

## The Leap from Volunteer to Support Worker

Volunteering at The Centre, after a permanent move from Devon to Bristol in 2015, soon became the highlight of my week. It gave me a real focus and it was great fun getting to know the team and the guests; I was so pleased to have been given the opportunity.

When the post of Support Worker became vacant, following promotion for Chris, I was encouraged by my friends, family and after prayerful consideration, I applied. That was a daunting task. I have worked in various roles all my life but not needed to make a formal application for over 25 years!

I was over the moon when I was told by David Alderman that I had been successful and I made the leap from volunteering on a Wednesday to being at the centre four days a week.

There is a great deal to learn. Working with Debbie, Chris, Paul, Robin, Trudy and all the volunteers, however, make the learning so much fun. What a brilliant team they are. With a wealth of knowledge and vast experience between them I always have someone to ask for guidance. No two days are ever the same; we just never know what the day ahead will bring when we arrive and set up for each session. Yes there are the daily routines of breakfast and lunch preparation and clearing, washing and drying clothes and towels for guests, sorting the laundry, organising showers, food and clothing store sorting etc. However, it is the unexpected that keeps me on my toes and those little gems of conversations about all sorts of topics that make the role so brilliant.

The continuity of being at The Centre everyday has been a huge advantage in really getting to know our guests and slowly understanding their needs and their frustrations. I never ceased to be amazed by



some of the stories I'm told about their experiences whilst growing up, some of the places they have worked and the places they have travelled to or lived in. They are a remarkable group of people in many ways.

The generosity of people who donate to the centre has been another area which I didn't fully appreciate when I was only there one day a week. Bags regularly appear with food, toiletries, clothing etc that can then be used and distributed to those who need it. Human kindness is clearly apparent and all the donations are put to the best use.

Mutual respect, laughter, compassion and the Christian ethos are the keys to the success of The Methodist Centre in my opinion and it is a real joy and privilege to now be a much more active part of the team. This is a place where I would like to be for a long time to come if it is God's plan.

### What do you do with yours?

Throughout the year we receive the Methodist Centre newsletters/ magazines, once you have read it, what do you do with it? Put it on the pile of magazines, papers and leaflets which you intend to sort out but never seem to have the time or the inclination to get around to it, or does it end up being put out for recycling. I have an OHIO (only handle it once) system.

The newsletters are put to one side and the next time I write to my friends or visit a friend I pop one in the envelope or take it. My friends are interested in the centre and are always asking about, 'how does it work and what do you do'? by reading the newsletter, they can understand more about, the hard work, the dedication and the achievements of the staff, volunteers and churches that support the centre.

And who knows it may give other circuits a challenge to set up their own centres.

So before you get fed up with seeing the newsletter sat on that pile of paperwork collecting dust, why not spread the word and send it to a friend, pass it on.

Lyndsey



*'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'*

(Matthew chapter 4 verse 4)



Here at the Methodist Centre we're constantly confronted by the human need for the basics of life – the need for 'bread' is very real. Therefore the bulk of what we do is providing for those needs – food, drink, shelter from the weather or the dangers of the street, a shower and clean clothes.

We also try to provide for some of what the psychologist Maslow saw as higher level needs – newspapers and a weekly film to stimulate the mind and relieve boredom; opportunities to be creative and use gifts and skills in the art room; board games and other activities.

All of this is offered without any pressure to embrace or even explore the Christian faith that inspires and enables the work of the Centre – we welcome unconditionally people of all faiths and those who reject any faith.

But as Christians we will always want to go further than the (important) work of providing for those needs. This is because we have encountered the One who said that he came to bring life in all its fullness. Although Jesus said that our earthly lives would inevitably include difficulties and be less than fully satisfying, we have found that God's love in Christ does bring fullness of life even as we deal with life's hardships and disappointments.

And so, as Jesus knew would happen, we want to share God's transforming love in Christ with others, and especially with those for whom this life is particularly hard. Even as we do our best to express God's love in practical ways, we know in our hearts the truth of Jesus' statement, that fullness of life doesn't come with a full stomach, and that only relationship with God through Jesus Christ can really satisfy the hunger of the human soul.

Our weekly prayer meeting is one of the ways we try to give expression to this desire to share God's love in Christ. At about 11.15 on a Wednesday we invite anyone who would like to, to come to the chapel for a short time of prayer. We read a passage from the Bible, normally from one of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), then allow our praying to be inspired by the reading – celebrating God's power and loving care revealed in Jesus, and expressing our need for the same in our lives today. We invite the Holy Spirit to work in our



hearts and minds, revealing the depth of God's love for each of us, bringing strength to cope with what we face in our lives and the peace that only Jesus can bring. Then we pray for more specific needs – our own and those of others:

- \* We pray for those who are sick or troubled, believing that God heals today (*James 5:15*)
- \* We pray for those trapped in addiction, remembering that our prayers have 'divine power to demolish strongholds' (2Corinthians 10:4), and that God's kingdom includes 'freedom for the prisoners' (*Luke 4:18*).
- \* We pray for those who are currently rough-sleeping, 'sofa-surfing' or dependant on the Night Shelter, that they would be found suitable accommodation.
- \* We pray for those who are able to work but are struggling to find something suitable, that God will guide them to the right place at the right time, and that someone will see the potential they have.
- \* We pray for peace and justice in the world, and any major item of news in our city or further afield.

We give thanks to God for signs of His loving care in the beauty of creation and His everyday provision, and also for the promise that one day Jesus will return to 'Make all things new' (*Revelation 21:5*) – that the world will not always be as it is now, but will be totally filled with peace, joy, love and abundance. Also that those who give their lives to Jesus have the promise of a life to come that is fully pain-free and perfectly satisfying, and that in the meantime whatever we have to cope with in this life, God's love always surrounds and holds us.

You are always welcome to join our Wednesday prayer meetings – just come about 11.15, but please particularly remember in your churches and in your own prayer times, to pray for the work of the Centre, and the needs of our guests. Thank You.

### Welcome Our New Manager

Ross Jeffrey having moved from London with his wife and two daughters. We are so pleased to have you now in place and bringing with you a wealth of knowledge and experience. To further the Methodist Centre in what we pray will be many fruitful years ahead.

Debbie

