



Seven truths to hold onto in dementia

Dementia can bring profound challenges to later life, whether we experience it ourselves, or walk alongside others. Reverend Mark Wormell, an Anglican pastor in Sydney, draws out seven truths about Our Heavenly Father to bring hope and comfort in the midst of uncertainty. This is based on his experience of people living with dementia, and the research for his book, *Coming to Christ in Dementia*



Dementia is a stage of life that an increasing number of people face. There are over 100 forms of dementia. Alzheimer's disease is the best known and most common. Like many other forms of dementia, it affects our memories, and can affect our ability to control ourselves.

Dementia need not be intimidating when we think about who God is, who God

says we are, and what He promises to do for us. Dementia is neither an end to a life of trust nor a barrier to a new life with God.

Many of us fear getting dementia, and caring for someone with dementia can be overwhelming. Yet there can be spiritual growth and contentment in dementia, both for believers and those who don't yet know the Lord. Here are seven truths to hold onto in dementia.



God can be trusted

God has proved Himself over millennia to keep His promises. He has given us the great gift of prayer. We can trust Him to answer our prayers for people living with dementia, that He will care for them, comfort them, speak His words of love, assurance and peace to them, and bring them into His kingdom. Christian care for people with dementia goes well beyond prayer, but it can never do without it.

God knows us

God created us, and tells us He made us for relationship with Him and each other. We are of infinite value to Him, because He gave His Son for us. We are not defined by our capacities or relationships or what other people think about us. We are defined by God's love for us. Sadly, many modern views on personhood are based on our capacities and relationships. They hold that when these fade, so does our right to be counted as a human person. That is not God's perspective. Our existence is tied up with Him, and His desire that we know Him and enjoy Him forever. We read in Romans 8 that nothing, including death, can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. If death can't separate us from God, then dementia certainly can't.

God can be experienced

People living with dementia still experience God. They know things even if they have difficulty expressing them. People who reached out their hands to take the bread and wine in Holy Communion for many years still know in dementia to reach out their hands to



receive something good from the God who loves them. Reading familiar Bible passages and prayers also connects us with God. They allow the Holy Spirit to bring assurance and peace.

God speaks to us

God can always find a way to us. He does this through the touch, voice, care and prayers of carers. Research and experience show that music gets through when many other forms of communication do not. It works for many forms of music, but just watch how people smile when a familiar hymn is played. I remember one service in an aged care facility. An old woman with dementia sat with her arms curled in, her head down, and apparently paying no attention to the service leader, the Bible reading or the short sermon (I say 'apparently' because we never know what another person is thinking). But when someone stepped up to a piano and started playing 'At The Name Of Jesus' she unfurled like a flower hit by

morning sunlight, and sang every word of every verse from memory. God had reached her and she remembered the joy He gives.

Knowing this, we can adjust our services to draw on familiar hymns, short Bible readings, sermons that are illustrated with images or acted out, and with simple, clear messages like, 'God is here' and 'God won't let you go'.

God seeks us

When I started my research, I wondered if I would come across any stories of people coming to faith in dementia. Oh, me of little faith! In fact, every chaplain and Christian carer I spoke with had at least one, and often many, stories of God shining His light into the life of someone living with dementia. Even those who have rejected Him all their lives are reached. No one is ever beyond God's love. So never give up on anyone, however they appear to us. Keep visiting. Keep praying, and trusting God will find His way to them.



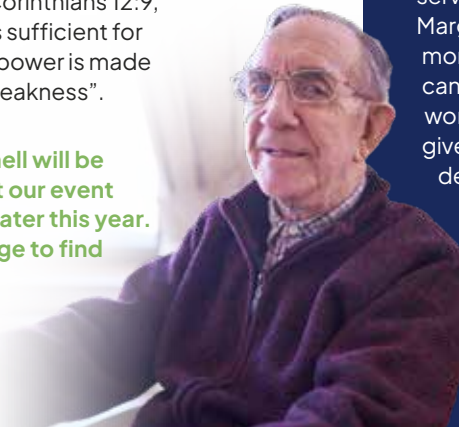
God sustains us

We sense that our memories are very important to who we are. We may worry that when we lose ready access to our memories we may lose our faith or cease to be us. Yet God will resurrect us as us, with whatever access we need to our memories to be us. In the meantime, we can take it that our memories are held in the hand of God. This is one of the delightful ways God sustains us in our later years. Another is the way God uses His people to help us persevere in our faith. Family and friends can give up visiting a person with dementia, because they do not feel recognised, or they think they will only upset that person. But God made us for relationship with Him and each other. Even if someone with dementia has difficulty fulfilling the role in a relationship they once did, we must not give up on them. We should let God use us, and our touch, our voice or smell may help our loved ones, even if conversation is very one sided.

God's grace is enough

God can find a way to anyone. We know God's desire is that we all repent and turn to Him. That is not a problem for someone living with dementia. For someone who has been a Christian for years, God will remember their many expressions of trust in Him and their prayers of repentance, even if, with dementia, they have difficulty knowing that some behaviours are wrong, and remembering what they have done. And for someone who enters dementia without a trust in God, dementia is no barrier. Faith can take the form of a simple sense that God is with them, that He is good and they need Him. As for repentance, if someone has no sense of their own sin, no pride in their sin, and no attachment to their own sin, there is no obstacle to right relationship with God for a person with dementia who has a simple trust in God. We may trust Jesus' words in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness".

Mark Wormell will be speaking at our event Evergreen later this year. Turn the page to find out more...



A story

I have heard many stories of people with dementia coming to faith, and being sustained in their faith. My sister nursed people with dementia for many years. She tells the story of Marg (not her real name) who was taken into care with younger onset dementia. When asked if she had any religious beliefs, she said that was "a lot of garbage, a lot of rot" and "I want nothing to do with that!" After about a year she decided to stay for one of the church services conducted in her facility. She then went a few more times, and her son noticed a change in his mother. Marg asked him to bring in a Bible, which he read with her. By now she was regularly attending the services. My sister asked her why. Marg replied, "I have dementia. No mortal can help me, but maybe God can", and "God will be there. He won't walk away". Her daughter had given up visiting her. As Marg's dementia progressed she could no longer read, and language had to get simpler and she looked at pictures in illustrated Bibles. When she died she showed no sign she thought God had given up on her.

A prayer: Gracious God, may we see each other as You see us, not defined by our capacities or circumstances, but by Your love for us in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen





EVERGREEN

A conference for Christians serving older people

I'm delighted to announce that this September we're hosting Evergreen, a one-day conference created to equip and inspire Christians from all walks of life who care about or work with older people, both in the church and in the community. With an outstanding line-up of speakers, our hope is that as we gather, we'll learn from rich biblical teaching and practical wisdom and be refreshed through worship and spiritual encouragement. Pick up your early bird tickets now via our website - the ticket includes refreshments and lunch also!

See you there! **Miriam Baines**, Supporter Engagement Manager



Join us
for a day of biblical teaching, practical wisdom, and spiritual encouragement



EVERGREEN,
Wednesday
23rd September
2026



**Westminster
Chapel, London**
Doors at 9.30am
for a 10.30am
start - 4pm



Early bird price:
£16
Includes
refreshments
and a light lunch

First speakers announced...



**REVEREND MARK
WORMELL**

Mark, a lecturer in Ministry with Seniors at Mary Andrews College, Sydney, will discuss faith and dementia based on his extensive pastoral experience.



**PIPPA
CRAMER MBE**

Speaking on the church and older people, Pippa brings vast experience through her work with Daily Hope and Connections.



**ALEX
HUGGINS**

Alex, CEO of Faith in Later Life, is dedicated to sharing the gospel with older people and equipping and inspiring Christians for later life.

THE SPENCERS

Worship will be led by London-based sibling duo Anais and Khaim Spencer.



Book your tickets now:
www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/evergreen



A special thank you

Guy was part of the family at Shottermill House, Haslemere, passing away in September 2024 at the age of 97. Here Henrietta Blyth, Guy's daughter and the CEO of Open Doors, shares a letter of thanks to our managers and the wider team



Dear Mike and Anne,

We have just had the first anniversary of Dad's death and I wanted to write formally both to mark it, but also to thank you and the team at Shottermill so very much, once again, for all you did for Dad and for us.

After Mum died in June 2022, Dad really struggled. He had been wrestling with depression and anxiety for some years but had always had Mum beside him spurring him on. Without her he was, as he said to me several times, "Just so lonely". I would go down once a week for the day and we would go out for pub lunches, or down to the seaside. He and Minnie, their little dog, really loved a trip in the car! And as you know, Dad loved to have a big G&T before he tucked into his meal. I was responsible for his care and

his finances, and he had support from the carers at the Clockhouse in Guildford [the retirement complex where Guy lived], and also several visits each day from Seniors Helping Seniors who were an absolute lifeline.

But then about 10 months after our mother died, Dad fell during the night and one of the carers at the Clockhouse heard him calling for help at about 9am. They called the paramedics and he was admitted to Frimley Park Hospital, Surrey.

They think he had been lying on the floor for several hours (he was not wearing his "button" to call for help) and obviously that knocked him for six. He was in hospital for six weeks and during that time he received no physio or help to exercise and so by the time he came home his legs could not bear his weight and he was effectively bedbound. At that point we brought in live-in carers, but Dad didn't really get on with them, although they cared for him physically. He told me, "They're just not cosy".

Honestly, we were all really struggling. Then one night I had a dream – I was on a boat and it was sinking and my sister was on the harbour wall yelling "you're going down, get off, get off" and the next thing I saw was the boat upside down on the seabed. I discussed the dream with my sister and husband and we all felt that it was the Lord telling me that the weight of managing Dad's care and having a fulltime job was literally sinking me. We all agreed that it was time to find a care home for Dad, and when we spoke to him, he also agreed.

That was when Josie, my sister, said, "Call Shottermill". We had called you the year before about Dad but there were no beds available. When I called you the following day, Mike, you said there were two rooms available and when did we want to come and see them?! And as you know we moved Dad in about 10 days later.

The reason I wanted to tell you all this is that I want you to know how absolutely transformative it was for Dad and for us when he came to Shottermill. These are some of the things that you did for him and for us:

“I want you to know how absolutely transformative it was for Dad and for us when he came to Shottermill.”

- He had been struggling to sleep and that significantly added to his anxiety, and he was shouting and calling out at night. Anne brought in the nurse consultant and she altered his medication and, from then on, he never spoke of difficulties sleeping again. That was a huge weight off our minds as well as his.
- He loved all of you as a team and he knew you all loved him. Hearing him laugh with Anderson and Shinu [carers] as they cared for him was so wonderful.
- Anne's suggestion to buy him a chair was brilliant – he loved being pushed around the home and in the summer it was so good to be able to sit in the garden with him.

Guy with
Minnie



- He had been very bothered about not being able to go to church, for quite a long time. When he came to Shottermill he loved joining in with Songs of Praise and the singalongs. He loved it that Deborah would joke with him about asking her for hymns she didn't know. He absolutely loved to sing (he and Mum used to sing in competitions together) and you gave him the opportunity to do so again. In fact, one time I was coming into the home and one of the other relatives said to me, "Your father has a beautiful singing voice, I heard him singing the whole of the Messiah the other day!" He had people to talk to about faith and about Jesus. I think he had struggled with his faith – he felt a lot of guilt about things he'd done many years ago, and intellectually he sometimes found it difficult to accept that faith was what mattered. You all gave him the opportunity to talk about the Bible and the Lord and that meant the world to him.
- You let me bring his little dog in to see him, and they both loved that! Sadly, she became sick a few weeks' later and we had to have her put to sleep so it was so special that Dad had the chance to cuddle her that last time.



Guy with wife Patricia



One of Guy's watercolour paintings

- You encouraged him to have his alcohol free wine and G&T and his sweets and crisps – these were all things that were a big deal for him and they really helped to make him feel at home.
- He loved his room and being able to have all his pictures up, including some of the pictures he'd painted himself which he was very proud of!

“ Josie and I were immensely touched at the welcome we always got when we arrived at Shottermill.”

Josie and I were immensely touched at the welcome we always got when we arrived at Shottermill – big smiles and greetings as we came in. It is hard to overestimate what an immense difference that makes. We felt like we were part of the Shottermill family too, and we loved it when the tea trolley came round and we got tea and cakes as well! (And sweets when Deborah brought the tuck shop round on a Friday afternoon. I loved it that you even put them in the pink stripe bags I remember from being a child myself. In fact, Dad used to help me smuggle sweets into my boarding school when I was 10 and so we have a long history with sweeties!)

The last week of Dad's life was difficult, of course. Rick and I came home from our

holiday when Josie called us and we were so very, very glad to have those final days with Dad. When he said he wanted meat we were so touched that you went and got him some so that the chef could make him some stew. And when Hilary called us early on the morning of the day he died we were immensely touched to arrive in his room and find that she and another carer had been with him singing hymns and reading to him from the Bible.

I can't tell you how glad Josie and I were to be with Dad when he died. I had a strong sense of the Lord calling him home and saying, "It's time Guy, come on". Josie had a strong sense of huge angels in the room with us (also confirmed by one of my colleagues at Open Doors). And Josie saw his spirit leave his body. Dad had been a bit iffy about dying – he did not want us to talk about it – but he was so peaceful at the end.

And then we were so blessed that Lux said he would stay with Dad's body for a bit after we left to go home. And we knew that Lux would be praying for him. And then how precious it was that your chef came to Dad's funeral.

The home was always clean, always bright, there were always people about (Beauty and Isabella saying hello from the carers station and Anna waving from her office!). There was no horrible smell and it always felt so incredibly positive and full of life. The 'family members' [those who live with us] would smile and say 'hello' through their open bedroom doors as we walked past or wave at Dad as he was pushed along. It didn't just feel like family – it was family. We miss Dad enormously, and we miss all of you.

When one of the carers accompanied Josie to take Dad in an ambulance for a hospital appointment, she told Josie that she had worked at many care homes, but Shottermill was far and away the best.



Guy with daughters Henrietta and Josie and his little dog Minnie

When Josie asked why, she said, "Because everyone knows where they are going".

And that is the thing I take away from all those months visiting and after your wonderful love and care for Dad for the year he was with you. Shottermill is an Embassy of Heaven. You are professional and your care is excellent but more than that the way you love the family members is truly Christlike and is a massive encouragement and a powerful witness. I am sure it is not always easy, but you make it look effortless and I am so grateful, and praise God for you all.

So thank you. Thank you so very much for all you did for our Dad and for all you did for us.

God bless you all,

Henrietta

The Way We Live

Words: Alexandra Davis

Housing which is more than a home

Pilgrims' Friend Society has been providing sanctuary for older people for around 200 years. Today, alongside our care homes, we run nine independent living housing schemes across England and Scotland. They come in all shapes and sizes – purpose-built one and two bed apartments, one-bed bungalows, studio flats – but they have at least one thing in common: they are communities where older Christians can live well together.

Over the last year, our housing team have been developing The Way We Live which is a framework for understanding Pilgrims' Friend Society's approach to housing.

Rooted in our Christian faith, it reflects our values of compassion, community, transparency and excellence, making sure that buildings we provide are more than just places to live but also communities where Christian life and fellowship can flourish.

The housing team pulled out **eight foundational principles**, inspired by the Bible, which underpin life and community in our housing schemes.



We take a holistic view of the person

We provide more than housing — we foster spiritual, emotional, and relational wellbeing. Each resident's life and faith journey is respected and, where welcomed, shared. Inspired by Genesis 1:27, we recognise each person as made in God's image, deserving of holistic care and dignity.

We create community by design

We were made for relationship (Psalm 68:6). Our schemes function as interdependent communities, where residents support each other and belong, no matter the season of life.

We believe in purpose in all seasons

Every person, regardless of age, has a God-given purpose (Ephesians 2:10). We encourage those who live with us to continue contributing to community life and inspire others by their presence and wisdom.

We celebrate a diversity of gifts

Like the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:14), each person brings unique strengths. Residents are invited to encourage staff and one another, fostering mutual care and prayerful support.

We build life-long relationships

We support ongoing connection and friendship, recognising the loss that often comes with ageing. Hebrews 10:24–25

encourages us to keep meeting, loving, and uplifting one another.

We honour each voice

We listen carefully to those who live with us and involve them in decision-making, even as needs change. Respect and partnership underpin our support.

We value contribution over capability

Psalm 92:14 reminds us that older people still bear fruit. Everyone is encouraged to participate in life and share their story, passions, and faith.

We are unique, God-created individuals

Every person who lives with us is "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). We honour the intrinsic worth of each person and celebrate their individuality.

The Way We Live in practice

So, what could you expect from one of our housing schemes?

Tea and cake – and lots of it! Regular times together for those who want to meet with others are regularly fuelled by coffee, tea, cake and biscuits.

A battered Bible. Time spent together is regularly done around sharing God's Word together.

All kinds of festivities. As much of life's rhythm dances around celebrations such as Easter and Christmas, our

'Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.'

Hebrews 10:24

communities enjoy marking these important times together.

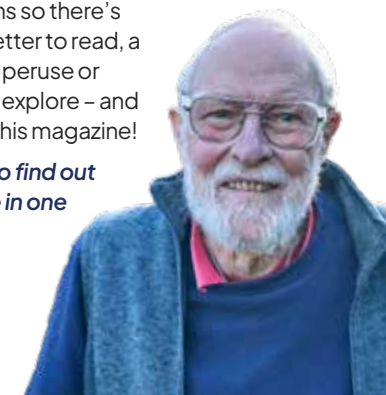
Your own space. If all of the above sounds like far too much, you'll get your own front door to close exactly as and when you like.

Prayer and pastoral support. The value of living in community often deepens when times get tough, so prayer groups and partnerships and visits from staff or church leaders become even more important.

Access (almost) all areas. Our buildings are managed and maintained with reduced mobility in mind so you should be able to get where you need to go without trouble (but maybe not the boiler room).

Reading material. We prioritise good communications so there's usually a newsletter to read, a noticeboard to peruse or social media to explore – and there's always this magazine!

Turn the page to find out more about life in one of our housing schemes, Royd Court in Mirfield...



Please pray



That those living in our housing would be blessed by the community around them



Outrageously bold



Words:
Tyler Sewell-Nicholas

Alison Jenner's poem 'For Peter' is a heartfelt tribute to a dear friend and fellow resident at Royd Court, Mirfield. Through her poetry, she celebrates friendship, courage, and the joy of growing older with grace, faith, and humour

Alison & Jack



At 77 years old, Alison Jenner speaks with the gentle confidence of someone who has lived a full and thoughtful life. She has been resident at Royd Court, Mirfield, for four years, and during that time her warmth, creativity and love of words have quietly enriched the community around her. A poet for most of her life, she finds inspiration in friendship, faith and the shared experience of growing older.

Before moving to Royd Court, Alison and her husband Jack lived for many years in the Lake District. "We lived near Windermere," she says with a smile, "although if I'm being realistic, we were closer to Barrow shipyard." Their life together started in Hertfordshire (Welwyn village), then took them to Chesham in Buckinghamshire, following Jack's ministry. Married for 53 years, Alison describes their meeting as a "whistle-stop romance." They met outside the church in Welwyn village Alison had started to attend, and, just six weeks later, Jack proposed. "People ask what makes a marriage last," she reflects. "I think it's give and take, loving the Lord, and trusting that He brings you to the person He wants you to marry."

Alison trained as a nursery nurse before qualifying as a midwife, a role she loved deeply. Caring for

mothers and babies came naturally, but when she and Jack began raising their family – five sons in all – she chose to step back from full-time work. "Being a pastor's wife and raising children was more than enough," she says. Even so, caring remained a constant thread in her life. She helped children with additional needs at a nearby school, supported local nurseries, and gave her time wherever she saw a quiet need.

Poetry has accompanied Alison since her teenage years. She began writing at school and turned to poetry more seriously after her brother died of cancer when she was just 14. "I wrote a poem after he died," she says. "And I just kept writing." Her mother also enjoyed rhyming and wordplay, which helped nurture her early love of language.

Although Alison has written poetry for decades, it was later in life that her craft deepened. While living in Ulverston, Cumbria, she joined a poetry group made up of experienced, published poets. "We had to bring a poem every month," she explains. "They helped me understand how to give a poem rhythm and shape, how to make it clearer and stronger." It was a formative experience that sharpened her voice as a writer.

For Alison, poetry is about far more than description. "It doesn't have to rhyme," she says, "but it must have rhythm and musicality." She believes poetry should carry meaning – sadness, courage, humour or truth.

"Just writing about something beautiful doesn't make it a poem. It has to say something."

That belief is evident in her poem 'For Peter', written for a friend she has made at Royd Court. Peter lives with significant hearing and



sight loss and lost his wife to dementia two years ago. Despite this, Alison describes him as someone who brings lightness wherever he goes. "He loves life," she says. "He teases people, especially the ladies, and he has such a generous, open spirit."

The poem is inspired by Jenny Joseph's poem 'Warning', best known for the line 'When I am old, I shall wear purple', and of which Peter is particularly fond. Alison often read it aloud to Peter and he delighted in it, especially because it had made his wife laugh. He has even requested for Alison to read it at his funeral. "So I promised I would," she says.

Alison admires 'Warning' for its boldness and humour. "It gives you permission to be yourself," she explains. "To enjoy life, even when you're old. Peter always laughed at the line about 'learning to spit,' so I wanted my poem to carry that same playful courage."

When Alison shared her poem at a group gathering, Peter listened closely, chuckling at the humour and the affection behind her words. Later, he reflected simply, "I was surprised, I'd never had anyone write a poem about me before. It made me laugh a lot."

Humour, Alison believes, is essential to daily life. "It's hard getting old," she says honestly. "But humour helps." She sees laughter as a way of comforting one another and building connection. "We used to say to our boys, 'I'm not laughing at you – I'm laughing

towards you.” It’s a principle she still lives by.

At Royd Court, Alison is actively involved in community life. She takes part in reading and singing groups and runs a ladies’ Bible study. Reading aloud has become a particular joy. What began as reading one-to-one with a resident who could no longer see well has grown into a small group. Together they have read Christian books, autobiographies and lighter stories, sharing laughter and companionship.

Creativity, Alison believes, brings people together. “When you read or write together, something happens,” she says. “You’re sharing more than words.” Moments like these, alongside everyday kindness and conversation, help Royd Court feel like home.

Her poem encourages readers to ‘be outrageously bold.’ For Alison, this means embracing life with kindness, confidence and joy. “It’s not about being rude,” she explains. “It’s about enjoying who you are.”

Alison continues to write, inspired by daily life and friendships. She is working on new poems, including another playful piece written for Peter after a walk along the canal. When readers encounter ‘For Peter,’ Alison hopes they will smile. “I’d like them to feel warmth,” she says. “And maybe a little courage too.”

For Peter

When I am a very old man
I shall wear a striped blazer
and short shorts
above my knobby knees.
I shall splash ‘Old Spice’ around
and smell just how I please.

I shall sing in the garden,
along the street
and down the canal towpath.
I’ll frighten ducks
and dogs and joggers,
make other people laugh!

I will carry on teasing old ladies
with names that suit me...
if not them.
I will brandish my stick,
do a dance, slow ~ slow ~ quick
and declare that its only ‘pro tem’.

In winter, I’ll eat chocolate ice cream,
on hot summer days,
fish and chips.
Every day of the year
I’ll eat plenty of grapes
so that I can have fun spitting pips.

I relish these years misbehaving
...and how!
for I finally gained some antiquity,
a valuable quality, cheering and fine,
for it’s nothing to do with iniquity.
So, here’s my advice for the
present and past...
Be outrageously bold,
~ leave your friends all AGHAST!

Alison Jenner



Reflecting on Easter

Gaie Marshall, Pastoral Lead at Middlefields House, Chippenham, shares a simple toolkit to help prompt spiritual reflection with older people this Easter

A verse to read...

‘Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.’

1 Peter 1:3–4

A prayer to pray...

Father God,

We thank you for this season of Easter, for the opportunity to focus on all that was achieved for us at the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Help us to ponder anew with grateful hearts on all that we have as a child of God – sins forgiven, a new life in the Spirit, every spiritual blessing in the Heavenly places, the assurance of an eternity with our Heavenly Father. We are reminded that in You we can be overcomers as we live out the life of Jesus ‘Christ in us the hope of glory.’

We give you thanks and praise for these amazing truths,
in the name of Your Son, our wonderful Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

Hymns to sing...

For Good Friday ‘When I Survey The Wondrous Cross’
For Easter Sunday ‘Thine Be The Glory’

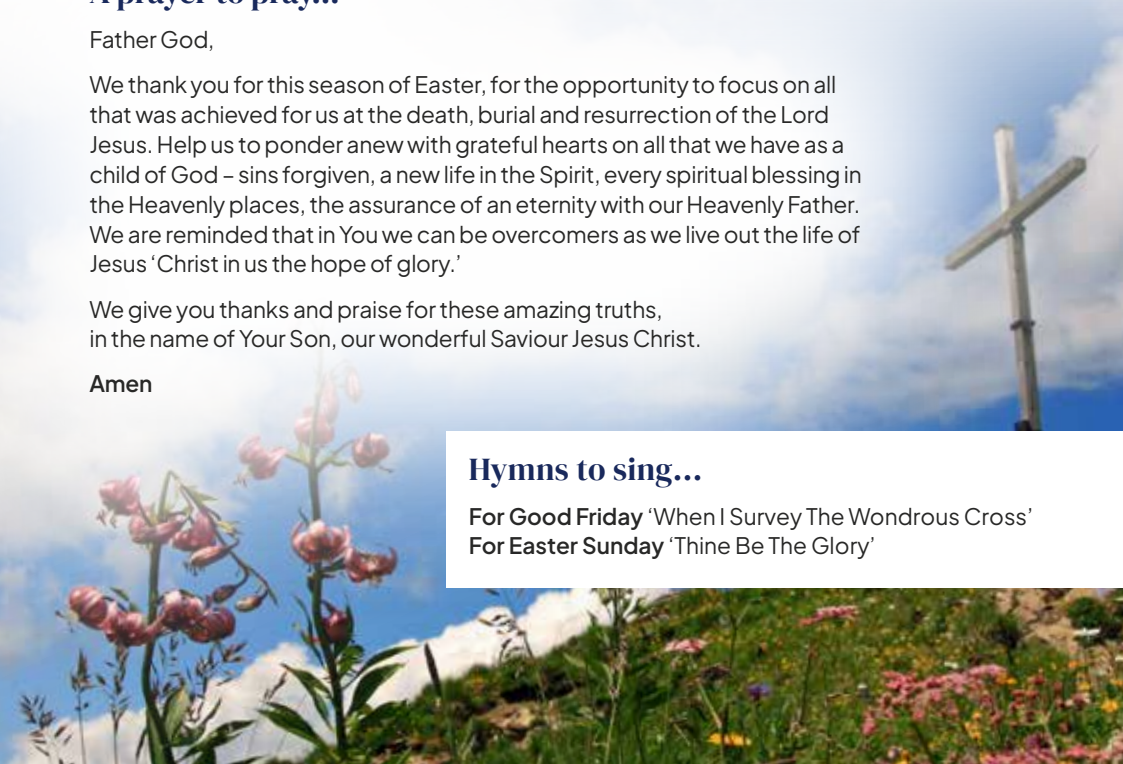
Objects to look at...

Large cross and red table runner (for Good Friday)

Poster with the words ‘I am the resurrection and the life’ (from John 11:25)



Learn more about life in our housing schemes, visit:
www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/housing-schemes





Meet a volunteer ... Tim

Words: Tyler Sewell-Nicholas

Tim, 78, has been volunteering at Milward House, Tunbridge Wells, since 1985, visiting once a month to lead devotions and spend time with those who live at the home. His decades of service to the community have brought comfort, faith, and joy to many, as well as meaningful connections for himself

I started volunteering at Milward House in the 1980s. It was just an annual visit in the early days, and the frequency increased over time. It was only when I retired from my pastoral work at Pembury Road Baptist Chapel in Tonbridge, Kent, that the visits became monthly. My aunt, my mother's twin sister, had moved to live at the home in previous years, so I already had a family connection there.

I always prepare before I arrive at Milward House. Devotions follow a regular pattern: prayer, a hymn, a Bible reading, usually read together, followed by a short talk based on

the Bible passage, another hymn, and then we usually say the Grace together. Alongside this, I enjoy chatting with people, seeing how they are, and offering support or a kind word. On the surface it may seem like just a devotion service, but it is really about being present and sharing encouragement and faith. Often, it is the simplest moments that stay with me most, a smile during a hymn, a hand held during prayer, or a quiet conversation about memories from their past. Those moments feel especially meaningful.

“On the surface it may seem like just a devotion service, but it is really about being present and sharing encouragement and faith.”

Over the years, I've seen the home change a lot. There are many more people living with dementia now than when I started,



which can be quite challenging. But the quality of care has always been exceptional. The staff are amazing, and I'm grateful for the support they give volunteers like me. Susan, the Activities and Community Engagement (ACE) Facilitator at Milward House, who helps organise the services, is particularly encouraging. She makes sure everything runs smoothly, whether it's helping with the keyboard for hymns or arranging practical details, and that support makes a big difference to myself and our 'family members' [as we call those who choose to live with us].

Some of my most special moments have been deeply personal. My mother-in-law lived at Milward House for several years, and it was wonderful to see her there while also serving others. Another family member I knew, Shirley, ended up in the same room my mother-in-law had occupied – it was such a lovely coincidence. One moment I'll never forget was praying with a relative at the bedside of their dying mother. They asked me to take the funeral afterward, which was a real privilege, even though I hadn't known her for very long. I've also had joy in the smaller, lighter moments, like singing hymns with people who hadn't sung

in years or simply sharing a cup of tea and a chat. It's those little things that make volunteering so rewarding. Experiences like that remind me why I keep coming back.

I love volunteering at Milward House because it allows me to share my faith.

Speaking about the Lord Jesus and encouraging people to cling to Him is at the heart of what I do. The gospel is always relevant, no matter your age, and seeing the joy and comfort it brings others inspires me in my own life. Volunteering keeps me connected, gives me purpose, and brings me a sense of wellbeing. It also helps me stay active, meet new people, and reflect on what matters most in life.

In his spare time, Tim enjoys:

- Gardening, with a special focus on cultivating miniature kiwi plants
- Walking in the countryside, especially along a well-loved public footpath that follows a stream between Tonbridge and Southborough
- Spending holidays in Lancashire

Fun fact: Tim and his wife have seven children and 17 grandchildren, and family gatherings are always lively and full of joy. Seeing all the grandchildren together is always a highlight of the year.



For more information on volunteering, head to our website:
www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/volunteer

A prescription with a difference

There's a growing recognition that many health conditions are non-medical and can be treated instead through 'social prescribing', to the benefit of many older people. **Esther Platt, Senior Consultant at the Good Faith Partnership, explains what it's all about and how the local church can help**



What helps you feel 'well'? For many of us being well means good sleep, exercise, fresh air, nourishing food and staying hydrated.

When we dig a bit deeper, we might also acknowledge that a warm and safe home, a few trusted neighbours and friends, and financial security are also significant factors in enabling us to feel peaceful, positive and confident in day-to-day life. Spiritual wellbeing also has a significant role to play.

For many people, changes in where we live and how we interact in our local neighbourhood have led to significant increases in loneliness and isolation. As highlighted by the Campaign to End Loneliness, this has a devastating impact on wellbeing and can lead to

poor mental health, and increased risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes.

There's now increasing recognition across the public sector and government that there are many needs for which clinical treatment is not always the most appropriate response. Indeed, the Lord Darzi review of 2024 and the government's 10 Year Health Plan emphasise the need for health provision in the UK to be broader than simply treatment for the sick. The 10 Year Plan outlines three shifts for health: hospital to community; analogue to digital; treatment to prevention. There is also a strong emphasis on the importance of 'neighbourhood health' provision that is easy for everyone to access in their local area.

What is social prescribing?

Social prescribing involves 'prescribing' individuals to local community activities that support their wellbeing such as walking clubs, art classes, debt advice services, chaplaincy and many other activities. In social prescribing, local agencies such as charities, social care and health services refer people to a 'social prescribing link worker' (SPLW). Individuals who are referred might include those experiencing low mood,

loneliness, bereavement, or practical challenges such as debt management or housing needs. SPLWs are often based in GP surgeries, and give people time, focusing on 'what matters to me?' to coproduce a simple personalised care and support plan.

Evaluations from the National Academy for Social Prescribing illustrate that social prescribing can reduce GP appointments, hospital admissions and A&E visits. For example, in Kirklees, social prescribing support for frequent GP service users reduced GP appointments by 50% and A&E attendance by 66%. Further studies suggest that social prescribing schemes deliver between £2.14 and £8.56 in social and economic value for every £1 invested.

What churches can do

In January 2025, the Good Faith Partnership and Theos launched 'Creating a Neighbourhood Health Service: the role of churches and faith groups in social prescribing'. This research sought to understand and evidence the challenges and opportunities for faith groups to engage in social prescribing. We found many churches run activities that can be 'socially prescribed'. Befriending schemes, coffee mornings, chaplaincy, choirs, community pantries, exercise classes, debt advice, English language classes are just some examples. We found that churches



and faith groups are a consistent community presence with local networks, volunteers and buildings where pastoral and spiritual support can be offered for those who wish to access it. These assets make faith groups ideal partners in social prescribing and key players in the provision of broader community wellbeing.

Ebenezer Church, in Bristol, is an example of a church engaging in social prescribing. They have hosted a Warm Welcome Space, a Kintsugi Hope Wellbeing Group, a weekly community café, and a seniors' group called Footprints. All are run by local volunteers with a heart for generosity and hospitality. Local SPLWs are aware of the work that Ebenezer church do and have signposted individuals to their community gatherings.

Angela is in charge of the seniors' group. She says, "Footprints is genuinely a place of company, friendship and support. We welcome everyone and anyone. We have had people socially prescribed to us where it was felt being in a safe and caring environment would help with low mood or



depression. It didn't take long for new people to feel well and truly accepted as part of a loving community."

Alongside our report, we published a 'how-to' guide for faith leaders which provides clear next steps for churches who want to receive social prescribing referrals into their activities.

If you would like to connect your church in to your local social prescribing provision, the best place to start is to find out who your local SPLWs are. Their names and phone numbers will likely be listed on your GP's website under the 'meet the team' or 'wellbeing' section. If you can't find that information, give your GP reception a ring.

Instead of emailing, we suggest you give your SPLW a call. Tell them who you are and what activities you have to offer. Invite them to visit you or ask if you can take them for a coffee. We suggest you use the 'fact sheet' template in our 'how-to' guide to help you provide all the information your SPLW will need to feel confident prescribing patients to you.

Making this connection and maintaining a relationship with your SPLW is key. Ask if you can keep them updated via your newsletter or email bulletin or if they would be willing to have a coffee every six months.

A good relationship with your SPLW can be the starting point for further engagement with community wellbeing. In central Nottingham, SPLWs hold meetings with patients at church cafés as these are safe spaces, where signposting to other activities and pastoral support is available. In Northampton, Broadmead Community Church ran a community listening event where they asked the local community about their experiences of health and



wellbeing. They have built on this by holding regular forums for professionals and volunteers across the town.

In a time when Jesus' command to love our neighbour can seem overwhelming, connecting with your SPLW and partnering with your community can be a fantastic way to support the wellbeing of our neighbours. As the church, we can offer wellbeing support beyond that which the NHS is able to provide and in doing so we play our part in improving the wellbeing of our society and lessening the load for the NHS to continue to provide clinical healthcare for all who need it.

To read our 'how-to' guide, download our printable fact sheet and discover our 'Creating a Neighbourhood Health Service' report, visit www.churchworks.org.uk/our-work/wellbeing



The **Good Faith Partnership** is a social consultancy that resources projects focused on the relationship between faith and civil society. ChurchWorks is one such project.

For further details, see:



www.goodfaith.org.uk
www.churchworks.org.uk



My Story

Margaret

Words: Helen Nathan

Margaret, 94 and fondly known by the nickname Titch, lives at Emmaus House in Whitehaven. She told us of a life of love and adventure spent in the Lake District, from the close bond she shared with her parents to freewheeling adventures with her future husband and the joy she found with the Brownies

Tucked inside the pages of Margaret's worn, black leatherbound Bible is a very special object – a four-leaved clover. Crumbling at the edges, it has lain here ever since her husband Sydney came across it while they were helping out at hay-time on her auntie's farm as newlyweds. A rare and lucky find, the clover evokes memories of the many years they spent together. "We were married 60 years and had a good life, a happy life," says Margaret.

In her room at Emmaus House, Margaret is surrounded by objects that hold precious memories. There's a wooden cross made by Sydney, at the foot of which perches a tiny white dove from their daughter Janice's wedding cake. Dotted along the shelves

are beautiful wooden nativity figures given by her church and on the wall hangs a bell ornament from her very first Christmas 94 years ago. There's also a watercolour of St John's Crosscanonby, the 11th-century church she walked to every Sunday morning as a girl alongside her father. To spend time with Margaret hearing the story of each object is to be enveloped by the love and kindness that has filled her life.



A Cumbrian lass born and bred, Margaret grew up in Crosby, a village some three miles from Maryport. An only child, Margaret was close to her parents. Their small cottage was lit with gas lamps and had sweeping views across the Solway. "I could lie in bed and look right out at the Scottish coast," she recalls.

It was a contented childhood, albeit one disrupted by war, which broke out when she was seven. Margaret recalls air raid sirens and sheltering in the cellar of the local pub. "We'd hear the planes on their way to bomb Glasgow," she says. "One night, it was very loud and we found out the next morning that Maryport had been bombed."

During the war, her father worked at the local shipyard and ammunition depot before being transferred to the aerodrome at Silloth to work on Lancaster and Halifax bombers. The village welcomed evacuees from South Shields, and her mother took in a little girl called Nora. "I remember all she had was in a carrier bag," says Margaret. "My mother clothed and cared for her as if she were her own. When she had to go back after three years, she clung to Mum. She didn't want to leave."

Brownies and then Girl Guides were mainstays of her childhood, and in 1947 she was chosen to represent Cumbria at an international rally in London, marching along The Mall past Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret.

Academically, Margaret excelled and earned a scholarship to the grammar school at Workington. She was still at school when she met her future husband. Sydney was an apprentice painter and decorator, and in his spare time a keen cyclist. "He was into roadway racing and once said to me, 'Why don't you get a bike?'" Margaret wasn't so keen, but Sydney was determined. "We used to go to the pictures every Thursday. One day, he asked if I would slip home with him first, saying he had something to show me in the shed..."

When Margaret got there, she discovered it was a tandem. With their bicycle made for two, the world was their oyster. "We'd go on picnics to Ennerdale and on a lovely, fine night we'd stay out and bike all round Lake Windermere." Margaret nods towards the window, "On a clear day you can make out the fells. I often look out and think of Sydney and the rides we went on."

After school, Margaret had ambitions of training as a nurse. However, it was not to be. "Mum suffered from poor health. One evening, I was sitting with Dad and he said, 'I don't know what I'll do when you go away.' That changed me." Setting aside her plans, Margaret went to night school and learned shorthand typing, going on to work for a local provision merchants.

Margaret and Sydney married on 19th February 1955 and their daughter Janice was born in 1961. Margaret gave up work to become what she terms 'a fully domesticated engineer'. The couple even had plans to adapt their tandem for family life with the addition of a sidecar, but the frame wasn't strong enough.



In her early thirties, Margaret was met with a devastating blow – the loss of both parents and then her father-in-law within a year. "My mother was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and went into hospital in the December," she recalls, "They told us nothing more could be done. I said, 'if my mum's going to die, I'm going to look after her.' The doctor looked at me and said, 'I think you're very brave.'"

Margaret duly nursed her mother at home before she passed away the following January. Just five weeks later, her father suffered the first of a series of strokes, eventually passing just before Christmas. Then, a fortnight later, Sydney's father died suddenly.

Through this difficult time, and Margaret found herself leaning on her Christian faith. "I've always believed," she says. "If you don't have faith, what have you? We wouldn't be able to sit here and look at the sky, the fields, the animals, the mountains if God hadn't made it all. I thought to myself, 'God is with me, He will look after me.'"

Margaret found God providing for her through her local community. "I didn't want to go out," she recalls. "My husband used to go to work and I'd close the door and that was it. It was horrible. But one day this

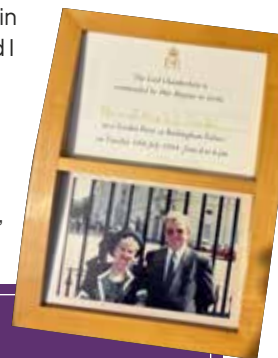
lady came round to see me. She was the local commissioner with the Girl Guides. She got me into the Brownies and from there I became a Brownie leader and then the Brown Owl. I was responsible for organising pack holidays for Cumbria. The Brownies and I had some wonderful times."

Margaret also served at the local church, leading the girls' choir and taking on the role of church warden. In 1994, she was recognised for her services to the community with an invitation to the Royal Garden party at Buckingham Palace.

Having struggled with a heart condition, Sydney sadly passed away shortly after the couple celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. For Margaret, a series of falls at home led to her decision to move to Emmaus House, Whitehaven, where she has lived since June 2024.

"It was difficult at first leaving my own home. But after a fortnight of settling in, I knew I couldn't be in a better place. Everyone works so hard and is so friendly."

Reflecting on all that she has done, she says, "I'm just a village lass that has had a great life. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think of marching down The Mall and going to Buckingham Palace. I've had a lovely life and no complaints whatever."



Find out more about how we care for those living in our homes: www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/thewaywecare

CONTINUED...

Gift Form

My details

Title: **Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Rev'd/Dr**

Full Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone

Email

Gift Aid

I want to GIFT AID my donation of £ and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years to Pilgrims' Friend Society.

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year, it is my responsibility to pay the difference. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p in every £1 that I give.

Signed

Date

For us to claim Gift Aid, it is essential that you complete the address section above. Please notify the charity if you change address or no longer pay sufficient tax on income and/or capital gains.

Sign me up for Family News, the monthly email for Pilgrims' Friend Society.



Please return this form to Pilgrims' Friend Society in the pre-paid envelope supplied

We will keep your data secure, complying with Data Protection legislation. For full details of our Privacy Notice and General Data Protection Policy, please visit: www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/privacy



Don't forget... You can also make a donation via our website: www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/spring2026

Join us in securing the future of care for older people

£29

Each January, there's a reported 29% rise in care homes searches

£50

Around 50% of people searching for a care home will need one within a month

£144

144,000 new care home beds will be needed in England in the next 10 years*

*Source: carehome.co.uk

Yes! I would like to give a gift

One-off gift

I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A ONE-OFF DONATION OF:

£29 £50 £144 £

Amount in words:

I enclose a cheque payable to 'Pilgrims' Friend Society'

A regular gift

I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A REGULAR DONATION BY STANDING ORDER

To: (Name of bank/building society)

Address of bank

Postcode

Account No Sort Code / /

Please pay LLOYDS BANK PLC, Law Courts (Sort Code: 30-00-04) for the credit of PILGRIMS' FRIEND SOCIETY (Account Number: 00117804) the sum of

£ Amount in words:

Commencing from (date) / / and thereafter every month/quarter/year **(delete as appropriate)** until further notice.

Signed Date / /

Give online: Can you give online, helping us to save on administration costs?

 www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/spring2026

CONTINUES
OVERLEAF...



EVERGREEN

*A conference for Christians
serving older people*

Hosted by Pilgrims' Friend Society, the day will offer *biblical teaching, practical wisdom,* and *spiritual encouragement* for Christians who care about or work with older people.



WEDNESDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER 2026



Westminster Chapel, London

Doors at 9.30am
for a 10.30am start – 4pm



Early bird price: **£16**

Includes refreshments and a light lunch



www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/evergreen