

Pilgrims *matters*

News for Pilgrims Hospices supporters

Autumn/Winter 2026



More
inspiring
stories
inside

Claire and Simon share their story

Meet our front cover stars on p4

Photography by Aurelie Four



A message from our Chair

Our cover story introduces you to Claire and Simon, whose story of love, music and making memories is incredibly moving and uplifting.

Their experience shows how hospice care can support not only the person who is unwell, but those closest to them too.

Reading stories like Claire and Simon's also brings into sharp focus the responsibility we hold as Trustees. Our role is to help ensure that Pilgrims remains true to its purpose, uses the support entrusted to us wisely and always keeps patients and families at the heart of its decisions. The stories in this edition, from the compassionate work of our Health Care Assistants to the many people who volunteer, fundraise and support research, reminds us why that responsibility matters.

There is plenty to discover in these pages, and I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I have.

Thank you, as always, for being part of our Pilgrims community.

Your support really does make a difference.

With warmest wishes

Karen Warden

Karen Warden

Chair of Trustees, Pilgrims Hospices

Are you coping with an life-limiting condition or illness?
Find out more about Pilgrims' support by calling our
Advice Line on **01233 504 133**.

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Talk to our team

To contact our Chief Executive or one of our trustees please email eastkent@pilgrimshospices.org or write to our Canterbury address below.

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A message from our CEO



Over recent months, I have been reflecting on how hospice care is changing and how important it is to engage with partners and organisations who operate nationally as well as those who are more local to us.

At a national level, organisations such as Hospice UK are working closely with government and the NHS to shape the future of hospice care. As the NHS seeks to deliver more care within communities and reduce reliance on hospital services, hospices have an important role to play in supporting people in their own homes and neighbourhoods. At the same time, Hospice UK continues to champion fair, sustainable and consistent funding arrangements that will enable hospices to meet growing demand and plan confidently for the future. Here in east Kent, we are contributing to those conversations while remaining focused on what matters most: providing outstanding care and support for patients and their families when they need us.

The future of hospice care is about much more than funding alone. It is about ensuring that

everyone who could benefit from hospice support is able to access it, regardless of where they live or their circumstances. It is about reaching people earlier in their illness and working alongside partners across health and social care to provide joined up, personalised support.

As expectations and needs continue to evolve, hospices must evolve too. Developing new approaches, embracing innovation, strengthening partnerships and learning from research all have an important role to play in helping us meet the challenges ahead. At Pilgrims Hospices, we are committed not only to responding to today's needs but also to preparing for future generations, ensuring our services remain accessible, relevant and sustainable for years to come. Investing in our buildings and facilities, including the modernisation

of our Canterbury hospice, is an important part of that work, helping to ensure we can continue to provide exceptional care in environments designed for the future.

I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks for everything you do for Pilgrims Hospices. Whether you support us by donating, fundraising, volunteering, visiting our shops or sharing our work with others, you are an important part of Pilgrims. Your kindness gives us the confidence to plan ahead, so that hospice care remains available to everyone who needs it across east Kent. We are deeply grateful for your continued support.

With very best and warmest wishes

Helen Bennett, FCIPD
Chief Executive Officer

We care about your care

From 1st January to 30th June 2026 we received 369 reviews through I want. Great Care, this is what **YOU** told us about **YOUR** experience with Pilgrims.



98.1%
had a positive
experience with us.

On average we scored
4.9 out of five stars.





**For Claire
and Simon,
every day
matters.**

Love, music and making memories:

Claire and Simon's story

For Pilgrims Hospices patient Claire Scott and her husband Simon, life is filled with love, music and a deep appreciation for every moment they share together.

When Claire, 55, a talented pianist, met Simon, 45, a singer and songwriter, at a training event, their connection was immediate, love blossomed almost straight away.

Now living in Lyminge, the couple have built a life centred around creativity, compassion and making meaningful memories together. They've even performed side by side at garden parties, sharing their love of music with others.

Claire was first diagnosed with breast cancer 13 years ago. After treatment, she enjoyed precious years of stability, but two years ago received the devastating news that her cancer

had returned and spread to her liver, bones and spine. Since then, she has undergone various treatments, determined, as she says, to "buy a little more time."

Despite the challenges, Claire approaches each day with honesty, strength and remarkable positivity.

"I've recently been offered a new course of chemotherapy," Claire explained. "There's hope it could give me more time, possibly even a couple of years. That means everything to us. It's time to be together, to plan, and to make sure things are in place for Simon."

With a background as a medical secretary, Claire feels she has been able to understand her diagnosis and treatment more clearly, helping her to make informed decisions about her care. Recently, a combination of steroid medication and pain relief has helped her feel more positive again, though she is open about the reality of living with serious illness.



“There are good days and bad days,” she said. Some days are much harder than others, but I will always strive to be positive and grateful for the time I have with Simon, my family and loved ones.”

Support from Pilgrims Hospices has been central to both Claire and Simon’s journey.

“Pilgrims is full of warmth and love, it feels like a family,” Claire said. “The team regularly check in with me to make sure I’m feeling supported and making the most of everything available. From the doctors, nurses, healthcare assistants, and wellbeing teams, I feel like I have a cushion of support helping me through every emotional step. It’s like they’re saying, ‘It’s OK, we’ve got you.’”

Through Pilgrims’ wellbeing services, Claire has taken part in therapeutic art, and creative sessions such as Tiles of Joy, while also recording special messages for her loved ones through the Blackbird Project, leaving behind treasured memories in her own voice.

For Simon, support has come through counselling and wellbeing walks, helping him to navigate the emotional challenges of Claire’s illness. Music, too, remains a powerful outlet. He has written a deeply personal song, Blessed, which will one day be played at Claire’s funeral, a reflection of their love and shared journey.

“Having the time to make these decisions together is incredibly important,” Simon said.

Claire is equally focused on Simon’s future, encouraging him to continue creating and sharing his music.

“We are both really creative,” she said. “I want Simon to have wonderful projects to focus on moving forward.”

Recently, the couple created one of their most treasured memories, their wedding day.

With support from the charity ‘Gift of a Wedding’, Claire and Simon were able to celebrate a beautiful ceremony at Broome Park on 27 March 2026. In just five weeks, an incredible team of supporters brought the day together, with everything from the venue and dress to photography, cake, and hair and make-up generously donated.

“It was the most wonderful day,” Claire said. “We didn’t feel a burning need to get married, we did it purely for love.”

Surrounded by family, along with members of the Pilgrims team, the day was a celebration not just of their relationship, but of life itself.

“We feel incredibly lucky to be surrounded by such a loving family,” Claire shared. “They are kind,

supportive, and bring light even in the hardest moments.”

Together, Claire and Simon have made a conscious choice to face the future with openness and positivity.

“People can sometimes see death as something very dark,” Claire reflected. “But for us, it’s about embracing the time we have, focusing on love, creativity, and the kindness we receive from family, friends and Pilgrims.”

Simon is now passionate about giving back, using his music to support others facing similar journeys. He recently played some music for a fellow Pilgrims patient, one of the pieces really helped them and their family to reconnect, which was wonderful, a moment that stayed with him deeply.

“Pilgrims holds such a special place in our hearts,” Claire said. “Knowing they are here for both of us, now and in the future, helps us remain positive. I know Simon will continue to support hospice care long after I’m gone.”

Together, they continue to focus on what truly counts: love, connection, creativity, and making the most of the time they have, holding on to joy, even in life’s most difficult moments.

Read the full story
on Pilgrims Hospices’
website newsfeed here:
pilgrimshospices.org/news



Dr. Tina Ivanov

“I have a genuine interest in how we get death and dying right for people”

Dr. Tina Ivanov is the Director of Clinical Operations at Pilgrims Hospices; she joined the charity in March 2026, following a long career as a paramedic in both Australia and England. She has also worked in clinical education and service development, helping to keep patients safe, engaging staff, and leading on clinical governance.

Tina shares what drew her to palliative care, and her hopes for the future at Pilgrims. Originally from Melbourne, Australia, Tina moved to the UK in 2015:

“People always ask me why I left Oz. Firstly, I love to travel, and the world seems much closer when based in England. But the other reason was work; I thought I could learn so much being part of the healthcare system in England. It's not perfect, but there's a lot to be excited about in the way we deliver health and care here.”

Q What is your professional background?

“It's a lovely mix of clinical, people and education. I've been a registered paramedic, which is one of the Allied Health Professions, for nearly three decades. I also have a professional membership with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, and I'm a Doctor of Education.

I've worked in ambulance services and a hospital, as well as in universities, in lecturing and course development, for most of my career. I've been a manager for about 20 years, leading teams and services, and working at senior levels across operations, people and service development.”

Q What drew you to palliative care? What is your personal experience of palliative care?

“As a paramedic, I've seen the full spectrum of palliative patients, dying and death. In my early career, I felt I needed to “save” everyone, but as I learnt more and saw the reality, my approach to death and dying changed. I saw that having dignity in death and allowing the dying person to feel supported and in control, and providing information to them and their family, was far more beneficial than medication or intervention – so I have a genuine interest in how we get this right for people.

I experienced this personally through my mum, Dorothy, who lived with Parkinson's disease for many years before being diagnosed with terminal cancer. Although one part of my family remained in denial right to the end, my mum wanted a safe space to talk about her wishes and to die at home. The support provided by the hospice team was exceptional, and my mum died at home with us there. Being able to support that outcome for her was one of the most privileged positions I could be in.

These two experiences made me curious about best practice in palliative and end-of-life care; not just from a medical point of view,



but with the whole picture in mind – psychological, environmental, the family, support – everything.”

Q Why did you choose Pilgrims Hospices? What do you enjoy about your role?

“The more I learnt about Pilgrims, the more I felt this is the right place for me. It has such a strong connection to the community we serve, which is so important to me. When I asked people about the charity, everyone spoke with such pride and connection, and I wanted to be part of that. And now that I'm here, I feel it; it's not words on a poster on a wall, it's real, and something I experience every day. Our people, staff, patients and volunteers all really matter.

I love working with individual teams and hearing about those stories where families and patients are supported, the stuff that goes on behind the work. Because we get to know our patients, we can do the very personal things that make such a difference. I love that, as Pilgrims, we champion that and give people the space to do it properly. It gives me a real positive energy in my role, and it's what makes Pilgrims a very special place to work.”



Dr. Tina Ivanov at work in Australia

Read the full story on Pilgrims Hospices' website newsfeed here: pilgrimshospices.org/news



THIS IS HOSPICE CARE



What does hospice care mean to you?

"Healing after a traumatic hospital experience"

Our Stepping Stones team delivered 1073 bereavement sessions in 2025

Our patients are regularly visited by Pets As Therapy (PAT) dogs

"It was as comforting as it could possibly have been"

"Pilgrims is the epitome of hospice care"

"Some normality and routine during a frightening and difficult time"

"I believe that everybody should die in such a beautiful place"

Over 650 volunteers generously give their time to support our 33 retail shops

We care for an estimated 30% of people who die in east Kent each year

With a gift in your Will you can help hospice care live on for all, for now, forever

**Gifts in
Wills**



To find out more about leaving a gift in your Will, visit pilgrimshospices.org/will, or speak to our Gifts in Wills team on 01227 782060 or via giftsinwills@pilgrimshospices.org





Monica



Michael



Carole



Teresa

Behind every moment of comfort, every reassuring smile and every act of kindness at Pilgrims Hospices, there is often a Health Care Assistant (HCA) helping to make it possible.

The heart of hospice care

Celebrating our Health Care Assistants

Health Care Assistants are an essential part of our clinical teams, providing skilled, hands-on care, practical support and emotional reassurance to patients and those closest to them. Working alongside registered nurses and the wider multidisciplinary team, they help ensure everyone receives personalised care that respects their wishes, dignity and independence.

Whether supporting patients on our inpatient wards or visiting people in their own homes through our community services, HCAs play an important role in helping people live well and make the most of every precious moment.

But the role of a Health Care Assistant is about much more than the care they provide.

Our HCAs are often the people who notice the little things that make a big difference – recognising when someone needs a cup of tea, a quiet conversation, a helping hand or simply someone to sit beside them. They provide personal care with kindness and dignity, support independence wherever possible and offer reassurance to patients and families during some of life's most important moments.

They also help create special memories, supporting celebrations such as birthdays and weddings, and helping to arrange cuddle beds

so loved ones can spend precious time together.

Alongside their clinical skills, our HCAs bring warmth, humour and compassion to their roles. They help create the calm, welcoming atmosphere that makes Pilgrims Hospices such a special place.

Making every moment matter

For many of our HCAs, the privilege of supporting patients and families at such an important time in their lives is what makes their role so rewarding.

Melanie has been a Health Care Assistant with Pilgrims for nine years.

"It's all about the patients and their loved ones. It's a very special job," she said. Michael, who has been part of the Pilgrims team for three years, shares the same passion for making a difference every day.

Theresa joined Pilgrims Canterbury around seven months ago following a 20-year NHS career, which began in end-of-life care at Kent and Canterbury Hospital.

"It's a wonderful calm environment with caring colleagues, it's a team that makes everything work so well, everyone plays their part."

For many HCAs, the sense of belonging and the support of their colleagues is one of the things that makes working at Pilgrims so special.

An essential part of the team

Tina Ivanov, Director of Clinical Operations at Pilgrims Hospices, said: "Health Care Assistants are an essential part of our clinical teams. Their compassion, dedication and commitment makes a huge difference to patients and families every day."



Marife

Sharon, Amber and Sarah



"They provide skilled and compassionate support, working closely with nurses and colleagues across our services to deliver the personalised care that Pilgrims is known for. Their ability to notice the small things and bring comfort at exactly the right moment is truly special."

Nurses across Pilgrims also recognise the important contribution HCAs make, describing them as trusted colleagues who bring valuable knowledge, experience and insight into every aspect of patient care.

Kate White, Senior Nurse Manager, said: "Our HCAs are at the heart of the care we provide. Their compassion, dedication and ability to bring comfort, dignity and reassurance to patients and families every day is truly invaluable."

The moments that matter

Carole has been a Health Care Assistant at Pilgrims Hospice Canterbury for 18 years and loves being part of a team that helps make every moment special for patients and families.

"I love supporting the patients and families and helping to make every moment special," she said. "Being part of a team and knowing that we all care so passionately about what we do means so much."

Alongside her caring role, Carole enjoys creating seasonal displays on the ward, from Wimbledon-inspired decorations to autumn leaves and festive scenes, bringing smiles to patients, visitors and colleagues alike.

Amber has been a Health Care Assistant at Pilgrims Hospice Thanet for two years, having previously worked at the Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother Hospital in Margate.

After taking time away from work to care for her daughter, Amber reflected on what was most important to her and discovered a real passion for end-of-life care.

"I truly love the relationships we're able to build with our patients at Pilgrims," she said. "Being part of the team is really special. We communicate so well, support one another and always come together when it matters."

Sharon has spent the past two years as part of the HCA team at Thanet, following previous experience with Pilgrims' Hospice at Home service. With 11 years of valuable Pilgrims experience, she knows how important teamwork is.

"Patients never realise what a jolly place it is here," she said. "To hear the laughter and spend time chatting with the HCAs can make a world of difference to patients and their families."

At Pilgrims Hospice Ashford, the team shared the same feelings, Monica and Marife said: "It's a privilege to care for people when they need us most. Every day is different, but knowing we've made

someone's day a little easier is incredibly rewarding."

Every day, our Health Care Assistants bring compassion, dignity, reassurance and kindness to patients and families across east Kent. Whether offering practical care, sharing a quiet conversation or helping to create lasting memories, they are at the very heart of hospice care.

Thank you to every one of our Health Care Assistants for the extraordinary difference you make every day.

A day in the life of a Health Care Assistant

- ✓ Providing personal care with dignity and compassion
- ✓ Helping patients maintain their independence
- ✓ Working alongside nurses and the wider clinical team
- ✓ Supporting families through precious moments
- ✓ Creating special memories and celebrations
- ✓ Offering comfort, reassurance and companionship
- ✓ Helping make every moment matter

Read the full story on Pilgrims Hospices' website newsfeed here: pilgrimshospices.org/news



Did you know? Our community fundraisers are here to help!

Behind every fundraising event, collection tin, quiz night, school, challenge and community celebration, there's a dedicated team helping make it all happen.

Across east Kent, our Community Fundraising teams in Canterbury, Ashford and Thanet work closely with local people, schools, churches, clubs and community groups to turn great ideas into vital support for Pilgrims Hospices.

Whether you're organising a sponsored challenge, village fete, coffee morning, bingo evening, sporting event or something completely unique, our fundraisers are there every step of the way, offering advice, encouragement and practical support to help make your event a success.

Throughout the year, hundreds of fundraising activities take place across our communities. Many only happen due to the passion and commitment of our community fundraising teams and the incredible volunteers who generously give their time to support the charity.

From helping at events and cheering on participants, to running stalls, welcoming supporters and spreading the word about Pilgrims, our volunteers are at the heart of community fundraising. Together with our supporters and local partners, they help to ensure more people across east Kent can access the compassionate hospice care they need.

Got an idea?

If you've been thinking about organising a fundraiser, we'd love to help. Whether it's a celebration, personal challenge, workplace fundraiser or community event, our friendly teams can help bring your ideas to life.

To find out more, visit pilgrimshospices.org/get-involved or email fundraising@pilgrimshospices.org

Every fundraiser has a story. Every volunteer has a reason. Every event, big or small, makes a difference.



Festive fun this Christmas!

Get ready for a season of festive fun, community spirit and making memories, while helping to raise vital funds for hospice care across east Kent.

Santas on the Run

Sunday 13 December 2026

Grab your Santa suit and join us for a fun-filled festive adventure! Whether you run, jog or walk, Santas on the Run is a brilliant way to get into the Christmas spirit with family and friends, while supporting local people who need Pilgrims' care.

Starting from Herne Bay Clocktower, this festive favourite welcomes Santas of all ages. Under 3s go free, with adult, under 18 and family tickets available. You can even boost your fundraising by collecting sponsorship – whatever you can raise will make a difference.

Find out more on our website:
pilgrimshospices.org/santas



Christmas Tree Recycling

Ashford

Saturday 16 – Sunday 17 January 2027

Canterbury and Thanet

Friday 15 – Monday 18 January 2027

Once the festive season is over, let us take your real Christmas tree off your hands! Our popular Christmas Tree Recycling campaign makes it easy to recycle your tree while raising funds for Pilgrims. Our amazing volunteers will collect trees from homes across the Canterbury, Thanet and Ashford Borough Council areas in exchange for a donation to the hospice.

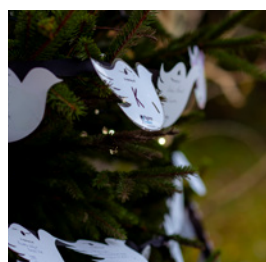
Find out more at:
pilgrimshospices.org/treerecycling



Ashford Christmas Fair

Saturday 21 November 2026

Find out more at
pilgrimshospices.org/events



Trees of Love

Festive remembrance events throughout December. Please see back of magazine for further information, or visit pilgrimshospices.org/treesoflove

Coming up in 2027

Keep an eye on our social media and website for the release of 2027 event dates, including our Miner's Way Challenge, Pilgrims Way Challenge, and Cycle Challenge.

For full event details

Visit pilgrimshospices.org/events

Questions?

Our friendly team is here to help, call **01227 812 609** or email fundraising@pilgrimshospices.org



TILES OF JOY

Creativity, connection and moments of happiness at Pilgrims Hospices

A beautiful community art project is bringing colour, creativity and connection to Pilgrims Hospices, as patients, carers, staff and volunteers come together to take part in Tiles of Joy.

Led by ceramic artist Jayne Wright of JAW Ceramics CIC, Tiles of Joy began in 2023 in partnership with Power of Women (POW) Thanet, with an inspiring workshop at the Margate Caves. Since then, the project has grown into something truly special, with more than 2,000 handcrafted tiles created by people across Thanet and beyond.

The project has united a wide range of community groups, from local schools and heritage organisations to social inclusion initiatives and arts groups, nurturing creativity and connection across the area.

More recently, Pilgrims' wellbeing groups have been taking part in the inspiring Tiles of Joy project. Patients, carers, Stepping Stones bereavement groups, staff and volunteers were invited to create their own ceramic tiles, each reflecting what brings them happiness. During the sessions, participants explored clay by scraping, indenting and shaping their designs, supported throughout by Jayne, who then carefully fired each piece before returning them ready for display.

Now proudly displayed at the hospices in Ashford and Thanet, these unique artworks form beautiful, fixed installations, each tile telling its own story and together creating a lasting celebration of community, creativity and care.

The experience has been both thought-provoking and uplifting. Participants have not only enjoyed the hands-on creative process, but also the special experience of seeing their work become part of a shared piece of art, something that will continue to bring comfort and joy to all who visit.

The project has also inspired Pilgrims' wellbeing team to explore how clay and creative therapies could play a bigger role in future sessions, opening up new opportunities to support patients and families through creativity and wellbeing activities.

As the Wellbeing team shared:

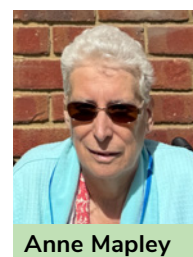
"It has been such a meaningful experience for everyone involved. Seeing people relax into the process, express themselves so freely, and then light up when they see their finished tile on display has been incredibly special."

Ann Mapley, a wellbeing patient at Pilgrims Hospices who took part in the sessions, said:



Palak Sharma, Wellbeing Practitioner with
Kavita Sodhi, Wellbeing Practitioner Lead

"The brief was to design tiles that meant something to us, and for me that was my grandchildren. One of them loves George's dragon and the other loves snails, so I created a dragon and a snail on my tiles. It was such a fun afternoon, there were lots of laughs and giggles as we all tried to get everything just right with help from the lovely ladies running the session. Seeing the mural come together has been wonderful; it looks so lovely now. I first found out about the project through a leaflet that had been brought in, and I'm really glad I took part."



Anne Mapley

Tiles of Joy is a reminder that even small moments of creativity can have a lasting impact, bringing people together, sparking reflection, and creating something truly meaningful.

Read the full story
on Pilgrims Hospices'
website newsfeed here:
pilgrimshospices.org/news



Will you support Pilgrims?

Supporting a charity through your business is a sustainable way to raise vital funds for Pilgrims Hospices whilst increasing brand visibility at the same time.

Many of the pieces of equipment used in our hospices are funded through donations

Supporting a charity through your business is a sustainable way to raise vital funds for Pilgrims Hospices whilst increasing brand visibility at the same time.

A commercial partnership simply means raising money for a charity through product sales or service delivery, and is an easy way to embed fundraising into your daily activity. Whether you are a big corporate or a small family-run business, this is a partnership that can work for you.

Our Corporate and Trusts Partnerships Manager, Leila Ilkhan, will guide you every step of the way, ensuring the partnership is tailored to suit your business needs and putting in place the necessary agreements. All you have to do is share how your business is making a difference in the community by doing what you do best.

Partnership spotlight

Sarah and Danny from Injection Development Garage Services in Hersden have been committed supporters of the hospice for many years. Each year, the team will sit down with our partnerships team to decide on the year's fundraising activities.

Driving forward hospice care:

This year, Sarah and Danny decided to make a donation for every engine service completed during the summer months. This is a great way for clients to feel part of supporting a charity, boost business revenue and requires little time to run.

The team at SGS Energy based in Thanet have recently come on board as a Pilgrims Partner by pledging to make a donation for every domestic solar installation carried out.

Could Pilgrims Hospices be your 2027 Charity of the Year?

£30,000 for 300 years: Earlier this year, we were delighted to celebrate an extraordinary year of fundraising support from Furley Page Solicitors. The law firm were marking a very special anniversary and chose Pilgrims as their 2026 Charity of the Year. From climbing the Three Peaks to hosting in-house events, the team raised a staggering amount of money. Through this support, a number of projects have been made possible, including equipment for Pilgrims' community nurses, complementary therapy teams and furniture to make our family lounge in the Canterbury hospice feel extra homely.

Scan the QR code to see more ways your business can support Pilgrims:

Aaron Spencer, Partner and Head of Private Client and Chair of the Furley Page Foundation.



What we've funded recently

Our Trusts fundraising team work closely with departments across the charity creating a wish list of projects and items needed to deliver our services. Many of the pieces of equipment used in our hospices are funded through donations and we would like to say thank you to the Trusts and Foundations who have supported our work.

Earlier this year, the Hospital Saturday Fund donated £2,000 to fund a bladder scanner. This piece of equipment means our nurses can preserve patient dignity and manage their pain non-invasively.

A donation of £30,000 from the Albert Hunt Trust also helped our team to buy 25 syringe drivers, which are used on our inpatient units, providing continuous medication to help manage symptoms and provide comfort to patients.

The Cantiacorum Foundation funded our Tiles of Joy project, which welcomed patients, carers and



people who attend our bereavement groups to create their own ceramic tiles, each reflecting on what brings them happiness. This project helped participants to relax and be part of a wider meaningful experience.

If you are feeling inspired and would like to talk to our fundraising team about how you can get involved with supporting the hospice, email leila.ilkhan@pilgrimshospices.org.

Read the full story on Pilgrims Hospices' website newsfeed here: pilgrimshospices.org/news



“Pilgrims go above and beyond”

Alex Miles from Folkestone was a family man; a devoted husband to Ruth and father to Millie, Jake, Mason, Layla and Bailey, he served as a sergeant in Kent Police and played football for Folkestone Invicta FC.



Alex and Ruth Miles on their wedding day with family



In 2019, Alex, then aged 44, was diagnosed with lung cancer, which had spread to his bones. He began treatment and, with his condition managed, was able to live relatively well and

even continue working. But in 2024, Alex suffered two strokes, after which he was admitted to Pilgrims Hospices for end-of-life care. Alex died at the Ashford hospice in September 2024, aged 49.

Ruth shares how Pilgrims helped their family to make the most of their precious final moments with Alex, and supported them in their grief after his death: “Alex was transferred from hospital; after the second stroke, he wasn’t really conscious, but Pilgrims made him comfortable – it was noticeable as soon as he got to the hospice.

“As a family, we had such a positive experience of Pilgrims’ care. Alex was only in the hospice for a few days, and although it was never going to be easy, it was as comforting as it could possibly have been.”

We had a family room, so a few of us could sleep in there with Alex. Friends and family could visit any time to say their goodbyes. I was breastfeeding our youngest child, Bailey, who was just five months old at the time. The kind nurses and staff were so supportive – they made us countless cups of tea and toast, took Bailey for walks and played with him to give us a break, answered our questions, held our hands and simply listened. They even shared their own stories with us; we learned that so many of them have personal experiences of hospice care, which is what inspired them to work for Pilgrims. They did all this whilst keeping Alex comfortable; they really do go above and beyond.”

“After Alex died, myself and one of Alex’s older children were offered bereavement counselling; we really appreciated that continuity of care. I also had massages from the complementary therapy team, which was lovely. I can’t fault Pilgrims, they’re fantastic.”

In April 2025, Alex’s family launched the inaugural Miles Memorial Cup – a football match in honour of Alex to celebrate his life, which they plan to make an annual event. On 18 April 2026, the match

was held in aid of Pilgrims, raising £4,000 for local hospice care.

Ruth said: “We wanted to give back to those who helped us on Alex’s journey; Pilgrims were able to offer the specialist, compassionate care that Alex needed at the end of his life, when no one else could. If our fundraising helps just one other family to have that same support and peace, it will mean so much to us. We’re lucky to have such brilliant hospice care in the UK, but it is only available thanks to peoples’ generous support and donations – that’s why it’s so important for us to fundraise for Pilgrims.

“Any opportunity to talk about Alex and have other people remember him, I’ll take it, because he deserves that. It’s very comforting for me. Although Alex’s life was cut short, this is how we can keep his memory alive.”

Follow [instagram.com/milesmemorialcup](https://www.instagram.com/milesmemorialcup) on Instagram for news and updates about the annual Miles Memorial Cup.

Read the full story on Pilgrims Hospices’ website newsfeed here: pilgrimshospices.org/news



Celebrating 30 Years of Pilgrims Lottery

Happy birthday to you...
happy birthday dear
Pilgrims Hospices Lottery!

This April, we celebrated an incredible milestone – 30 wonderful years of Pilgrims Lottery. For three decades, this has been so much more than just a weekly draw. It's been about kindness, community, and people like you coming together to make a real difference.



Every week, your entries have helped provide compassionate, specialist care for patients and families across our community. That's something truly special and it simply wouldn't be possible without you.

30 years of making a difference

Together, over the past 30 years, we've been able to:

- Raise millions of pounds to fund vital hospice care
- Award over £200,000 in prizes every single year
- Celebrate more than 5,000 winners annually
- Support thousands of patients and their loved ones when it matters most

Behind every number is a person, a family, and a story, and your support has helped bring comfort, dignity, and care to so many.

A personal thank you

Whether you've been supporting us for years or have only recently joined, I want to say a heartfelt thank you. You are part of something truly meaningful, and every single entry helps us continue our work.

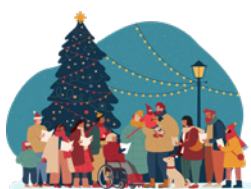
Join us today

If you're not already playing, now is the perfect time to get involved.

For just **£1** per entry per week, you can be part of something life-changing with the added excitement of chances to win.

Don't miss out, join today, play each week and be part of the difference you can make.

It's easy, complete and return the leaflet enclosed, call **01227 379 741** or scan the QR code opposite.



keep an eye out for our **30th Anniversary Comfort and Joy Superdraw tickets**. We're planning something extra special, and we'd love you to be part of it.

Together, we've achieved so much over the past 30 years. With your continued support, we can do even more – reaching more families,



Anniversary

Together we make a difference



Looking for a unique gift this Christmas?

From only £5

Order now, call **01227 379 741** or scan here



providing more care, and making an even greater difference in the years ahead.

Thank you for being part of our journey — and for everything you help make possible.

Warmest wishes,

Shiralee

Thinking about volunteering at Pilgrims Hospices?

Our volunteers share what that means to them

"Volunteering at Pilgrims is very special; to feel a small part in something so valuable is truly rewarding."

"I gain a lot more than I give in my volunteering role, and hope the small amount of time lends itself to the wonderful services for patients and families."

"People, privilege, pride."

"Volunteering at the hospice in several different roles has added value and meaning to my life, I look forward to going there each week, there is more joy in the hospice than people realise."

"It is a very positive experience to be able to help people."

"Volunteering at the hospice is the grounding in my life, a connection to people doing something positive, something kind, that means something."

"Volunteering at the hospice encourages and enables an authentic connection between people, at a time when they are truly vulnerable."

"Volunteering gives me the chance to give something back for the care my family members have received in different parts of the country!"

"Volunteering has continued to give me rewarding structure to my life since retiring from work."

"It's my way of helping a much needed, much loved service where I live. It also gives me a feeling of self-worth at a time in my life when I feel 'invisible'."

"I have benefitted from the kindness of services first-hand and wanted to give something back when the time was right; I feel valued."

"Volunteering gives me purpose and validation."

"I enjoy using my skills and learning new ones. I find it very rewarding, giving me confidence to try new ways of doing things. I feel appreciated and look forward to the days when I go in."

"The hospice is such a happy, caring place that being a volunteer gives me more than I can give. I go home tired but uplifted, happy to have been a small part, feeling very much valued. I have lived a long, healthy life and I am so grateful that I can still be of use."

"Giving back and support; knowing my help makes a difference; a sense of community and purpose; to see someone smile again and to see them finding strength to carry on, because they matter."

"Having worked at the hospice many years ago, volunteering has given me a sense of returning, of purpose, of returning to a calm, compassionate and supportive environment."



Find out how you can volunteer for Pilgrims Hospices by visiting: pilgrimshospices.org/volunteer



Christmas Cards 2026

Order online at pilgrimshospiceshop.co.uk



1. Merry and Bright Sparkles

Best Wishes at Christmas



2. Bethlehem Journey

Best Wishes at Christmas



3. Village Carols

Best Wishes at Christmas



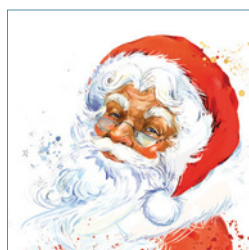
4. Peace & Joy Dove

A Very Merry Christmas



5. Snowy Branch Robins

Happy Christmas



6. Impression of Santa

Happy Christmas

**10 CARDS /
10 ENVELOPES
PER BOX**

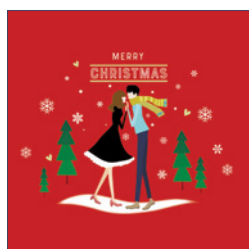
PLASTIC FREE!

All our packaging is cardboard



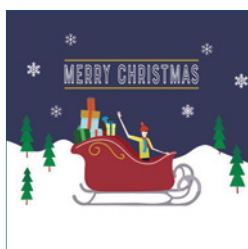
**7. Twin Pack 1
Carousel & Christmas Fair**

Happy Christmas



**8. Twin Pack 2
Christmas Couple & Merry Christmas Sleigh**

A Very Merry Christmas



**9. Twin Pack 3
Angel Prayer & Watching Over You**

Best Wishes at Christmas



10. Jigsaw

500 pieces

Please note: this item incurs an additional £4.20 in postage



11. Bumper Pack

20 assorted cards

Designs in pack can vary from those shown



SCAN ME

Order No. _____

Date: _____

Item	Qty	Total	Item	Cost	Qty
1. Merry and Bright Sparkles, 125 x 125mm, £3.50			10. Jigsaw, 500 pieces, £14.99* (additional £4.20 postage)		
2. Bethlehem Journey, 125 x 125mm, £3.50			11. Bumper Pack. 20 assorted cards, £5.00		
3. Village Carols, 125 x 125mm, £3.50					
4. Peace & Joy Dove, 125 x 125mm, £3.50					
5. Snowy Branch Robins, 125 x 125mm, £3.50					
6. Impression of Santa, 125 x 125mm, £3.50					
7. Twin Pack 1, 125 x 125mm, £3.50			Total Cost		
8. Twin Pack 2, 125 x 125mm, £3.50			Postage & Packaging		
9. Twin Pack 3, 125 x 125mm, £3.50			* Jigsaw Additional Postage		
<i>With payment by cheque, UK Postage & packaging details: Orders under £20 = £4.45 £20.01 to £50.00 = £5.95 Over £50.00 = £7.50. For overseas orders please call 01268 288637</i>			Donation		
			Total Enclosed		

Please complete your details in BLOCK CAPITALS

Contact name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone No: _____

Email: _____

Order online at **pilgrimshospiceshop.co.uk**

Please return your completed order form and cheque payment to: **Pilgrims Hospice Christmas Cards, Offset Publishing, Unit 10 Honeywood Business Park, Honeywood Road, Basildon Essex SS14 3HW**

Allow 14 days for delivery. Orders accepted up until 8th December 2026. If you require assistance please call our help line on **01268 288637**.

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☐ Please treat all donations I make now, in the future, or have made to Pilgrims Hospices for the past four years as Gift Aid donations until further notice. I am a UK tax payer and understand that if I pay less Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the current tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations it is my responsibility to pay any difference. I understand that Pilgrims Hospices will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I have given.

Signature _____

Date _____

We would like you to hear from Pilgrims Hospices?

Your support is making a real difference, and we would love to keep you updated about our work and how you can help, including petitions and fundraising activities.

Email ☐ Text ☐ Post ☐ Phone ☐ Please detail your email and/or telephone number on order form above.

Please note that you will be responsible for P&P costs if you return part or all of your order unless faulty.

Pilgrims Hospices in East Kent is a company limited by guarantee. Registered office: 56 London Road, Canterbury, Kent CT2 8JA. Registered as a company in England No. 2000560.

There is more merchandise available at the three Pilgrims Hospices sites in Canterbury, Thanet and Ashford. Please go to our website at www.pilgrimshospices.org for details.

Research updates

Celebrating our first internship awardee to support future research leadership and improve patient care.

One of our trainee Advanced Clinical Practitioners, Lisa Gower, has been successful in winning a funded award to undertake a Research Internship with the NIHR Applied Research Collaboration.

Lisa is one of 24 in the first cohort of interns across the Kent, Surrey and Sussex region who started their nine month placement in March.

The initiative is designed to help more health and care staff build research skills, support evidence-based improvements to services, and widen access to research

opportunities across the region. Interns gain valuable experience through placements, mentorship, academic modules and small-scale research projects. Lisa plans to undertake some palliative care research modules and networking time with Kings College London, and develop a research project to help

support referral of patients with end stage liver disease to the hospice.

Well done, Lisa. For further information about the Applied Research Collaboration, visit:
arc-kss.nihr.ac.uk



Research to understand biological changes in cancer patients to improve their care

Towards the end of life, the body undergoes a profound shift in metabolism. Dr Coyle and researchers at The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre in Liverpool have organised the METEL research study to look at changes in the body of cancer patient's as their disease progresses and towards the end of life. There is very little known about these changes in a person's body at this incredibly important time, and they will be using urine samples to look at these changes.

The aim of the study is to help accurately predict when someone is nearing the end of life, which is currently hard for clinicians to do, and often occurs only hours or a few days before death. Knowledge of these changes will help clinicians with decision making about care and help avoid treatments that may be unnecessary or burdensome.

In the future, the researchers may also be able to use the samples for other research, for example to help develop various tests and/or treatments that will hopefully improve the care future patients receive.

Pilgrims Hospice Thanet inpatient unit is one of 30 research sites around England that is collecting samples for this study. Dr Anna John is leading the study at the hospice. If a patient is eligible to take part, the patient/ loved one will be approached by the study team at the hospice to see if they would like to participate. Participation is voluntary and will not affect the care they receive.

Scan the QR code to watch a short video about the METEL study:



Would you be interested in helping the hospice review their research?

The hospice undertakes research and receives many requests from researchers to undertake research in the hospice. All projects are reviewed by the hospice Research Facilitation and Governance Forum for their agreement to start, and their oversight whilst projects are running, through quarterly meetings.

We are currently looking for a public member to join the forum as a volunteer to provide their perspective. This role will help us to ensure the research we do is designed and conducted appropriately for the people we care for.

If you are interested in this role, to find out more please contact our Research Facilitator by email charlotte.brigden@pilgrimshospices.org or tel: **01227 812625**

To find out more about Pilgrims Hospices' Research, visit our website: pilgrimshospices.org/research





Who will you remember?

Dedicate a dove in memory of a loved one this December and join us for carols and refreshments at one of our services across east Kent.

*Saturday 5 December
Ashford, Canterbury, Thanet Pilgrims Hospices*

Saturday 5 December

Firmager,
St Nicholas Church,
New Romney

Sunday 6 December

All Souls Church,
Cheriton

Thursday 10 December

Barham Crematorium,
Barham

Sunday 13 December

St Peter and St Paul Church,
River, Dover

Sunday 13 December

St Alphege Church,
Whitstable

Sunday 13 December

St Leonards Church,
Hythe

Wednesday 16 December

Charing Crematorium,
Charing

Friday 18 December

Herne Bay Crematorium,
Herne Bay



Scan to find out more information

Visit our website pilgrimshospices.org/treesoflove

Call our friendly Supporter Relations team on 01227 782062