

WONERSH CHURCH

Parish of Wonersh with Blackheath St John the Baptist

Celebrating Another Year Of Mission In Wonersh!

'Mission is primarily the work of God and we participate with God in what He is doing'

Following the Mission review a year ago, we committed to deepen and strengthen the relationship between our church and our Mission Partners. A busy year on, it is good to look back and review quite how much God has moved to enable us to do exactly that. Not everyone will be aware of the activities of the Mission Committee, however we meet regularly to pray for our partners, review and to strategically plan how best to connect with our partners. A key focus has been to improve our mission communications to you, the wider church community, by embedding mission in our church prayer life and newsletters. We have been fortunate to have met most of our partners at least once in Wonersh this year, which is quite a blessing when several of them are based in far continents. God has indeed been good and worked through us all. With this letter we want you to share in the blessings of all the mission activity that has occurred throughout 2016:

VIVA

We have been fortunate enough to have Mim speak to our church 3 times this year, each time building a clearer picture of the challenging mission field they work in, helping countless thousands of vulnerable children to a safer way of life. In early December we were privileged to host not just Mim, but also Faith, Susan and Julie from the Crane office (the name of the Viva hub in Kampala). Having heard, in church, updates about each of the strands of work they are involved in, we then had a joyful shared lunch in Lawnsmead, giving many of you an opportunity to speak in depth with our guests. For Susan and Julie it was their first visit to the UK – quite a shock for them considering the temperatures here were well below zero! Whilst they were here they undertook management training in Oxford and joined an international conference for agencies working with vulnerable children, all helping to safeguard Viva / Crane's sustainability far into the future. This last year has been a huge success story for the Education Project that has continued to win further funding from Dfid, due to its successes. Since the 'Wonersh Ladies' visit 3 years ago, Viva has enabled 2,300 girls to re-enter the primary school system and complete their education. Dfid will be using the project as a blueprint to be replicated in other countries. Not all the funding for this project has been provided by the British Government, with Viva being required to seek significant matched funding. Wonersh responded magnificently in our Autumn appeal, by raising a tremendous £10,862.50. As £50 enables a single girl to complete her catch up education, this means we have launched 217 girls back into the education system. A huge reason to give praise!

In addition to all of this, numerous members of our congregation have also been beavering away for Viva behind the scenes. Brenda Morley and family have been busy recording a library of stories, expertly edited by Ben Preston. This is a valuable resource for Viva and the schools, churches and orphanages they work with. Mary Thompson and her mother have been knitting countless blankets for new born babies and Kim Gibbs has put Viva in touch with a Guildford Education Consultancy that now sends 4 teachers to Viva annually, to support their learning programmes. Our prayers and blessings follow Thomas Gray who will shortly be flying out to Kampala to spend two months of his gap year working with Viva in their media team.

Ema and Viorel Tulpan

We were delighted that Viorel and Caleb were able to join us for our church away weekend in January. With honesty and humour, Viorel shared how he came to be a Christian whilst he was in the army and the challenges and joys that he encounters as a pastor in his rural community in central Romania. For many of us this was the first time we had considered the contrast of a Christian life in a country so recently having turned its back on communism. Our relationship with Viorel and Ema and their community is very important to them and when they returned in August as an entire family, Ema spoke passionately about how our prayer lifts them and gives them encouragement and strength to continue to build their Baptist community. The family has made some great friends within our church community over the years and Patsy was able to celebrate this with a BBQ at her house during their visit in August.

Charlotte R and World Horizons

WH works where there is no church yet, or where the church is underground or just beginning. Earlier in the year Debbie and Alex met with the director of WH UK, hearing about the development of their strategy, and in particular how they are working to improve relationships with churches like ours. Charlotte has recently been appointed as the new Short-Term Mission Placements Coordinator which involves receiving enquiries from people who are interested in going on short-term mission and working in a team to oversee the preparation, review and debriefing of trips. Charlotte is also still involved in leading worship at WH UK and is particularly keen to develop small group creative worship. In the last year, Charlotte visited 3 overseas teams to support them and/or lead worship. There are precious stories from Charlotte's travels about the encounters she has had with underground Christians. These are so encouraging and we would urge you to ask her about them face to face when she next visits us. We must give thanks that Charlotte has been able to buy a house in the last year and has taken root in her local community as well as the one where she works. We have been able to support Charlotte in prayer as she settles into her new home and have prayed over her work as she leads worship and encourages and trains people new to the mission field. We eagerly look forward to hearing her speak to us again on 2nd April.

Wonersh and Shamley Green Primary School

Wonersh Church has vibrant links with Wonersh and Shamley Green Primary School. Debbie regularly shares collective worship with the pupils and staff and is chair of the Governing Body. Our Open the Book team are also regular visitors to the school, re-enacting and bringing alive bible stories for the children. It is a great joy to see the influence that both Debbie and Sarah Rowden bring to the school community and joyful to see so many families from the school past and present an intrinsic part of our congregation. On Education Sunday in September, Headteacher, Tess Trewinard spoke about the rich history the school has had with the village and church over the decades and centuries and how God has been at the forefront of the children and staff's lives. This continues to this day, as He gives hope and love on what can often feel a very challenging educational horizon. The PCC awarded the school a gift of £5000 towards school funds last Spring, however, as a formal mission partner from 2016, they will receive a regular share of the annual mission budget from now on. One further blessing is that Wonersh and Shamley Green have forged links with Viva and will develop a partnership between pupils and staff from Wonersh and schools in Kampala.

YMCA Downlink

Brave Mike Hodges once again slept outside on a cold night for the 'Great Sleepeasy' raising a fantastic £900 for the Guildford branch of the YMCA, which helps over 10,000 young people and families across the south east. (For those of you eager to do the same, there will be an opportunity for you to join in the next Sleepeasy, on 24th March 2017, details at <http://www.ymcadlg.org>). Having had a long-term connection with the YMCA, this year has given us the opportunity to connect with new faces in the organisation and to re-energise our partnership. We were lucky enough to hear from Chas Walker, CEO of YMCA Downlink, in June when he spoke into the parable of the Good Samaritan and challenged us to think how we would have reacted in the same situation.

Debbie attended a launch in September about a new Mentoring programme and how local churches can fit closely with this, so we look forward to hearing more about our role in this as the year unfolds. Another exciting new project for the organisation is the expansion of Medway House from its existing 13 bedrooms to a 34 bedroom block, located near the centre of Guildford. Again, we will seek to find out how we can support this as the building project proceeds.

Bishop Sospeter

The Thursday congregation continues to grow in its support and links with Bishop Sospeter of Kibondo Diocese in Western Tanzania. In November Bishop Sospeter came to visit, joining a Thursday service where he was able to share the blessings and challenges of his Diocese. Evangelism and church planting are so successful that many new churches are being established. One major project this year is the completion of a health centre to help provide for growing local demands and the thousands of refugees from Burundi who are in two camps in the area.

Footsteps

John Wallis continues to be our link with Footsteps drop-in centre for the homeless in Guildford which serves up to 40 men and women each Sunday evening, offering them a meal and a warm, safe space to relax and socialise. A lunch and tea are also provided on Christmas Day. With donations made via Womersley Church's 'Big Card' and the retiring collection from our Crib Service, we were able to give them a total of £834.50 (which will amount to over £1000 with Gift Aid). Run entirely by volunteers, with a number from our own congregation, there is always an opportunity to offer help throughout the year.

And More ...

Summarised above are just some of the activities of the formal mission partnerships we have as a church, but it is by no means the limit of the mission that has taken place this year. We welcomed Simon Guillebaud who heads an organization called Great Lakes Outreach (Charlotte Hutchinson is a trustee of GLO and she and Mark are a great support for Simon and his family) which seeks to transform Burundi from the bottom to the top, meeting both spiritual and physical needs of people through God's love. This was not the first time Simon has spoken to us, but he always inspires and challenges us to action. Our continued prayers for protection are particularly needed for Simon and his family as they face very real threats for their safety. Anne Heine-Carmichael followed a dream to visit a Compassion project in Thailand, taking many gifts donated by members of the church. Nick Gray and Clive Couzens regularly go without sleep to patrol the streets of Guildford as Street Angels, coming to the aid of young and vulnerable young people after dark. Mission is not just restricted to the adults in our congregation. Bethany Ellis is currently helping refugees in Europe, and Josie Wakefield and Hermione Menges are hosting a fundraising quiz night in Lawnsmead to raise funds for their own chosen charities, including The Fountain Centre, Viva and SEN Ethiopia.

We hope you will agree that Mission is both alive and vibrant in our church community and with God's blessing in 2017 we will continue to have our eyes opened towards even more opportunities to serve Him in our local community and beyond.

The Mission Committee January 2017