

Larkfield Warm Space



From left to right: Volunteers on our opening day, our Warm Space Christmas Tree and a volunteer having lunch.

It seems incredible that, at the time of writing, it is only two months since we first heard about the Warm Welcome Campaign, which encourages churches and other establishments to offer a warm and welcoming space for people who need to save on heating bills during this cost of living crisis. The Rev. Naomi had mentioned this initiative at the end of a Churches Together meeting, and suddenly the churches in Larkfield were being encouraged to set up a Warm Space, and we did. The Sycamore Tree building at our church was deemed the ideal place, and now we are just completing our fourth week.

It has been an amazing experience, and not one I would ever have wanted to miss. Firstly, because at the time of the Queen's Jubilee, members of our three Larkfield churches, Holy Trinity, Larkfield Community Church and we Methodists had so much enjoyed working together on a Known and Loved mission, that we were excited to be doing something together again. So we set a date for starting, Monday 21st November.

Secondly, because of our wonderful volunteers, those from the other churches and from the community, as well as people who have responded to social media advertising. Their friendliness has made the Warm Space such a pleasant place to be.

Thirdly, because of the guests. Every day we have been open, somebody has come who needed us to be

open. They have come for many different reasons – for help with internet problems, to charge up mobile phones, for companionship, for conversation, for coffee, for cake, and especially for flapjack, and for hot chocolate with marshmallows and cream, to read a newspaper, to do a jigsaw, and recently to have a car battery charged and other car problems sorted. And two men and a dog have come (separately) because they are homeless and need somewhere to be, and to be fed during the day, before heading off to a tent or car! And two boys turned up because their schools were closed due to snow, and they wanted to find out what a Warm Space was about. We expected people to come so that they could turn their heating off and come somewhere warm, and that has happened, but to a limited extent. I think that's because of the weather. When we opened it was still mild and people hardly needed their heating, then the temperature dropped and dropped, but so did the snow, and nobody wanted to come out in such icy weather, except the intrepid volunteers who still turned up, as did our homeless friend and a few others who wanted a nice free cup of coffee.

Fourthly, because it's all free. We are so thankful for the grants that have been applied for from all three churches and other organisations, which are beginning to arrive. We are thankful to the lady who donated lots of new and nearly new toys to sell at

our Christmas Tree Festival so we were able to raise, with other donations, nearly £140; for the generosity of Tesco and especially Morrisons, who have donated cleaning materials, food, drinks, soup, and chocolates(!); for the volunteers who have brought bread and milk and newspapers. For people's amazing generosity, that enables this all to be free, we are hugely grateful.

And reason number five, because God has been clearly at work in all this – in the way the planning has fallen into shape, the number of volunteers who have come, and all the stories of individuals, whether shared or kept secret. A couple of weeks ago, we were discussing how to reach more people. We said we needed a large banner on the fence on the corner, but couldn't afford it. Then the next day a lady contacted the Rev. Naomi, saying, "You need a banner, I will pay for it!" Truly God was at work at that time, and at many times over the last two months.

We still potentially have three months to go, and we still have the right people to find. The banner on the fence helps. After Christmas we plan to do a leaflet drop around some areas of Larkfield. We have no idea how much this project is going to cost. We have no budget. But we go forward in faith, as we know God is at work in our Warm Space in Larkfield.

Monica Wilding, December 2022