

Gift Day 1 2025.

The Lord has told you what is good and what he requires of you, to do what is right, to love mercy and walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8

Our annual Gift Day launch is less than 2 weeks away and we hope that you have listened to the various talks and videos that have been shown illustrating the charities and organisations that we support. We ask that you pray about what you can give this year. So many people in our world are suffering physically, spiritually and mentally and through the organisations we support we can reach out to them with help and the love of God. Some of our charities are many years old – CMS 225, Embrace 170, and MAF 80 years – while others are more recent; all are committed to relieve suffering. Many of our congregation are actively involved with them and we know all the money is used wisely.

Please consider what you can give as we only ask once a year; every gift is valued and together we can make a difference.

Jenga

Many of us remember Bex growing up here at Sunnyside and it is incredible what she has achieved with Loved – based in Namantala, a slum area of Mbale in Uganda; however, there is so much more to Jenga and the work they do in the community. This year they are focusing on one of their Core Values: Empowerment. They strive to improve the lives of the very poor and disadvantaged. In recent years they have worked to empower women and girls. Now they are turning to help “uplift boys”. 98% of children on the streets are boys, 98% of those in juvenile detention and 7 out of 8 recruited to child armies are boys. Recently Jenga has addressed this issue with a new gym, a football academy and a programme of social and personal development for both boys and girls. Suubi House provides a home for 20 young men rescued from the streets and offers a 2-year programme to turn their lives around. Having completed the course, some have been offered scholarships to continue education, others have gone on to football academy and others are

playing football in the Ugandan league. All this is combined with Christian teaching and values.

Bulawayo Shelter

Our Sunnyside donation to the Bulawayo Shelter certainly arrived at a time to bring relief. Always struggling to pay the few staff wages, food essentials and municipal/utility bills, this Christmas was very difficult. The Bulawayo Shelter frequently gets to the stage where their committee feel the time may have arrived to have to sadly close their door. And then a lifeline comes along, like our Gift Day donation to their work for which they are most grateful – a great relief.

The chairman, Myles Thompson, tells us that Pastor Samuel Teodozio, a Presbyterian missionary from Brazil, is now helping with a project to restart the 'keeping chickens' project to complement the vegetable garden, and his wife will take the children at the shelter for Bible stories. As Myles works at Christian Brothers School, he recently was surprised to learn that one of their parents, Mrs Ntombi Moyo, had been volunteering to support the people in the Shelter, without him knowing. When he asked her what drew her to the Shelter she said she had been an orphan and understood what it was like not to have a home – we are blessed to have this Christian lady on board.

This voluntary help is valued and essential in the life of supporting residents at the Bulawayo Shelter.

CMS: Chris and Veronica in Spain and North Africa

We so appreciate Sunnyside's financial support, because without yours and many others we could not do what God has called us to at the edges. Just one example, R was one of those people that we were able to help and give comfort and meet her physical needs. R is from Bulgaria. She was in a very difficult relationship with someone involved with drugs; she did not know what to do. She shared her story, her lack of food and just there on a street bench I listened to her and was able to share about God's love and purpose for her life. I encouraged her to cry out to God. We prayed there together for God's help and direction.

Afterwards we went to a local food shop and I bought groceries for her. She was very grateful and touched. About a week later she sent me a text thanking us and telling us she was now in Germany where she has found a job.

James and Jo Price in Malaysia with Frontiers UK, working with the Rhoinya

James & Joanna relocated to Malaysia last September. They are establishing a new team in Kuala Lumpur to work amongst Rohingya Refugees, a least-reached Muslim people group from Myanmar. They currently have a young German couple serving with them and will be welcoming two more people in the coming year (other people are in the pipeline). The continued financial and prayer support from Sunnyside will be a huge blessing as they seek to increase the initiatives to serve, bless, and share the love of Jesus with Rohingya refugees.

The focus of the past 12 months has been exploring different areas of the city to identify Rohingya communities they could engage. Through a model of 'learn, pray, serve' they have sought to establish themselves as people of faith who care for and advocate for the Rohingya. This involves listening to their concerns and responding to felt needs as appropriate. To date the team has run a couple of maternity courses providing information and support for expectant mums; started a craft group for women; trialled an English class for men; and established partnerships with the UNHCR and a local church to provide weekly food aid to a poor community.

Sunnyside Rural Trust

Growing fruit, flowers and vegetables... and growing people too!

If you have ever come to one of our special afternoon services for Easter, Harvest or Christmas you will have seen for yourself how the Sunnyside Rural Trust grows not only fruit, flowers and vegetables but happy, confident people too.

We were thrilled when one of our more able trainees recently got an apprenticeship with the professional gardening team on a private estate

near Wendover. It was a great moment and a fitting reward for all he had learned during his time with the Trust working on the Sunnyside allotments.

Our church has developed a real partnership with the Trust over the years. The trainees have planted primroses in our churchyard and also built our bird boxes and the wonderful bug hotel. They come every month to put away the tables and chairs after lunch club. We now have two members of our churchyard gardening group working there as part of the volunteer team. What a joy it is!

Age UK Dacorum

Age UK Hertfordshire works to improve later life for thousands of older people in Herts by creating opportunities and challenging disadvantage and discrimination. They offer a wide range of services and events such as lunch clubs, digital inclusion workshops, handyperson help in the home etc.

One of their initiatives that I had not heard of before and am now in the process of signing up to be a volunteer for is the Befriending service. Older, more isolated people are referred to the service by professionals, family members, neighbours etc. They are then matched with a volunteer who will visit for approximately an hour a week or who will chat on the phone every week. The coordinator, Katie, spent quite a while chatting with me so she can make a good match between me – the volunteer – and the older person. One lady she is looking to place a volunteer with is desperate to have a dog come and visit her as she so misses her previous pet! This seems to me such a worthwhile initiative that will make such a difference to an older person. Our Gift Day gift helps to make such initiatives possible. Maybe, having read this, you might be prompted to volunteer as well as give generously.

DENS

DENS' aim is to be the first port of call for people in Dacorum, Hertfordshire who are facing homelessness, poverty and social exclusion; to support and empower them to take the next positive step in their

lives, secure and maintain a long-term housing option and be an active member of their community. We ensure individuals have access to temporary and short-term accommodation, and individuals and families have access to emergency food and provisions. We provide a range of integrated services, which together form a pathway to support people towards an independent future.

Here is how we supported our community last year:

- Fed 9,897 people, including 3,931 children through the Foodbank; 4,024 food parcels were distributed. This is a 15% increase since 2022
- Welcomed 324 people to our Day Centre, who visited a total of 3,966 times. This is a 16% increase compared to 2023
- Served 3,313 hot meals in our Day Centre
- Provided emergency Crash Pad accommodation for 143 people
- Provided 970 hours of one-to-one sessions through the Therapy Centre, and 58 clients participated in group sessions
- Housed 120 individuals at The Elms hostel

Swan Youth Project

The Swan Youth Project has continued to support local young people through your kind donations and we have not only served at least 3,800 hot meals but we have supported members' mental health and wellbeing. We have signposted them to support services where necessary but have got involved where needed to help support the family as a whole. We have also had members with additional SEND needs come to our sessions and develop their social connections as well as gain confidence. We have upskilled students at Ashlyn school teaching Year 12s cookery skills and also engaging with The Blue Bike Charity to deliver Business Studies workshops, enabling students to put theory into practice. We also got our hearts racing with the Britannia Boxing Programme with Britannia Boxing Gym, which was wonderful in educating members on resilience and never giving up.

Our focus on 'Kitchen Talk' has discussed issues affecting members, ranging from knife crime, substance misuse, anxiety and social media, to the latest, about the programme 'Adolescence' which highlighted how

social media feeds toxic information into the rooms of our children. We do all we can to help put preventative interventions in place so that young people can make pro-social choices. We live our ethos of Somewhere to Go, Something to Do and Someone to Listen, by ensuring we have trained support staff, an enriching programme and a place where members feel safe to be themselves. We cannot do this work without continued community support, especially as our funding has decreased by 50% in the last year due to grants closing and many charities competing for the same pot of funding.

We welcome the positive changes you have helped us deliver to our youth community and hope through continued funding we can make a better future for young people in our community.

Please pray for the charities involved; so many of them tell us that the money came just at the right time to help a much-needed project or to actually help the charity to survive.