

# Appeal for Croydon Church and Feeding Scheme

You're probably aware from Carelinks reports over the last year or so that the Lord has poured out His blessing upon Carelinks projects in South London, UK. The "Croydon Church in a Pub" has been running nearly a year and this has spilled out further into "Croydon Lunchtime Church", held at a venue in the heart of Croydon right next to the central tram stops. Many missionary minded brothers and sisters are involved with running this work, and have spent their lives preaching and trying to reach out to people through humanitarian efforts. And unanimously they all say to the effect 'We've never seen anything like this in the western world! The Lord's blessing upon it is extreme!'. To keep all this going is costing a lot of money and so we're coming to you cap in hand. But let's fill in a bit more background.

Currently we are running four meetings / week. We not only teach the Gospel. We feed the people, provide clothing and even a tent in one case, and direct them to relevant agencies who may be able to assist them with specifics. We observe the Lord's work often involved meals together and we have found this to absolutely work in our age too.



## Who comes?

As well as a few asylum seekers attending and some Ukrainian refugees, the vast majority of our attenders are local British people, mainly poorer folks struggling with the cost of living, living in single rooms. The areas around West Croydon which are our main catchment area are some of the most socially deprived in London and therefore in the United Kingdom. But do people come because of free food? Nearly all who come are Christians who are disillusioned with churchianity but are attracted by our alternative, Biblical, low pressure, friendly approach. We ask people why they come and they all say things like "Because you teach the Bible well", "You don't pressure for money", "Your pastoral team are clearly genuine and have no agendas", "I feel safe and at home with you". So the free food is not the ultimate attraction but it is needed by many, and several say that "This is the only decent meal I ever eat, I thank God for you". And it provides a great forum in which to present the truths of the Gospel.



## Baptisms

We teach the doctrines of the one true Faith through going through a Bible chapter at each meeting. We've been through most of Genesis and most of Luke, all the Lord's parables, and many historical incidents from the Old Testament. All our talks are viewable at

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqHWDPHDmR\\_wAAABA1j2bhI5eVoINv5Pt](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqHWDPHDmR_wAAABA1j2bhI5eVoINv5Pt)

As you can see from looking back at our weekly Carelink reports at <https://carelinks.net/doc/carelinks>, we have baptized 77 people in the UK over the last year, the vast majority of them a result of our activities in South London. That's an average of well over a baptism every week. Nearly all local British people. We labour that point not because we think any ethnic or social group is more significant than another- but because "local British" are the very group that our community [and we ourselves] assumed were *not* that interested in church, or at least, in our take on things. How wrong we were. These initiatives have been used by the Lord to break through our wrong assumption that "Nobody's interested in western countries". They are. Now more than ever before, what with the reduced quality of life, spiralling heating and living costs in the UK, inflation outstripping wage growth etc. Not all of our folks are the poor of this world, however- we're pleased to say that between them they do fund some of our feeding work.





### Spiritual growth

Numbers of baptisms are one thing. The great thing is that those baptized feel this is their spiritual home and they keep attending. Not all every week, but we have a loyal attendance base of over 120 people. All built up over the last 12 months. Attendance at the pub is limited to 35 maximum because the bar is too small and we are using all bar stools and chairs they have. Attendance at Lunchtime Church has varied from 20 to 70 at each meeting. The majority of those who attended our very first “Church in a Pub” meeting still attend. Quite simply, they like what we have to offer. They invite their friends and family. Usage of the *Bible Companion* app is good amongst them, and you only have to listen to some of the comments and short talks at the baptism services to perceive that the level of spiritual growth amongst our brothers and sisters is significant. So many lives have been changed- on our YouTube channel you can hear videos of those baptized testifying about having given up smoking, drugs and immorality after being baptized.

This is all clearly the work of the Lord through His Spirit, and we eagerly seek to continue it.

Truth is, it’s not cheap to keep renting the venue and providing all that food. Especially as there’s no kitchen there and we have to buy in all the food ready prepared. None of our workers get any payment for their work, every penny donated goes to the work in hand. But with rising costs and so much human need, our treasurer [brother Steve Gretton] says we’re looking at spending around £800 GBP / week [that’s US\$ 1000, AU\$ 1500]. We’ve been able to keep things going so far but longer term we do need your help. We’re wondering if ecclesias / churches with funds to spare might consider making a significant donation; if individuals might donate regularly and remember Carelinks in their legacies; and above all can you all *pray* that this keeps going forward. To His glory alone.

We're also absolutely open to any who would like to come and help on the ground, by helping with the food warming and distribution / provision of coffee and snacks; those who might like talking to people about the Gospel, and any who would be able to come and give talks at our meetings [every day of the week apart from Thursday, Friday and Saturday]. You'll find a keen audience.



You can see our general donation details at <https://carelinks.net/doc/donations> but donors are welcome to discuss directly with brother Steve Gretton [shgospel@gmail.com](mailto:shgospel@gmail.com) .

We do ask you give this appeal your serious and prayerful consideration.

Sincerely your brother on behalf of Carelinks UK

Steve Gretton, Secretary [Mendip ecclesia] and the trustees, Rob Clements (Ipswich), Deb Cwiecek (Erith), Pete Eichorn (Nantwich), Jean Field (Kendal), David Hemingray (Nottingham- Jarvis Avenue), Norman Stock (Bournemouth- Winton), Andy Taylor (Windermere)