

Middlesbrough CENTRE OF MISSION

Sister Jane Anne Emson



Middlesbrough Newsletter 2020

I am really sorry that's it's taken me so long to send this newsletter.

I did intend to send it a few months ago but lots of things have been happening and I wanted to share as much as I could with you since I came to live and set up one of the newest COM in Brambles Farm Thorntree just over a year ago.

About the Centre of Mission

Middlesbrough Centre of Mission is based on the Brambles Farm and Thorntree estates in Middlesbrough, which are in the top 1% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. - Thorntree is being one of the most deprived areas in the UK (IMD 2019). St Thomas Church (Brambles Farm estate) no longer has a building or congregation and was the last Anglican worship on the estate. The last time the church met there was in October 2006 and their building was demolished in 2007. My role is to start a New Worshipping Community (church plant) focusing on the 20s-40s on the estate.

Lockdown

Lockdown has been really busy. We have been taking up to 60 food parcels out every other week. And in the school summer holidays this has increased to 72 families which means we're supporting more than 260 people.

The food has been donated from Churches outside the parish and also from Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland who has so generously gave us funding. I not only bought dried food but also fresh fruit and veg and meat which included recipes to cook and online Zoom sessions to help.



We have given out activity packs for over 120 children and run events on Facebook. Activity packs included creating a COVID-19 time-capsule and an Easter colouring competition.



I have people from the estate sending me friend requests on Facebook every other day and messages asking for support. I have formed really good links with our local councillor who helps deliver the parcels and an organisation called Kids Kabin who work with 7-11 year olds and do a lot of outdoor activities. They also help with the groups and the distribution of food/activities.

Recently a local businessman donated money to help feed the children in Middlesbrough during the school holidays. Middlesbrough football club chefs cook hot meals voluntarily deliver them to organisations to distribute them. I am working with them and we are taking 100 meals out a week plus food parcels.

In September we are arranging a picnic in the park get together for prayer.

Life before Lockdown

When I first started my role as Lead Evangelist I was told not to really do anything other than get to know the area and to listen to what God is saying for the first 6 months. I understood why and the importance especially as I didn't know the area its needs or anyone. Anyway, for those who know me this was near on impossible.

So I began by going out with Fr Terry and his Coffee van three mornings a week. It's where we park the van in different parts of the estates and give out free coffee to people in the local community. With a stamp on the side saying 'given with God's love'. In doing this it not only enabled me to be present but also form some good relationships. One in particular was with a guy called L who had recently come out of prison where he told me he had spent most of his life



and he told me that he gave his life to Jesus just a few weeks before his release. He said that he would like to help me set up a church and that he wanted to share his faith. After various meetings I managed to get the keys to a building in Brambles Farm and opened as a church for about a month or so. We did get a few families attend. However due to various reasons I didn't feel that it was the right time.

I got involved with local groups, one being Feast of Fun which provide free activities/meals during the school holidays for local families and gives people the chance to see friends, have a healthy meal, have a day out, family time, etc. I started to build relationships and shortly after set up a Facebook page and very quickly started to get lots of friends requests.

I also started to build up good working partnerships and was handed keys to three local community centres and was told I could use them free of charge to set up what groups I felt appropriate, even a church. I was also asked to be one of the trustees at one of the centres.

One of the centres already had a youth club called Tommy's. However just a few weeks after my arrival the club closed due to lack of attendance. About a month after this I was asked by the Area Dean if I could start it back up. Which I did in November after lots of prayer, a great team and a few changes. We ended up with 142 young people on the register in just a few months.

It was mental but amazing. I would have never thought that I would have seen so many young people attend in such a short space of time. Not only did I get to meet the young people but also their parents.

At Christmas time I helped in a local café and served 24 Xmas dinners to those who was alone but mainly to the homeless.

I have set up groups such as Santa's Grotto, after school club, Tommy's and various other one-off events. We set up Family Fun church in January which runs monthly.



In September we did an afternoon tea event for Come and See. We invited Ace from Gladiators who shared his story. The Bishop of Whitby and Archbishop John Sentamu and lots of families from the estate came.

Team

This leads me onto the team. The first couple to join the team was from St Johns Church where I attend. I then was asked to run a workshop on estate ministry by Bishop Paul at an Archdeaconry Day in October. Through this another couple from a church in the next parish joined the team. Later a lady called Samantha from the estate started volunteering, which leads me on to the next section.

Lives Changed

Sharing Faith through words and action. This is Church Army's strapline and since coming over here I have had the amazing privilege of doing this on a number of occasions

I would like to share one story about a lady who lives in Brambles Farm. Her name is Samantha and she has given her permission to share her story. When I first met Sam at the coffee van she came across as quite angry. To the point where I thought that I must have said something to upset her. But I soon discovered that it wasn't me that she was angry with but God.

Here is Sam's story:



My name is Samantha Pearson. I am 42 years old and I have 3 children and a grandson. My mam passed away 4 and half year ago and I was so angry with god, I couldn't get my head around why he would take my gorgeous mam, the only person I really needed, she was my rock. I was in such a dark place with a lot of anger in my body.

My journey begins at a coffee van. I stopped and asked Fr Terry if he was selling coffee and he said "no its free, given with God's love". I stayed for a coffee and a chat and after a few weeks of going to coffee van I met the lovely Jane and from them I have started seeing things differently from the way I looked at life.

I go to church on a Sunday and I also volunteer with the church as well as help with food parcels and anything I can. I have found God and the way he has helped me is amazing. My thoughts are no longer dark and my future is very different. Jane has helped me so much, whether it was a food parcel or a listening ear. She has even gone above and beyond with a lift to church. Whatever anybody needs Jane is there whenever she can. I wouldn't of found faith or God as my family aren't really church people but my thoughts of God and church have changed so much for the better. The future is bright and I'm looking forward to what God has in store for me and my family.



Thank you

I find it such an honour and privilege to serve God in Brambles Farm and Thorntree. The people, children and young people are so amazing, and really appreciate the help and support that we offer.

I feel really blessed that God called me in Middlesbrough. I must admit when I first came, I did question myself and God if I had done the right thing. But as time went on it was clear that I had. It is such a privilege and honour to be able to serve God in Brambles Farm Thorntree and I am so excited to see what he is going to do next in and through me. I just want to say a massive Thank you for all your prayer and financial support in the past year.

Lastly, I want to share some exciting news! I am going to be ordained in September of this year. And whilst being over here I have also met my future husband David. We got engaged on Valentine's day.

Every Blessing

Jane

GET INVOLVED

PRAY

Prayer is such an important part of your support. We need God's help in every aspect of our work:

- Please continue to pray for all of us in Brambles Farm and Thorntree as we seek to rebuild St Thomas church.
- Pray for my amazing team.
- That relationships within the local community will continue to grow and that people would be open to hearing the Gospel message.
- Pray that we get the building in Thorntree Park in which we plan to run all the groups from including the church. I have a meeting planned to discuss this at the end of August.
- Pray that the partnership working with local organisations and churches will continue to be positive.
- Pray for Claire who is going through the discernment process to join Church Army and her husband Darren who is part of Middleborough Centre of Mission.
- Pray for Sam and her family who recently come to faith.
- For my ordination in September.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Can I just say a Massive **Thank You** for all your financial and prayer support?
You are Amazing!

God bless

Sister Jane

WAYS TO DONATE

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