

## June 2025

Dear Friends

Welcome to the Cornerstone Centre newsletter!

## Thanks

Our Newsletter needs to start with a huge THANK YOU. Thanks to our amazing staff but also a special thanks to all our incredible volunteers who give up their time to support the staff with serving our community. Our volunteers give us a total of 206 hours p/w! We could not do it without you.

We also need to give thanks for all those that have made a one off or regular donation of food or money to support our work. You enable us to keep working hard to meet the needs of our community.

Finally, thanks to our users and our community. We all feel blessed to work here. Thanks for sharing your stories, your tears, your laughter and your friendships.

God Bless to you all,

Alison x

## The Centre

The centre has seen a few staff changes since we last published a newsletter!

Fran has returned from Maternity leave! We are pleased to report the safe arrival of her daughter Jessica and happy to have Fran back at the centre. She came back in March full time.

Jon filled in for Fran whilst she was on Maternity leave, and we are very thankful for all the help, support and skillset he has brought to the centre. Jon is staying on, and you can read about his shiny new role a bit later!

Before Fran came back she expressed a wish to go part-time. So, we advertised and hired Luci to join Fran doing the administration for the centre. Luci started in May and they are doing 2 and a half days each.

Russ our secretary trustee has stepped down. This means that the trustees are on the hunt for someone to try to fill the gap he has left in their team.

Mel has been offering music therapy at the CC for just over a year. In that time sessions have been offered to: Oakwood School, and Children's Centre, as well as to families who use the centre. Mel has many years of experience working with preschool aged kids to help boost their development, enhance their relationship with parents/carers and improve emotional wellbeing. We are very grateful to the Build Back Better grant that is allowing us to offer this service.



## Get Moving Whaddon

Get moving Whaddon has really grown in the last year! Laura now runs 4 groups a week. Her Tuesday women's group is thriving and expanding into more of the hall.

On a Thursday Laura runs 3 classes! She has her women's group first thing, the men's club straight after. The men's club has a variety of ages and abilities and is becoming a lovely way for local men to get stronger, more confident and tackle loneliness. Then on a Thursday afternoon she has 'Women of Whaddon Workout' which is aimed at mums in the area who want to feel confident and positive about their bodies, build strength and feel part of a supportive group. It is conveniently timed round the



school run and mums with younger children are free to bring their little ones and there are toys to entertain kids when mums break a sweat!

The Cornerstone centre has also been listed as a venue for the feel-good Pass that have been launched by Feed Cheltenham. This means that some of our pantry members are getting their exercises free for 12 sessions!

Anyone who is interested in trying a class can try their first one for free! Speak to reception or a member of staff.

Laura says “I am so proud of all the people who attend the classes. Just coming to the classes shows that they really want to make a difference to their health and they want to be part of the Cornerstone community and feel connected to others. Watching the groups grow over the last year has brought me so much joy and I know that people are getting more from the groups than we ever thought possible. There will always be a warm welcome for you and I promise you will be able to join in with us. Hopefully see you there soon.”

## Support and Youth Worker!

Jon is thrilled to step into a new role as a Support and Youth Worker at the Cornerstone Centre. His goal is to offer support, encouragement, and a listening ear to our community including individuals, families and young people.



He'll be based at the Centre three days a week, providing direct support and engaging with everyone who walks through our doors. One day a week, he'll be working alongside other local services to strengthen our outreach and collaboration. In time, he hopes to be working regularly in Pittville School, helping students navigate life's challenges.

Beyond the Centre, he's looking forward to detached youth work, connecting with young people in informal settings. He'll also be involved with the Café Church youth table (1st and 3rd Sunday mornings from

10.30am) and campfire sessions (2nd and 4th Sunday evenings from 6.30-8pm) —creating spaces for conversation, reflection, and community-building.



He's so pleased to be continuing with Cornerstone and St. Michael's and seeing how we grow together!

## Holiday @ Home

Holiday at Home is an annual event for families who cannot afford a holiday away. This weeklong event gives families a wonderful and positive 'holiday' together during the summer.

As expected, Holiday @ Home was an enormous success with volunteers, cooks and sporting professionals providing our holiday makers with craft activities, quizzes, sports activities and a delicious lunch from the host county. This year around 50 people took a 'trip' to Mauritius, Fiji, Turkey and Britain!

The pictures are a mixture of days to give you a flavour of everything they got up to!

Thank you, James, and your team of volunteers, for your boundless energy – keeping this event alive and fresh, every single year.



## Pantry

Our pantry is supplemented, alongside the generous donations, with fresh, organic vegetables from our own allotment on Blacksmith Lane.

For the past 4 years our pantry has been blessed by John King growing us vegetables. John has recently split the plot into 5 smaller plots and has a volunteer for each smaller plot. This is to ease the work for him tending to one big plot.

They have been planting of beans, tomatoes, marrows and squash and we are looking forward to delicious organic vegetables for our pantry clients.



Our pantry members are also beginning to benefit from a new scheme launched by the council and NHS to help with their health and wellbeing during this continuing cost of living crisis.

It is called The Cheltenham Feel Good card and they can claim it through the pantry and claim 12 free sessions either at the leisure centre or at other

participating venues such as The Cornerstone Centre! They can access 12 free sessions with our lovely Laura at Get Moving Whaddon.

## Joy Evenings

The Cornerstone Centre and St Michael's Church have started a joint venture of 'Joy Evenings'. The thought behind it was

To bring some joy to the Cornerstone Centres users and community!

The first Joy Evening in May was a hit! Many guests were blown away by how good it was! Folk On brought the house down with their signature blend of heartfelt songs and hilarious storytelling. Their music, included themes of unity, belonging, and unyielding happiness; plus, the odd song about doomed romances, Morris dancers, or unfortunately expired animals. They had everyone smiling and singing along.



The audience didn't just sit back and watch, there was plenty of enthusiastic participation, including a delightfully embarrassing moments for Lara, energetic standing and stomping, and all the actions you could wish for in a proper folk sing-along. An interval gave folks a chance to chat over drinks, and the evening finished with a flurry of activity around the merch table.

The crowd was a lovely mix of familiar local faces from the Cornerstone Centre and enthusiastic Folk On fans who'd come in from surrounding areas. It was a warm, laughter-filled evening that truly lived up to its name — and yes, plans for the next one are already underway.



## St Michael's News:

It's been a busy few months for St Michaels, we kick started the year in January thinking about gifts brought to Jesus by the wise men and thought about what we would receive, we looked at exploration of faith and spoke about what it means to be a truthful community.

Many took advantage of our Lent course 'Learning to Breathe Underwater', the spirituality of the twelve steps, helping with reconnection and reflection with our faith.

We gave thanks and handed out flower posies to all mums at church on Mothering Sunday. In April, Archdeacon Revd Canon Katrina Scott joined us for Café Church. We spent an hour at the cross in reflection, hosted a family Easter Light Service and enjoyed a special and tasty Lamb dinner on Maundy Thursday with our church community.

In May we beat the bounds and prayed, sang and walked around the parish boundaries.

Coming up in June we will have the ordination service at Gloucester cathedral for Taz followed by her presiding at her first communion and bring and share meal to celebrate.

## Drop in Sessions

We have this year had multiple drop-in sessions from agencies around Cheltenham:

- We were an [election polling station](#) in May.
- [P3](#) have been in to talk about housing needs and help and support those who have housing issues or evictions.
- [Healthwatch Gloucestershire](#) have been in asking people about their experiences with the NHS for surveys to try to help improve the service.
- [Narcotics Anonymous](#) did some drop-in sessions.
- [V-I-A](#) are offering free, confidential support to adults and young people with issues around alcohol dependency and drug use on a Friday morning.
- [Listening Post](#) have been using our space and offering sessions for users.

## Might you help us financially?

We are so thankful for both the one-off donations and for those who have set up a monthly standing order. We are blessed with some grants from charitable trusts, but they are always time limited. A regular source of income from individuals is therefore a great help - plus if you are a taxpayer we can claim back extra from the Inland Revenue. Might you think of setting up a standing order? Even a small regular amount is an immense help.

Speak to Alison, the Centre Managers, for details, phone us on 01242 777777 or email [admin@cornerstonecentre.org.uk](mailto:admin@cornerstonecentre.org.uk).

## **And finally, thank you to all donors, volunteers, and supporters!**

There is countless other support that we simply do not have room to mention. So, a huge thank you to everyone who has donated, volunteered, and attended our activities to support the Cornerstone Centre. We could not do what we do without you.