

Spring Greetings from Bunyanland!!!



31st March 2017

Hall Supervisor, Natalie, a keen supporter of Tea & Talk

Tea & Talk

After a slow start, Tea & Talk has now begun to take off as a vehicle for the community to meet and chat. We currently average 11 people each week but, if everyone came along at once, we would meet over 20 people there. Friends are bringing along friends, and others are bringing along their partners, and new friends are being made – often bridging the generation gap. Our youngest member is almost 6 months old and our eldest is 72 years. Faith conversations are beginning and this venue is proving important in the building-up of 'belonging': this reflects a common theme reflected in the Bedford Deanery MAP, that is recognition that, in the 21st Century, many people 'belong' before they 'believe'.

There is some cross-pollination between Tea & Talk and Walk4Health, reflecting this stage of our ministry: "The second space (*of Mission Community*) is some kind of meeting point that is not explicitly Christian, but is shared territory created so that relationships can be deepened and issues explored." "When we meet people in two settings, not just one, our relationships become deeper." (*Starting, Assessing and Sustaining Pioneering Mission*, Steve Hollinghurst, Grove Ev101, page 21) "Relationships that are significant take time. One of the reasons our evangelism is often minimally effective is because we are more interested in rationally conveying a message than we are at truly getting to know people and letting them know us." *Organic Church – growing faith where life happens*; Neil Cole; Jossey-Bass; page 167)

Walk4Health, Great Denham

This group continues to attract new members – the latest being a couple of young professionals and an older grandmother, all looking to connect with their local community. Now with three leaders – and possibly a fourth in the pipeline – we have more opportunity for faith-based conversations as we literally walk alongside people: “Being incarnational means coming alongside people where they are.” (‘Pioneer Ministry in New Housing Areas’, Penny Marsh & Alison Boulton, Grove Ev113, p8)

The idea of ‘Third Tuesday lunches’, for those who enjoy the social side of Walk4Health but who can’t always manage the walk, has been well received, with seven people joining us – and our grace die - for our first one in March.

Both Walk4Health and Tea & Talk act as a vehicle to advertise other events that we are planning, reflecting the importance of our involvement in the community: “60% of respondents had heard about community activities from the church leader.” (‘Pioneer Ministry in New Housing Areas’, Penny Marsh & Alison Boulton, Grove Ev113, p6)



One such event coming up is a Sunrise Walk, beginning at 5.30am on Easter Sunday: this will be a short walk of around 40 mins, with a couple of reflections about the meaning of Easter, followed by breakfast in our home. Initial conversations about this have been met with a positive response, with three ladies – two of whom frequent Walk4Health and Tea & Talk - already committed to coming along. (We plan to follow this up with a Pentecost ‘walk and picnic’ in May.)

Baptisms

With the arrival of our new colleague, Rev Eric Lomax, baptisms within both estates feel like they have a new lease of life, reflecting the energy behind them. This is especially exciting for Suzette, who came to faith over twenty years ago through being a God-parent.

While always aware of our job description, reflecting on it recently has shown us an assumption within in it: that is, that the new estates are predominantly populated by

families and young children, and that our work would evolve around them. This has proven to be true only in part, with a large section of our work evolving around those over 50 years of age. (See Tea & Talk and Walk4Health.) Also, in our experience, most of the families on the estates need 'wrap-around-care', from around 7.30am to 6 pm: indeed, walking around the estates in school holidays, you would find it hard to believe that any children lived there at all.

That being said, with the new energy around baptisms, it is clear that there will be something evolving from this, even if what that will be is not clear at present.

Thank You!!!

You will notice some differences in this edition of Prayer-mail and this reflects the next stage in our ministry, with an increased focus on Spiritual Companionship. Within this journey we are supported by a lot of people and we would like to record our thanks to:

Our 'Monitoring Support Group'

Those who attend and pray for us at Table+

Rev Eric Lomax and other members of our local ministry team

Rev Lydia Humphries

The Church Wardens and various members of All Saints, Kempston and St. James', Biddenham

Our project's 'critical friend' (an experienced Pioneer Minister)

The Trustees and Treasurer of our BMO

Those who receive this Prayer-mail and/or those who pray for us regularly

Jim Weir (chair of Great Denham Parish Council)

Head-teachers of local schools and leader of local Children's Centres

& - last but not least – Our family and friends

(Do forgive our aging memories if we have forgotten anyone – rest assured you are in our hearts if not in our minds as we type this. 😊😊)

Please give thanks for:

* Tea & Talk

* Walk4Health

* Baptism opportunities

* Our positive relationship with Rev Eric Lomax & the congregations of All Saints and St. James'

* The guiding wisdom of our project's 'critical friend' who has come on board in recent months



* The support we get from all of those listed above (see Thank you!!!)

* The arrival of our latest grandchild – number six – ‘Eric David Kevin Maguire’ 😊 (This causes great confusion when we go around telling everyone that Eric has terrible wind! 😊)

Please continue to pray for:

- * Rev Eric Lomax, his wife, Liz, and their family, as they continue to settle into life in Bedford *and* as they mourn the loss of Eric’s father, who died in January
- * Further opportunities to use our giftings.
- * Tea & Talk: that it will continue to grow and offer us opportunities to further our ministry
- * Walk4Health and Third Tuesday lunches, as above
- * Opportunities occurring through baptisms across the new estates, including how and when it is appropriate to develop something from these
- * For us to continue to meet people in more than one setting, and that relationships and questions will deepen from that
- * For us to have more and more spiritual conversations with those around us, and pray also that we model attractive spirituality in our own lives
- * Our relationships with local schools and if and how they should develop
- * The spiritual battle that is becoming more apparent as relationships build
- * Conversation with the Wesleyan Holiness Church and their presence in Great Denham
- * Preparations for the Sunrise Walk on Easter Sunday
- * For us in general, in our lives and ministries
- * Any or all of the above information, as you feel led. Thank you once again! 😊 😊

We’ve had our ups-and-downs recently but, as we hope that you can pick-up from this mailing, we are very excited about the way things are developing locally. Praise God!

A collect for this stage of our ministry:

God our Father,
Whose family extends throughout the new estates
of Great Denham, West Kempston and beyond;
Help those that you have placed on those new estates
to use the gifts that you have given them,
that they might discover the work
that you are already doing in people’s hearts;
And equip them with patience, wisdom and courage
as they minister to your people, Face to Face;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Your support

Thank you so much for your continued support.

You may not know this but Church Army is a charity and, as Church Army officers, each year we commit to raising funds for them.

If you or your Church don’t currently support Church Army financially, but would like to, please contact us or email ess@churcharmy.org.uk quoting **ESS 2001 SMA**.

Contact details Tel: 01234 341912
Facebook: ‘Community Ministers at’ followed by ‘Great Denham’ or ‘West Kempston.’