



Community Matters

'Unity at the Heart of Our Community'. The Cornerstone Centre is a thriving hub of activity at the heart of the Whaddon, Lynworth and Priors Estates.

December 2025

HELLO FROM ALISON:

DEAR FRIENDS

Welcome to the Cornerstone Centre newsletter.

Happy Christmas to all our users, volunteers and supporters.

We have had another amazing year at The Cornerstone Centre and it is a pleasure to be able to share our newsletter full of our staff's stories of what exciting projects have been happening.

It fills me with joy to be able to pause and reflect on the breadth of the work that happens in this wonderful building and within our community.

God Bless to everyone who has been involved in making The Cornerstone so special. A particular thanks to our growing number of partners who facilitate our growth beyond our skills.

Alison x





THE CENTRE

Luci and Fran have fallen into a lovely rhythm with sharing out the admin workload.

Mel has been busy promoting Little Pebbles and running Play Trial.

Jon has thrown himself into youth and community work.

On our Facebook page we asked our community for words that describe our volunteers and staff and used the responses to make a word heart.

In August the Centre had a small face-lift in new backs and seats for our chairs which has given the cafe a fresh look! We have gone back to the original blue, orange and grey... They look very smart, should last longer and are more comfortable!

HOLIDAY AT 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 country. This year around 50 people took a 'trip' to Malaysia, Scotland, Britain, The Netherlands and South Africa! The pictures are from the 'Netherlands Day'!

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

YOUTH WORK



Well where do we start? Since July, we've taken the [Afterschool Club](#) (which meets on a [Monday from 3.30-4.45pm](#)) on a special trip to Pittville Park to sail their home made boats.

We've also started a 'Detached' session on [Monday evenings from 5.30-7.00pm](#) where, together with people from *The Children's Society* and a growing number of *volunteers*, we walk the streets and positively engage having good conversations with the young people. So far we've walked 50+ miles and meet on average 25 young people each time.

Jon's started going into [Pittville School on Wednesday mornings](#) offering One-to-One mentoring sessions to pupils that need a little support and a listening ear. Once the bell goes for lunch he walks the corridors getting to know the young people a little more.

On the [1st and 3rd Sunday mornings from 10am](#) you'll find [Campfire X Cafe Church](#) hosting a table as part of the service - helping with the words and sharing their view as young people. On the [2nd and 4th Sunday evenings, from 6.30-8.00pm](#) Campfire has been meeting with the usual fun, food and friendships. This term we went away to Viney Hill Activity Centre where we had fresh pizza, s'mores around the fire, stacked crates as high as we dared, shot arrows and wandered through the autumn leaves.

Roll on Christmas! In New Year we're hoping to join with the Church exploring the parables... watch this space.

EARLY YEARS

The Play Trail group, for families with babies up to the age of 2 years, is going well with more families attending. Mel has recently been able to meet with the local Health Visiting Team, which will hopefully lead to more families being aware of the group and feel encouraged to attend. We continue to use resources from *Peepie* to help parents understand how to support their baby's development and two more volunteers have completed their training to deliver the Learning Together Programme this term.

It's lovely to see families enjoying how their babies develop and to celebrate their achievements.

Little Pebbles started with lower numbers in September after a large group of children left in the summer to start school. However, numbers have been gradually picking up over the course of this term and we are now seeing new families joining us. One parent was overheard telling a newcomer that she'd tried lots of toddler groups in Cheltenham but that Little Pebbles was the best!



KITCHEN CREATIONS

A new cooking group run by Mike, a chef from Cheltenham Trust, who has come to share his skills and passion for cooking by sharing tips on how to prepare tasty meals you can find in the pantry.

Aimed at people who are out of the habit of cooking, or just having never learnt, Mike helps them to make easy, basic meals that can be used in a variety of ways. For example, a simple mince that could be turned into Spag. Bol., Chilli, etc.

The course is 6 sessions, fortnightly over 12 weeks, to help participants get used to a new way of eating. We only have 6 people at once.

We also have funding, so if people come to the lessons but they don't have an air fryer or hob at home we can help buy one for them.



JOY EVENINGS



Since our last news letter we have had another Joy Evening. Back in October we had a local choir Take Note and some spoken word from local poet Brenda Read-Brown.

Take note sang hits such as “Wellerman”, “Any Dream Will Do” and “Blackbird”, with some beautiful two part harmonies (and even 3 parts at one point!) This was all sandwiched by some fantastic poems by Brenda Read-Brown. We laughed, we cried, and there were a few rude words!

The audience participation part of the evening was a huge success! With the whole church joining in a canon of “What Should We Do with the Drunken Sailor” and “Oh When the Saints” with the audience being conducted by James White, with a little bit of guidance from his curate, Taz.

Joy Evenings are a joint venture between the Cornerstone Centre and St Michael's Church. The thought behind it was to bring some joy to the Cornerstone Centre's users and community!

CHARITY SHOP

The Charity shop has had a very profitable year. Part of this is due to branching out onto Vinted.

As many of you will know our charity shop prides itself on being affordable. This means that £10 will go an awful long way towards a new 'pre-loved' wardrobe!

If you are frequent browser of our rails you may have noticed sometimes we labeled higher quality items with brown labels at slight higher prices. A nice dress goes for £5 rather than £3.

Sometimes we get very generous donations of brand new items with tags from big brands, this is when Vinted comes in! These items go on Vinted at a higher price. All the money come back into the centre to support our users. £223.50 has been raised so far through Vinted.



FILM CLUB

Did you know that Cornerstone has a film club? It's been running since 2013, entirely run by volunteers! Thanks to a community fund grant and a generous discount from The Richer Sounds we were able to update our equipment to a modern tuner with surround sound speakers and a wall mounted projector.

Since then, we have shown over 150 films to more than 300 different people (not all at the same time!). Some months the film is a comedy and other months the film is based on a true story. We usually get around 20 or 30 people coming along but when we showed *'The Lady in the Van'* we had over 50 and had to squeeze extra chairs in.

Occasionally we find a film that is only available on a streaming service like *'The Boy in the Woods'*, the remarkable true-life survival story of a Jewish boy hiding and being hunted in the forests of Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe.

We meet the first Saturday of each month, the doors open at 7:00 and the film starts at 7:30. If you want to know what we're showing next, the Cornerstone Centre staff can tell you. The BluRays/DVDs are available to hire after the event for a small charge.

PANTRY

At harvest our Cornerstone Cupboard received lots of generous donations from lots of organisations: Holy Apostles School, St Mary's Prestbury School, St Michael's Church, Holy Apostles Church and 288 Bar and Wok.

Our shelves are stocked and we are so grateful for the the support; physically, financially and spiritually from everyone who donates to the pantry.

Our allotment is also in full swing with organic locally grown fruit and vegetables.



CORNERSTONE'S 25TH

Back in July the Cornerstone Center turned 25! Although the Cornerstone Centre is still quite young it has a rolling carousel of fantastic staff, volunteers and regulars! Each one bring their own flare to our wonderful Cornerstone Centre!

Other things turning 25 this year included the camera phone, *How The Grinch stole Christmas*, the USB flash drive (a memory stick), *Big Brother* and the PlayStation 2!



ST MICHAEL'S NEWS

It has been a full and joyful six months at St Michael's Church. In June, our Church Administrator, Emma, got married and the next day our Curate, Taz, was ordained at Gloucester Cathedral in a truly wonderful service. The following Sunday she led her very first communion, which was a special milestone for us all.

July brought our simple but successful Summer Fair.

In September, Lyn, one of the church warden's became a licensed funeral minister.

October was a month of generosity as our Harvest Festival gathered an amazing number of donations for The Cornerstone Pantry. After the service, we shared a Hunger Lunch which raised further support for the pantry! As always, Rev James, and his team of volunteers handed out glow sticks to over 300 trick and treaters on Halloween, being the 'light' in the dark night. They did an activity with the light guiding them and had a science quiz.

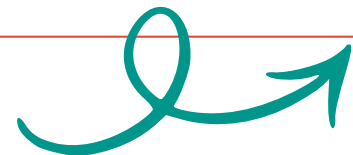
November then offered space for reflection and remembrance, with our All-Souls Service to honour loved ones, and a moving Remembrance Service where veterans Beanie and Will delivered readings and laid our wreath in tribute to the fallen.

Now December is here, and we look forward to celebrating together with our Christmas Fair, Advent Carols, Christingle Service, and more.

Merry Christmas and God Bless



LOOKING FORWARD



Looking into the new year, and the next few months at Cornerstone there is lots to look forward too!

- Our **Board Game Afternoon** only started in November so in the new year will be getting bigger and better as it continues.
- We have our annual **Volunteer Thank you evening** in January to celebrate all the fantastic work that our volunteers do, and remind them we couldn't do this without them.
- There will be another **Joy Evening** in the spring, plans are still being made so, no spoilers yet but keep an eye on our Facebook.

Don't worry if you can't make it to any of these things, our newsletter will be gracing your inbox again in June telling you all about it!

DROP IN SESSIONS

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

- [Alcoholics Anonymous](#) have started running sessions in the Centre on a Thursday Evening.
- [A Borough Councillor](#) Drop-in on a Friday morning gives local community members a chance to voice their issues directly to a councillor.
- [P3](#) have been in to talk about housing needs and help and support those who have housing issues or face evictions.
- [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.

Please get in touch for more information!

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.



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The Cornerstone Centre

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