



This year marks the 21st Anniversary of Church on the Bus. 21 years of differing experiences, some good, some not so good and some exceptionally good. It has been 21 years of being God's workers in serving the homeless and isolated members of our community, bringing them some basic comforts in food and hot drinks, some clothing and protection and warmth against the vagaries of our weather and most of all a message of hope that things can improve and be more rewarding. In this newsletter we will revisit the vision and inspiration that led to the start of Church on the Bus as well bringing you up to date with the here and now.

However, an important way to start is to acknowledge the role that each and every one of you have played in supporting, shaping and delivering Church on the Bus over the years. A really Big Thank You to every one. By working together as a team, we continue to meet the needs of so many individuals in our town. Everyone's part is important in building and delivering the bigger picture.

"The Spirit of the Lord is on Me..."



Isaiah 61

This time of the year is the Church's season of Pentecost. This occurs 50 days after Easter and marks the start of the Christian church. The first Pentecost was when God's Spirit came to Jesus' disciples and followers. Jesus promised that God's Spirit would come and be with all that follow Him and His teaching. He called it the Spirit of the Comforter as it would enable us to change and develop our lives in a positive way and follow his teachings in our everyday lives. Part of the message brought by Jesus was the requirement to "Love our neighbour as ourselves." The work of Church on the Bus is part of that process of showing God's love to all irrespective of who they are and what has happened in their lives. God's love and Spirit can be a power for change and enable all to grow into individuals with a positive lifestyle.

The Dove of the Spirit

by Anna from the Gates Art Group

John Small

How it all Began!

Have you ever wondered just how and when Church on the Bus started. In order to get some clarity on this I (John Small), with Ian Macleod, met with Alan Parks to let him outline where he found his inspiration and motivation to start this work that is Church on the Bus.



Alan experienced a problematic time in his early life. He was for a period both homeless and destitute relying on his wits and others to get by. He was living very much day to day and had no structure and certainty in his life. When, at a particularly low point, he turned to God and found personal salvation through his trust in and commitment to Jesus. As his faith grew his personal circumstances improved. I am sure the story of his life and the impact of his faith will make interesting reading for another time.



As Alan's faith grew, he joined the Church Army and was appointed Captain with responsibility for Evangelism in the churches. He found the working in a typical parish church to be frustrating, in that he was aware that there were sections of the population who did not feel able to attend church and would not be comfortable in a formal service. He developed a passion to take the "church" outside of the building and share the Gospel with all in their community.

In our discussions it soon became clear that Alan had a "passion" for living out his faith by caring for all and sharing the good news of God's salvation. He also has a strong belief that God showed him the way forward for his life through dreams.



God showed Alan, through dreams, that he should develop a ministry to the "lonely, lost and least" by setting up a work involving using a Bus to go where the people were, rather than expecting the people to come inside a church. The message from God was soon reinforced by another offering him the use of a bus and by Alan's contact with local support agencies that demonstrated that there was a need and that could be met with an outreach programme. Others became enthusiastic about the proposal and wanted to be included, People donated funds and over a short time the idea soon developed into a viable plan.



In 2004 Alan, a driver and 3 volunteers arranged the first meeting of Church on the Bus. They parked up near Chesterfield Town Hall and waited. One guest came and shared the evening with them. Alan was clear that this was a great start. Next week 10 guests came and the following week 15 attended. The format was the provision of a hot drink, some sandwiches and the opportunity to share. Sessions included an opportunity to pray together and involving God in caring for all attendees.

Over time the work grew with the provision of Church on the Bus in Chesterfield, Staveley, Clay Cross and Matlock. There remains a lasting legacy serving the community. It has developed and changed but still retains Alan's vision of sharing the Love of God with those he identifies as the "lonely, lost and least."

Is this a case of a dream come true or a matter of one man's obedience to God's calling and a commitment to serve God in the community. Perhaps it's both



Annual General Meeting

Held on 3rd June '25 the AGM was held at St John's Church Walton. A number attended and played their part in the continued management of CotB. The meeting was chaired by Rev Hilary Moore (left) and Ian Macleod (right). Full minutes of the meeting are available but I thought I would share some points to give a flavour as to the progress of our charity.



We must of course thank those who have acted as Trustees working hard to develop programmes and focus in a changing world. This year saw Archdeacon Karen

Hamblin and Shearer Thurlby stand down from the role. Thanks to them for their hard work and commitment. Others we elected to join the Trustees and once they find their feet I am sure they will bring ideas and initiative to our work.

A few extracts from the AGM

- Rev Hilary called for more volunteers to join those serving on the front line in engaging with our guests. She suggested we invite others to come and observe the work and encourage them to sign up as hands on workers.
- At present there are 25 volunteers who are active in Chesterfield.
- We are financially solvent, but expenditure exceeded our income resulting on drawing on reserves.
- Over the past year there have been;
105 sessions of Church on the Bus
362 Different Guests have attended out evenings
154 Guests are regular attenders
40 is the most Guests attending in one evening
11 is the fewest number of Guests attending an evening.
- Church on the Bus is represented at Chesterfield "Rough Sleepers Action Group" a multi-disciplinary panel that reviews individuals and works together to provide appropriate support and resources for the homeless in our community.



Prayers for Life by John Birch

Good Shepherd, we pray for the homeless
the misfits, rejected, damaged, hungry.
People without hope struggling to survive
not far from where we live.
Bless those who care,
who feed and clothe and offer companionship
to these forgotten people,
may we play our part rather than cross the road
or look the other way

QUIZ NIGHT

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As part of the celebrations for the 21st Anniversary of Church on the Bus a Quiz Night was held on 22nd February '25. Just over 20 supporters of CotB met in Hunloke for the evening event. Some were currently active volunteers, and some had been active in the past and some were part of our faithful supporters. Shearer worked hard at organising the night with a warm welcome and a rather tricky quiz. The questions ranged across a wide number of different topics and were designed to include all to take part and on occasions or all to be stumped by demanding subjects.



We all brought our own snacks and nibbles and hot drinks were provided.

Andrew was our "Question Master" and presided over the evening with humour, support and some testing questions. Once the answers were given and the scores added the team from Matlock won by the closes of margins. To be fair they were the largest team and some considered them to be the noisiest as well!

The evening was a success for all who attended and this is largely down to the hard work of Shearer and Andrew in planning and delivering a most enjoyable evening. A heartfelt thanks to both of them.

**Thank
You!**

A few pictures from our quiz night; you may be able to identify some of those attending.



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Financial Help: Regular or one-off donations can be made to our Co-op Bank Account:

The Church on the Bus. Sort Code: 08-92-99; Account: 65923339

We also have a Just Giving Page at www.justgiving.com/church-onthebus

Or you can use "Give As You Live" (www.giveasyoulive.com) which gives you access to many major retailers and high street stores. When you shop through this site your nominated charity receives a donation from the retailer, and you can nominate Church on the Bus if you wish.

Gifts in Kind: We distribute donated clothing and hygiene items (Gifts in Kind) when specifically asked by guests and we especially need small items for personal hygiene that can be easily carried, good trainers and walking boots, jeans and jogging bottoms, socks, thermal hats and gloves for winter, and new underwear. We can also use sleeping bags but not Duvet's.

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