

**TOGETHER
NETWORK** 



Together in Prayer

The Power of Volunteering

August - October 2019

The Power of Volunteering

Volunteering, whether it be for a church's coffee morning, the local foodbank, or a national charity, can be a beautiful opportunity to serve others and reflect God's love. The power of a person giving of their time is vast and has interconnected benefits to the project or organisation, the person volunteering themselves and to wider society.

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. 1 Peter 4:10

Volunteering can have a hugely positive contribution for people's health and wellbeing, even including conditions like dementia. It can help reduce loneliness, improve mental health, and provide people with the skills and confidence they need to take the next step in life or even move out of poverty.

In 2018, over 10,000 volunteers were involved with the projects that the Together Network supported!

Volunteers help create connections in communities, helping to tackle social exclusion, increase the uptake of other programmes and opening up opportunities for others to get involved.

The role of volunteers is vital within the work of the Together Network as we work alongside churches in communities to tackle social inequality, transform neighbourhoods and change lives. We are so thankful for every hour invested.

This prayer diary is a celebration of the volunteers who support our work and gives pointers for praying for them.





7 in 10

people have volunteered at some point in their lives

89%

of recent volunteers met new people through their volunteering



90%



of volunteers feel they make a difference through their volunteering



8 in 10

volunteers give time locally, within their own neighbourhoods



Facts on this page are from **A National Survey on the Volunteer Experience, NCVO, 2019**

Diocese of York

Together Middlesbrough & Cleveland's Feast of Fun programme will be supporting over 1,500 children, young people and families with fun activities, healthy food and family outings this summer. Please give thanks for the amazing army of over 200 volunteers who will be giving their time, gifts and skills to support children and families across the 36 Feast of Fun holiday clubs.

People of all ages, from students to the retired, will be volunteering in their local communities, creating safe spaces where children can have fun and learn together. Volunteers will also be preparing a community meal that whole families can enjoy together.



George*, who has signed up to volunteer for the first time this year, said:

"When I heard about Feast of Fun, I immediately wanted to get involved. I remember as a child that my mum brought us up on her own, we relied on free school meals and money was really tight. Now I'm retired I want to give something back and make the summer holidays a happy and healthy time for local families."



Please pray for everyone involved, for safety, for joy in sharing fun and food together. There will also be lots of family outings being run so please pray for volunteers in local museums, National Parks, nature reserves, etc. who will be welcoming coach loads of Feast of Fun families.

Vera* said:

"I'm a widow and I would have been eating a sandwich at home on my own in front of the TV. Look at me I'm having so much fun, and sharing a meal with 50 people - it's like having a brand new family!"

*names changed

Diocese of Chester

Transforming Lives Together coordinates 'Filling the Gap', which sees churches provide food and fun for children and families in the summer holidays. Again it's run by an army of amazing volunteers. Pray for energy, peace and rest for them, and also that they find joy in the work. Please also pray that larger churches with more volunteers and resources will help those at smaller churches or churches in more deprived areas.

Places of Welcome, a network of places where everyone can go for a friendly face, cup of tea and a conversation if and when they need it, also depends on volunteers to run week in, week out.

"One particular volunteer informed me that helping had 'changed her life' as it gave her a purpose again. She was pleased to be helping others and benefitted from seeing people and feeling less isolated herself. Yes, we have visitors who have become volunteers – which is wonderful."

The Personal Power of Volunteering

Sarah* was struggling with her home circumstances, was very distressed, anxious and lacking in confidence.

A local Place of Welcome in Chester gave Sarah somewhere that was easy to drop into without needing to belong in any formal way. It provided her with a time and place that she could meet with those giving her support, and a relaxed atmosphere in which to get to know people. From this introduction, Sarah now attends church regularly, is a volunteer within the church's Charity Shop and at their 'Knit & Natter' group as well as the monthly

Messy Church – and anything else that needs an extra pair of hands! She has regained her confidence, is much happier and, whilst not all of her personal problems have gone away, she knows she has friends she can turn to. A church member recently helped her secure a part-time job which is another hurdle crossed. Sarah says, "If I hadn't got to know the people at church, I probably wouldn't be here".

*name changed



Diocese of Newcastle

Together Newcastle coordinates the Places of Welcome network locally. Please pray for new volunteers starting at two new Places of Welcome in churches in the east of Newcastle. Please also pray for energy and that the volunteers will feel blessed working at other projects and organisations Together Newcastle support including: Little Shepherd's parent and toddler group, the meet and greet at St Nicholas cathedral, Widdy Grows community garden and Tyne and Wear Citizens.

Diocese of Southwark

Together Southwark is supporting several volunteer-led projects including local Lunchbox Library groups which provide food and literacy support to children, a pilot move-on support project for people experiencing homelessness, and work around the prevention of serious youth violence. These all run thanks to the involvement of volunteers who give their time and talents. Please pray for protection and blessings for these volunteers.

Diocese of Liverpool

Together Liverpool has been leading the development of the Liverpool Kindness Displaced Peoples Spiritual Support project, which is seeking to establish a chaplaincy service which will help support asylum seekers of all faiths and none to access spiritual support in their first few months in the UK. Please pray for Together Liverpool as they recruit and train volunteer chaplains.



Please also pray for a specific volunteer, Annette, at Together Liverpool who is working on a project listening to and recording stories of experts by experience across the city. These are people who are experiencing food insecurity and their stories will be told to local politicians. Please pray for wisdom and sensitivity as she meets with these people.

Diocese of Leicester

Together Leicester is supporting St Peter's Lunch club as it looks for ways to develop into a social eating venue. Please pray that they are able to recruit more volunteers. Please also pray for the development of volunteer involvement in a cooking skills project starting in Leicester City – Together Leicester want to provide the opportunity for volunteers to grow in confidence in teaching cooking skills and using them in wider contexts, such as the catering industry.

Diocese of Birmingham

Thrive Together Birmingham coordinates the Places of Welcome network for the city. Thank God for the many volunteers involved in running Places of Welcome, who each week help make their local community more friendly and welcoming. Thrive Together Birmingham will soon be celebrating the 5th anniversary of Places of Welcome with a series of events honouring the role of volunteers in making the project a success.



Please pray for wisdom, emotional strength and comfort for all the volunteers who regularly meet people in difficult situations at their Place of Welcome. Pray that volunteers know they are valued, and can see the difference their commitment is making.

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

Luke 6:38



Diocese of Truro



Transformation Cornwall's programme of events and workshops known as 'Meet The Funders' brings together groups and projects looking for funding for social action, outreach and community work in Cornwall, with those who can fund them. Those seeking funding are almost all volunteering on behalf of their project.

Pray that they continue to have time for this important work and are able to access the funding they need.

Diocese of Norwich

Imagine Norfolk Together are supporting a church in Great Yarmouth which is the first in the area to start a group to support families with food and fun during the school holidays. This summer, three more churches are planning to do the same. They have had some enthusiastic volunteers come forward; please pray for these volunteers as they start these new ventures.

In King's Lynn, Imagine Norfolk Together are supporting the local Christians Against Poverty Debt Centre. There is a need for volunteers here to become chaperons and befrienders. Pray that local people hear about this opportunity and get involved.

Diocese of Manchester

Greater Together Manchester run the Greater Manchester Winter Night Shelter. This exists to provide shelter and hospitality to rough sleepers, working in partnership with the Booth Centre (a local day centre) to create individual move-on plans to allow them to move on from the shelter into better more permanent accommodation.

Please pray for all the volunteers who work tirelessly to ensure that the shelter is able to open each night over winter. Pray that they will feel supported and valued, and that they are able to serve guests with love and that they too will feel blessed by those they serve.



2 in 3

recent volunteers say they are
always or often with others when
they volunteer

93%

of recent volunteers say they
enjoy their volunteering



Celebrating Heroes

We always want to celebrate and truly thank our volunteers. In Chester, Transforming Lives Together held a big event called 'Filling the Gap Heroes' which brought together volunteers from local churches who are part of their Filling the Gap programme of food and activity provision in the school holidays. The event was purely a time to celebrate the volunteers and to thank and affirm them for all of their incredible work. Everyone received a 'hero' plaque in a special presentation. One volunteer said 'I never saw myself as a hero before!' and another said they felt 'valued and honoured' by being invited to the event.

Facts on this page are from A National Survey on the Volunteer Experience, NCVO

Diocese of Lichfield

Transforming Communities Together has a growing team of specialist volunteers. Whether they are helping Transforming Communities Together to reach the milestone of 50 Places of Welcome in Staffordshire, or helping to collate feedback from training sessions, these volunteers greatly add to the team's capacity to help people and communities thrive and flourish.



Please pray in particular for Gavin and the Just Finance Black Country team, as they work on developing a Pensions Workshop to empower people to make choices about their long-term financial future.

“Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.”

Proverbs 11:25

A Prayer for Volunteers

Written by Lily Axworthy, Worker at Greater Together Manchester

Lord God,

We thank you for every person who gives of their time and energy to change the lives of others. We pray for all those who volunteer in their local community, that each volunteer will know just how important their contribution is. In particular we pray for those who feel overwhelmed by the level of need surrounding them or who feel that they are alone in their work. Please help them to find others who can support and encourage them, and that they will know that they are not alone.

We pray for those who would like to give of their time and skills, but have yet to find that to which they are called. We ask that you would give them the courage and wisdom to discern that which is the right place for them.

Amen.

The Power of Volunteering Together

Together Kent found that the cost of school uniforms were putting many local families under severe financial pressure.

They gathered together local groups and churches around the issue, raised some funding, and started regular sessions which saw donated school uniforms being distributed lovingly to those who needed them. Each distribution was held by a different

church and was led by a volunteer team. A volunteer army also sorted, washed and ironed the donations – around 1,000 pieces of school uniform in total! One older volunteer said "It was the first time in years I felt that I'd been useful".



Diocese of London

Capital Mass regularly holds training events or 'learning communities' for clergy and volunteers from local churches, so that they can go back to make a real and meaningful difference in their communities. Upcoming events include training around resettling regugee families, helping people onto Universal Credit and hosting Winter Night Shelters.



Please pray that volunteers who attend these events will be educated and empowered by them.

Diocese of Blackburn

Together Lancashire is coordinating a programme of holiday provision including food and positive activities for those in local communities where resources are tight. This is run by a team of volunteers who give of their time, for example spending an hour every morning to make 1,000 sandwiches a day. Please pray for this great team, who are not only passionate about keeping children fed, but also become a great team from different church backgrounds and none.

Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham

Transforming Notts Together has recently moved, along with two other charities, into a building owned by a local church. This is an exciting step, but the building is in need of some TLC. Please pray volunteers with practical skills offer their time over the next few months to transform the building into a real hub of activity that is warm and welcoming for all who visit.

Transforming Notts Together are hoping to encourage people in churches who have a heart for social action but aren't yet involved, to consider volunteering at existing projects rather than starting brand new projects. Transforming Notts Together will be holding an event to let the wider church know what churches are already doing in the city and how they can get involved.



Please pray that people come and are inspired to 'step out' and join in with what is happening in the area.

What is the Together Network?

The Together Network is a key and distinctive aspect of CUF's work. It is currently comprised of 20 partnerships with Church of England dioceses working to support social action in specific areas of the country, and continues to grow.

Together Network member organisations employ dedicated Development Workers who support churches and other groups that are seeking to bring about positive change in their communities. This includes offering encouragement and guidance, delivering training, helping to identify resources, and building connections between groups.

Being part of an established national network enables members to share best practice and promote strategic working. At the same time, members can respond innovatively and creatively to specific opportunities and challenges in their areas.

**TOGETHER
NETWORK** ⊕

**National movement,
Local action**

The Together Network is a subsidiary charity of the Church Urban Fund

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