



Dear friends,

As the rest of the UK, Devonport is slowly opening up again. We have faced challenges around getting going again and finding things different. COVID has given a time to review and look at things in a new way. Here in Devonport, we have been able to open the work club in St Aubyn's library as before, and we have started running a food club. More about that to come. As I write this letter, COVID is still very prevalent. The hospitals in the area have more cases of COVID than even at the peak of the lockdowns. Schools are struggling to maintain staffing and the community is aware that this is not over yet.

Riverside Community Primary School

As chair of governors, much of my time in the last months has been coordinating and leading the process of appointing a new head teacher for the school. The current head teacher is retiring after a long and successful headship and in the current climate, replacing him is not an easy task. After two rounds of adverts and applications, a decision was made to implement our succession plan and appoint our deputy head for one year. She has accepted the position and we have put in place a structure for her support and for the staff to step into other management roles. This decision has the support of all staff and the local education authority, and I look forward to the next stage in the life of Riverside school.

As a school, we are still dealing with incidences of COVID, both in staff and pupils. It continues to be a challenge as there are fewer staffing agencies able to provide cover. Managing teaching due to absence is a problem but the school has continued to provide catch-up lessons for any who need it and to support staff who have been asked to take on extra duties due to absences.

Saying goodbye to a much-loved and respected head teacher will be hard. I would value your prayers for a smooth handover and for next September to be a positive progression for the school both in teaching and support for each child.

Work club

As I mentioned earlier, the work club is now back up and running in St Aubyn's Church. It has been a slow start and it will take time and effort to get



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My role: Church worker in the community



the numbers back to where we were before COVID. The need is just as great, but it feels different. There are jobs available, but many are for skilled workers. Some of our members are looking for unskilled work or would require specific training. We can help our members with writing CVs and provide general support to enable people to access benefits or funding that the government provides for things such as support for fuel payments. There is help available for those struggling with paying bills, and finding a way to access it is something we can help with.

New project!

After the success of the food programme that was offered during the lockdowns, Churches Together in Devonport felt that we needed to continue to support the community with access to food and more importantly, help tackle the isolation issues in some way. Three weeks ago, we started a food club, where people can join for £1, giving them access to food for a small cost. The food is provided through an organisation that collects goods from supermarkets and redistributes it to hubs around the county. We offer refreshments and a space for people to come and meet others as well as providing food if needed. This is a new venture, and we are looking forward to seeing how it develops. The food club is held alongside the work club on a Wednesday, so we are seeing this as supporting those looking for work and providing food alongside a place to socialise.

As things open fully, opportunities have come along. Our communities are facing the challenges of rising costs in all areas, just as the rest of the country. We need to pray for wisdom in responding to need and to do so in the right way and with the resources we have. We thank God that we are able to tackle some of the challenges people are facing and to encourage those we meet. Please pray for us as the work develops.

Thank you for your prayers and support for Devonport.

Ruth



Photos from top to bottom: An advert for the newly-started food club; food club supplies for distribution; ready to receive food club guests at St Aubyn's

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