

Pilgrim prepares to answer God's call



The Rev Jennie Evans: hopes to follow God's call to Pembrokeshire

THE Rev Jennie Evans is a living example of one of our Kairos principles – travelling light, as a pilgrim does.

The 63-year-old grandmother is preparing to sell her house and make a new start in Wales, where God is calling her to create a retreat centre for those who feel bruised and broken.

She hopes to buy a cottage and an 18th century chapel to convert into the Bethesda Pool Christian Centre from September. It's the latest move in a story that has seen her responding in faith each time she feels God calling her somewhere new.

"I always rest lightly on the present," she said. "I'm ready to go and I like adventure! I believe I have the gift of hospitality, and love the idea of creating a home and a centre for those who are feeling broken. I'll help whoever the Lord sends, as brokenness covers so many things.

"Guidance comes to me via thoughts and promptings about doing things. It's not a voice I hear, but you know in your spirit when you feel God has spoken. He also speaks through his word and through other people. God often starts with small things, and you've got to trust him and act on it. I believe he's calling me to do this."

Jennie first came to our diocese in 1965 with her husband Barney, who was curate at Holy Rood Church, Stubbington. The couple were then at Hart Plain Church for eight years. Jennie worked as a home economics teacher at Crookhorn and Oaklands secondary schools and the couple had two children, Naomi and Pete.

It was in 1975 that Jennie first started thinking about ordination. She went on a selection course with her friend Juliet Grace, who sadly died recently. After a five-year part-time course, Jennie became an accredited lay worker. When Barney died of cancer in 1980, she continued to work at Hart Plain Church.

"I lived by faith with two teenage children, and it was amazing how God provided for us financially," she said. "I had to move out of the vicarage, but I felt it was right to stay in the area as it was more secure for the children. This was where I was work-

ing and where I was loved."

It was the former bishop, Bishop Timothy, who noticed that Jennie's children would soon both be living away from home and suggested she could be ordained and work in a parish. She became a deacon and worked in Liphook and Bramshott for three years as a stipendiary curate, which was an exciting time in her ministry. So when the call came to move to East Cowes, she was unsure about going.

"The bishop was offering me a half-time job, but no house," she said. "One night the Lord woke me up and said I shouldn't be anxious about my half-pay, that he would provide and that I should pray for a house that was large enough - and for a new yacht, because we had to sell ours when Barney died.

"As it turned out, a group from Liphook and Bramshott covenanted to provide half my salary for four years. Not only that, but someone wrote a cheque for £16,000 so we could buy the boat. It showed the remarkable-ness of God's provision and the bishop named the boat 'Jehovah

enjoying a surfing and painting holiday. After praying in St David's Cathedral about her future, the pair passed an estate agent's window. They spotted a photo of a cottage and adjoining chapel for sale in a nearby village. Jennie woke at 5am the next morning, convinced that God was calling her to buy it as a refuge for broken people.

"I'd always worked with broken people, and someone had given me a prophetic word in 1987 about me helping to put bruised apples that had fallen on the floor into luxurious, purple baskets," she said. "I discovered that the cottage and chapel would cost £450,000. My house was only valued at £250,000, but I thought I'd go and see it anyway.

"I went the weekend before Christmas to the village of Rhoidiad y Brenin, which is Welsh for 'The Way of the King'. The chapel had been decommissioned, but was still used for occasional village services. When I explained to the owner, John, what I wanted to do, he began to cry. He said he knew what it was like to be broken, and he told the

my faith

The Rev Jennie Evans is to answer God's call by establishing a centre for broken people in Wales. It won't be the first time she's responded to divine guidance about her future.

Jireh' – the Lord will provide."

Jennie came to St Paul's, Sarisbury Green, to work as an assistant curate in 1995. She had just prayed about her future before meeting the former vicar, the Rev Roger Moseley, at a cathedral healing service – and he said: "Come and work with me!"

Her ministry has included working with gypsies at the top of her road, being involved in the social club next-door, helping to lead school assemblies and ministering to bereaved families.

She has also run church holidays at Climping, near Littlehampton, and has an active prayer ministry in the parish and surrounding areas. This ministry was linked to Wholeness Through Christ, an organisation for which she serves on the national team and leads the Wessex region.

Last November, Jennie and a friend were in Pembrokeshire,

estate agent to take it off the market. I said I didn't have enough money yet for both the cottage and the chapel, but he said he was still willing to go with that! The whole thing was mind-blowing!

"It is a huge leap of faith, but I believe God is in it. God has said I'll have enough money to buy both cottage and chapel by September. I'll move into the cottage and then we'll have to refurbish the chapel, put in another floor and create four new bedrooms for guests to stay in. Then I'll wait to see who the Lord sends. Hopefully we can run teaching weekends on healing and wholeness too.

"Many of the villagers are related to John, so he's already introduced me to some of the local community. It will be hard to leave the loving and supportive community in Sarisbury, but I know God has this work for me."

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