

Spreading the Word and the Work



Over recent years I have had the great privilege of speaking at many churches and organisations who are interested in what we do here at the Centre. It has been a great pleasure to be able to convey the importance of what we do, what we try to achieve and looking into the future at the Methodist Centre. I have always been greeted with great love and warmth, humour and had a lovely time doing this, also have been able to sample some lovely cakes along the way.

These visits are vital to our work and gaining a greater understanding of homelessness, unemployment, addiction and many more battles people face. After a short or long talk by myself it has always been wonderful the questions put to me. It is a good opportunity to get a better understanding of issues many have not come across in everyday life before. Many come to me and say they didn't understand or know quite what people face on an every day basis; having some great debates, with people exploring their thoughts and feelings on these type of issues.

We really appreciate the money donations often collected, along with items we are in need of at that time.

I would encourage all who have not had such a visit from us, to get in touch we would love to come and see your group and bring a deeper understanding, to the needs of our people.

Whether it is a daytime you meet or an evening we would be happy to do our best to put a booking in the diary. Myself or our Manager Ross look forward to getting to know some more of you.

A massive thank you to all who have welcomed us into groups, and friendships formed.

Debbie Green

Updates



Fence: We have now had a wonderful fence erected around our garden; this was to replace our temporary bamboo panels which, in the recent bad weather needed replacing. It is a fabulous job and has added some structure to the garden whilst also making it more secure and secluded for our guests to enjoy.

Haircuts: We are now running a fortnightly hair cutting service within the centre. Our guests have been finding this a great addition to our services, with our hairdressers cutting around ten – fifteen guests hair every session.



WheelyGoodBooks: We have been able to secure the services of WheelyGoodbooks to run a weekly drop in session around literature. Whilst also providing our guests new books to read and stocking our library in the centre, they will also be discussing literature, hosting some creative writing and enabling a space for open discussions around topical issues.

Big Questions: Corrine Brown has been developing this idea alongside our weekly Wednesday Worship sessions, to engage our guests in big questions and talking to them about faith in a friendly, engaging and welcoming environment.



Art Project: We are going to be hosting an art project at the centre run by a student from Bristol University; the project will run over thirteen weeks and will be open to all our guests to attend. The sessions will cover using a range of materials and the guests will be encouraged to create artwork and learn new skills along the way.

Garden

Hi everyone, I do hope you have got through the cold weather, snow and ice safely. Very pleased to say, here at the centre we have been open throughout the recent cold spell; all got into work and have been able to keep people warm, safe, fed, and showered.

As the weather warms up and the nights draw out, I know my thoughts turn to my garden, what needs doing, what should be done, and plans to make changes. Looking around the Methodist Centre garden is no different. Gardens look a mess right now, but in a couple of months it will be a different picture.

We now have had a permanent fence erected around our garden (thank you to Adam & Lee who have done a super job). We now have to look at getting planting, potatoes first. We are pleased to say that our row of bay trees are doing very well, and will no doubt put a bit of growth on this year. Bulbs are in flower and we will soon see what herbs have survived in our kitchen garden.

It would be especially good to be able to put up nesting boxes soon and have a bird table. If anyone out there, whether they be retired, carpenter or a church that would like to help make this a reality, through donations or hard graft that would be brilliant. Possibly some donations of bird food would also go a long way to attracting birds to the garden and if you would



like to be involved in this new project please do get in contact with us.

Plans also include putting up some hanging baskets and growing some climbers up the walls. We as always will be looking to include our guests in this project who would like to have a go at gardening or bring their own expertise to the job.

Thank you to all that have given to the garden in the past. Year on year it is slowly become a place of tranquillity and peace for all who use it.

Thank you, Debbie Green

Community

In the summer of 2017, following recent concerns regarding Gaunts Ham Park opposite the centre, I was invited to attend a Stakeholder Meeting of residents, social care agencies, police and tenancy associations. After several meetings much progress was made and the centre has actually now hosted the last two meetings, bringing people and organisations together in order to resolve issues in and around Lincoln Street and the park. My ambition in involving the centre in these meetings was in part to establish good relations with our neighbours as well as develop new channels of communication with local agencies dealing with health and social care but more over I wanted the Methodist Centre, located now within a former church building, to resume a role within the community befitting its previous purpose as centre of community aspiration and vision.

In 1989 some friends of mine were involved in the peaceful demonstrations held in East Germany. The Lutheran churches, which had for a long time been viewed with some suspicion by the agents of the authoritarian state including the dreaded Stasi, hosted the protestors as they not only planned their demonstrations but also planned for their communities in the face of the collapse of the East German state. The churches were revitalised and became the source of both spiritual inspiration and detailed practical planning for the restoration of the democratic process. With these lofty notions in mind I attempted to involve the centre in some community initiatives which might restore the building as an active, if not central, participant in the lives of our neighbours. I hoped that through assisting in the organisation of localised events that the centre would come to represent not just a shelter for the vulnerable but also a recognised source of community engagement.

I talked over my ideas with our guests who responded readily to the idea of engaging the centre with the wider community and as a first step we assembled a team of



volunteer litter pickers in order to keep the park clean, especially the children's play area. The team and I were featured in a local magazine article which attracted a good deal of positive feedback. The litter picking developed into a larger leaf clearing project during the autumn and has now resulted in close links with Bristol City Council and their Parks and Estates department. Indeed, we are now involved with them in planning for the summer and the planting of flowers and shrubs. In addition to this centre will also be providing logistical support for organised events in the park including a family fun day for the Easter holidays and another family event centred around mental wellbeing in May. There are other numerous events scheduled for the park throughout the year in which the centre and its guests will play a pivotal role.

In many ways the centre is now not just servicing the need of our guests but introducing them to the community around Barton Hill through positive engagement. Furthermore the centre has now become a fundamental part of our locality, a place of hope, inspiration and love, meeting the needs of our guests and neighbours alike.

Chris