



News from the Riverbank

ISSUE SIX 2019

Welcome to our latest Newsletter!



A message from the CEO...

As I come to the end of my first year as CEO of Riverbank, I look back with real joy at the way God has been moving in this ministry. I have learnt so much personally, but knowing Jesus as my Lord and Saviour has on many occasions been that which has held me. I was reminded recently in Ephesians chapter one that we sit under the authority of Christ and that God places all things under His feet. Our vision is to see the families that we work with come to know this for themselves, so that the hardships they face are laid at the feet of Christ and placed under His redeeming authority.

So what have we been up to this year? Well, new developments for Riverbank have included welcoming a number of new families into the fold and beginning a partnership with St Richards Church in Ham. We have introduced the Hygiene Bank to help families struggling financially and grown our partnerships with Kids Matter, Kick London and Richmond Knights Basketball. We have also welcomed our Syrian family and begun the resettlement process.

In appointing Laura Lowther as our Mission and Ministry Manager, we have grown our links with partner churches, started running a regular Bible study group and invited families to our All Age services followed by a roast and Harvest lunch shared together afterwards.

As we've continued with our regular groups, it has been a real pleasure to see our Riverbank mums help one another, celebrate special occasions together, and offer words of encouragement. To see them equip one another has been truly touching and very much part of our long term vision for Riverbank.

As we prepare for Christmas and the much anticipated Riverbank party, I want to wish you all well for the festive season and the New Year and pray that you will discover the love of Jesus in a new and surprising way.

Michelle. ☺

Community Sponsorship

This year, we were finally given approval from the Local Authority and the Home Office to be Community Sponsors for a Syrian Refugee family. This project has been a big one for Riverbank and its dedicated team of volunteers and has consisted of furnishing a property, raising money, navigating the benefits system, arranging school places, completing



paperwork, and finding translators (amongst other things!) In July of this year, Michelle and a small team met the family at Heathrow and safely took them home. The family consist of Mum, Dad and three girls – two of school age and one preschooler.

Since their arrival, the family have done so well. The girls have all settled into school and nursery, and both mum and dad are rapidly learning English at college. The family have had a day out in London visiting a number of tourist attractions and dad has started earning some pocket money from doing simple painting and decorating jobs. Please do continue to pray for this family over the coming year.

Hygiene Bank

In September of this year, Riverbank contacted a local distributor to find out more about this scheme and then very soon found themselves swamped with shampoos, conditioners, toothbrushes, toothpastes, shower gels, sanitary items, gift packs, soap... the list is endless! What a blessing it is for our families to be offered these bits and pieces – often alongside a Food Bank voucher. So far we have given out a selection of hygiene products to 20 of our families.

Riverbank at Home

This term, we introduced a new group called Riverbank at Home. For many years now, we have wanted to create a weekly drop-in space for parents or care givers to come and make friends, eat together and be in community. In the few weeks that we have been running, we have seen our mums eat plenty of breakfast together, share stories and encouragements, and meet with staff to

accept offers of practical help around filling in forms, small grant applications, and receive invites to other events. In time we hope that our numbers will grow and that this will be a safe space for our parents to hang out together and enjoy each other's company.

Volunteers

'I thank my God every time I remember you...' Philippians 1:3. I'm not quite sure how we would manage without the loving support of all our dear Riverbank volunteers! From the young people who help with face painting at our parties to our oldest volunteer at the age of 90+ who knits for the newborns of our mums, may I take this opportunity to say; **'Thank You.'** We have had people bake, cook, pray, give financially, attend events, wrap presents, help in a crèche, furnish a house, buy school uniform, drive cars, offer advice and many, many other things. Without **YOU**, Riverbank just would not work or run smoothly.

What has been a real pleasure this year however, is seeing some of our mums give back by volunteering. We are regularly blessed with Cheryl's amazing cakes at Little Splashes and two of our mums are even volunteering back at the hostel in order to meet and encourage other mums. The most powerful stories of hope come from those who have experienced the love and support of Riverbank itself. If you would like to find out more about ways to volunteer with Riverbank, do please get in touch.

St Richards Church – Ham

This year we have embarked on a new project to plant our first Riverbank Hub. This has been in the pipeline for some time now, but with the blessing of the trustees, we now have an advertised job role for an opportunity to work in Ham

alongside St Richards Church and School. The vision for this Hub is to help build the church, bring families into community, and build on the model that has been successful here at Holy Trinity. If you would like more information about this post, please do get in touch.



Living Water

Living Water is a Bible Study group for any parent who wants to explore faith. So far we have had a small but dedicated group commit to learning more about forgiveness, prayer, the bible, the trinity, baptism and the person of Jesus. It has been a privilege to watch these mums grow in their faith and even take a Bible away with them to read for the very first time. Do please continue to pray for this group and for Laura as she leads it.

Orleans House Gallery Workshop

In October half term, we were very fortunate to partner again with Orleans House Gallery. We had 18 people enjoy a free puppet-making workshop and pizza lunch together. It was a wonderfully creative time of coming together and making an organised mess! The children and adults thoroughly enjoyed themselves and commented on how much fun it was spending time together as a family. To Dawn and her team, we would like to say a big thank you and we are looking forward to the next one!



Financial Giving

A big **'thank you'** to those of you who have given financially to the work of Riverbank this year! The list is too big to mention each and every giver, but you know who you are - whether individual, corporate or a partner church.

To allow our schools work to happen, we have been blessed again with large grants from Richmond Parish Lands as well as receiving a donation from the Kew Village fair towards the costs of our Christmas party.

As we look to next year and our 10 year celebration, we can't wait to build on and continue our partnerships with those of you who are very special to our Riverbank family.

Goodbye from Karen

After four years of serving with this extraordinary ministry as Fundraising, PR & Marketing Manager, I leave Riverbank on 16 January 2020.

What a privilege to have seen lives impacted by the love, grace and fellowship of Christian community and the endorsement of secular supporters, organisations and funders.

We stand alongside our families and commit to them for the long term – not as 'beneficiaries' or 'service users' - but as people we are called to befriend and love, equipping the church to build positive networks of support around each family.

I am so thankful to have been part of the Riverbank story and look forward to hearing more good news in 2020 and beyond.