



# WINTER NEWSLETTER

Feb 2025

## HORSFORTH CHAPLAINCY PROJECT



### Welcome to our winter newsletter!

We look back at the last 6 months **with grateful hearts** for the 'good hand of the Lord' on us in many ways - do have a read of our highlights and updates, and don't miss **the encouraging story** of one young person's journey on page 2!

As we **look forward** to the next few months, please pray particularly that volunteer bid-writers would be successful in **gaining funding** to enable Laura to continue with us beyond May, and that new people will come forward with **fresh imagination and wisdom** for the **large events** as Duncan seeks to make room for others to take the lead on some of these events this year.

## Highlights

### Mayor opens Pantry



We were all delighted to welcome the **Lord Mayor of Leeds, Councillor Abigail Marshall Katung** to officially open **Horsforth Community Pantry** on 24th October. As **Food Champion** for Leeds, it was clear to see her genuine interest and enthusiasm for the work as she **engaged warmly** with everyone, took a great interest in the work and spoke of her own involvement in Little London Community Pantry. It was a **great celebration** of this essential community asset, which is helping even more people every week.

### Award won by Town of Sanctuary



The untiring work of our own **Horsforth Town of Sanctuary** was suitably recognised recently when they won the **prestigious Jo Cox Award** at Leeds Council's **Compassionate City Awards** ceremony on 5th December. This wonderful accolade highlights the ongoing contributions made by the **many volunteers** and the **asylum seekers** themselves, as they work together to run activities and practical support, **foster integration** and **raise awareness** in the community.

### Over 800 at Carols in the Park



Thankful for the better weather this year, the well-oiled team swung into action, and the result was a very successful **Carols in the Park** event; many felt there was a **wonderful atmosphere** as an estimated **more than 800 people** gathered to enjoy singing well-known carols and listen to a **short service of blessing** led by Jonathan Cain, ably accompanied by the Stroke of Genius Band. It's a sure **sign of success** when you run out of drinks and glowsticks!



One thing I love about my job is the **number of people** I get to meet, and one thing that frustrates me the most is how I struggle to remember names. God thankfully **knows everyone by name** and knows everything about each person we encounter in our work. I want to celebrate **the work we do in Schools** which allows us to **teach a Bible story** to over 2100 children each half term in 7 Primary schools, engage 300 yr 4 children in the **real Christmas Story** at Rewind, and deliver a **Christmas assembly** to 1400 children in the High School; it is fantastic to welcome 800 people to the **Farmers Market** each month and be encouraged by the **large numbers** coming to celebrate Christmas at Carols in the Park, or Easter at the Walk of Witness; but **most of all** I celebrate when I hear of the one who has **been touched and changed by Jesus** - stories like the one below, which warm my heart.



## A Young Person's Journey

Spotlight Story!

'I first started going to the **'Connect' group** at Horsforth School in year 8. It's a **safe haven**, a place to have a break from the pressures of school life and just be myself. Somewhere we can vocalise our thoughts and **learn together** about Christianity. School can be a difficult environment where you feel pressured into stuff which isn't God's best and so those friendships at Connect are **really important**.

From Connect, I got invited to **'The Worship Room'**, a night of just worship. I wasn't sure at first but was encouraged to keep going and even asked to **read a scripture** John 1:1-18. I was so nervous but after I'd read it I felt **really encouraged**. I've learnt to relax and just let myself **worship God**, to lift up my hands in praise and kneel down in worship and I've **experienced God's presence** in wonderful ways.

I really thirst for the **fellowship of other Christians** and so I went to Cragg because it was my nearest church. Everyone was very welcoming and let me be myself, it just **feels like home**. I was invited to help **play in the worship band** which was the scariest thing ever, but I have **grown in confidence** with the help of others encouraging me and I now just want to **use my gift** to help others worship God and know Him.

My prayer is that God would **reveal what he wants me to do** and that he would raise up my generation to be **full of faith** and help lead the church into the future.'



We were delighted that our **new MP Katie White** joined us at the **Farmers' Market** for our 12th Birthday celebration. The market now needs **2 new volunteers** to enhance the team - do spread the word!

**JOIN OUR TEAM**

**Call out for 2 New Volunteers!**

**We are looking for:**

- **Social Media Volunteer**
- **Organiser Volunteer**

**Would you like to join our friendly team?**

## Looking Forward

Here are a few important things to pray for:

- for Duncan's 'events sabbatical' in 2025 - for **new people to come forward** with fresh imagination and wisdom for events such as the Gala and Carols in the Park
- for Easter events: **Rewind to Easter** and **Walk of Witness**
- for **more funding** to be found to continue Laura's post beyond May, when the current grant ends
- For more **young people** to be inspired to follow Jesus & get involved in shaping our community mission

Helping Horsforth Flourish



## Walking with People Seeking Sanctuary

I am immensely proud of Horsforth Town of Sanctuary for **receiving the Compassionate City Award**. I see the love and welcome which people in Horsforth give to new people seeking sanctuary firsthand in my role as Refugee Support Worker. I praise God for the **generosity and care** given by all the volunteers from the local community and people who are seeking sanctuary themselves. Many support their peers in the hotel, often people they have only known for days or weeks.



Since the change in government, there have been **more and quicker decisions** by the Home Office on people's asylum claims. While this is good, it has brought both **changes and challenges**. We have celebrated with many men at the hotel when they received their leave to remain in the UK and could move on with their lives; but this also means goodbyes, plus many people facing **homelessness**, as finding housing as a refugee is very difficult, especially as they only have 2 months to do this. All our volunteers have been amazing at **walking alongside people** at the same time as welcoming new men at the hotel.

Seeing people face discrimination and

## Raising Awareness

these challenges leads me to **ask God for justice** and to seek to raise awareness even more. Our brilliant volunteers who have lived experience of seeking asylum have **bravely shared their stories** at local churches, at the Leeds Playhouse, with children in a local primary school and with the student parliament at Horsforth High School. In response, many people **got involved by donating** Christmas gifts and clothing, and school children made over 100 hand-made Christmas cards with messages of welcome. We would also love for more people in our local community and in Leeds to become hosts with the charity **Refugees at Home** or consider taking lodgers so that refugees at risk of homelessness can get housing more easily.



## Volunteering and Inclusion



We organised 4 **football tournaments** at a local school, with men seeking sanctuary and local football players playing together. This led to a few young men starting regular training and matches with a local 5-a-side team. Others have enjoyed **joining in with local events** like Horsforth Apple Day and Perfectly Pitched concerts, and have **volunteered** their time at Horsforth Community Cafe, painting a church hall, and at Carols in the Park. As a project we have **worked more closely** with the council and other charities in Leeds to support volunteering opportunities, access to English classes and to include the voice of people seeking sanctuary to improve local services.

We also continue to **be grateful for** your

## Practical Support and Events

generous donations! Some people arrive at the hotel with only the clothes they are wearing and in the past 6 months we gave clothes, shoes and bags to **over 200 newly arrived people**. At our weekly English conversation club our volunteers create a space where people **feel welcome and able to ask for help** - for example we have provided phones and SIM cards, taught people the English alphabet, talked about human rights and given support with their asylum claim. Our **monthly Sanctuary Socials** at St Margaret's Church have involved rich conversation, delicious food, frisbee, dancing, musical chairs, bowls, a summer evening walk and Christmas bingo - and **you're invited** to join the fun!



*To get involved in any aspect please email Laura on [laura@horsforthchaplaincy.org](mailto:laura@horsforthchaplaincy.org) Thank you!*

Helping Horsforth Flourish



## A Sign of Communications Success?

In noticing the **website stats** recently I was pleasantly surprised to see a **year on year increase** in views, including a significant increase this last year!

Hopefully that means the regular work of **updating** each week, **making images** that convey information effectively, and **sending links** in mailings, has paid off in terms of establishing the HCT website as a **useful source of information**, meaning the messages have a wider reach and lots more people are **keeping up-to-date, involved and connected** (the real aim of communication).



## Horsforth Community Pantry

I have continued to **really enjoy** my monthly slots helping at Horsforth Community Pantry with the lovely core team (here I am with 2 of them - Maria and Sharon). It is a busy time, but **wonderful to chat** with those that come to shop, and to **be a practical part** of ensuring food that would have gone to waste is made available to those who need a bit of extra help, in a way that gives them **choice, dignity and support**.



It was also fantastic to **celebrate together** what has been achieved at the official opening with the Lord Mayor of Leeds Councillor Abigail in October. From January the organisational side began to **be transferred** from HCAP (Claire Evans) to St James' volunteers (Ruth Dent and others), with the core team continuing as it was. Please pray this will **continue to go smoothly** and work well for all involved.

## Development, Designs & Documents

The rest of my time has been spent on - **meeting with Laura** to support her in her work and development, - **designing new items** such as the Farmer's Market replacement banners, various leaflets & a webpage about Town of Sanctuary, and - **drawing up useful documents** such as a Volunteer Agreement, draft Constitution for HCT, and checking a Memorandum of Understanding, as well as being a part of **negotiating changes** in the running of the Refugee Work and continuing to liaise with our Steering Group members. All necessary **background work!**

## Our Support

We are deeply grateful to the many people who **give generously** to the Project, without which we would not be able to function. Currently approximately 80 % of our core income comes from individuals who give **monthly or one-off donations**, (apart from the time-limited Refugee Support Role which is currently funded by a grant from Leeds City Council until May 2025).



To support us, **scan the QR Code** for easy online giving, or for **other options** see our webpage: [horsforthchurchestogether.co.uk/horsforthchaplaincyproject/](https://horsforthchurchestogether.co.uk/horsforthchaplaincyproject/). Or simply **email Duncan** on the email below. **Thank you!**

With **many thanks** from all of us at Horsforth Chaplaincy Project:  
**The Steering Group:** Peter Mawson, Rozel Daltrey, Jo Bailey, Jane Linley, Pete Gillions,  
and **The Staff Team:** Duncan, Rhoda and Laura

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