

ashwoodnews

January February 2024



Pastoral Care

We care a lot about Pastoral Care in Ashwood. See details on pages 34 - 47

Prayer

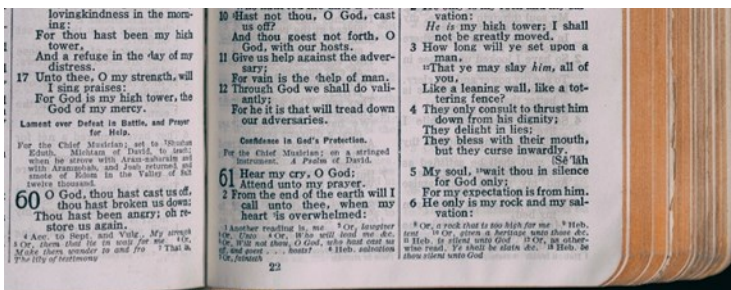
Prayer is important for us. Find ways to develop your prayer life on pages 30 - 33

Christmas

See the Church in action over the Christmas Season with photos on pages 2 - 6



Helping people find and follow Jesus



Matt's message

Hello Ashwood News Readers!

Thanks for picking up our bi-monthly collection of information and news! We will look back over the last couple of months as well as look ahead to 2024. If you're new to us, we hope you can find what you're looking for. Feel free to contact us, if we can help you further. Thanks for reading.

Happy New Year!! And Oh what a year!

It's customary to look back before looking forward! So, let's do that first! I love the Christmas season for many reasons. I enjoy the lights and the candles, the delicious food, the family gatherings, the wonderful carols and music and even the Christmas Pyjamas! (In fact I'm quite a fan of the odd Christmas themed item of clothing generally! You may have observed that....!) But the two things I love most at Christmas are:

1. Being reminded that I'm part of such an amazingly generous and caring church family! And
2. Feeling more thankful each year I'm alive, for the incredible mind-blowing choice that God made to send His son to live WITH us, so that one day He would die FOR us.

My heart is always filled with gratitude to everyone who serves in small and large ways to make the Christmas season in church so special. Many of the activities are behind the scenes, but we are blessed to have a huge army of people declaring but also





demonstrating that God loves the world and we do too!

Thank you to everyone who served in kitchens and car parks, who crafted gifts or sang on stages, who narrated the Christmas story or who gave financially to make someone else's story better! If you served us and/or our community in any way.... **THANK YOU!!**

And we had plenty of fun along the way too! (Photos represent a tiny snapshot, but more on next pages)

At the end of the year, it's also important to pause and to look back and reflect on the bigger picture too. And what a year 2023 was! Many new people joining us, in our mission to help people find and follow Jesus. More people baptised, more people joining LifeGroups and more children attending holiday clubs, Friday Night Take Away and our extended hours for Café 22 to name just a few! We had our "Stepping Out" mini-conference in the summer with Paul and Perriane Brownback, and more people than ever attended Alpha, Freedom in Christ and Keys to Health and Wholeness as well as a marriage course in the Autumn. We honoured Zoe as she stepped out of Senior Leadership and welcomed a new Core

Team to help to lead the church. And of course, we celebrated 50 years of Ashwood over two jam packed party filled weekends of celebration. Full of honouring and thanking God and his faithful people for 50 wonderful years!

Of course, some sadness too during the year, particularly as we grieved the loss of Dan Young who transitioned to heaven in March. It was a year of stepping out in many ways – and we're definitely the better for it. As we close the chapter on another year, we're incredibly grateful to God for His kindness and provision for us, and we look forward to the Church we see in our future.

In 2024 we're praying for breakthroughs and we believe it's time to be bolder than ever before! We also believe it's time to increase our prayers and our faith for our New Home! Please join us in praying and fasting for this important part of our future. (Read more later in this edition about how you can pray and be involved.)

With huge thanks, appreciation and love!

Matt Bell
Senior Leader





christmas

Family Christmas Service - 10th December



Seesaw Christmas Party - 12th and 15th December

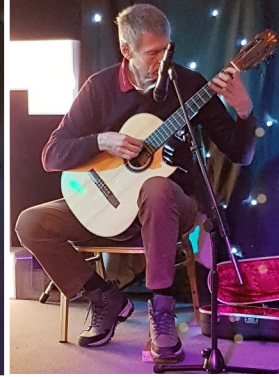
Over a hundred children in two sessions enjoyed a wonderful Christmas Party with a bouncy castle, games, bubbles, festive food, friends and fun. *Janet Wright*



Carol singing at Morrison's - 16th December



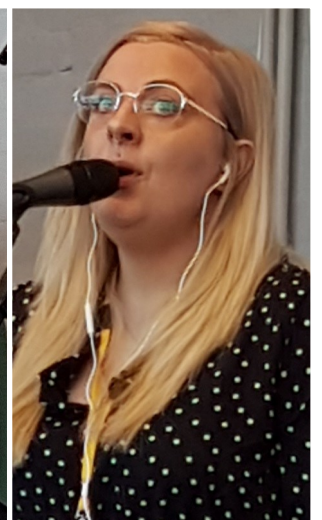
Ashwood's Got Talent - 15th December



What an evening! What talent! It was wonderful to be together for Ashwood's Got Talent and see so many different performances from poetry and classical guitar, dances and comedy. We consumed some delicious desserts, drank non-alcoholic mulled wine and enjoyed some delux hot chocolates. Thankful to everyone who took part. Let's look forward to AGT2024. **Claire Bell**



Carol Service - 17th December



Breakfast with Woody - 23rd December

Just two days before Christmas Day we hosted our breakfast with Woody, Elsa and Anna. We had around 150 people enjoying breakfast, crafts and some great singing and even some snow, with lots of the songs from Frozen. It was such fun! Enjoyed and appreciated by so many people we connect with in our community. Thanks Woody for coming and hanging out with all of the children.



Christmas Eve Service - 24th December



Christmas Day Service - 25th December





awaken

We are excited about AWAKEN 2024!

We are so thrilled to see this event building and gathering momentum and we know that it is significant for the church in our nation at this time. Once again we will be on the Lincolnshire showground over the August Bank Holiday weekend expecting and experiencing a great move of the Holy Spirit as we gather together. Awaken is a time of Celebration and our strapline FAITH, FAMILY, FUN really does sum it up.

The event includes everything you love about a summer gathering, with dynamic worship, inspirational teaching, encounters with the Holy Spirit and opportunities to go deeper in faith. There are great kids and youth programmes, activities for the whole family and space to be together in Church Community.

We're excited to step into all that God has for us and are looking forward to seeing you there!



To book **Awaken 2024**, (23.-26. August) follow this link:
<https://groundlevel.yeahtickets.com/awaken-2024/tickets>

Faith - Awaken is about going deeper

We want Awaken to spur you on in your Christian walk, empowering you to live out a God filled life in your own context. Awaken is a space to encounter God together.

Fun - Awaken is about enjoying the gift of life

Life is meant to be enjoyed, Awaken is a space to have fun and express yourself with other like minded people.

Family - Awaken is about being together

At the very heart of Awaken is a desire to be together, united as one church family in pursuit of God.



**23rd Aug
26th 2024**

**Lincolnshire
Showground**



Ashwood LifeGroups

LifeGroups have always been important for maintaining support and care and also a place to grow spiritually. LifeGroups are a committed place in Ashwood where you can get to know a group of people, do life together and support a smaller group of people. It's also a safe place where we encourage one another to be followers of Jesus.



We continue to add new people to our groups which is always a great pleasure, and is a great way to become part of the Ashwood Family.

If you are new to Ashwood or maybe you've started connecting with us on Sundays online, and you would like us to introduce you to one of our friendly LifeGroups. Please email admin@ashwoodchurch.org.uk and we'll be in touch with you!

What are LifeGroup's all about?

These are the four core values that are at the heart of all of our LifeGroups:

1. **WELCOME** – LifeGroups are inclusive and a really positive place for everyone to “do life” together.
2. **RELATIONAL** – LifeGroups are a place of high commitment where people are supported, through trusting, open and accountable positive relationships.
3. **GROWING** – We believe that the Christian life will always include spiritual development as we seek to become more like Jesus. LifeGroups are a great place to do this.
4. **JESUS CENTRED** – We want to be a community of people who know the truth of Jesus and live by His Spirit. Prayer, sharing God's word and exercising the gifts of the Spirit are all part of keeping Jesus unashamedly at the centre of all we are about.



Matt Bell

During the first part of this year, we will give our time to praying as part of the prayer season and then after that look at some excellent material generated by Safe Families – to consider the theme of “Belonging”.

Being part of a LifeGroup is a great way to deepen your faith and do life with others. As we continue to grow as a church our LifeGroups have become fuller and recently we started a new lifegroup based in the Mansfield/Sutton area. LifeGroups are such a brilliant place to share, grow and learn together, supporting one another in the highs and lows of life. Steve shares his experience

How did I find joining a LifeGroup?

I was rather nervous at first, not really knowing what to expect. Which I soon learned was not necessary at all, as they are a lovely bunch of people, very welcoming and made me feel very comfortable right away.


What's struck me?

The groups openness and willingness to share, making for a comfortable environment, which helped me come out of my shell a bit and be more vulnerable, which is not a strength of mine. I even found myself praying out loud, which is something I never do in large groups. The dynamic is beautiful, each person brings their own little spice, making for fun and interesting perspectives for the topics each week.

Why would I encourage others to join?

For me, who has been a Christian since a child, it can be easy to be complacent and stagnate in church life. The importance of getting together to share testimonies can renew one's faith. Joining a life group, gives you a chance to meet members of the church, get to know them, which I think helps the church grow closer together.

Steve Mthembu




Eco Calendar
2024

A Rocha Eco Calendar 2024

Are you looking for fresh inspiration to continue on your journey towards sustainability in 2024? Try the A Rocha new downloadable easy Eco Tips Calendar!

This calendar offers simple yet impactful tips per month to make a positive difference in your home and community. We pray it will inspire positive change that benefits the planet and future generations and draws you closer to God.

<https://arocha.org.uk/easy-eco-tips-2024-calendar/>



UK
A ROCHA
SILVER
AWARD
WINNER
2022
ECO CHURCH
learn more





courses

As many of you know we ran the FIC course in the autumn and saw God do some amazing things. We are having a get together in January to celebrate and see what God has been up to.



We will be exploring topics such as emotional healing, physical and spiritual healing and how to be more fruitful in our walk with Jesus. Most of us are impacted by health problems in



In addition, we are going to be running the FIC Keys to Health, Wholeness and Fruitfulness course in April, which will be running Thursday evenings starting Thurs 18th April -Thurs 6th June, with a steps day on Saturday 25th May.

some way, either ourselves or through someone we care/support and it can raise lots of difficult questions such as “Does God heal today?” “What does healing look like?” and “Can there be a spiritual block to healing?”

Why not sign up and come and explore this with us. It’s a great opportunity to go deeper with God but also to make deeper connections with those within Ashwood. If you are interested please let Bec Goody know - 07968101051-thankyou.

Bec Goody



It’s that time of year again when we think about Alpha. Alpha is a 12 week course designed to give people a opportunity to explore the Christian Faith, ask questions and share their

point of view, no matter what they believe themselves.

Each week centres around a specific topic, giving people a safe space to share their views and listen to others, whilst sharing food and building relationships. We are really excited start the course on Tuesday, 23rd January 2024, here at the Ashwood Centre, with a full day in March to learn more about the Holy Spirit.

We loved the marriage course!



The Marriage Course

Having been married for 23 years, it was something we had always wanted to do but never had chance.

The setting was great, it really felt like date night with low level lighting and candles on the table. Every week we looked forward to being served dessert and coffee by our wonderful hosts during one of the discussion times.

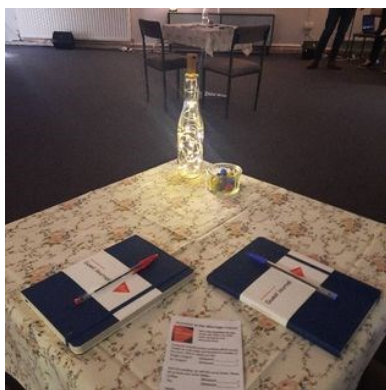
The content of the course was so relevant, seven sessions covering a variety of topics. We would watch a video clip which included real life stories and experiences from a number of different couples. It was helpful to hear how other people navigate their way through married life. The clips were interspersed with discussions

which were always private between the two of us and we had a very useful workbook that included questions and exercises encouraging us to be honest and open with each other.

Its fair to say that this course is for those who want the best for their marriage. Its not necessarily for those having difficulties, its more learning about how to get the most out of your relationship.

It certainly helped us, maybe to understand each other a little more, to be more considerate and we learnt new things about one another (mostly good). We would recommend it!

Matt and Helen Tomlinson



- Aided communication and explored topics, some not explored before...
- Kind words / actions transferable to others too - family / friends...
- It has highlighted some issues that we need to work on and made us realise that marriage is a journey that will have its ups and downs...
- Keeps certain topics on the "radar" so we don't slip into bad habits e.g. using phones too much, no date nights..

For those of you who are new to church or faith and want to know more, this is a great place to start. Even if you have been around for a while, I would encourage you to consider attending. I have lost count how many Alpha's I have been on (either as a participant, host or leader) and I still take something away from it every week.

Think about who you could invite, or better still, bring them along! For more

information on Alpha, what it is, or how you could support, or to book your place, please email alpha@ashwoodchurch.org.uk or speak to

Sallie Bates
Alpha Leader.





Singleness and the Church

addressing within church.



It's important to recognise that some people are single by choice, but some people aren't. We have people within Ashwood that are bereaved, some that are divorced, some that have never been married. Some are young and single, some older, some are ok about it, some find it really tough. Especially on a Sunday when people are sat in their 'family units', it can be hard for those who are single to know 'where do I sit?' 'where do I belong?'. We want to make sure that we as a church address the topic of singleness carefully, ensuring we love, validate and empower those who are single to be all that God has called them to be and to make them feel part of our church family unit.

Singleness - A gift or a struggle? Or both at times? Too often in church culture, we're inclined to idolize marriage and downplay singleness. But those who enjoy and steward the gift of singleness remind us that Jesus is enough, and nothing else can truly satisfy.

We need this reminder - this is something we need to be ok at

Bec Goody

Singleness: Gangrene or a Gift?

Chris shares a bit of her experience...

Singleness can include a wide variety of situations which may be chosen or involuntary. I am glad that I was asked to tackle this topic. I bring the experience of an almost three decade marriage and subsequent singleness

so I've tasted both statuses and they both have their advantages and disadvantages.

Sometimes people believe that changing their status will be the magic cure to life's problems. A status is not a solution but a situation. Changing status does not bring a miracle cure to loneliness or relationship difficulties.

When God drip fed the phrase



“gangrene or gift” into my mind as I woke up one morning I didn’t at first have a clue what it was about. Then I realised he was giving me thoughts for writing this. How we view our status will affect how we deal with it. If we think of ‘singleness’ as a problem to fix then maybe we see it as ‘gangrene’ – something that is destructive, creates problems and needs to be fixed. But Jesus was single! So there cannot be anything inherently wrong in being single!



I love that at Ashwood there is love for all, and singles are not

made to feel inferior in any way.

I wonder if we had the chance to ask Jesus about singleness while on earth what he would have had to say about it. We don’t know but what we do know is that he was about His Father’s business. We may have a status we want or we may not like it but focussing on ‘our Father’s business’ will help us to focus on our purpose less than our comfort. God looks after our comfort as we look to him to guide to walk in His ways in life.

There’s many other things I could say but for now my encouragement would be to focus on our IDENTITY in Christ because that will make the largest difference to how well we deal with either status whether married or single.

Chris Porter



Fragrances and Fibromyalgia

Alyson runs her own fragrance business “Mizzle” and has a heart for making a difference to others. Her love for Jesus and her own battle with fibromyalgia has prompted her to create fragrance boxes tailored to those struggling with fibromyalgia and other chronic conditions.

Her shop is located on 36 Lowmoor Road NG177BD—opposite Moor Market.

She also stocks Christian based cards and gifts and offers free sanitary products to any women who call into the shop and ask for them - no questions asked or judgement made. They also do workshops for various crafts .. details on request. They consider themselves a community shop and are able to take in donations both



for the homeless, which will be given to the relevant charities and also take donations for the sanitary products.

God has done so much in her life and she wants to give back to others.

Why not get in touch if you’d like to find out more?

Alyson Philbin
07505288435





Ashwood Church Financial Giving

The easiest way to financially support the work of Ashwood Church is to make a direct bank transfer / set up a standing order:

Account Name: Ashwood Church
Account Number: 00216525
Sort Code: 60-01-73

If you do decide to give via bank transfer / standing order, please let Becky Holmes know (becky@ashwoodchurch.org.uk) so that we can say thank you and allocate your gift to the appropriate fund.

Alternatively, you can:

- Make a debit / credit card donation via our online Stewardship page. Go to <https://www.stewardship.org.uk/partners/20024077> or scan the QR code



SCAN ME

- By debit / credit card / Google Pay / Apple Pay on a Sunday morning (please see Becky if you would like to donate this way)

- By cash or cheque (made payable to 'Ashwood Church') during the offering on a Sunday morning

Becky Holmes

Financial Administrator



	Total Giving	General Offerings	Development Fund	Building Fund
October 2023	£14,120	£9,729	£3,851	£540
November 2023	£12,036	£10,664	£785	£587



Children and Young People

We are passionate about children and young people! We want them to grow up in an environment where they can learn about Jesus and understand God's love for them. We want to equip our children and young people to meet Jesus and have a life long relationship with him.

Here are some of the great examples of ways we have been able to invest in the lives of children and young people with the money you have given. Every gift, small or large, makes a difference.

Since April 2023 we have:

- Run and resourced four Friday Night Takeaway (FNT) events for school years 1 to 6 (FNT is a great night of fun, games, music, food and stories. Each event enables children to learn more about Jesus). The next FNT is on Friday 9th February 2024
- Run and resourced two holiday clubs (Easter holidays and October half term) for school years 1 to 6 (Each holiday club has a different theme which explores different aspects of life with a positive message and story from the Bible)
- Run our Sunday morning 'Earthshakers' sessions for ages 2 to 14
- Given 'Graduation Packs' for the young people 'graduating' from Earthshakers
- Given Baptism gifts for the



young people who have taken the decision to be baptised

- Given gift bags to our young people heading off to university
- Run social events for young people including 'Colour Run' and 'E-Fest'.
- Facilitated training opportunities for our Children and Youth Teams
- Hosted our Elevate youth sessions on Sunday evenings
- Refurbished our Youth 'Drop In' room and run weekly Youth Drop In sessions
- Invested in Elevate Refresh (our Youth weekend away for school years 6 to age 18) event.



The next Elevate Refresh will take place from 22nd to 24th March 2024. (We subsidise the weekend to keep the costs as low as possible.)

It is so important to keep our children and young people connected and engaged with Jesus. Thank you for the money you give which helps us to try and do this. Everything we do is connected to our mission to help people find and follow Jesus!

Becky Holmes



SERVING OPPORTUNITIES

USE WHATEVER GIFT YOU HAVE RECEIVED TO SERVE OTHERS

- 1 PETER 4:10 -

Serving is so important to us as a church, it helps us to give something back, to experience community and to use our gifts and talents for God. There are many ways to get involved in serving at Ashwood, one of the ways is through serving at our community café-café 22.

Eric shares his experience...

Encouraging and Welcoming

Hello, I have been hosting at Café 22 for about a year now and although at times it can be quite stressful and tiring, the rewards are brilliant.

I have hosted alongside different people and it is encouraging to see how each of us network with our 'customers'. The comradery that exists between the hosts is really encouraging and we know that the whole of the Café 22 'staff' are there to support each other at difficult times.

I believe when we are hosting we are actually showing God's Love in a tangible way. When we are hosting we meet a variety of different people coming through our doors. People are coming to meet friends or make



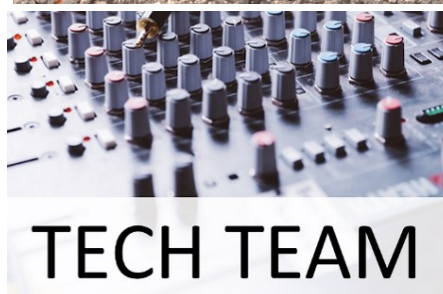
new friends and I hope that by showing our respect, kindness and God's Love, they will feel welcome.



**Eric
Smith**



If you're new to Ashwood (or even if you're not) you may be wondering "How can I get involved? How can I serve and help out?" Serving in church is an amazing way to get to know people better, to be involved in the life of the church and **to give something back!** Jesus gave us an incredible example to follow by serving those around Him. There are so many different areas you can get involved in serving. The rest of the newsletter will give you some more details on some of the logos below.



If you are interested / want to know more, email admin@ashwoodchurch.org.uk



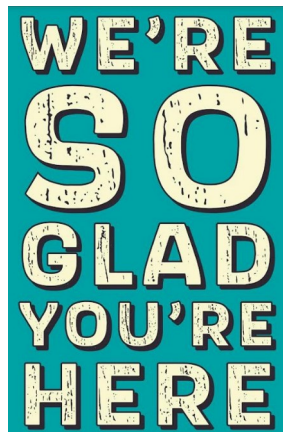


Welcome and hospitality are really important to us at Ashwood, we long to see every person made to feel welcomed and cared for whether they are new to us or whether they have been coming to us for while. We hope people feel seen and valued from the moment they come through the church doors to the moment they leave and beyond! Every person helps to cultivate a welcoming atmosphere, but our welcome and hospitality team play a big role in sustaining this! Marion shares her experience of welcome..

Bec Goody

I started coming to Ashwood just after lockdown after 'attending' online. When I first arrived, I received such a wonderful welcome from not only people on the door but from so many places within the body of the church.

Having experienced that, I wanted to share that welcome with anyone that was new to church or that was feeling a bit down as they arrived. I joined the welcoming rota to enable me to do that.



It's not something you're expected to do every week but when I do it, it's lovely to have a quick chat with so many people that come through the door and sometimes even a hug as bonus. I have got to know so many people just by giving a very simple welcome.

It is something I feel comfortable doing and it's being part of the church I see as a welcoming church.

Marion Shardlow



"Belonging to Ashwood" – Next Sessions

Sunday 11th Feb 12-12.45pm after the morning meeting.

If you'd like to find out what it means to be part of Ashwood – please join us for this short session. This is the perfect place to ask questions, and hear about our vision, values, and mission as a church. You can also find out how to join a LifeGroup or one of our serving teams. If you're new to Ashwood or been around for a while this is also perfect for you. You can just turn up or let us know you're coming claire@ashwoodchurch.org.uk

Future Dates: Sun 17th March / 12th May / 30th June



Full House on our Christmas Special Café 22 Event!



The U3A Ukulele group added a lot of festive atmosphere, playing Christmas songs everybody could sing along to and Gill gave some food for thought with a special Christmas quiz. Both the turkey baps and the mince pies were very popular and the Kirkby "Men in Sheds" and the "Ashwood Crafters" completed the picture with their great productions on sale.

Gill Isterling



Foodbank says "THANK YOU"



A massive "THANK YOU" to all who have donated to generously to make our "Bags of Blessings" we gave out to our foodbank customers over the Christmas period possible.



Gill Isterling

Psalm 24 in 2024

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters. Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. They will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God their Saviour. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, God of Jacob. Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty he is the King of glory.



Looking back over 2023 I am so grateful to God for His faithful love and goodness to me and my family.

There were many tough times and health challenges... But I give praise and thanks that through it all I experienced God and family and friends in Ashwood Church giving me keys to Health, Wholeness and Fruitfulness. Thank you!

Yes, I love numbers and I believe Psalm 24 is God's gift for me to share in 2024. A gift to receive, to pray and declare over everything and everyone I'm praying for: *"The Earth is the LORD's and Everything in it. The World and ALL who live in it..."*

"Who can climb the mountain of the LORD?" - Well, I know I don't always have clean hands and a pure heart but thankfully, Jesus has opened a door for us into the presence of God. Jesus is our way, our truth, and our life.

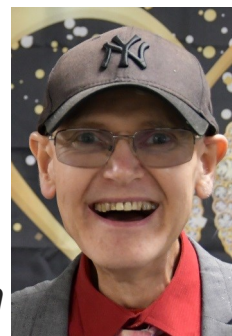
"Open up, ancient gates. Open up, ancient doors and let the King of Glory enter..." - We can give praise and thanks that Jesus is our King of Glory!

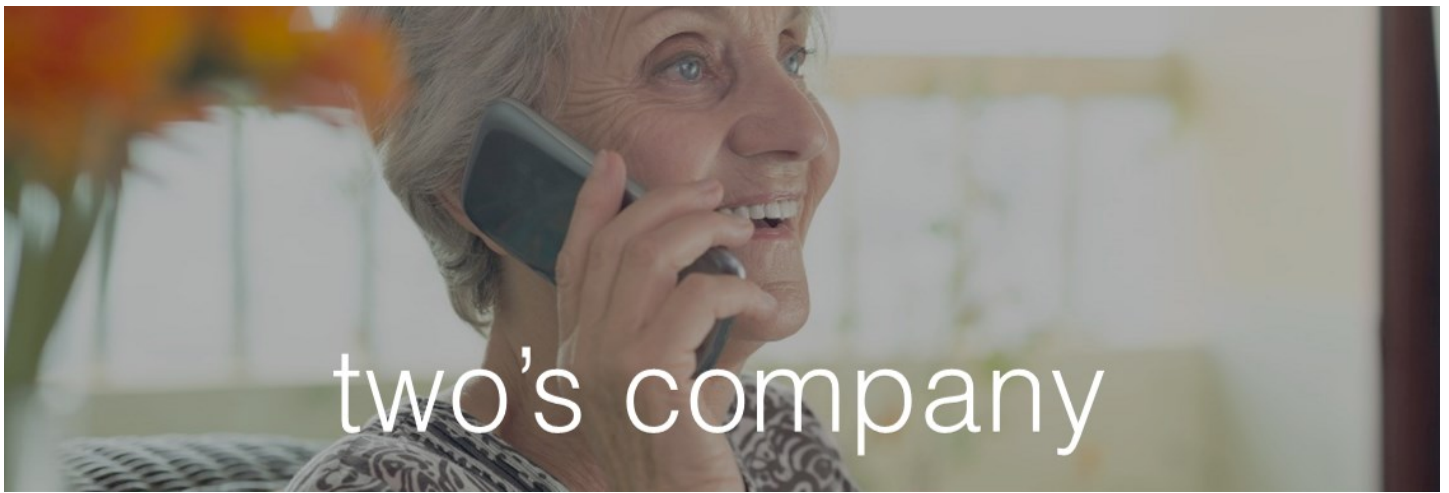
"The LORD strong and mighty. The LORD invincible in battle..." - I believe God's Spirit has been making connections for me in Psalm 24 that has filled me with awe and wonder.

I believe that 2024 is a year of breakthrough that comes through our prayer journey. I wonder, what is God's gift for you to share in 2024? Let's enjoy sharing the gifts God generously gives us this year to encourage each other on our journeys.

Let's enjoy the journey... together.

Dave Redfern





two's company



“Have you a desire to journey with a lonely and vulnerable person, who

simply needs a listening ear, and a bit of time maybe once a week? Two's Company is a lovely way to help and support someone. I have enjoyed phoning and building a talking relationship with my contacts over the past year. On more occasions than I can count, amazingly, I have called at just the right time, it really is uncanny.

To be a link with another human being who is lonely is a high calling, so there is a pressure that comes with sharing and listening, and of course privacy and confidentiality is paramount. So if you like serving in a quiet unassuming way, have a chat to Bec Goody who facilitates the scheme for Ashwood Church. (Anonymous)”



“I look forward to hearing from her every week’

‘It’s the highlight of my week!’

“She is so lovely, it brightens my day!”

“They are so kind, I love hearing her stories, it’s like I get to experience it too!”

“They have such a great laugh, I can’t

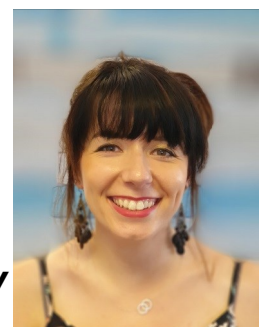
help but laugh!”

“We get on well, really well - he’s such a great guy, a real friend!”

These are some of the lovely comments received by scheme members who receive calls from our faithful volunteers within Ashwood Church. Each one of them speaks highly of their experience of telephone befriending. For many of them it is the highlight of their week and gives them some joy. A simple phone conversation once a week or once a fortnight could make such a huge difference!



If this is something you feel God stirring you in, or something you want to simply find out more about, please let me know - you could make such a difference to a lonely person in the community!



Bec Goody

Time for something new...

WoW... Good bye 2023 and Hello 2024!...

At the end of last year, we were focusing our Sunday evening program by looking at some of the essentials to our Christian faith. Over the 5 sessions together we've covered some of the core disciplines and principles to being a Christian: Praying, Worship, Hearing and Giving. We only scratched the surface on some of these topics and there's so many more things we could have looked at as well.

We're hoping that as we finished focusing on some of the essentials, the faith and knowledge of our young people is in a better, stronger place! Our hope is that our young people will continue to practice these essentials, read and study God's word. We must remember that the word of God doesn't work unless you put it to work.

Revelation + Application is what brings everlasting change in your life and the life of others around you!



We started the new year by looking at how we can focus on God with our goals, resolutions and things that we want to achieve. In Matthew 6: 31-33 it says this...

“So don't worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

Upcoming Elevate Dates

21st Jan 6-730pm
28th Jan CoGroups 6-7pm
4th Feb 6-730pm
18th Feb 6-730pm
25th Feb CoGroups 6-730pm

All sessions and evenings are 6 - 7.30pm at the Ashwood centre and open for all young people in year 6 – age 18.

Our most important goal in life should be – Seeking God’s Kingdom first and then all the other things will be given! This means putting God first, before all things we want to chase after. Before all the goals that we want to set for ourselves. Because the things that are important to us and the things we base our life around, will also be the things we base our goals and dreams around.

As we build up to our RFRESH youth weekend away at the end of March we will be looking at the signs and wonders of Jesus and what we can learn from them today.

At Our Elevate.Yth CoGroups in November we continued our radical.YTH series and we were looking at God’s word. One definition of the word “radical” is: “relating to or affecting the fundamental nature of something.” God speaks in radical terms, we know this because when He speaks, the fundamental nature of things change. If we’re going to be a radical youth, we need to listen to and apply the radical words of God.

CoGroups are back in January and February. Our CoGroups operate like our main church lifegroups but for young people. The aims are to create time and space where young people can grow and develop friendships, explore more about the Christian faith, get to know Jesus, have opportunities for spiritual and personal growth, explore their gifts and talents together.

We ended 2023 with our second social evening of this academic year with a festive themed evening of YTH vs. Leader. Going into the evening the leaders were winning, however by the end of the night the young people took the victory to bring the scores all level

at one all. The next social event is on Sunday 17th March.



Refresh weekend 2024-

Our annual youth weekend is back for 2024! Refresh is our annual youth weekend and an exciting opportunity for young people in year 6+ and their mates. Refresh is packed with faith, energy, fun, excitement, relationships and plenty of activities.

22-24 MARCH 2024

REFRESH

ARE YOU READY TO REFRESH?

ELEVATE.YTH



We believe that there’s something for all young people who will be joining us on our Refresh weekend, and they’ll have an amazing weekend together.

You can book in and find all the details that you need by scanning the QR Code.

Rich Reason
Children and Youth
Teams Leader

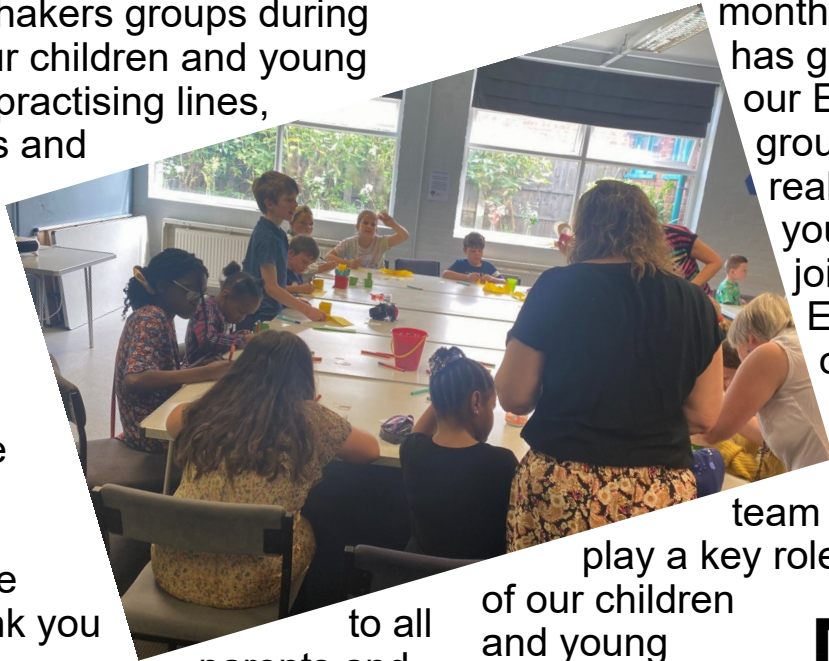




ashwood kids

Earthshakers

In our Earthshakers groups during November our children and young people were practising lines, singing songs and preparing props as they were getting ready for our December family service where they performed a version of The Nativity. Thank you to all the children, parents and team members that were involved in making the family service happen.



you would be able to to join our Earthshakers team? Over recent months our church family has grown and so has our Earthshakers groups and we would really appreciate it if you would consider joining our Earthshakers team on Sunday mornings.

Being part of the team means that you can play a key role in the faith journey of our children and young people and you can get to have a whole load of fun whilst doing it!



Starting in January our Earthshakers children and young people will be looking at a new series on the Jesus' "I Am"s. We will be unpacking some of the keys in the "I Am" statements of Jesus. What did he teach about himself and what does that tell us about who he was and who God is?

We would also like to ask any parents/ carers/guardians and church family if

If you would like to be involved in the work involving children as part of our Sunday morning Earthshakers or A C E Kids team, please contact Rich rich@ashwoodchurch.org.uk





kids from the community

ACE KIDS Friday Night Takeaway.

children will be excited about receiving gifts. There is no greater gift that we could receive than Jesus Christ.

December was here and it was time for our last Friday Night Takeaway of 2023 and the last in our AWESOME series for our focus was for the evening was all about our AWESOME Gift!

In the run up to Christmas the



Our aim was for the children to know that when God gave us his son Jesus Christ he gave us everything we could ever need. Jesus is our King, our Priest who came to pray for us and help us be friends with God and our Rescuer setting us free from the things that separate us from God.



Join us for our next Friday Night Takeaway happening on Friday 9th February 6-730pm, where we will have another evening full of Faith, Fun and Friendship!

Food and Refreshments provided. Craft, Games, Songs, Dancing, Story. FREE and available for all children in school years 1-6 (Key Stage 1&2) Please book your place on our TicketTailor page or



scan this QR code overleaf.

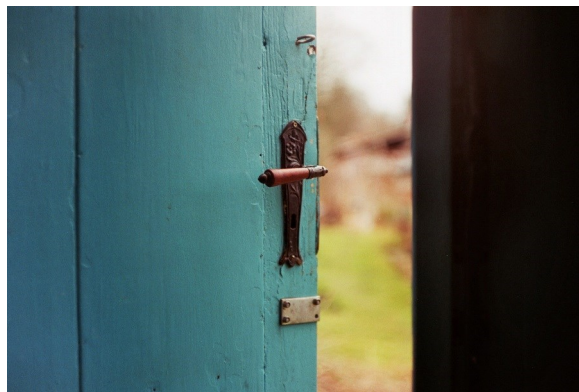
Keep an eye out on our website and main meeting updates for all our ACE Kids events and you can follow Ashwood Church on TicketTailor and subscribe to get a notification for all our events.



Doors opening

At a recent Pray First we read together Psalm 130:5 AMP *“I wait patiently for the Lord, my soul (expectantly) waits, and in His words do I hope.”*, and in the NLT *“I am counting on the LORD; yes, I am counting on him. I have put my hope in his word.”* There are a number of situations that I am counting on the Lord to do what he said he would do. I’m counting on him to do what I can’t do. I’m counting on him to do what I don’t know about to bring about what he said he would do.

These thoughts reminded me of one of the things that Joe Gisbey spoke about on the Sunday morning of our 50th



Celebration weekend: **“this is the year of breakthrough, of doors opening”**. I keep hearing these words and praying over this phrase, in my own life and over other people’s situations. I wanted to share it to encourage you to keep praying, to keep pressing into the presence of God. It’s not time to stop asking. It’s time to speak out what God has said and trust that he will do what he has said.

God is saying **“Ashwood Church, this is the year of doors of breakthrough for you.** As you step into this Jubilee, this is the year where there are doors that would not open, would not budge, this is year when God is going to open those doors. It says in Revelation *“Behold I have an open door in the heavens before you”*. Things you’ve prayed for, things you’ve longed for, even things you’ve stopped praying for because it’s too painful to carry on praying for, God says the things you used to pray for I am about

to answer it. The thing you used to hold out hope for, I am about to do it. There are also going to be some doors that God’s going to close as well.

A door of itself is not important. We have all sorts of doors, we have

ornate doors, we have very, very simple doors but essentially all that a door is, is something either provides or denies access. It moves us from one atmosphere into another....

This is the year of breakthrough, open doors for breakthrough, open doors for businesses in this room. This is a year of breakthrough, open doors for marriages in this room. What before you have thought, what you have

longed for, what you have tried and God is saying, I'm about to open the door.

There are some doors that you've opened and you've known that you've allowed the enemy in and it's caused destruction and it's caused distractions which is almost as dangerous and it's caused you to lose focus on God has for you. This is the year when God is going to close some of those doors as well. He is the one who opens doors no one can open and he is the one who closes doors that nobody can open....

I believe God's saying: It is Time to refocus and keep your eye on (Him). Don't get so enamoured by what is happening around you right now

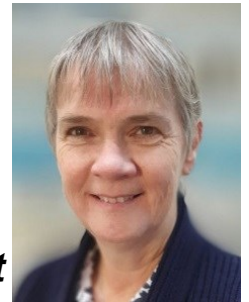


because if you do then you are going to get knocked off course. Keep your eye on what has God said. What has God said to you? What has he said?

Because if God has said it, no man is able to stop it. If God has said it, there is nothing in heaven, on earth or under the earth that is able to stop God from doing what he has declared to you. It's time to speak it out. Joe Gisbey 1st October 2023

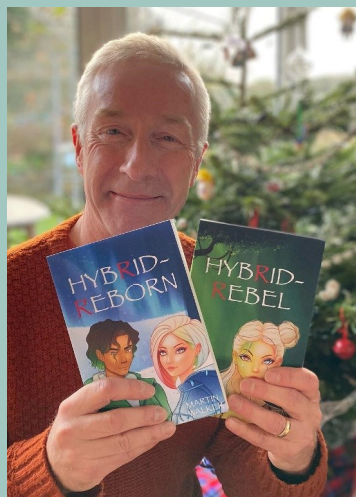
Let's do just that, on our own, with two or three friends, in our lifegroups as well as when we come together to pray, worship or serve and look forward to seeing what God does as we focus on Him and what He has said.

Janet Wright



Book Tip

Many of you know that I have become an author of young adult stories! I have over the last eighteen months been promoting my books online through Amazon, as e-books or paperbacks. The first books are part of a trilogy called "Hybrid". The first is "Hybrid Rebel" and the second "Hybrid Reborn". The third is being written now, due to be released early next year. These are based around the climate crisis, the teen protagonists romantically



attached! They have historical and scientific facts injected into them, making them that bit more realistic.

Also, I have started another series called "Maisie". These are more espionage based, as Maisie is trying to escape the lifestyle she is used to, whilst being dragged back again and again, in an attempt to find the truth behind her parent's deaths. Someone likened them to the Jason Bourne series. They are all available on Amazon as kindle, kindle unlimited and as paperback. Or if you prefer to get a signed copy, I can supply them to you personally!

Visit my website - martinwalkerbooks.com

Martin Walker



stepping out

Update - Fostering adventure

Hi Ashwood Family

Back in July, I wrote a bit for the Ashwood News about our plans going forward for fostering. Here is an update!

Some of you will remember our plan to buy a bigger house with help from the local authority. That is still the plan! It's not been an easy journey these last 6 months. We have asked a few times 'Is this really what God said?'

BUT - God is always faithful to His promises.

I was reading in Lectio one morning about the birth of John the Baptist and Zechariah's declaration of faithfulness at the end of his enforced silence. He chose not to speak words of disappointment about the journey, but words of clarity and what he had learned in that time. This last 6-12 months has felt for me like a time of exile, silence and limitation at many points - but like Zachariah the things that I have learnt, the ways I have grown in faith, in humility as I have leant on God are so much greater than the struggle.

I have been receiving counselling throughout the whole of this process and it has been so invaluable. A lot of

what I have learned is about control. About being in control of the things I have been given control of, but also being able to let go of what I can't control, and let God take care of those things. All of those times the negotiations with the council have gotten more tricky, my natural inclination is to push harder to try and make it happen. But what I learned is that just letting go, giving it God and trusting in his promises, his hope and his future is the best way.

There was one particular week in this process where I stopped emailing people and just trusted God. During that week, we sold our house, and the house we are now buying dropped in price meaning we could afford to buy it, we finalised the agreements with the council and received a request to have a new child, who is now living with us!

God is so amazing, and we have just seen so many times him just meet us in our lowest points, and looking back we can just see him carrying us, and getting us ready for what is next.

Throughout this whole process we have kept coming back to Isaiah 54, about enlarging our tent. We feel like what we are doing is just that... spreading out and thinking big, getting prepared for our growing family. The context of that passage is Israel not

seeing the promises fulfilled that she was expecting. God is saying hang on in there, get prepared, keeping worshipping. Don't hold back - one day you will forget this time and just see what God has done. The start of the passage talks about tents, spreading out pegs. But by the end it's talking about a city built with precious stones. What an amazing picture, as we are faithful with stretching out our tent pegs and doing what we can to make room for God's children, he has in mind a strong and beautiful fortress - so much more than a tent! Even in the pain, what God has in mind is more than what we are imagining!

Some of the things we have experienced and are experiencing we believe are a prophetic vision of what could be in Ashwood too, as we all are obedient in getting ready for growth and enlarging our tent... exciting!



SO WHAT NOW?

We are expecting to move to our new house, sometime during February. After that we will be ready to welcome two more young people into our care, making three in total.

As we have said before, we can't do this alone. We are so grateful for all of our Ashwood family who have prayed with us, supported us and helped us.

We are so fortunate to be part of a church who not only loves us but also has fostering in it's vision.

We would love for you to consider if there are ways you can support us, here are some ideas:

- 1) We will need some new bedroom furniture. wardrobes and chests of drawers.
- 2) Ongoing support with household tasks. It will take some getting used to a bigger house to clean and extra laundry etc!
- 3) **BABYSITTING.** We are super grateful to Joel and Bethan who have agreed to be regular babysitters. However we'd love to get another couple of people. With three children in placement it would be good to have people who could babysit in pairs, so perhaps a couple or two friends. There is a

simple vetting process for this. The local authority will pay for babysitting so it can be a way to earn a little extra money.

- 4) **Friends and Family support care.** People who know us can register as carers to have our children (or one of them) for weekends or holidays to help

us have a break. You do have to become a registered carer for this so there is some training and a more in depth process to go through, but you won't be asked to provide breaks for any other foster carers.

Thanks so much Ashwood, we are so grateful for you!

Zoe (and Paul, Esther and Maisy too!) x



Opportunities to pray TOGETHER:

We believe prayer is so important in the life of Ashwood. If you consider yourself part of our Ashwood Family – please find ways of joining with us to pray.

“Prayer Rally”

Every Sunday morning 9.50am at the Ashwood Centre before the meeting

“Pray First”

Fridays 7.00-7.30am on Zoom*

“Prayer Space”

Thursdays 09.30 -10.30am on Zoom*

“Touching Heaven”

Wednesdays 7.30pm
7th Feb, 6th March and 3rd April at the Ashwood Centre
Please join us! Everyone welcome!
“The People of God in the Presence of God.”

“Prayer for the New Home for Ashwood”

Thursdays 8-9pm at the Ashwood Centre:
25th Jan., 29th Feb. and 28th March

***For Zoom meetings, find details on your weekly email.**



TRANSFORMED WORSHIP NIGHTS 2024 –

Sunday Evenings 7pm.

We can't wait for our first Transformed Worship Night of 2024. A night when we gather together to worship Jesus and invite Him to come and transform us in His presence. We often end up praying for a fresh in-filling of the Holy Spirit and praying for those who need a touch from God.

Please note the dates for 2024:

25th Feb / 12th May / 22nd Sept / 24th Nov



Prayer on a Sunday

Prayer is a fundamental part of our walk with Jesus and as a church we are passionate about prayer and helping others to cultivate healthy prayer lives. There are loads of different ways to get involved in prayer here at Ashwood...

On a Sunday we intentionally create space for people to have prayer after the service, recognising that God may bring up things throughout the service, or that you may want prayer for a specific issue or for healing. Everyone is so welcome to go to the prayer banner to receive prayer-if you've not done it before - why not try?



We know prayer has power!

Prayer on a Sunday is a living part of Ashwood, where we can all participate in encouraging and supporting each other. It's important we are sensitive to whom we pray with, keeping to the same gender for instance. One thing I find myself doing, is asking Father who needs that prayer, waiting for any Holy Spirit prompting.

I sometimes have a scripture, or a word for someone and gently ask if it's ok to pray with them. Don't be pushy or demanding that you pray as this will have a negative effect.

Hearing God is so important, as this can be just what a person needs, encouraging them that they are not alone and He does really care for them. If this is our motivation, then we shall not be far wrong with what we pray for each other.

Martin Walker



Baptism Sunday – 4th February

If you've never been baptised, please speak to someone, and find out more. Please contact your LifeGroup Leader or Youth Leader or email admin@ashwoodchurch.org.uk

Our date is 4th February with a baptism preparation / awareness session on Sunday 21st January.

Why not speak to someone now and we'll look forward to baptising another group of people!

Matt Bell

If interested in being baptised, speak to
Bec Goody /
LifeGroup Leaders
or email
admin@ashwoodchurch.org.uk



Baptism Preparation Class on
Sunday 21st January 12-1pm
After the Meeting

Ashwood Ladies



New Home for Ashwood Update – Praying Together refined Prayer Strategy

At the start of 2024 we believe it is time to increase our intentional PRAYING – for this important part of our future. There are 4 different things we're asking people to join with us.

1. Monthly Gatherings

We plan to meet every month in the Ashwood Centre from 8-9pm. Here are the dates for the first 3 months:

- Thursday 25th January
- Thursday 29th February
- Thursday 28th March

2. Fasting Thursdays

We're also encouraging people to consider fasting from food on "Thursdays" as we intentionally seek God and add extra weight to our praying. Fasting demonstrates "We're serious and we're focused."

3. Daily Reminders

We're suggesting that some people might like to set a daily reminder to pray at 20:24 during 2024. Using either the prayer below or praying using the words from Leviticus 20:24 which says: *But I have promised you,*

'You will possess their land because I will give it to you as your possession - a land flowing with milk and honey.'

4. Pray the Declaration Prayer:

God our Father, we give you thanks and praise for all that you've done in our past and thank you for your faithfulness to us over many years.

We believe that you've called us to be a healthy growing church for all ages. We believe that you have good plans and purposes for our future.

We believe you have said "Enlarge the place of your dwelling" and it's time to Plan for Growth.

We pray that you will make it possible for us to acquire the land next door, to help with our growing church family. Thank you in advance for providing all the provision we need! Lord increase our faith for this project – we believe you can do it!



We don't want to settle for anything less than your best for us. Help us to think big! Amen

Matt & Claire Bell / Owen Wright / Elaine Torr

We're grateful for the group of people who also give financially either monthly or on a "one-off" basis. If you would like to give financially – please simply contact becky@ashwoodchurch.org.uk

Prayer - for local and global

Some of us enjoy the fun of a good PANTO... "Oh YES we do!" with all the favourite one liners for audience participation, "He's behind you..." "We'll have to do it again then won't we..."

Some of us pray regularly for our communities, for our neighbours both local and global as God, in His great LOVE for us, invites us to participate in His performance in the world. We love being able to participate in the pantomime of God's story where Jesus is the hero who has won the victory over the baddy and all evil...

Christine and I have been on a prayer journey of discovery using the alternate Monday evenings from our LifeGroup sessions to pray together, using resources from Tearfund, Links, Open Doors, Safe Families and others as a catalyst for prayer.

The symbol of the rainbow kite has been my own image and symbol for prayer for a while now. Our prayers connect heaven to earth like a flying a

kite. The diamond shape represents the relationship between God the Trinity connecting to US - God's children on earth [the bottom point]. The black cross represents the cross of Jesus - believing it's through the New Covenant of His cross that the rainbow promises of God are "YES! and Amen!"

In Revelation 4 John describes a rainbow that looked like an emerald or precious gems encircling God's throne. I love this image of God being enthroned within the rainbow of His Covenant Love.

The Good News is that God our Father invites us ALL to come and belong to His family in Christ, to play our part in His Kingdom on earth, bringing Justice and Truth... 'Of the increase of Jesus' government and rule there will be no end!'

Dave Redfern



Weblinks to resources that we hope you will find helpful and encouraging in your prayer journey of discovery:

<https://www.tearfund.org/get-involved/pray> And watch the Tearfund video: 'Why do you pray?'

<https://jubilee-plus.org/docs/Stand-in-the-Gap.pdf> There's enough information in this resource to be a catalyst for my prayers throughout 2024... I'm aiming to take a prayer prescription of just ONE/day!

Open Doors: WORLD WATCH LIST 2024

MP's are invited to the Launch Event in Parliament: Wednesday 17th January
The annual ranking of 50 countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution.

You can explore this on Open Doors website: <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/>

You can also contact Open Doors to receive paper copies and sign up for regular mailings.

pastoral care

Pastoral Teams Get-together

In November we had a pastoral get together with both of our pastoral teams (the pastoral gathering and the pastoral hub) which was such a great time to gather with like minded people who have a real heart for others.



We are so grateful to have so many pastorally minded people within Ashwood that come along side others and look out for them. We all need pastoral care!



I wonder how do you look after yourself? Emotionally? Physically? Socially? Spiritually?

Maybe a walk in nature or a chat with a friend, time alone with God or meal out? We can't pour from an empty cup!

We explored questions such as:

- What's the biggest challenge in pastoral care?
- What good news stories have you seen in Ashwood?
- How can we look after ourselves so we don't burn out?

We enjoyed some team building exercises including marshmallow and spaghetti tower building!



We all need to look after ourselves.

I love that we all bring a different flavour of pastoral care, we all have different ways of caring for people. You will do it in a different way to me and that is great! We all have pastoral gifts to use

I wonder who could you reach out to this week?

Bec Goody



In picture -> Gisela, Andy, Eric, Robin, Mags, Sallie, Debby, Dave, Helen, Janet, Bec.

Also there: Dom

We missed those who couldn't be with us: (Lola, Michael, Christine, Martin, Mandy, Molly) but it was great to be together!

Types of Self-Care

Physical



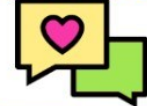
Sleep
Stretching
Walking
Exercise
Nutrition
Yoga

Emotional



Stress Management
Coping Skills
Compassion
Therapy
Journaling

Social



Boundaries
Support System
Positive Social Media
Communication
Friends

Spiritual



Time Alone
Meditation
Prayer
Nature
Sacred Space

Personal



Hobbies
Creativity
Goals
Identity
Authenticity

Space



Safety
Healthy Environment
Stability
Clean Space

Financial



Saving
Budgeting
Money Management
Paying Bills
Boundaries

Work



Time Management
Work Boundaries
Breaks

BlessingManifesting



ashwood church

pastoral care

Supporting Men's Wellbeing



We recognise that maintaining good mental health and wellbeing are so important for everyone, but in particular it is so important to make sure men aren't missed. We know that we ALL need pastoral care (whether we're struggling or not) and we all need to feel heard and accepted. Research has shown that men often feel unable to express their true emotions often due to stigma e.g. real men don't cry. Whilst we are addressing this a lot more in society, we still have a long way to go. Especially given that 1 in 3 men in the UK have experienced suicidal thoughts as a result

of stress (Mental Health Foundation). Guys please know it's ok not to be ok - it's ok to show your emotions - it's ok to talk about how you're really feeling!

We hear from some guys this month who are comfortable sharing their own experience/encouragements....

Martin

Today men's mental health is under stress. Sometimes we have been expected to just to "man-up" if circumstances seem overwhelming or desperate. I believe because of modern day wokeness, male dignity is under attack more than any time in my lifetime. Often confused as to how you are supposed to act, we guys can retreat from any situation that might be misconstrued or

misunderstood. It can leave us feeling powerless.

My own experience has taught me that walking closer to Jesus and allowing His healing touch on my emotions,



brings a peace and an understanding of others. I attended counselling many years ago which enabled me to understand myself better and why I had certain reactions to things. As the saying goes; "Knowing the truth sets you free"

Having this dedicated time empowered me to have greater empathy towards others and see that we are all broken people, trying to find peace in the pieces. Jesus said: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners".

He intends to bring peace and freedom so we can be whole people, filled with his love and empowered to overcome. Coming to Him without the feeling that

you have to get it all right, frees us up to be real and know that He loves us as we are, with a plan to make us into the "good and faithful servants" He's looking forward to welcoming home.

Martin Walker



Phil

It's just not true. Men do cry...or they should be encouraged to. There's something in our culture that encourages us men to 'man up' and not to talk about feelings or mood. No wonder male suicide rates are so high - feelings about not coping, of not living up to some image of man, build up with nowhere to go.

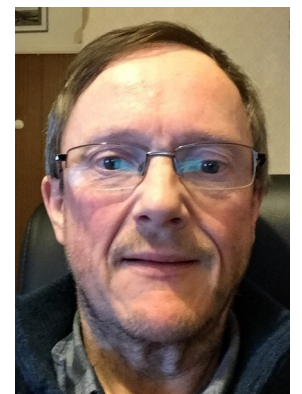
I always knew that my mind worked differently to others, but I had, or at least I thought I had, mastered the art of behaving like others (masking) so that I fitted in, despite the mental anguish, pain and anxiety this would cause me. So a diagnosis of Aspergers Syndrome or Autism level 1 as it's now called at the age of 52 initially came as a great relief. I now understood me better. This soon changed into feelings of incompleteness and being defective. How can God love me and work through me if I'm defective?

Enter COVID and as a charity fundraiser I was one of the 10% of my colleagues not furloughed. I was working all hours, not to fundraise for nature conservation projects as normal,

but to keep the lights on and my colleagues in post. This pressure led to my mental health going into sharp decline and mental burnout. I was having regular suicidal thoughts. Thankfully I was 'man enough' to seek help. I had two courses of therapy, during the middle of which I had a lightbulb moment: they were basically teaching the Biblical principles of taking every thought captive and of casting my cares on Jesus.

I'm in a much better place now. I recognise that I am, as the Bible says, wonderfully made and unique, even though I don't always feel I am. I still have autism. I still get anxious and depressed at times. But I know that God has a plan for me, that despite how 'defective' I might think I am, He is more than capable of using me to help build His kingdom here on earth. So my advice to all men is don't bottle things up. Seek help. It really is the most 'man' thing to do.

Phil Lakin



Anonymous

Have you ever thought about the saying “there is light at the end of the tunnel”, well, as I write this short piece, I am travelling back from my days’ worth of meetings and going through many tunnels along the way. One encouraging thing about a tunnel is that you know

that at some point, you will reach the end which provides, light, relief and hopefully a fulfilling destination.

However, whilst there is light, there are times in life when you are in a very dark tunnel and no matter how much you try you cannot get out into the light. Well that is what I have experienced over several years and whilst there is progress, there are also times when stuff just pulls you back.

I’ve been there and continue that journey and as said, even when progress is made, another thought or rumination just pulls you and down you go. Being in this tunnel is not nice and can be a lonely place. You can only tell someone a few times how you are feeling before you become (in my view) a broken record or, you see people swerving you because they know what will be said. So, having painted a very dull picture I want to bring some hope into this short piece.



No matter how you are feeling in terms of Anxiety and Depression – talk to a close friend(s) who you can trust, ask them to pray for you, go out for a coffee, seek medical attention, do not be afraid of that. Engage with a counselling service or talking therapy.

I have done all these and it does make a difference. My resolve in life is to be

the best, Husband, Father, Son, Dog Walker, and most of all a Child of the living God. There are many songs and verses from God’s word the Bible and just want to share the following lines with you.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us

throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. Hebrews 12

Anonymous

There is a way to go with me,
But I know that God is on my case.
Declare that Gods name is Power,
Gods name is Healing,
Gods name is Life.
Break every stronghold,
Shine through the Shadows,
Burn like a Fire.
Can it be that I’m surrounded,
I’m surrounded by You.
Oh God my God, I need you,
Oh God my God, I need you now

Men's Socials

At Ashwood we have our regular Men's Breakfast on a Thursday morning at The Regent, Wetherspoons and men's nights every few weeks.

We hope LifeGroups are a place where you feel able to share and be open with one another. If you're feeling stressed - why not share with someone you trust? A chat/pray can make all the difference!



Support Groups



You are not alone. and if you know you're struggling with your mental health, there are brilliant support groups like 'In Sam's Name' that actually meets at the Ashwood Centre. There is also one in Mansfield and in Ollerton.

For more information why not email: info@insamsname.co.uk or visit their website <https://insamsname.co.uk/news>.

Bec Goody

The next men's food night is on Wednesday 31st January at Wetherspoon's The Regent, Kirkby in Ashfield starting around 7:15pm.

Please message Vic on 07496889904 if you intend to be there.



Men in Sheds

Men in Sheds is also a brilliant place to support men's mental health and wellbeing. Many men can struggle with low mood and depression when they retire, feeling a lack of purpose, and men in sheds helps to provide a place where men can do practical work together, a place to share, a place to belong. They meet at St Thomas' church, Kirkby on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings 9-12,

Why not contact Garry 07505969799 or Chris 07944790937 for more information.





At Ashwood, we strive to create a culture of care and to support people pastorally to the best of our abilities. Some issues however are so complex and deep that they may require additional support.

If you're unsure of where to go, here are a few ideas. This may be for you or someone you're supporting, but we hope you find it useful. Don't hesitate to get in touch with me for more information.

Bec Goody

Understanding Mental Health



Do you want to understand more about you own MH or someone you love? NHS self help leaflets are really useful and can be found online: <https://web.nw.nhs.uk/selfhelp/>

They have a whole variety, covering common mental health issues these guides contain useful tips and hints as well as self-help techniques.

These self help booklets have been written by clinical psychologists and those who have had first hand experience of mental health issues. They are a brilliant resource - why not have a look, to make yourself more aware?

Counselling for children and young people

There has never been more of a need for mental health support for children and young people, but it is often difficult to know where to turn to when so many counselling services don't take clients under 16 or even 18. Here are a couple of brilliant places to look:

Green Lane Counselling and Psychotherapy, Derby

Work with children and young people in a variety of settings and offer affordable rates! Check out their website: <https://www.greenlanecounselling.co.uk/> and why not get in touch: enquiries@greenlanecounselling.co.uk





Callum's Voice A great charity that works specifically with young people with autism and mental health issues. Why not check out their website: <https://callumsvoice.org.uk/> you can even donate on their website by clicking the 'buy me a coffee' button to help support a young person in need.

Mary Kelly Therapy (based in Alfreton) also works with children and young people - Her email address is: marykellytherapy@gmail.com.

(Most of the therapists offer zoom or in person sessions)
Why not look into this if you know a child or young person who could do with some support?



NottAlone

Nott Alone.org.uk A brilliant website that provides local mental health advice for help for young people in Nottinghamshire. There's bits you can access as a young person, a carer of a young person or as a professional and there's loads of useful resources and articles for supporting young people with things such as self harm, gambling, family separation, gangs, self esteem, young carers, social media and keeping safe etc. Why not have a look?

Need a reliable Trader?



If we or someone we love is vulnerable, it can be especially important to find a trader (e.g. electrician/plumber etc) that will be reliable and not take advantage! Age UK have a list of approved businesses/traders in your local area- why not have a look: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/age-uk-business-directory/>



MENOPAUSE

Many reading the word “menopause” will already either begin to feel embarrassed or giggle - but there will be some that are deeply relieved that it is being talked about! The menopause impacts women in a complex variety of ways and, of course, this can have a knock on impact on those around them as well.

We are beginning to become more confident in society about talking about it - and it's something we need to be ok talking about within church. Some women suffer terribly with the change, affecting them physically in all sorts of ways including their memory but also affecting their emotions and their mood. There are a variety of treatments and support available and it's important that women feel comfortable to share their experience.

Perimenopause (the stage before menopause) can be a particularly difficult time for women, both physically and psychologically. Mental health issues – such as anxiety, depression, fluctuations in mood, and fatigue can really affect a woman's quality of life and in turn impact those around her.

Helen shares her experience...

Recently, there seems to be a lot more recognition and acceptance of the difficulties we ladies experience in menopause but it can still be a troubling time. Our symptoms are so varied, its often tricky to know what's expected at this time of life.

My symptoms started a couple of years ago and included the hot flushes, fatigue, aches and pains and changes in my womb for which I underwent lots of investigation. It was the low mood however that affected me the most as it was something I'd never experienced before. It was a tough time for me and my family. HRT patches definitely helped, it was a huge relief when the

mood lifted (for Matt in particular). I read a few books on the menopause, it certainly helped but I'm really none the wiser.

Everyone's experience is so different! It does help to chat to others who are in the same boat. I know there are a few ladies in church who are navigating this change and it's good to share the burden with one another. If anyone is struggling, I would be more than happy to listen and share and helpful tips I may have picked up. Would be good to encourage each other and pray together.

Helen Tomlinson



Sallie shares her experience...

My menopause journey was very surprising. Everyone tells you that you will get mood swings and hot sweats, but I didn't find them that bad. My issues started with sleepless nights and led into anxiety and brain fog.

No-one can explain how it feels to have words drop out of your head, to forget what you were talking about, mid-sentence, or to all of a sudden have panic attacks when doing normal tasks.

I genuinely felt like I was going mad! I had always prided myself in my memory, especially for dates and numbers, but all of a sudden, I was forgetting key dates and missing appointments. I realized I needed to write everything down. My motto now is "if it isn't written down, it isn't happening". My phone has become my lifeline, not for scrolling through social media, but for reminding me to do things at a certain time, and in some instances how to do things that I have done all my life, but now can't remember.

I have withdrawn into myself in so many ways, avoiding conversations with people and social situations, which has greatly impacted me and my friendship group.

I often have feelings of failure / dread.

The biggest thing I have learnt through this journey is to have grace: Grace for myself, to treat myself with patience and kindness when I am having a bad day, and grace with others who may be going through the same thing. I have become much more self-aware, knowing I will have to repeat a task over and over again before I remember how to do it or understand it. I have learnt to rely on apps:

- **"Loona"** has helped calm my addled brain and allowed me to fall asleep
- **"Calm"** has helped me to relax,
- **"Finch"** has enabled me to schedule self-care and encouraged me to be kind to myself,
- **"Todoist"** has helped me keep track of things that need doing.

I would really encourage anyone who is struggling in any way, not just through menopause, to try various different apps to find the one that helps you the most.

But most of all, being kind to each other; it is easy to see someone who appears to have it all together, but we never know what is going on under the surface.

Sallie Bates



The Menopause charity has a symptom checker you can use to monitor symptoms which can be really useful when trying to see if a treatment is effective. <https://www.themenopausecharity.org/2021/10/21/menopause-symptoms-questionnaire/>



And The Mental Health Foundation has some great information about supporting your mental health throughout the menopause: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/a-z-topics/menopause>



Nurturing faith in our children and young people

We all know that nurturing faith within our children and young people is so important, which is why we invest time as a church in running things like: Elevate Youth, Earthshakers on a Sunday morning, Friday Night Takeaway and Holiday Clubs. These are brilliant opportunities for our children and young people both within Ashwood and for those within the community to hear more about following Jesus and have the space to grow in their relationship with Him.

But research has shown that the biggest influence in a child's walk with Jesus is the parents/guardians - what happens at home has a big influence on how faith grows.

We thought it's be good to hear some snippets about what some families do at home to help cultivate and grow the faith in their homes..



Nurturing Faith in Toddlers

Encouraging children in faith is so important! The earlier you start the easier it will be for them to understand and acknowledge that they have a heavenly father who cares so deeply for them.

I encourage my daughter by reading age appropriate Bible stories, recapping on the stories afterwards and

occasionally creating crafts relating to the story. Christian pop-up story books really motivate, excite and encourage younger children to want to learn more about God's word. Praying together is so important, it helps children grow in their relationship with God and it also teaches discipline e.g if you do something wrong you ask for forgiveness from your heavenly father. Praying together highlights your own





faith and really encourages your child to become more prayerful as they are growing into their faith.

Christian children songs, programmes and rhymes are positive ways you can encourage faith in children, they will be learning God's word and having fun at the same time!

Tracey Crowder

Nurturing Faith in Tids

Having been approached to write something about how I encourage my children with their faith, I found myself not sure what to write.



Every 'family' is different and faces their own unique challenges and I think it's so

important to acknowledge that encouraging the next generation is not something we can do alone, nor should we.

I believe that it is the exposure to loving and supportive individuals that is so important to encourage faith in the next generation. In my opinion, we can achieve this through our positive interactions, actively demonstrating Christ-like characteristics.

By encouraging my own children to attend and become involved in church life, they have had the privilege of meeting and interacting with a diverse mix of amazing church family.

As a family we have found the family lectio app really useful, in addition to chat and catch prayers (where you encourage children to 'chat' with God and 'catch' what He is saying back, basically a two way conversation with God), and conversations about life events and challenges e.g. attending Halloween discos at school have been really helpful.

We've found that being part of church has meant that people demonstrate through their daily interactions and service to each other and Christ how to deal with the daily challenges life throws at them. As church family I

believe it is all of our responsibilities to demonstrate our own faith to the next generation. By doing so it will ensure that we all play our part in encouraging the faith of everyone within our church family.



John Gell

Nurturing Faith in Teenagers

As a mum of 3 teenage daughters (17,16,14) guiding and training them in teachings of Christ and developing their own faith is a challenge.

When i was younger we didn't have the influences around us like the young people of today have, social media is a huge influence and whilst it can be positive, safeguarding my daughters is a daily challenge, even down to the



music they are listening to. It can bring so much confusion on

identity, problems with building relationships and embracing the uniqueness of who they are.

As the scriptures say *“train a child up in the way they should go and when they are old they will not depart from it”*

Proverbs 22:6, this isn't about just telling them, it's about showing them with our own actions/behaviours and providing them that safe space to make mistakes and learn from them without judgement or condemnation.

They are watching us all the time and learning. When we realise our children are a gift from God and not our property it takes the weight off. We know His word says he will never leave us nor forsake us and he goes before us and leads our steps. Everyday the world brings its own



challenges but we have faith and know that His word never changes.

We have experienced our own difficulty in navigating the teenage years. It has been a very tough challenge and very easy to overthink, catastrophise and lean on our own understanding, but just as Abraham did, we have to surrender our Isaacs to God and know that He is working for our good. Asking God for help and support, praying together and when they don't want to engage, praying for them and then standing back and letting God do what only He can. Evangelism isn't just for us to do outside of the home, it begins in the home. Giving teenagers that space to share how they feel and their opinions on things makes them feel heard and it also then enables you to find out things that you can then use in your prayers, our job isn't to “fix” absolutely everything when it goes wrong but it is showing them that life is a journey of developing our character but God is always there. Sharing with them when you have received an answered prayer and having fun together.

Being over protective and trying to shield them from life is not helpful, if anything it will do more harm. They need to understand the good and the bad and learn to lean on the Lord

themselves, then they will see their own prayers answered. Parenting is hard but God put our children in our lives to be good role models to them and to love them.

Amy Shaw



carer support group

We recognise that within church we have a lot of people involved in caring for relatives and we've been thinking about how we can support those within church that are involved in caring for loved ones e.g. elderly parents, spouses with complex health needs, those supporting relatives with dementia etc.

and care full time for someone, for some it's regularly checking in and supporting a loved one, but we all share that emotional burden of caring for someone. We met up in November at Wetherspoons which was great. Maria, who's joined Ashwood a few months ago shares her experience.

Why not come along to our next get together?



It was a lovely experience attending the first carers support group. A chance to meet others and share stories, ideas and information which I found invaluable.

At times it is so easy to feel isolated and overwhelmed, but a chat with someone who has empathy with how you are feeling is such a blessing. I would encourage anyone that is involved as a carer to pop in and say hello....no pressure.

It's great to know we can support one another and enjoy a little time out for ourselves.

Maria Graham



We're aware that this takes a toll and can be emotionally and physically draining and that chatting with others who are in a similar position can be really helpful/encouraging and can share the load. We have set up a WhatsApp group for those involved in caring for loved ones, so we can pray/support each other and have occasional social get-togethers. Caring looks different for each of us, some live





Moving Forward in 2024

What does togetherness look like for you? The Hebrew word for one "Ehhad", which is used to describe God, signifies more than just a digit, it demonstrates a unit moving together with one purpose and belief. In 2023, working for Links we have seen a great number of "Ehhad" moments with our connections and partners across Africa as we move forward and advance with the Good News of our King Jesus



Hope Missions, Ashwood's church partnership through Links, have been a

strong example to other organisations in Malawi and Zambia on how to minister to rural communities in the Spirit of "Ehhad"-ness in key areas of Faith, Justice, Healthcare, Business and Empowerment. Ashwood's recent Christmas offering will go to develop their Community Healthcare teams to reach another village with preventative healthcare messages to the five they already work alongside

Annie Mkandawire, and her brilliant team at Hope Missions, continue to share their knowledge and insight with other organisations, for example their

amazing solar irrigation system at Hope Farm that waters thousands of bananas has just been recognised by the agricultural



as a site of excellence and provides some sustainable income for the organisation's activities. Hope Missions are so grateful for the church connection with Ashwood - thank you for moving forward with them! Let's believe for more "Ehhad" moments in 2024 and beyond!

Ashwood Team to Malawi

In 2024, Ashwood Church can be excited to be moving forward with Hope Missions in developing the ongoing connection and support to reach lost communities in Malawi with the practical and spiritual realities of the Kingdom of God

We will meet after Sunday Service on 28th January with Sam Walker, Links' Africa Region Coordinator, to pray and continue to plan an Ashwood team trip to Malawi

Please join us if you're interested in Hope Missions or are thinking to join the visiting Ashwood team in early 2025.



Kenya - a New Base!

Over the past 6 years the Links Africa office has served and done training with 12 partner organisations across Kenya, Zambia, Malawi and Uganda out of its temporary base in Malawi where I work and live. But in 2024 Links and I are excited to be moving forward with developing Links Africa's regional hub in Kenya, where we have been generously given some land and property.



This new hub base will create more partnerships within East Africa, become a site

of excellence to showcase Links core activities, provide locally source income for our involvement on the continent and provide an administrative centre to serve our Africa partners more effectively

I am really excited with the expansion God is doing for this region and believe it will even impact a global network of partners! Can you pray with me in this development of a new base? - For me personally and for Links' influence on the continent of Africa?

Links and my work will continue as usual in other nations like Malawi - but from February 2024 I will be spending the majority of my time in Kenya rather than Malawi.

Sam Walker

Links Africa
Region
Coordinator



Thank you!

Thank you to everyone for your support over the past month. I'm doing well and walking without crutches now.

Having had my hip replaced, one of my frustrations has been to be dependent on others for putting my socks on or picking things up, to Hoover and put things away in low cupboards. I like to be independent and not rely on others. Yet we need each other.

I have learnt to use crutches and discovered the wonder of a litter picker! It enabled me to get dressed and pick things up. What a delight in picking up a pin with it (magnet at the end!) from the floor that my lovely husband would have otherwise probably found in his foot!

These tools empowered me! Jesus also empowered people when he asked them: "What do you want me to do?" He didn't decide what they needed. Then he told the man on the mat to pick it up, no longer dependent on his friends.

It made me think about whether I am empowering people when I help them.

I like Links Charity because it looks to empower people. Micro enterprises invest in a business and then the loan is given to empower someone else in business.

Thank you to everyone who has supported Links this Christmas. Thank you for empowering people!

Mandy Walker





what's on

Regular Meetings:

- **Sunday Morning:** Ashwood meets in the Ashwood Centre starting at 10.00am for refreshments, meeting starts at 10.30am
- **Touching Heaven Gathering:** 7.30 – 9.00pm usually 1st Wednesday in the month: 7th Feb, 6th March, 3rd April and 1st May
- **LifeGroups** meet fortnightly on Sunday or Monday evenings. If you would like to be a part of a LifeGroup please speak to one of our LifeGroup coordinators: Molly Bell or Bec Goody
- **Ashwood Youth** Fortnightly on Sundays details, see page 22 / 23
- **Ashwood Men** Weekly Breakfast at Wetherspoons on Thursdays 9.30
- **Prayer Opportunities** see pages 30 - 33 for more details

Ashwood in the Community @ Ashwood Centre

- **Café 22:** Mondays except Bank Holidays 9.30am – 12pm
- **Foodbank:** Tuesdays 2.00pm-3.00pm
- **Seesaw (toddlers):** Tuesdays & Fridays term time 9.30am – 11.15am
- **Detached / Bike Project:** Thursday evenings in the Coxmoor estate (starting back after February Half Term)

For Your Diaries:

Tue 23rd Jan	Start of Alpha	pg 10
Sun 28th Jan	Sam Walker - Malawi Trip	pg 48
Wed 31st Jan	Men's Food Night	pg 39
Sun 4th Feb	Baptism Sunday	pg 31
Fri 9th Feb	Friday Night Takeaway	pg 25
Sun 11th Feb	Belonging to Ashwood	pg 18
Fri 1st March	Women's Worship Night	pg 32
Fri 22nd to Sun 24th March	Elevate Youth Refresh Weekend	pg 23
Thur 18th April	Keys to Health, Wholeness and Fruitfulness	pg 10
Fri 23rd - Mon 26th Aug	2024 Awaken	pg 07



sunday messages

The best way to get hold of our Sunday messages is the 'Talks' section of our church website (or Facebook). Here's a reminder of what has been preached over the last few weeks

Sunday 19th November	The Church I see - Part 5 Bob Goody
Sunday 26th November	The Church I see - Part 6 Matt Bell
Sunday 3rd December	Mary's Voice Matt Bell
Sunday 10th December	Family Christmas with Nativity Our Earthshakers children with Rich Reason
Sunday 17th December	Carol Service - Joseph Gill Isterling
Sunday 24th December	The Shepherds Bob Goody
Christmas Day 25th Dec	Jesus Gill Isterling
New Year's Eve 31st Dec	Cobs and walk
Sunday 8th January	The Big Adventure - Part 1 Matt Bell
Sunday 15th January	The Big Adventure - Part 2 Matt Bell



Further information

For further information about any church activities, please speak to one of our welcome team or one of the people taking part in the meeting. Alternatively, feel free to make use of the following contact information:

Senior Leaders	Matt & Claire Bell 01623 237749 matt@ashwoodchurch.org / claire@ashwoodchurch.org
Administrator	Gisela Beighton admin@ashwoodchurch.org.uk
Children and Youth Work Community Outreach Leader	Richard Reason 07852 915270 Gill Isterling gill@ashwoodchurch.org.uk
Pastoral Care Team Leader	Bec Goody bec@ashwoodchurch.org.uk
Finance	Becky Holmes becky@ashwoodchurch.org.uk
LifeGroups	Bec Goody bec@ashwoodchurch.org.uk
Church email	info@ashwoodchurch.org.uk
Church website	www.ashwoodchurch.org.uk
Facebook	ashwood church page

www.ashwoodchurch.org.uk

In case you miss any of the information from Ashwood News or the weekly notices, then visit www.ashwoodchurch.org.uk.

We have a Church Weekly email with lots of information to help keep you up to date with what's going on and how to get involved. To be included in the mailing list to receive this information please email admin@ashwoodchurch.org.uk.

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