

Gift Day 2025 – article 2

Let us not love with words or speech but by actions and in truth! John 3.18.

Sunnyside has a long tradition of supporting organisations both in the UK and overseas, Christian and secular, all with a mission to help the poor in body, mind or spirit. With Gift Day approaching we ask you to pray for the charities involved, and also about how much you might be able to give. Even a very small gift is appreciated and together all our gifts can make a real difference at this time of government and local cutbacks where there is so much need.

MAF – Mission Aviation Fellowship

A Christian organisation was started 80 years ago by WW2 pilots using redundant warplanes. They saw a need to bring lifesaving supplies into remote and inaccessible places. Sam and Abby Beguma are based in Kampala, Uganda with their two daughters. Recently MAF has purchased a plane to land on water in the lakes of Africa reaching remote islands in Lake Victoria. As well as medical lifesaving supplies, they also transport educational aids and church ministers bringing spiritual help and comfort. MAF operates worldwide in 31 countries and a MAF plane takes off somewhere every 6 minutes.

The Bible Society was founded in 1804 and is a non-denominational Christian Society whose aim is to make the Bible available throughout the world, in languages and dialects that are constantly revised and updated. These Bibles also are used as a literacy tool helping people learn to read and write. Bibles are distributed in remote places where it would be impossible to purchase one. They are distributed in war zones, bringing comfort and solace to many in desperate need. The hope is to come to a time when everyone has access to a Bible that they can read. Throughout the world there are 140 different Bible Societies ensuring a close link with local communities.

Embrace the Middle East

Formerly known as Bible Lands, Embrace still works in the lands of the Bible. Recently, four of us from Sunnyside were privileged to attend a talk by Daniel

Munayer who lives and works in Jerusalem. It was a sad and sobering talk but he reminded us that while the news gets ever more desperate, true reconciliation is about action, courageously pursuing justice, truth and healing. He told us of terrible conditions in Gaza and the West Bank, the worst they have ever known. Embrace supports suffering communities throughout the region with medical care, medicines especially for long-term conditions, mobile hospitals now that Palestinian ones have been destroyed and psychological support for those traumatised by the ongoing conflict. They treat all who come to them regardless of faith or ethnicity. Embrace maintains a local staff on the ground ready for any emergency. They are also able to provide education and long-term support for children with special needs.

A Rocha International

A Rocha is a global Christian family of conservationists working together to live out God's calling to care for and protect creation and equip others to do the same. They bring to communities theology, science and policies to produce sustainable farming and care of the environment. Churches in the UK are encouraged to become Eco Churches, reducing their carbon footprint. In Kenya, A Rocha has spent 3 years studying biodiversity, identifying the needs of the local community. In Europe, they have been working to reduce microplastic pollution, while in the Philippines a couple have been working in local schools to promote sustainable food production and farming. Our actions have a consequence to the whole of creation and as a faith-led community we must care for our planet and help and encourage others to help vulnerable communities and sustain food supplies.

Playskill – Skills for play. Skills for life

Founded in 2006, Playskill is the only charity that runs free playgroups for under-fives in Hertfordshire with physical delays or disabilities. They offer training, advice and support for parents as well as social activities for the whole family. At the playgroup, both children and parents receive expert support from paediatric physiotherapists and occupational therapists, and help with speech and language from experts. While they play and have fun the children are learning to stand, eat, communicate and walk. Playskill offer one-to-one support for children with complex needs, ensuring the best possible outcome

for them and their families. Early intervention is essential to allow all children to reach their full potential.

Good News for Everyone

Formally known as the Gideons, this charity aims to introduce others to the Christian faith through personal witnessing by members of the charity and to provide Bibles and New Testaments to people everywhere. One former prisoner in a high security prison was asked to be a volunteer and for 5 years has regularly visited prisons as a volunteer chaplain to distribute Bibles and New Testaments and talk with prisoners. He has seen lives changed by telling the men he meets of God's love and giving them scriptures. He sees how God has brought the men hope. *"He lifted me(n) up from the pit of despair and the miry clay and set my feet upon a rock and made their footsteps firm"* – Psalm 40.2.

The Hospice of St. Francis

The hospice in its purpose-built home on Shootersway is an amazing place, giving all-round care to those at the end of life, with a dedicated and experienced staff in all aspects of care.

It costs £695 each day for each patient and their slogan is "Help keep our beds open". Rainey's story – "Mum spent 5 weeks at the hospice and the love, care and support we received were phenomenal, a calm room with a little garden in a beautiful setting."

They treat 2,000 patients each year; referrals are up 40% since 2020–21. It costs £6 million a year to run and 80% comes from the local community. A quote from their website: "We never wanted life to turn out as it did but the Hospice helped to make it the best journey it could be." The Hospice provides total care – inpatient, outpatient, reviews, regular assessments, home visits and health and well-being services. Children are welcome to visit, as it is not frightening in the way that many hospitals can be. Bereavement support is offered for everyone including children, and families say the ongoing care has a huge and positive impact.

Please do pray about what you can give. All these charities will use the money wisely and they are so appreciative of whatever we give them. Let us give them “strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow”.