**Looking Forwards … Sharing God’s Love with our neighbours**

***‘In response to God’s love for us, we seek to love God and love our neighbours as ourselves’.***

As many of you will know Lea Road has always been a church that has seen love for our neighbours and community ministry as a fundamental part of what we do. This is captured in our mission statement which is at the heart of what we are and what we do.

Our church was set up as a mission church when Queen’s Street Church raised money at a gift day to both buy the land and build a church in the newly built area of Penn Fields. When it opened in 1905 a number of people moved from Queen’s Street to form the new church on Lea Road. Since that time reaching out to the people living in the neighbourhood and working with them to come up with solutions to the issues, problems and concerns they are facing has been seen as part of the mission of the church. 100 years ago, as a response to unemployment the church parlour was opened up by the minister to men who were struggling with unemployment during the great depression. In the 1960’s the Saints Youth Club started and ran for over 30 years, Mencap started their Wolverhampton group at the church and Age Concern started a lunch club hosted in the church building. In our more recent times, although now over 20 years ago, we called Adella to be our Church Related Community Worker. Following on from that we started our programme of hosting Time For God volunteers who have come and worked alongside us in our mission to reach out and serve our neighbours.

It is in this context that we now look ahead to the next steps on our journey as a church and it was great news when we heard, at the beginning of March, that our funding bid to the Lottery had been successful and that we have been granted £205,000.00 spread over the next three years. This funding will enable us to continue the valuable work that we have always done and respond to the needs and aspirations of people living in the local neighbourhood.

The funding will enable us to do a number of things. Most importantly it will fund the range of community facing activities that we have developed over the last 10 years that up till now have been run mainly by volunteers and subsidised at least in part by the church. These activities will include the Drop In that we will now be able to run with an enhanced programme to include workshops and training that give people both the confidence and skills to go on to new things. There is also funding for the Youth Club and the Food Project.

Secondly, we are going to be able to refurbish the lift and make it safe and usable for the future. This will enable more people to safely access the first floor of the building which in turn will make it more possible and accessible for new groups to make use of this space.

In our Sunday worship on the 21st of March David Brown reminded us that we need to be a people of welcome and of invitation – let us pray that we will use the great opportunities that this grant provides us with to continue to be a people of invitation and welcome and that we will truly live out the words that appear on website where we say:-

* ***We are an inclusive church family of ordinary people, drawn together in fellowship and the love we know in Jesus.***
* ***​​​We are committed to serve our local community as disciples of Jesus.***

***‘The King will reply ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me' Matthew 25 v 40***

**Pete Twilley - March 2021**