

Ruth Sayers

Link Letter no. 43 | December 2021

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The call in action

Dear friends,

Christmas, here we come! Is this going to be a normal Christmas, whatever that is? Way back 2000 years ago, Christmas was hardly normal. Events happened that changed the world and continue to do so. A baby who became a Saviour, a belief that shaped faith and most significantly, we were shown our place in the world. This year in Plymouth has been far from normal. The events that hit the communities here included COVID and all that came with that, and the effects of the Keyham shootings have been felt across the city.

COVID, school and work club

We have all felt the change as we have opened up after lockdowns. As governor of a local school, I have witnessed the struggles of opening up and the wave of COVID cases in the staff which means that parts of the school have had to close for several weeks. This pandemic is not over and the issues with education will continue for many months, even years to come. Riverside Primary has done well in providing online support and has now opened up fully as a school while still intent on keeping children and staff safe. News hot off the press is that our head, Brian, has decided to retire. We will miss his leadership and the way that he coordinates the school community and maintains a high standard of teaching. As chair of governors, I now have the responsibility of leading a team to consider the new appointment. He will leave next July so there is time to do this.

COVID has also limited the opening up of libraries. At present, our local library is only open for two days a week and this has meant that the usual activities can't take place. The work club cannot meet in the library space at present and negotiations are taking place with the council to try and make this a possibility. Meanwhile, the work club has opened up at the local Salvation Army hall. This work club is held on a Thursday each week alongside a debt support service run by the Salvation Army. This is a different venue, and it will take time for the work club to re-establish itself there. After almost two years without being able to offer face-to-face support, it was exciting to meet colleagues and our first client after such a long time. During the pandemic our coordinator continued to work via the phone and has also been able to support people through the changes in the



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My call: A call to serve that has led me overseas and now in the UK
My role: Church worker in the community



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Work club 2021

benefits system. The negotiations continue as we plan to open the work club in St Aubyn's. Extra funding will be needed to keep both work clubs running, and also more volunteers.

Keyham shootings

A quiet area of Plymouth was suddenly front page news earlier this year. The events of the afternoon of 11 August devastated the community and many families who witnessed the events. It was an opportunity for the churches and local support organisations to rally and I was able to be part of a team offering support for a shattered community. Churches were open, not just for prayers and reflection, but for practical support and as a place where people could gather. We were able to support the police and other emergency services during this time and to deal with the overwhelming attention from the media. Being in the spotlight is an uncomfortable place but of course, and the effects of that day will continue for many months to come. Please continue to pray for those who have lost loved ones and for the community to heal and recover.

St Aubyn's 250th anniversary

St Aubyn's Church celebrated its 250th anniversary in September. This was a milestone for the church and the bishop came to be part of the celebrations. Despite the difficulties of holding events during COVID restrictions, people were able to come together to thank God for the past years and for St Aubyn's having been a place of worship for this amount of time. An exhibition was put together with local contributions and many memories were shared. A banner was made using the handprints of all those who are currently part of the church community. The church is seeking to use its facilities to create a community hub. While activities have been ongoing and during the pandemic, food programmes were able to operate, the church and library space has the potential for further development. Please pray that this can happen and that the church will become a place of activity and hope.

May God give us peace and hope this Christmastime.

Ruth



Photos from top to bottom: Poster for the window; St Aubyn's 250th anniversary; last year's Christmas tree

GOING FURTHER WITH CHURCH MISSION SOCIETY

We live in a violent world but CMS partners in Africa and across the globe are bringing change, hope and freedom to lives wrecked by war. You can help bring the peace of Christ to lives torn apart by conflict too. Find out more at churchmissionsociety.org/christmas2021

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If you would like to discuss your mailings with us or to receive this link letter on a regular basis, please email supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org or call 01865 787400

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