



Registered Charity No. 232 635

## Who we are and what we do

We - the Benedictine Community of Nuns in Minster - have enclosed this letter to explain how the Benedictine way of life will be reflected in the proposed Pathways rehabilitation project.

Saint Benedict, whose teaching guides the monastic community, speaks of the importance of hospitality:

"All guests who present themselves are to be received as Christ, for he himself will say,

"I was a stranger and you welcomed me".

In our prayer we feel intimately united to our families and friends, and especially to our local community. We also feel the pain and suffering of our brothers and sisters throughout the world. Since 1937, when Minster Abbey was re-founded as a Benedictine monastery, we have offered hospitality for those who are seeking God's presence in their lives. In our work of hospitality we give an open-hearted welcome to all our guests. This gives us an awareness of the varied and profound struggles and sufferings that afflict not merely a few people, but a wide cross-section of society. Prayer is at the heart of our life, through which we seek to be open to God's transforming love in every aspect of living.

We feel that Christ's love and concern for the poor is an important aspect of the hospitality which Minster Abbey offers. Over the years, we have welcomed many people with deep spiritual needs: we have worked with men and women on Community Service; we have welcomed women and their children who suffer from HIV; we have welcomed men and women who are recovering from addiction, following the "Twelve Steps Program" of NA and AA - a spiritual path to recovery. We see these people's lives being transformed by the power of love and by personal cooperation with the grace of God.

Our experiences with such a wide variety of people have made us aware of the crying need for a project in our area such as Pathways House to be supported with Benedictine principles.

It would be naive for any of us to say that drug abuse is not a problem in Thanet, even in our beautiful, tranquil village of Minster, and some of your letters to us have proved that.

## Minster Abbey, a recognized National Charity

Since 1956, Minster Abbey has been a recognized National Registered Charity. Each year we are required to submit a report to the Charity Commission and account for our charitable work. The trustees of Minster Abbey are responsible for seeking advice whenever necessary, to ensure that their work is carried out in a professional manner, according to government regulations.

We have to ensure that our property is well maintained according to the highest safety regulations, and that correct procedures are carried out regarding any lease agreements.

Sadly, due to lack of funding, the Minster Museum was unable to fulfil the terms of the Repairing Lease. In November 2006 the Museum Trustees therefore decided to accept our offer to relinquish the remainder of the lease. After so many years of friendly cooperation within the village it gives us great sadness to hear of allegations of deception on *our* part. As responsible and caring trustees we have endeavoured at all times to act ethically and with integrity.

### Seek peace and pursue it

According to Charity regulations, it is important that all properly owned and leased by the Trustees of Minster Abbey is used according to the objectives and aims of the Charity. Any lease agreements we undertake must ensure that the ethos of the Benedictine Community of Minster Abbey is incorporated.

The Abbey Trustees frequently receive enquiries from individuals and firms interested in using the Oast House area. When the Museum Trustees informed us of the decision to accept the offer to surrender the lease in November 2006, the Abbey Trustees began seriously to consider only those proposals that were in accord with the mission and ethos of the Abbey. In April 2007, after much research and reflection, we published in *Minster Matters* our thoughts on the proposal of Pathways House. In early June, Kenny Milne and his team were in a position to hold open meetings in the Old Schools in order to give the village information about the proposed project and answer questions and concerns. We are sorry if any of our friends and neighbours feel sidelined. This was never our intention. The voice of each person concerned is important to us, and your letters have been received with great respect,

The vision for the Pathways Project closely models Benedictine values. We have been deeply impressed by Kenny Milne and by his passion to pass on the new life he has received through the Twelve-Step Program of rehabilitation. Through our contact with him, we have met many recovering addicts and alcoholics and have recognized in them a peaceful spirit that echoes the aspirations of St. Benedict's teaching, "Seek peace and pursue it." With the requirement of total abstinence, which demands commitment, hard work and discipline, following the "Twelve-Steps for Recovery", we feel that the Pathways Project can enable more lives to be transformed, and indeed, saved. By providing the property at Minster Abbey and having a seat on the oversight committee we will ensure that spiritual values contribute to people's recovery, just as we have always done in welcoming those in any kind of need.

People have real anxieties about the project, many of which we shared. We do not dismiss genuine fears. We will continue to respond to people's legitimate concerns, particularly regarding safety. Kenny has publicly made known his safety-strategies, and he continues to listen to advice that will ensure the safety of all. We would like to reassure our friends that any negotiations between the Pathways Project and the Abbey Trustees with a view to signing a lease would include clauses requiring stringent safety measures, and will meet the requirements of Charity Law.

It is estimated that at least fifty lives a year could be saved through the Pathways program. Many of these would be local people, some of whom you may have encountered in your daily lives.

We believe that the proposed project can operate safely in our village, and we sincerely hope to provide a space where lives can be saved and transformed through the dedicated support and peaceful environment of the Pathways House program.