

Editorial Musings

Welcome to the first edition of CA inFocus for 2024 - and a happy New Year to you! As we embrace the fresh start that comes with a new year, let's take this opportunity to reflect, grow and make a positive impact.

God's boundless mercy allows us to examine our actions with humility and seek forgiveness. By His grace, we're not defined by our past, but by the potential to do amazing things. His unwavering love fuels our journey towards transformation and encourages us to make a difference in the lives of others.

Within the pages of this edition, you'll discover inspiring stories that exemplify God's work in unchurched communities, amid lonely people and in the lives of young

individuals battling self-harm. These stories serve as a reminder that, with your support, we can continue to share the love of God through both words and actions.

So, as you embark on this reading journey, I encourage you to see the people behind these stories. Let their experiences provoke your thoughts, elevate your spirits and inspire you. There's so much need, but through God's unwavering love, we can answer that call and bring hope to those who need it most. With His steadfast love guiding us, let's embrace this new year with determination, compassion and a shared commitment to making our world a better place. Together, we possess the ability to transform lives and make a difference.



Sarah Waller Editorial Assistant

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CHOOSE YOUR CHALLENGE!

Calling all adventurers....We've got some amazing challenges just waiting for you to conquer!

From sledding in Lapland with a team of huskies, or standing tall on the summit of Kilimanjaro, or witnessing the beauty of Snowdon - illuminated by the glow of sunrise....

We've got it all!

Our incredible range of adventures span the globe and by taking on an epic challenge, you'll be raising funds for our frontline work - supporting us in making a positive impact while having the experience of a lifetime! Are you up for the challenge?

ARE YOU UP FOR THE CHALLENGE?

MICHAEL IS...

EVENT: September - London to Paris Bike Ride with a mate from church

MOTIVATION: It's a great excuse to get a new bike!

LOOKING FORWARD TO: The 26 miles between Dover and Calais

NERVOUS ABOUT: Chafing

TRAINING: Watching lots of Tour de France videos

"I love cycling and Church Army's work, so this as an opportunity to bring those two things together and raise money to practically help reach others with the love of Jesus."



JENNI IS...

EVENT: July - Devon Jurassic Coast walk

MOTIVATION: I love hiking and know the area but would love to learn

more about its history.

LOKING FORWARD TO: The scenery, meeting new people and sharing about the work Church Army does. "Please sponsor me! Or even better-join me!"

To find out more, please visit https://churcharmy.org/ways-of-giving/fundraise-for-us/events or contact Rachael Rook-Williams at **Rachael.Rook-Williams@churcharmy.org** / **0114 551 2604**. And of course, we would love to hear about your own fundraising ideas and support you along the way!



Jonny Price Church Resource Officer

I think, like many Christians, I've had a conflicted relationship with this passage. It's a fridge magnet passage, which can be rolled out in a trite way whenever something bad happens. On the other hand, I have it tattooed on my right arm, so I clearly think it has some importance!

"FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU," DECLARES THE LORD, "PLANS TO PROSPER YOU AND NOT TO HARM YOU, PLANS TO GIVE YOU HOPE AND A FUTURE."

Feremiah 29:11

Like many bits of scripture, this passage has become more meaningful to me the longer I've spent with it. It's reassuring and popular because it tells us, at a surface level, that God has plans for us that are good. That truth feels like such a contrast to what we see in the world around us. However, by looking at the world around us, we land on one of the key objections to the passage: how can we say that God has good plans for us when the world is in the state it is? In my thinking, I've landed on two big ideas that change this passage for me.

The first is that the 'you' is plural. It's a proclamation of goodness to God's people, not a promise of prosperity to one person. The shift to the collective encourages us to move our perspective back a step and look at the scripture around this passage. This leads us to the second shift: we notice that God's declaration of a good future is given to the Jews while they are in exile, being held as political prisoners in a distant land.

These two things, for me, make the truth at the heart of this passage more profound. God's future plan for His children is good and that goodness is beyond our imagination, but we can find it in His Kingdom. If our ancestors in faith can keep hold of that truth when held prisoner in a foreign land, then I can do the same when faced with troubles in my life and in the wider world.

For many people, the world feels like a dangerous, painful place. Hope is in short supply and it feels like this relentlessly (Faith Questions Session 4 gives further reflections on this). When thinking about sharing faith with others, maybe starting with the hope, reassurance, peace and wholeness we find in God, is more powerful than we often think. It's this reassurance that Jeremiah 29:11 points to. If we can talk about it sensitively, it can be a great way to bring hope and love to those around us.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Reflecting on 2023, we can't ignore the pressing issues that plagued our society. From the overwhelming level of need and poverty to the heartbreaking prevalence of abuse and spiritual hunger, it was undoubtedly a difficult year for many. It's disheartening to witness the growing number of vulnerable individuals who are continuously overlooked, ignored and rejected across the United Kingdom and Ireland. Our mission to assist those in dire need remains absolutely vital.

Visitors to The Sanctuary in the Marylebone Project more than **doubled** in three months.

The number of individuals sleeping rough is on the rise, with England alone reporting a staggering **26%** increase.

The persistent rise in interest rates and inflation exacerbated the cost-of-living crisis, contributing to a rise in food insecurity, homelessness and mental health issues for countless individuals.

The number of 17-19 year-olds grappling with mental health problems has skyrocketed from 1 in 8 individuals to an alarming **1 in 4.***

But there is good news! Your support has made a significant impact through Church Army's work. Together, we've brought hope and practical assistance to countless individuals who may have otherwise been overlooked.

For the last five years, **100%** of women resettled into independent housing by the Marylebone Project have successfully maintained their tenancies.

A staggering **4,745** nights of accommodation have been provided to homeless young people through CA Ty Bronna in Cardiff.

Over **24,600** meals or food parcels have been given out from our Centres across the UK and Ireland.

264 young people affected by self-harm have been cared for and helped by our Amber Project.

More than **3,000** essential items, such as school uniforms, hygiene packs and electrical appliances, have been distributed to those in need.



As we set our sights on 2024, our dedicated mission is to extend our unwavering support to those who need it most. We strive to empower individuals with practical assistance and spiritual guidance, ensuring they feel the boundless love of God through our words and actions.

But the reality is that countless people in our society remain unseen and forgotten, facing immense challenges without assistance. That's why we need your help - now more than ever. By addressing the growing need, we inevitably face increased costs for our critical services. The Marylebone Project alone requires over £3m annually to function. Ty Bronna, in Cardiff, providing essential accommodation for homeless youth, costs more than £400,000 per year to run. The combined expenses to manage all our Centres of Mission exceed £2m per year.

Without your support, these vital services would cease to exist, leaving countless individuals stranded without practical aid or hope. Your donation, regardless of the amount, makes an immeasurable impact on the lives of those we assist. Just imagine the transformations made possible with your help. Take Valentina,* who found refuge at the Marylebone Project and is now embarking on a nursing career and is reunited with her daughter. Reflect on Sam,* who is courageously working with the Amber Project to conquer self-harm. And consider Gavin, who discovered solace and purpose at the Pirate Monks recovery group in Dundee and who is now providing mentorship to others.

Please, let us unite in our fight against social injustice, continuing to demonstrate God's unwavering and unconditional love to each and every person who crosses our path. The need is urgent, and your support is crucial.

- * British Medical Association August 2023
- * Names changed
 - Pray for continued resources, provisions and finances to fund our vital work across these nations.
 - Pray for staff and volunteers to feel encouraged and supported as they help others.
 - Pray that our supporters will know how much they are valued and their generosity appreciated
 - Give thanks to God for His continuous love, guidance and strength as we navigate difficult challenges

PRAYER INFOCUS

BUILDING COMMUNITY IN SOUTHAMPTON

Church Army has had a longstanding presence in Southampton, investing in the development of a Centre of Mission in 2010. At the heart of this mission is the dedicated Evangelist, Ruth Hills, who tirelessly serves the local community in the Townhill Park area. The neighbourhood has been promised substantial redevelopment and regeneration. While this long-term strategy may hold potential, current residents find it hard to develop any sense of community, all while grappling with substandard housing, over-crowding and financial and relationship difficulties. With the support of Church Army, Ruth explores ways to overcome these obstacles, nurture genuine connections and create a thriving community where everyone can flourish and meet with Jesus.

Meet Ruth

here are a lot of problems for people living in the area, an area of high deprivation. There are redevelopment plans for the area which have been ongoing for a long time, flats and shops boarded up, it is very run-down. There are families who have been put on notice that they will be rehoused at some point, but they don't know when or where they will be moving to. They have no choice about it which is a difficult situation for anyone to live in. Consequently, some families

are living in houses which are not fit for habitation, with landlords being reluctant to spend money to improve them as they are due to be demolished at some point.

I have been involved with a family who were living in a house with a leaking toilet that wasn't being fixed and they were living in dire circumstances.

Another family in our community have a problem with overcrowding, there are two adults and three children, including a teenager, in a two-bedroom property. The council acknowledge it is inappropriate, but they have not moved them to more suitable housing.



Because the area is in a constant state of transition, the numbers of people in the community is always changing with people moving in and out. Maintaining a sense of community is difficult and we find families are reluctant to get involved and put down roots if they think they will soon be moved on, but we are working hard to combat this.

We run a parent support group and a toddler group on a Monday and two community groups running on a Tuesday - one is a very deliberate discipleship group and the other is a bit of a lighter touch but still a place for people to meet Jesus, where we are watching The Chosen together. Every fortnight we have the Edge+, a fresh expression of church which is well attended with around 40 people regularly attending, but numbers

fluctuate as people move out of the area. It is exciting to see the community beginning to 'own' that, participating in running it.

During the summer, as many families could not afford a holiday, we put on a Summer Fun twoday event and around 400 people attended, it created a real buzz in the area.

After many years of trying, we are delighted to have secured a building to use as a base for people to come to, Edge Community Hub. The community are involved in cleaning, painting and furnishing it and I hope that once this is up and running soon and with the help of our wonderful volunteers, it will encourage a new sense of community for people to feel a sense of belonging. PRAYER MENRILS

- Pray for health and wellbeing for Ruth and volunteers as they work hard to show the local community the love of God
- Pray that a sense of community will develop in the local area and that the opening of the Edge Community Hub will help this to flourish
- Pray for the local residents to feel encouraged and welcomed to join in activities at the Edge Community Hub
- Pray that although residents may feel their futures are uncertain, they will come to know that the love of God is unconditional and unwavering
- Pray for those battling with substandard housing to be helped in a practical sense and that they will be given suitable housing which they will be able to call home

CA CHAPLAINS

Church Army Evangelists play a critical role in chaplaincy across diverse fields, such as healthcare, prisons and sports teams. They provide religious, spiritual and pastoral support to all sorts of individuals and they demonstrate the importance of chaplaincy work in today's changing world. As more and more people grapple with mental health concerns, the cost-of-living crisis and daily challenges, the need for support and guidance is greater than ever. However, it's also important to consider the needs and well-being of the Evangelists who give their support and time to the care of others. Where do they turn for guidance and pastoral care? Meet David Booker, the Chaplain for Church Army. He offers support, care and guidance to the entire Church Army family.

Meet David

grew up in a Christian family, so church was always part of the scene. As a teenager, I felt called to some kind of ministry and I discovered Church Army on holiday in Weymouth, where there was a beach mission team and I later joined them as a volunteer. I fell in love with what Church Army was doing and I applied to become a Commissioned Evangelist and began my training at Blackheath.

My role as CA Chaplain is slightly different to other chaplaincy roles, as I am available to all CA staff, retired Evangelists, Commissioned Evangelists and the mission community. In most chaplaincy roles, you can walk around, be

particular job, I can't do that because the people I serve are all over the UK and Ireland, so it's important that people know they can contact me. My role is also to make sure that, as an organisation, we have the right structures in place to support people. When someone needs help, my role is a little like a pastoral paramedic service. I assess their needs, give spiritual first aid and get them to where they need

to be for the best care.

a visible presence and let people approach you. In this

It's a privileged position. When people come to you with really personal things, they're trusting you with the most precious

Wilson Carlile

the home of C

part of themselves, showing their vulnerabilities and that is really humbling. Church Army has people in some of the toughest places, dealing with traumatic situations. That has an impact on each of them, so we need to carry those people and love them.

Recently, I was spending some time talking to an Evangelist regularly because they were walking through a bereavement with a family whose child had been terminally ill. It was taking a toll on the family but also on the Evangelist. In that situation, the Evangelist was the hands and feet of Jesus, making sure the family knew that God loved them by sitting with

them, crying with them and holding their hands through it all. It was heartbreaking, but it was inspirational at the same time.

The Evangelist was with them, walking through the pain, and so, of course, they needed someone to talk to as

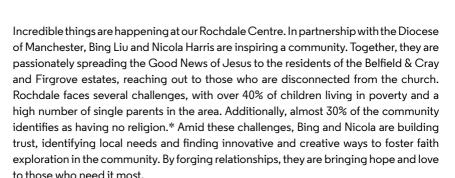
well.

As well as providing support to people and making sure the right help is in place for everyone, my role also involves looking at how we work supporting each other as a mission community. Church Army has changed over the years; we've always looked at new ways to do things, and that will keep happening. That means how we belong to each other will need to change as the work changes alongside social and technological shifts. The best people to support us are the people who pray for us and work alongside us. As a mission community, we will always be changing because we want to support, equip and encourage people to be the very best they can.



- Pray for chaplains to have sensitivity and wisdom in pastoral conversations
- Pray for chaplains to have ability to manage well the balance between pastoral and structural parts of their role
- Pray for those in Church Army supporting others while grieving or dealing with ill
 health themselves
- Pray that in all Church Army's support for those in times of trouble, joy and hope might shine through and those we service will be aware of the presence of God with them in their struggles.

FAITH AND FUN IN ROCHDALE



Meet Nicola

he areas of Rochdale we serve have a lot of deprivation. There are a lot of single parents and families struggling with food poverty and relationship breakdowns. It's easy to see the impact this has on children. I often have children telling me there's no food at home, which is utterly heartbreaking.

We run a football club on a Wednesday afternoon on some local football fields. Often, children will just wander on and join in, which is wonderful because we want to be inclusive for everyone. We try to speak to their parents and get their contact details so that we can continue to connect with them. Some of the children don't want to play football but do want to be involved.

> conversations about faith and Jesus. It's really organic, and it's great to see them being comfortable enough

to ask questions.

Recently, one of the mums asked Bing to pray with her, which was really special. Some of the children asked what it was about, and I said we were asking Jesus for help. They wanted to know more about how they could talk to Jesus; they were really inspired, which was incredible.



We are working hard to generate cross-over between our initiatives so that everyone feels welcome to become part of our worshipping community. Once a month, we have 'Fun Time', which is a cross between messy church and holiday club. Children come along with their parents, we eat together and have all sorts of activities, with a gospel message behind it all. It's really taken off and we have up to 70 people attending. Even better, some of them now come along to the resource church in the centre of town.

Some of the parents have a guarded attitude towards the institution of church, so we're encouraging them to reimagine what a relationship with God can look like for them. We have people saying that it's helped to heal the misguided understanding they had of church and actually believe that faith can be something they want to be a part of. Many are coming to feel that belief in God is something they could approach again.

We are identifying what the community needs and working to provide that, with a focus on building trusting and flourishing relationships. God is really at work here.

*End Poverty Coalition Annual Report

*ONS Census 2021

- Pray for the Alpha Course running at the Centre of Mission, that God would impact the parents from the estate who are currently engaging in the course.
- Pray for continued growth across key events at the Centre, including the worshipping community, 'Fun Time' and the weekly football group.
- Pray for relationships to grow and flourish between the Centre and local schools.
- Pray for the development of a youth club at the Centre to include local teenagers. Pray that they would feel valued and cared for.
- Pray for God to continue to work in the local community and for lives to be transformed.

PRAYER

RETIRED EVANGELISTS



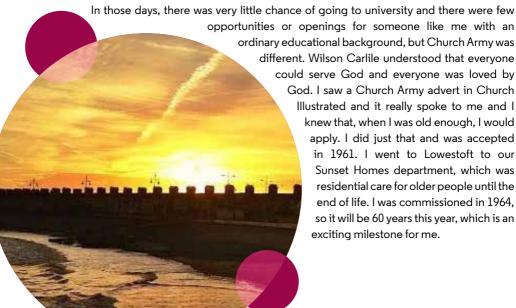
Overcoming prejudice to enable everyone to feel the love of God is something that Church Army has always done with passion. We stand up for those who may feel powerless, overlooked and undervalued. This means not only providing support to those in need, both physically and spiritually, but also empowering individuals who feel called by God to serve others. Committed to inclusivity, we've been training and commissioning male evangelists since 1882 and female evangelists since 1887. We strive to empower people from all backgrounds who are called to a life of evangelism. We support and train them to become recognised lay ministers and to reach those who may otherwise be ignored. Retired Evangelist Christine Goodger is a testament to this. Despite the scarcity of opportunities for people with an ordinary education or for women in ministry in 1961, she knew she was called to evangelism and took a bold step towards fulfilling her calling by joining Church Army.

Meet Christine

'I grew up in a Christian family with my parents and two siblings. My father was my godfather, too, and he was keen to make sure I grew up in the Christian faith. In those days, church worship was slightly different - adults went along to morning prayer while the children went to Sunday school, but I would also visit church with my mother for the Sunday evening service. I had known about Church Army from being a small child because there were two Church Army Sisters who worked in the parish.

In those days, there was very little chance of going to university and there were few opportunities or openings for someone like me with an ordinary educational background, but Church Army was

> God. I saw a Church Army advert in Church Illustrated and it really spoke to me and I knew that, when I was old enough, I would apply. I did just that and was accepted in 1961. I went to Lowestoft to our Sunset Homes department, which was residential care for older people until the end of life. I was commissioned in 1964. so it will be 60 years this year, which is an exciting milestone for me.



Being a Commissioned Evangelist has brought along challenges and I've had to face prejudice. Even today, there are people in the church who don't think that women should be involved in ministry and there are still some who treat lay ministers as second class. You have to lift yourself above all of that. I often remember words that were spoken to me at my commissioning: "If the Lord has called you,

Through the years of my ministry, I've been involved in church planting, bereavement counselling and working with children. I've faced redundancies, which have been very painful, but in those times, I've really leaned into my faith. I've had the pleasure of witnessing people accept Jesus into their lives and seeing them change and flourish and that has been an honour

then you will be able." I hang on to those words.

Evangelism to me is a lifetime calling, and I don't think I'll ever fully retire. I still lead some services and I'm involved with various charities. If you are training in evangelism or feel called, I would encourage you to seek guidance from those who have had years of experience and take on board some of the things you are told and seek help for spiritual direction. But perhaps the most important thing is to not be afraid to speak out when things aren't going right for you and not to feel that you are letting God down when something goes wrong. It's a journey of faith and He will guide you.'

Pray that all Evangelists, those more experienced and those just starting out, will remember that the will of God will never lead you to where the grace of God cannot keep you.

PRAYER Pray that Evangelists approaching retirement will take comfort that their gifts will never be redundant and that there will always be opportunities to share their knowledge and show people God's love.

- Pray that retired Evangelists will embrace different ways to share their gifts, even when the pace is gentler than they may be used to.
- Pray that retired Evangelists will never lose their enthusiasm to show God's love to others.
- Pray for good health, joy in abundance and peace of heart and mind for retired Evangelists.

My Tash choosing to leave a legacy

By Peter Ridge, supporter of Church Army for 21 years





I knew little about them initially, but I was delighted to discover the breadth and depth of their work throughout the country. It was exciting to be with Christians from all walks of life and different backgrounds working together to "preach the gospel at all times and use words when necessary," as St. Francis encouraged us to do.

I am particularly passionate about the work they do with children and young people from troubled backgrounds.

Over time I have got to know Nick Russell and become familiar with the outreach of the Greenwich Centre of Mission, living and working alongside young people struggling with issues such as gangs, drugs and knife crime.



I am impressed with the way Church Army evangelists do not shy away from situations such as these, but rather commit to these young people long-term, to see their lives transformed through the love of God.

I am no longer engaged directly in Church Army's work, but I am pleased to be able to continue supporting them financially with a monthly standing order.

Thinking ahead I have already made my Will which includes leaving a gift to Church Army as well as to my loved ones and other charities. I hope to encourage you to do the same as these gifts mean the work of Church Army can continue for many years to come.'

lef your legacy shine on with a gift of hope!

We envision a world where everyone, everywhere experiences God's love. We believe that to make a real difference in communities, we must be a part of them, building relationships, meeting the needs of those living in poverty and equipping people to transform their neighbourhoods through God's love. We empower the homeless to reclaim their independence, we walk with those struggling with their mental health or addictions and we work in areas others shy away from.

Leaving a gift in your will is a simple way to make a huge difference in the lives of those we serve. All you need to do is give your solicitor our charity name and number;-

The Church Army
Registered Charity England & Wales 226226
Scotland SC040457
Republic of Ireland R20152604

|hank you!

To discuss or find out more please get in touch with Rachael Rook-Williams at legacy@churcharmy.org

YOUNG PEOPLE AND SELF-HARM

Mental health disorders among children and young people aged 7–16 have skyrocketed by 33% since 2017. The situation is even more alarming for individuals aged 17–19, with the number of those suffering from mental health problems more than doubling.* These troubling statistics also reflect a surge in self-harm cases. The need for help has never been so desperate and that's where Church Army steps in. The Amber Project, in Cardiff, offers specialist support to young people between 14 and 25 who have experienced self-harm. The Constellation element of the project helps young people between 12 and 25 who are trans, non-binary or exploring their gender identity. Without the specialist help of the Amber Project, young people would continue to suffer, feel unheard, overlooked and misunderstood. The project needs expert staff and Tim Crahart is the new Operations Manager guiding the Amber Project.

Meet Tim

worked for Church Army back in the 1990s at Ty Bronna, when it was called Danescourt House. I'd recently qualified as a teacher and I was a part-time relief worker, doing evening and weekend shifts. One evening shift, we had a young person come to the door. They were homeless, distressed and had nowhere to turn. We helped them find a place to stay and made sure they got there safely, but the events that night changed something in my heart. I knew I wanted to help more young people in that situation and for me, that was the turning point - I realised teaching wasn't really for me.

Since then, I've worked in many different roles, mostly helping young people facing difficult challenges.

When the opportunity to work at the Amber Project came up, it really resonated with me. Working with young people is my passion and to be able to help those struggling with issues like gender identity or self-harm within a faith-based organisation is a wonderful opportunity.



We provide person-centred support to vulnerable young people and we offer a range of support services, including counselling, practical support, music lessons, creative groups and a theatre workshop. A lot of the young people we see have faced traumatic events and a lot of rejection, isolation and loneliness, and some experience a lot of tension in the family home. Some are at risk of losing their lives and suffer abuse. That's why it's so important for the Amber Project to be a safe, warm, welcoming place where they can be themselves and access the support they need. Unlike other services, there is no time limit or specific number of support services or sessions a young person can access at Amber. We are here to offer help long term.

The need for our services is increasing as we see more and more young people battle mental health issues. Prior to lockdown, the Amber Project was receiving an average of 200 referrals per year. In 2022, this soared to 264, which has put enormous pressure on our services and on our capacity to offer support. Since I started in support work, I've seen much higher levels of anxiety in young people and the need to access mental health services has increased dramatically. In my experiences through work and as a parent myself, I have seen the extreme amount of pressure on young people today and the challenges they face at home, school and socially. It's unprecedented, and often they are not given the tools they need to deal with these difficulties.



As well as providing professional help, we want to enable young people to meet others who are facing similar struggles and to make friends in a safe, comfortable environment where they can talk freely and openly and begin to eliminate some of the feelings of rejection and loneliness they so often experience.

It's incredible to see the difference in some of the young people as they grow in confidence and begin to flourish after beginning their journey with the Amber Project. Often, some will be shy, scared and reluctant to open up for fear of rejection or judgement, which they have so often faced before. However, after a while, with our help, they lower their guard and begin to trust the staff and volunteers, engaging in workshops and activities. As they gradually get to know themselves and make friends, they find their voice and lose the shackles of previous judgment and trauma. Many go on to perform on stage in front of an audience with the theatre workshop. The transformation is magnificent.

"Amber to me is a community where everyone is welcome no matter what. Everyone is friendly and kind. What I've gained the most from Amber is confidence, as I joined right after my lowest point in life, when I couldn't even do mundane things like go outside or go to the shop without feeling uncomfortable. However, after my time at Amber, I am proud to say that I am comfortable in my own skin and can walk outside proudly with my head held high."







"Amber Project! I honestly think I'd be lost without it. During Covid, my mental health declined rapidly. Even though I had my parents and a few friends, it became harder and harder to deal with my emotions. Thanks to the Amber Project, I've been able to get out of my comfort zone and go to extraordinary lengths in life."

Fordan



- Pray that young people who feel they have nowhere to turn are able to find help and support.
- Pray that the young people in the project feel welcome and accepted.
- Pray that those who are struggling are able to see a future for themselves.
- Pray that staff at the project feel supported and encouraged.
- Pray for continued support and resources for the project so that this valuable, life-saving work can continue into the future.

CHURCH ARMY NEW ZEALAND



This week is the start of Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday and ending on Holy Saturday. As Christians this is a perfect time to reflect, repent and prepare for the celebration of Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday. As a way to deepen their relationship with God, many people often practice fasting during this time while others may participate in daily prayer and refocus on their faith.

Church Army offers various materials, such as study guides and prayer prompts to help people engage with the Lenten season in a meaningful way and equipping individuals to serve their communities through acts of kindness and love. We also offer a number of resources and training for people to explore faith and become involved in ministry throughout the year. But did you know that these resources reach people right across the globe? Our Faith Empowered resource has recently been delivered to our partners in Church Army New Zealand, we spoke to Monika Clark, National Director of Church Army New Zealand.

Meet Monika

vangelism is our focus here at Church Army New Zealand. We want to train people and develop their evangelistic skills for them to help others follow Christ. We equip churches, faith groups and individuals and the resources from Church Army UK and Ireland helps to enable us to do that. We are a small team, with the majority of our people being volunteers and we are working hard to develop fresh expressions of church which is relatable for local people. We equip people to go and pursue ministries in areas they feel passionate about and help

them to make their traditional churches more effective and



can enable us to reach people in different ways, we can train people to use their giftings effectively to make disciples out of people in their contexts. We need to embrace the diversity, different ways of doing things, different approaches in different areas.

As Paul says: 'I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some' (1 Corinthians 9:22 (NIV)).

Having access to the Church Army resource Faith Empowered has been incredible. We are so grateful. It is perfect for us and enables us to empower others to make disciples of people in their own contexts. It is a wonderful tool and I would encourage others to explore it.'

To find out more about Church Army New Zealand you can visit their website at: www.canz.kiwi

To find out more about Church Army resources - visit: www. churcharmy.org/growing-faith



- Pray for the work of Church Army New Zealand, that their development of evangelists grows and flourishes
- PRAYER Pray for the staff and volunteers of Church Army New Zealand, that they may feel encouraged and supported in their work
- Pray for Church Army members, staff and evangelists across the world that they feel a continued sense of belonging and inspiration to spread the love of God
- Pray for each person reflecting and praying throughout the period of Lent, that they may feel a renewed sense of God's unconditional and unwavering love

EVANGELISTS IN TRAINING

In September 2023, eight wonderful, new Evangelists-in-Training (EiTs) began their journey with Church Army. We had the joy of introducing you to some of them in the last edition of CA inFocus. Now, we're delighted to introduce the rest of the cohort, who are all gifted individuals and will be following God's calling on their heart and developing their unique evangelistic skills with Church Army over the next three years.

ANJELA JONES

Anjela lives in Dewsbury and is married with four grown-up children, a granddaughter and a much-loved family dog. Anjela worked as a bus driver in the past, and she's put this valuable skill to use with the local Destination 211 bus ministry. The bus visits local council estates, where the team talk to local families about Jesus and engage in arts and crafts.



GAIL SOUTHGATE

Gail lives in Aldringham, Suffolk, where she's an Evangelist at the Suffolk Centre of Mission. She's a member of the lona community and is married to her husband, Stephen. Gail helps people engage with CA resources, such as Faith Questions, and she co-leads a local missional group called Pilgrims Together. Gail has a passion to reach out to communities with creative initiatives, with the aim of finding new ways to touch hearts.



NIC HARRIS

Nic lives with her husband, Tim, in Rochdale. She's an Evangelist at our Centre of Mission, where her work focuses on children and families on the Cray, Belfield and Firgrove estates. Nic is passionate about seeing the transformative love of God at work in the lives of people in her local community and helping people to grow and develop personally and in their faith.



EVANGELIST TRAINING WEEKEND

"On the weekend of 15-17 September, we hosted our first training weekend of the academic vear at WCC. We welcomed seven final-year EiTs, nine second years and eight first years. Our weekends are made up of six teaching sessions, times of gathered worship and prayer, times of fellowship over meals and lots of laughter! We also have a workshop on the Saturday afternoon, and this weekend we were delighted to welcome Andy Milne CA from Missional Youth Church Network. He helped all the EiTs consider how they can raise up other evangelists and leaders from within their mission/ministry contexts. Our worship theme for the weekend was 'come as you are', and this provided a wonderful, welcoming space for new and returning students. It was lovely to be with the whole training community as we got to know the new EiTs and formed new friendships. We are looking forward to the next weekend already!"

Beth Burras, Formation Lead and Tutor

- Pray that God will continue to shape our new EiTs as pioneer evangelists, and that they would start to feel at home in Church Army.
- PRAYER Pray that the new EiTs would get to know each other well and start building good relationships with their fellow EiTs in years two and three.
- Pray that, as they start their learning journey with us, the new EiTs would learn how to balance their new studies, their evangelism in their home contexts and their personal and family lives.
- Pray that they would establish good habits to allow them to find time for rest and recreation.
- Pray that the first-year EiTs would be open to new learning that connects faith in Christ with personal discipleship, the church and the world.
- Some of our EiTs start their training anxious about doing formal learning and assignments, often after a long time away from study. Pray that God would heal any anxieties, and that these EiTs would learn to trust in their own abilities.

TACKLING LONELINESS

Our Centre in North Coast Wales, in partnership with the Diocese of St Asaph, serves the market town of Abergele and nearby Pensarn, with over 11,000 residents. The area is predominantly made up of retirement bungalows and privately rented flats, and there are a number of vulnerable residents. The number of retirees in the area is significantly higher than the national average in Wales. While retiring by the seaside may sound idyllic, it often results in feelings of isolation, loneliness and depression. Many people find themselves living far from their extended family, with limited amenities nearby. This creates a challenge for older residents to connect with their neighbours and for vulnerable individuals to find acceptance and a sense of belonging.

But there is hope. Church Army's Jo Leslie is dedicated to building a community and helping local people become an integral part of it. Jo and a team of volunteers are striving to create a welcoming and inclusive environment where everyone can find connection and support.

Meet Jo

lot of people come to this area to retire. Often, they will have been here on holiday in younger days and thought it would make a lovely retirement spot. But leaving family and friends can be difficult, and making new friends is a challenge when you're no longer in a work environment. Retirement can take away a lot of opportunities to be in a community. There's a block of flats in the area, too, which is incredibly run down, and a lot of the people placed there suffer from

mental health issues or may be recovering from addiction. The flats are not really fit for purpose and can leave a lot of the

residents struggling even more.

There's a lot of loneliness and isolation here. Many people who retire to the area come as a couple and live quite independently, but, sadly, if one of them dies, it can leave the other person alone and with no connections to the local area or other people. Tragically, several older residents have taken their own lives, which is incredibly sad. The loneliness and isolation are just too much for some to bear. It's very much a hidden problem that people don't often talk about, but it's one we want to highlight and

help with. Loneliness and isolation are difficult for anyone, and we know they contribute to mental and physical health problems, too. We want to build a community and help local people build relationships with one another.

The King's Table is one of the initiatives I've launched to fight loneliness and isolation. Once a week, we serve a free community meal, to which all the local residents are welcome. We eat together, which helps create friendships and gives people something to look forward to. There are a number of volunteers who help with the preparation, and many of them are struggling with their own vulnerabilities. The King's Table gives them a focus and a sense of acceptance and belonging. It also helps with the cost-of-living crisis, which is affecting many of the people here. The project is going from strength to strength, and we're seeing weekly numbers increase. which is wonderful. Maybe more importantly, we're seeing friendships form and a number of people are meeting up during the week and enjoying each other's company. Community is being created.

"There's not a lot of positivity going around, but the King's Table is such a good thing. It makes my day coming here."

"There's not a lot of positivity going around, but the King's Table is such a good thing. It makes my day coming here."

- Pray that the worshipping community in North Coast Wales would grow and that new people would engage with faith.
- MERRILLE Pray that the Centre of Mission continues to provide spaces that welcome everyone and that the community would experience the love of Christ.
- Pray that our volunteers would be strengthened and that new volunteers would be inspired to join.
- Pray that the residents in the local flats feel welcome and able to connect with the Centre of Mission.

THE LATEST FROM THE MARYLEBONE PROJECT

The Marylebone Project is the largest women's hostel in the nation. With 112 bedrooms, we provide a safe haven for women who have bravely escaped unimaginable hardships. The Sanctuary element of the project is the only 24/7, 365-day drop-in centre for women experiencing homelessness. Here, they can access vital services and receive the help they desperately need.

Our residents come from a diverse range of backgrounds, each with their own complex story. Many have escaped the clutches of horrific domestic abuse, while others are refugees who have tragically become separated from their families. Many have experienced the hardships of rough sleeping.

We believe that every woman deserves to know God's unconditional love and realise their infinite value. We're committed to providing essential practical and emotional support so that every woman who walks through our doors can embark on a path of healing and empowerment.

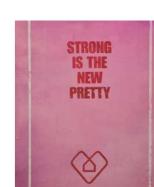
With your ongoing support, we can continue to create change and support these incredible women on their journey to reclaiming their lives.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Join us in celebrating the incredible achievements of the remarkable women who recently completed our educational classes, which we commemorated with an unforgettable graduation ceremony. From learning English from scratch, to mastering sewing and gaining qualifications in food hygiene and computer skills, these ladies have acquired invaluable skills for their future. But it's not just about the skills; the women themselves have described how this journey has given them confidence, camaraderie, empowerment and a sense of belonging and safety. We can't wait to see what wonderful things they will accomplish. Congratulations!

STRONG IS THE NEW PRETTY

London-based contemporary artist Fern Young created a magnificent piece of art that was displayed as part of the Urban Impressions Exhibition at the Yield Gallery in London. The piece will be sold by auction, with all proceeds going directly to the Marylebone Project, helping to empower women to end their cycle of homelessness and live full, independent lives.



BECOMING FAMILY AND CHANGING LIVES

"My name is Mimi, and 35 years ago, I arrived in London from my home in Ethiopia. I arrived with my sister, and we both lived here at the Marylebone Project for four years. I can't forget this place; it was like a family, and it meant everything to me. At the time, Sister Pertini took care of us. This place helped me make a new life for myself. It's very difficult to express my thanks because this place means so much. It gave me my life."

Now, Mimi is a strong, independent woman who works as an admin officer. Her sister, who was also a resident, is now the manager of a bank. We are so proud to have been an integral part of Mimi's journey.

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

We aim to provide our women with not only a place safe from abuse, trauma and the dangers of homelessness but also with somewhere they can call home. It might not be a permanent home or final home, but it is a place of security and love. While we help our residents into independent living. we want each of them to feel at home while they are here.

"I like it - I like everything here. I like the people, and they are so nice to me." Doreen (resident)

"I'm happy to be here... Having somewhere safe to stay is important to me." Frewouni (resident)

- Pray that each woman who comes to the Marylebone Project will feel it is a place to call home where they are welcome and safe, for however long they are there
- PRAYER MEDRICA Pray that each woman at the project will feel empowered and encouraged to celebrate each personal achievement and milestone as they begin to gain confidence and develop a sense of their own self-worth
- Pray for each woman at the project to feel and grow in understanding of God's unending and unconditional love for them
- Pray for more people to be inspired to support the work of the Marylebone
- Project and for existing supporters to understand how valued they are
- Pray for continued compassion, resilience and strength for staff and volunteers at the project

3 MARCH - 9 MARCH

CA TRAINING TEAM

In each edition of CA inFocus, we like to introduce you to some of the hidden heroes at the Wilson Carlile Centre in Sheffield. These people diligently support our mission of sharing God's love with everyone. Working alongside our passionate Evangelists and front-line workers across the UK and Ireland, each of these teams is integral to the work of Church Army.

MEET THE TRAINING TEAM

Our exceptional training team is made up of experienced practitioners and theological educators. Their role is to guide and mentor our Evangelists-in-Training (EiTs), providing them with a comprehensive understanding of evangelism theory and practice while nurturing their existing skills and developing new ones. Each tutor is assigned to provide individualised support and guidance to a specific group of EiTs. Our tutors specialise in creating innovative worshipping communities, Fresh Expressions of church and so much more. Additionally, our team is backed by dedicated administrators and a librarian, who play pivotal roles in delivering our training program.

DAVID SCHANNEN

Tutor

David is responsible for teaching modules, including Mission and Evangelism. He's also responsible for coordinating chaplains at the EiT training weekends.

117 RENTIFY

Liz is the Librarian at the theological library at WCC, which houses over 15,000 theological books, journals and articles. Along with helping library members access materials (members of the public can join the library), Liz also helps our EiTs with finding the correct learning materials.

JO SPINK

Jo is one of the team administrators. She arranges travel, accommodation and conferencing for the EiTs and their training events.



ALAN WILLIAMSON

Regional Training Lead and Tutor

Alan is responsible for developing training in Ireland.

FIII WNRT

Elli is the Head of Initial Training and oversees the training of the EiTs.

TIM WOOLLEY

Tim is Module Lead and Tutor. He's responsible for the delivery and evaluation of the teaching modules.

ANDREW WOODING

Administrator Andrew looks after the online learning hub for the EiTs and provides learning resources for training weekends.

BETH BURRAS

Formation Lead & Tutor

Formation Lead and Tutor, Beth oversees the development and formation of the EiTs, enabling them to reflect on their growth.

MEL HARTLEY

Also pictured is the Revd Mel Hartley, who left her role as Tutor in December 2023 to become a pioneer priest in the Peak Deanery



- As we enter a new academic year, please pray for energy and inspiration for the whole training team, both in teaching and administrative work.
- Pray that the training team would keep listening to and learning from God as they seek to form our EiTs into effective evangelists for our Centres of Mission and the wider church.
- Pray that the tutors would get to know all their new EiTs well and that good relationships would be built.
- Pray that our tutors would keep reflecting on their teaching and learning practice, living out our values and formational principles as reflective practitioners.

10 MARCH - 16 MARCH

YOUNG PEOPLE EXPLORING FAITH

County Sligo, in the picturesque northwest of Ireland, is home to our Sligo Centre. This innovative partnership between CA and the Diocese of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh encompasses the town of Sligo and other local communities. With a population of over 70,000, and seeing an impressive 7% growth since 2016, it's a diverse area with an impressive tapestry of 67 different languages spoken by its residents.* The youth population is increasing, creating growing demand for dedicated services. Answering this call are our passionate Evangelists, Alan and Hannah, who are working to create a welcoming environment for spiritual growth and a community committed to providing joy and a relevant space for faith exploration.

Meet Alan & Hannah

ur base is just outside Sligo town centre. It's a great location in between a lot of the local schools, but we also cover a much larger area. We have been developing relationships with the local schools, which has been going well. God has given us some wonderful opportunities to work within the local secondary schools running Youth Alpha courses. We are running courses for the transition years in each school, meaning we will be engaging with around 220 young people

throughout the year, which is incredible. Last year, we ran the

course on an opt-in basis. It went so well that each school asked us to run it for the entire year group. It's gone a bit crazy but in a brilliant way. We provide snacks and drinks so that the young people get the whole experience of eating together while discussing all the big questions. We now need to work out how we'll support the growth of the courses financially.

We recently joined a recruitment day in one of the schools so that pupils could see what Alpha is about before the groups start. They invited some of last year's attendees to share their experiences, which could not have gone better.



One of the girls, who described herself as coming from an atheist family, told everyone, "You should really go along, even if you don't believe in God still go because it's a safe, welcoming space, and you can ask any questions and discuss your thoughts and feelings, and they are really welcoming." It was so encouraging to hear her talk about us in such a positive way and to know that she had taken so much from our time together. She later told us, "Even though I haven't grown up in a faith family, I can see there's a place for me in church." To know that she recognises that church community is a place to belong means we have shown her God's love, and that's amazing.

Recently, we started some youth and children's ministry in the seaside town of Bundoran, not far from Sligo. It's a tourist spot during summer, so we were expecting some children who were there on holiday to join in, but we were overjoyed when it was mostly local children who came along. We want to try to work on some long-term initiatives in the area to continue those relationships and help them grow. There hasn't been any children's ministry in Bundoran for over 30 years, but clearly God is taking us there now.

*Central Statistics Office 2023

- Pray that each woman who comes to the Marylebone Project will feel it is a place to call home where they are welcome and safe, for however long they are there
- PRAYER INFIRIE Pray that each woman at the project will feel empowered and encouraged to celebrate each personal achievement and milestone as they begin to gain confidence and develop a sense of their own self-worth
- Pray for each woman at the project to feel and grow in understanding of God's unending and unconditional love for them
- Pray for more people to be inspired to support the work of the Marylebone
- Project and for existing supporters to understand how valued they are
- Pray for continued compassion, resilience and strength for staff and volunteers at the project

HOLY WEEK REFLECTION



Holy Week is one of those periods in the Christian calendar that can evoke deep emotions within us. Reflecting on the events that Jesus and his disciples went through in that week, some may be overwhelmed by both sorrow and joy. On Palm Sunday, the disciples experienced an extraordinary moment. Leaving behind their lives to follow Jesus had been a tremendous leap of faith, and witnessing the reception He received as He rode into Jerusalem on a young donkey would surely have filled them with a sense of accomplishment and excitement. It was a time of celebration and exuberance as the people recognised Jesus as the Messiah, the Saviour, the Son of God.

Yet, amid this jubilation, we might think about Jesus himself. Did He also experience contrasting emotions? Was there a tinge of sorrow, knowing He would be betrayed by someone He loved? Did He feel dismayed when his friend denied knowing Him? Was He tempted to fear in His heart as He faced the impending crucifixion? But was He also filled with the triumph of fulfilling His Father's will and the joy that His sacrifice would save us?

hat's striking is the immense strength and determination displayed by Jesus. Despite being divine, He experienced human emotions and persevered with unwavering courage. He knew that God would never lead Him towards something that was not ultimately good. He understood that God's will is always right. That was true for Jesus as He walked the hill to Calvary bearing the cross He would die on, and it's also true for us as believers following in His footsteps.



Finally, contemplating the crucifixion, let's put ourselves in the place of the disciples. Imagine standing at the foot of the cross, looking up at Jesus, devastated by the betrayal, the sorrow, the pain. The disciples undoubtedly felt scared and uncertain, feeling as though they now faced a future without their leader and the one in whom they had placed their hope. The impact of the crucifixion is indescribable, but the realisation that Jesus would have willingly died on the cross even if you were the only person in the world, so

that you could have a relationship with God, should fill us with a profound sense of love. Such is the depth of God's love for me, for each of us.



- Pray that each of us, when faced with adversity and doubt, will be filled with certainty that God loves us and that His will is right and good.
- Pray for each of us to feel inspired to share the Good News with those yet to know Jesus.
- Pray that those who feel far from God will have renewed faith this Holy Week.
- Pray and give thanks to God for his constant mercy, endless forgiveness and unconditional love.



PEOPLE & PLACES





And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Ephesians 6:18

Welcome to People & Places. In this section of inFocus, you will see the names and locations of our Evangelists and staff members listed daily for your prayerful support. Each person is listed against a day of the month. Please pray for them on that day on each of the next three months (e.g., 1st of January, February, March).

Church Army is made up of people across the whole of the UK and Ireland. We have Commissioned Evangelists, Pioneers in Centres of Mission, national staff working in the background and many more in between - all engaged in different ways to see hope and light enter the lives of everyone who is yet to encounter God.

As a charity that trains and releases Evangelists to follow their calling, we do not always know about the work they are all currently involved in. As such, please pray daily for these incredible people however they are engaged in their calling of building the Kingdom.

The following are five categories for people mentioned in People & Places. You may find the following guide helpful as you pray for each individual.

- Commissioned Evangelist
- Commissioned Evangelist (retired)
- ▲ Evangelist-in-Training
- CA Mission Community Member
- Staff





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Church Army is a registered charity in England & Wales 226226, Scotland SC040457 and the Republic of Ireland 20152604. A Company Limited by Guarantee, registered in England and Wales No. 37169; Company Branch registered in the Republic of Ireland No. 909766, Church Army (Ireland), Recentre Community Church, Sligo Centre of Mission, 3 Mail Coach Road, Sligo, F91 FK23.



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