



FAITH AND SOCIAL ACTION AT ST ANDREW'S MAGAZINE

WITH UPDATES ON THE CHARITIES WE SUPPORT

CHRISTMAS ISSUE DECEMBER 2025



In making ourselves available to God, we are not doing him any favours. We give ourselves for God's *use* to benefit creation, not to benefit God. That's what it means to be a "living" sacrifice.

Miroslav Volf

Dear Friends

It is so easy to slip into the mistake of thinking, possibly without even realising it, that by doing 'good deeds' we are somehow doing God a favour. In fact, as the great theologian Miroslav Volf says (slightly paraphrased) above, when we do something out of love for others, we are not doing it for God, we are doing it for his precious creation. Thinking about our charitable acts like this not only reminds us that all we possess already belongs to God, but it also reminds us that the smallest act of kindness has an eternal significance.

As always, 2025 has seen St Andrew's giving of their money and time to support our principal projects, and many other charitable endeavours. In our summer issue, we introduced a regular HIGHLIGHT section to focus on work being done by members of the congregation out of the spotlight. In this issue, Leonard Beighton tells us about his work at Kingsley Hall in Dagenham.

This Christmas, as we celebrate the great self-giving of God, in that fragile and vulnerable child in a manger, let us renew our commitment to give of ourselves wherever we encounter need in His precious creation.

May God's peace rest upon each and every one of you this Christmas, and always.

Charleen

Revd. Charleen Hollington

Associate Minister

Chairperson, Faith and Social Action Committee

HIGHLIGHT

MY WORK AT KINGSLEY HALL, DAGENHAM

Leonard Beighton



After the first world war the London County Council cleared the slums in east London. They built in their place the largest social housing estate in Europe at Becontree in Dagenham. For the first time people had decent houses with features such as indoor toilets, but there were no community facilities and in particular no churches.

In 1929 a couple of sisters bought over an acre of land nearby in memory of their brother Kingsley. At first there was no more than a caravan for use as a Sunday School, but in due course they put up buildings which were used as a church and a community centre. The project, Kingsley Hall, thrived and among those who visited was Mahatma Gandhi. After the war, however, Kingsley Hall had fluctuating fortunes.

In 1995, soon after I retired, I was appointed a trustee of the Shaftesbury Society, the largest Christian charity whose main purpose was to support adults and children with severe disabilities. Along with about 25 other mission churches, Kingsley Hall came under the overall care of the Society. The churches were not part of our business and we decided to divest them. Some could be saved, some could not. It was thought that Kingsley Hall could be revived. A successful Christian businessman was appointed as Chief Executive and pastor and in 2015 I was asked to take over the Chair.

At that time the buildings were badly in need of renovation; the finances were poor despite a moderate balance sheet; and the atmosphere was one which accepted gentle decline. It was important to continue to minister to the existing, largely elderly, community, while thrusting forward for a wholly different future in which Kingsley Hall would again be a thriving Christian centre for all ages, abilities and ethnicities.

Over the years we successfully raised very significant funds and with this money we put up two new buildings and completely refurbished the old one.

We now have a café which abuts directly onto the street with a real community atmosphere. There is always someone around to chat to, or to provide support. There are various group activities during the day in the hall above, some of them Christian. It is slightly more formal in the evening when you can get a pizza. There are Church services in the hall on Sundays with a congregation of maybe 60 people as well as children.

There is a food store charging very low prices and a clothes store with new and pre-worn goods, again at a very reasonable price. The staff include young people with disabilities from a local college gaining employment skills. There is also a fully refurbished pre-school group with a well-designed garden for the children, with an Ofsted 'Good' award. Recently a nursery has also been opened.

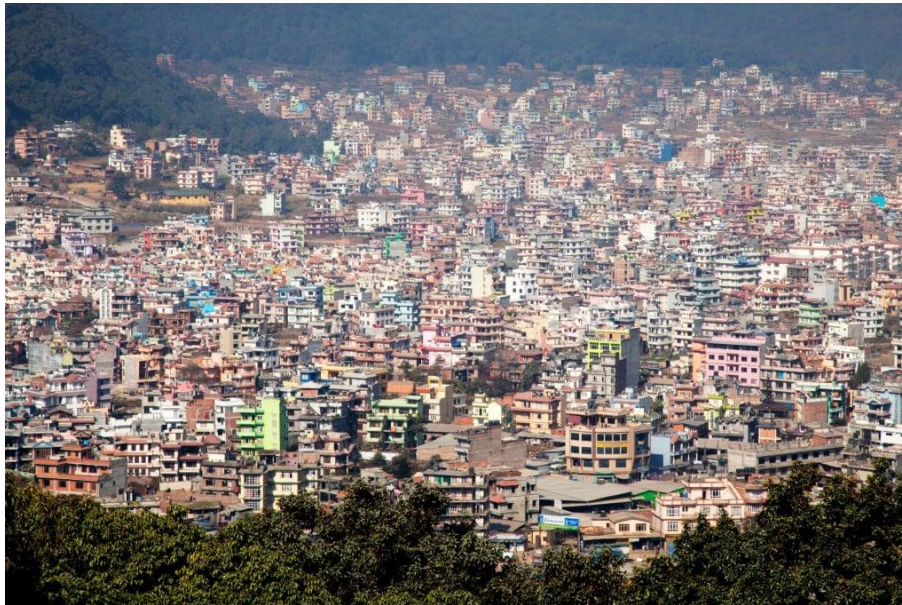
The Centre also looks out into the community, providing emotional and spiritual support. This was especially relevant during Covid when the Council chose Kingsley Hall as one of the lead charities to co-ordinate support in the Borough.

One of the developments about which I was most excited was when we took over a rundown church in one of the poorest parts of the borough. We refurbished it and it now holds well-attended church services. We are also developing a pre-school and nursery there. In an area with quite a high Muslim population the people who pop in for a chat are by no means all Christian. The site is also being developed to provide a warehouse for many of the foodbanks in the area.

Kingsley Hall has long looked out across Dagenham as a member of the Christian Union and otherwise. It has now been chosen by the Council to work with the Barking Mosque to outsource adult social care across the Borough.

OPERATION MOBILISATION HIMALAYAS

Report from Peter Kelly, champion for OM Himalayas



The OM Project Sunday in November was warmly received by the congregation. Students from the Discipleship group in particular were very interested in opportunities for cross-cultural ministry experiences, to the point where, at coffee, discussions actually began about 2026 trip, which was exciting to see. Clearly the St Andrew's summer 2025 trip to Moldova was significant and formative for many of the team. At coffee, Sam Foster of OM spoke to many in our church family and provided materials to Shirley to use in working with the Discipleship group. Several older members of the congregation expressed appreciation to OM for the work being done, and asked how the church could do more.

Ben in Nepal reports a change in strategy. Up until now, OM was focused mostly on reaching out to new people. If these people expressed interest in connecting to OM or in the faith of the community workers, they were put in touch with local believers or house churches. However, the local leadership has seen that these newly-introduced people were not reliably connecting to the local believing communities, which were themselves often in their infancy. OM will now invest more of their time doing follow up with people whom they have newly met to make sure they are connected to others and that their needs are being met. The OM teams will continue to support newly-formed groups and house churches so that they are a better landing pad for people wish to connect with OM or have been introduced to the gospel.

A new group has really taken hold in Southeastern Nepal. It is a women's fellowship, where experienced women provide encouragement and support to

each other, and especially to younger women. The group has begun to really care for one another and the local community has taken notice. OM is also supporting local schools. In Western Nepal, leaders of a school were looking for teaching in the subjects of sport, hygiene, and nutrition for a class of students of mixed Muslim and Hindu backgrounds. The school administrators approached the OM staff and asked if they would consider teaching the students, which they have. This shows the incredible strength of a trust-based relationship the community workers have with their local neighbours.

Ben, on behalf of the OM team throughout the Himalayas, sends prayerful thanks for our support and asks us to pray for their work.

wisdom as they adapt their strategy, for success in training up house churches and new leaders to be effective with people newly exposed to the gospel, and for continued success in connecting to or creating community outreach programmes.

Prayer points

Please pray for:

- ✓ *wisdom as OM adapts their strategy;*
- ✓ *success in training up house churches and new leaders*
- ✓ *continuing success in connecting to or creating community outreach programmes.*

If you would like to learn more, connect directly with the ministry or make a financial contribution to OM, please contact Peter Kelly at pjk207@me.com.

TRANSFORMING LIVES FOR GOOD

Report from Carrie Taylor, St Andrew's project champion for TLG



Earlier this term Mike, Moni, Elaine and Carrie attended the TLG Awards and Fundraising dinner event at Pineridge Golf Club. It was an inspiring evening, hearing from teachers, parents and a young pupil who really had been 'transformed' through his coaching journey. We also learnt of exciting new initiatives that TLG are putting into place to grow and develop trained counsellors through accredited courses. Additionally, each month TLG holds training days, where around 15 new coaches are equipped to join a TLG team in their local church and school. It's wonderful news and encouraging to hear that TLG is growing, developing and having an influence throughout the UK.

At St. Andrew's school we have been asked to complete a case study on one of our pupils, which will be used as part of the school's Nurture project. It's good to be regarded as contributing towards the support and nurture of children at school. We continue to be welcomed at the school and to work closely with staff members.

Prayer points:

Please pray –

✓ *that we will get to know pupils and their families better;*

✓ *that through the work we do, many will experience God's love*

If you are interested in becoming a coach please speak to Carrie. via parishoffice@sac.church.

OASIS FREEDOM PROGRAMME

Report from David Taylor, project champion for Oasis



Oasis have just completed the Freedom programme, and the feedback they have received from the participants include these comments:

- The Freedom programme showed me I'm not mad or alone anymore, being around people who understand and give hope.
- *Listening to other victims' stories makes you feel less hopeless and gives you heightened awareness of abuse.*
- Meeting other women in a safe place who could share freely without judgement was amazing.
- *The Freedom programme made me understand what my ex did to me was so wrong, I thought it was normal to be abused.*
- The Freedom programme is my first step from being a victim to being a survivor.

Caroline Edwards of Oasis thanks everyone involved for supporting these women through the fundraising which enables them to offer the Freedom programme to victims of domestic abuse.

Prayer points:

Please pray –

- ✓ *For energy and vision for the Oasis team;*
- ✓ *For all those suffering from domestic abuse.*

If you would like to make a donation or get involved in the Oasis Freedom project or any other work of Oasis, please contact David Taylor via parishoffice@sac.church

GARDEN ROUTE CHILDREN'S TRUST

Report from Paul Hurrell, project champion for the GRCT



The Garden Route Children's Trust held its important annual Christmas Market and Coffee Morning on 11 November 2025 at the Oxshott Village Centre — our biggest and most vibrant event yet. With more stalls than last year and an expanded space for visitors to enjoy coffee, cake and conversation, the atmosphere was warm, festive and full of community spirit.

I am delighted to share that the event raised over **£5,000**, representing a **30% increase** on 2024's total. This remarkable achievement reflects the generosity of everyone who attended, contributed and volunteered their time. I was especially thrilled to welcome many more visitors from St Andrew's Church, whose presence added greatly to the sense of fellowship throughout the morning. My heartfelt thanks go to all supporters and donors. Your enthusiasm and kindness allow us to continue improving the lives of vulnerable children supported by the Garden Route Children's Trust. On behalf of all the trustees, we are deeply grateful.

The charity will mark its 20th anniversary in 2026, and several fundraising activities are being planned.

Prayer Points

Please pray -

✓ thanks for the joy and generosity at our Christmas Market and Coffee morning, and bless all who gave their time, talents and resources to support the GRCT;
✓ for the children and communities we serve, that they may know hope and opportunity and the comfort of your loving presence;
✓ for guidance as we continue to be faithful stewards of the gifts entrusted to us.

If you wish to learn more about the GRCT, please do contact me by email at paulh@sac.church.

FOODBANK

Report from Alison Greenwood, project champion for the Foodbank



Once again Cobham Area Foodbank is very grateful for the food donations acquired from local Harvest Festival: 203.52kg of food was collected. This always comes as a welcome boost to the supplies.

Over the summer months there wasn't a great deal of demand for the Foodbank and numbers collecting food packages on a Tuesday were low. Possibly clients had the support of family or friends during the summer holidays. However, as we came into the Autumn numbers soared, and have stayed high, with new clients and regulars returning, consisting mainly of couples or single people unable to make ends meet. This rise in numbers obviously has a knock-on effect for the stock we keep, which is dwindling rapidly. Regular donations from the public are also down but we are in the fortunate position of being able to buy in much needed essentials.

Vouchers are obtained from local **referral agencies** such as Cobham Centre for the Community, PA Housing, Oasis, Esher Citizens Advice Bureau, Weybridge Job Centre Plus, and many others. These play a vital role in identifying those in crisis and helping them access the support they need. Over the last few months, we have had one of the Esher CAB staff on hand on a Tuesday when clients collect their food, talking to them and ensuring they are receiving all the benefits and support available to them.

The partnership with the Squires Garden Centre in Stoke D'Abernon ended in June 2025. We want to express our heartfelt thanks to the Squires team and their wonderful customers for their generous support.

Together, we've:

- Created **Spring and Autumn charity planters**
- Enjoyed a festive **Christmas Shopping Evening**
- Benefited from a **Charity Coffee Morning**, where a portion of every drink was donated to the Foodbank.

You may have noticed we have had a brand refresh with a new logo on our social media channels. This comes as part of **Trussell's (formerly The Trussell Trust)** initiative to unify foodbanks under a more modern, accessible brand — helping to raise awareness and reach more people in need.

Prayer points:

Please pray that -

✓our community will continue to be generous financially and especially with food donations.

✓we find an accessible community space from which the warehouse and distribution centre can operate on the same site.

FAITH AND SOCIAL ACTION FUNDRAISERS AND EVENTS

Hit and Hope Golf at Patchesham course in July

This was a great success. Twenty people participated and we raised £600 for our projects. Once again, the Hail Marys won the day. Greg Bradley as usual won the longest drive. Best team name goes to Nick Constable's team, Fairway to Heaven. A big thanks to Hogans bar who provided a great meal.

Faith & Social Action in Victorian Cobham: Matthew Arnold at Painshill Cottage

Unfortunately this event had to be cancelled due to David Taylor being ill but we hope that it will take place in 2026.

OM Quiz night in January 2026

The OM quiz night in January was such a success this year that we are planning to run it again. Watch this space!