

NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 99

July 2011

Dear Pilgrims, It is hard to believe that we are in July already and that there are therefore only a few weeks to go until we are off on the 2011 Newman Pilgrimage. I hope that if you need to “get your legs walked in”, you have already managed to get out on some reasonable length walks – this year we have a moderately challenging start with 5 consecutive days of walking from London to Oxford (rather than the more usual 4 days), although the terrain is fairly flat which helps. The numbers booked for the first week this year are also higher than those in the second week, and inevitably the larger numbers fall at the locations where halls are on the smaller side, so there may be a couple of cosy nights during this stretch as well. If you are unable to join the pilgrimage this year, please remember us in your prayers as we will assuredly be praying for those unable to come along, for whatever reason. Don’t forget that even if you have not booked in to stay overnight, you can just come along for the walk on any day as a “day pilgrim”, so if you are free and can make it along we would be delighted to see you.

Please do remember to strike a happy medium between having sufficient clothing to ward against consecutive wet days and not bringing your entire wardrobe with you – a Pilgrimage is about leading a simpler mode of existence and doing without luxuries after all! Could I also remind you that if you are travelling to London (or alternative start point) with everything in one bag for convenience, that packing a smaller bag that will permit you to split the contents whilst on the pilgrimage will make the luggage lighter to load on the van whilst not really adding to the space required in the van.

There are a couple of key absences from the normal “behind (or not so behind) the scenes” crew this year; Monica McLauchlan whose health has been the subject of a number of recent e-mails, and John Russell who could not get the needed time off work for the whole 2 weeks, but will be able to walk with us for a few days. Their absence will mean some changes to the way that the pilgrimage runs from day to day.

Frances Dean’s illness and death should have served as a “shot across the bows” to us that we have benefitted as an organisation from a huge amount of time and energy that has been lavished on us by a number of individuals over a period of many years. It is all too easy to take this for granted and then have to go to “panic stations” to resolve things when a key player has to drop out. The committee structure does assist with this by sharing the workload around and allocating key tasks to specific people: Accommodation Officer; Chief Route Planner etc., but we need to do more to document what is expected of each office holder and perhaps to have more in the way of deputies or understudies for the key roles. If you have any thoughts on this subject, I would be glad to hear from you; just e-mail me on coord@thepilgrims.org.uk.

It would also be useful to know of pilgrims who might be interested in taking on any of the pilgrimage roles, even if this might be a few years down the line, so that a degree of “succession planning” can be entered into if need be. If you are unsure what a particular role involves, please do ask either the incumbent or myself, or just observe what that person does during the pilgrimage (other of course than the accommodation officer whose task for the year is already complete by then!).

I look forward to seeing those of you who are coming at Westminster or at whatever later stage you are joining, or possibly to hearing from you by e-mail if you are unable to be with us, but are following our progress on the website.

Finally, although it is still some time off, the reunion will be upon us in no time once the pilgrimage itself is over and a suggestion has been made that mid to late October in Hove would be good – all volunteers who would like to organise this, or would like to organise the reunion but in some other location please put your hands up or take a step forwards, as you prefer – or just send an e-mail or volunteer your services during the pilgrimage.

May God bless you all.

Nick

Come and Join Us – or Join Us Online

Enclosed with this mailing (or on the website) you should find a “Come And Join Us For A Day” leaflet outlining our route and timings. Why not take up the invitation and walk a little way with us (or just meet us at a church or pub!). For those unable to get to us, you can be part of the pilgrimage by following our daily diary updates at <http://live.thepilgrims.org.uk>. The extended “virtual pilgrimage” has become a feature in recent years – do join us!

Monica McLauchlan

As those who are on the pilgrim e-mail list will have heard, our long-serving bookings secretary Monica McLauchlan was taken into hospital some weeks ago with what turned out to be an aggressive infection in her knee. Drastic measures were required to stop the spread of the infection - Monica was actually taken to theatre to have the leg amputated, but emerged with both legs after the surgeon decided that it was worth one last attempt to remove all the infected tissue. The latest news is that the infection seems to have been stopped, and discussions have moved on to skin grafts and at last closing the open wound.

I know from my e-mails that there have been a lot of people praying for Monica, and for her sisters Theresa and Gillian who are supporting her, and a number of pilgrims have been able to visit. Worthy of mention is “grumpy old man” Geoff Murray who has provided a number of updates, a recent one concluding “By her attitude she really is an inspiration to us all.” – Monica has remained matter-of-fact and even cheerful even when the prognosis looked grim.

I’m sure we will all redouble our prayers for Monica’s speedy recovery, and look forward to the day she can rejoin us on the pilgrimage.

Thanks to Keith Donachie who is standing in for Monica and receiving e-mail sent to bookings@thepilgrims.org.uk. If you haven’t yet paid in full, please send the balance to Keith a.s.a.p.

Aidan

Young Pilgrims Weekend

Our last Newsletter included an invitation to the Young Pilgrims Weekend organised by Fran and Jonny Gamble. Unfortunately, the turnout didn’t reflect the effort put in by the team, but those who were there had a good time, and we have one new recruit on this year’s walk from the weekend. Thanks to all those who helped plan and execute the weekend.

Fr Joe Kengah

Our Kenyan friend and pilgrim, Fr Joe, has left Mivumoni Parish after some 15 years, and has been appointed Priest at Kikambala, a rural parish north of Mombasa. The parish is not quite as remote as Mivumoni, and includes the main coast road and a beach resort. But there’s much work to be done, including support in prayers and finance. Joe hopes to join us near Oxford.

Advertisement

Pilgrim Matthew Huntbach has asked me to plug <http://www.faithandhopecards.co.uk/>, a new venture by Matthew and his wife Esther offering Order of Service Booklets, Memorial Cards, Prayer Cards and the like which goes live on 1 August 2011. They are aiming for items “with a good strong Christian message that steers a middle ground between traditional and modern on the design, between “in your face” and wishy-washy on the message, and will be attractive enough for people to want to keep”.