



To the Trustees of the Fellowship of St John Trust

Dear Trustees,

Many thanks for your generous grant to help establish a residential community in the vicarage of St Wilfrid's church. In the last year there have been exciting developments, and we will be grateful for your continued prayers for our project.

Background

Demographic changes in inner Bradford over the last fifty years have seen substantial white flight from the city centre and a commensurate decline in church attendance at most churches. I became vicar of Great Horton in 2013, and in 2017 I was asked by the Bishop of Leeds to take responsibility also for St Wilfrid's Lidget Green, a small and elderly congregation close to Great Horton. The old vicarage was refurbished for us to live in, and consultation with the archdeacon and bishop led to plans to create a residential community in the vicarage. In this, my family would be inviting others to live in the vicarage with us, with the aim of strengthening the mission of the local church.

What your grant achieved

The house is a four bedroomed house, with a three bedroomed annex. The idea was for the main house to be primarily our family house, though with a shared kitchen/dining room and living room. We furnished the main house using the diocesan grant we had received, but this fund did not cover carpets and furniture for the annexe.

As outlined in my original application, we used the funds from your grant during the autumn 2018 to buy equipment and furniture to enable us to launch the community. We are enormously grateful for the assistance, without which we could not have created a warm and welcoming environment.

The community today

We launched the community officially in January 2019. We gave it the name "Zindagi", which is the Urdu and Persian name for "life". The first person to join the community was our Associate Vicar, who has also offered his house as community accommodation. Members of the community commit to a shared rhythm of life and to mission to support the life of the church in these two parishes. This rhythm of life involves:

- Daily morning and evening prayer
- Attendance at Sunday worship in one of the two churches
- Joining a small group Bible study in one of the two churches
- A weekly meal eaten together
- A monthly Saturday of mission activity together
- A monthly hospitality meal offered to people who are not community members
- An annual retreat together.

We have not been in a hurry to recruit community members, believing that finding the right people is important. Conversations have taken place with several people, and two have joined us as Associate Members (not living in the house but sharing the rhythm). One of these is due to move into the house in September 2019. We are also pursuing a conversation with another single person, and a couple.

Community mission activities have included:

- Going door to door on the local estate to meet people and offer to pray for them
- Supporting our local "Park Run" on its 200th running (with snacks and hot chocolate and invitations to Easter events at church)
- Joining a council-led litter pick
- Visiting all the shops in one section of the parish to meet the shopkeepers and learn their names and wish them well and the Lord's blessing.
- A big clean up of the external property of St Columba's – an empty church building in the parish which our church has taken responsibility for and which we hope to use for future mission and possible church planting.

Many of these events have included other members of the local church who are not members of the Zindagi community. It is encouraging to see that the existence of the community is helping to stimulate participation in mission for other church members. All of these are fairly small scale, but also contain the seeds of a harvest which we hope to reap in the future. All these activities led to encouraging conversations with local people who are not part of the church, and learning some new names.

In July 2019, St John's Great Horton hosted a conference for Nepalese Christians from across Europe. There were about 250 delegates, and all needed accommodation. Since our accommodation is not yet full, it was a great privilege for us to be able to offer space to a number of church leaders from the Low Countries, and a conference speaker who came up from Oxford. Altogether we had twelve guests for two nights, thanks to the beds (and carpets!) you had provided. It was a blessing to our Nepalese brothers and sisters to be offered the hospitality.

As the community grows we hope to be able to do more. We greatly value your support and prayers.

Yours with thanks,

Rev Canon John Bavington

Vicar, St John's Great Horton and St Wilfrid's Lidget Green

10th August 2019