

Good News Stories for Gipsy Hill: Open Door Kitchen and Community Support with Christ Church

Open Door at Christ Church has been up and running for seven years. It has regular community of visitors who join for morning tea and cake, with more coming along for a healthy free lunch and activities that have included a community choir, quizzes and a variety of other activities and presentations. The last regular Open Door was held on 17th March after which we had to shut

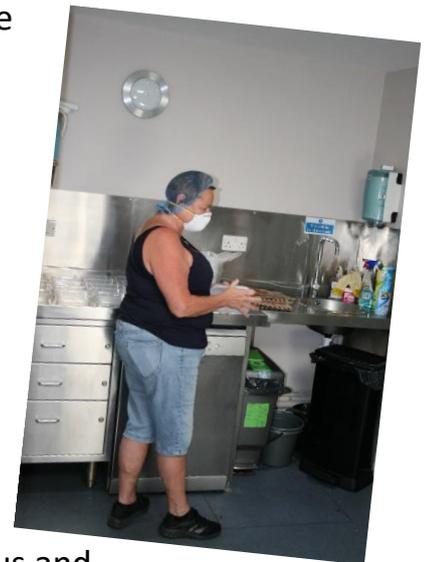


down completely as part of the COVID lockdown. Six weeks later, on 29th April, we launched the "Open Door Kitchen" intended to provide meals delivered to the door for those who are struggling to put food on the table. Having taken the decision to relaunch the

service on a Tuesday, we were approached by the [Friends of Gipsy Hill](#) who made a grant application to support this work, and very promptly received through them, courtesy of

[United St Saviour's Charity](#)

Southwark, a grant of £5000 to fund the provision of meals during the COVID-19 lockdown. That encouraged us and enabled us to offer the service twice weekly. We have over the past five weeks been



delivering 50 meals a day on Tuesdays and Thursdays to people in need within a 1 mile radius of Gipsy Hill station. And this week we have hit our kitchen capacity of 60 meals each day. Danielle (our regular Open Door cook and coordinator of the Magnolia Club, our drop in for people with dementia and their carers) and Ina are the core kitchen team and they shop, prepare and cook the food. We are very grateful to Janet Boyce and Josh Klein who, with Emma Lowth our curate, have coordinated the administration of the Open Door Kitchen and led the team of volunteers who deliver the meals to the doorstep in accordance with best practice social distancing.



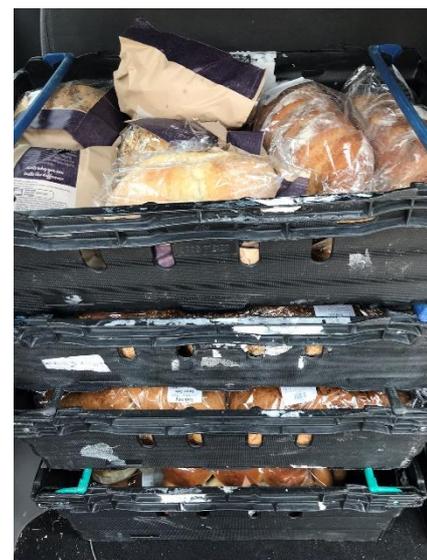
In the opening weeks of the lockdown, the church was also able to provide emergency food parcels to a number of people, whilst also acting as a referral point to the [Brixton and Norwood food bank](#). Andy Scholes, who helps coordinate the Friends of Gipsy Hill, and his neighbours in Colby Road also provided a number of food

parcels that have been delivered to people as interim support whilst food bank parcels are arranged.



Also through our relationships with Friends of Gipsy Hill, we have developed an arrangement with Sainsburys Upper Norwood to collect their leftover fresh bread - which for the past three months has been plentiful! We have been delivering bread and pastries to the Brixton and Norwood Food Bank warehouse in Streatham, and to the COVID-19 Food Bank on the Kingswood estate, run by the **Kingswood Estate Tenants**

and Residents Association (KETRA). This has fairly consistently been about 50 kg of bread each day.



The KETRA Hall has been home to a service for residents on the estate and more widely across Southwark -



providing food parcels (with plenty of bread!) and freshly cooked food, along with other essential items that have been supplied through



Southwark's COVID response team and other charities. They are staffed by a very cheerful team of volunteers led by the KETRA Chair, Lara.

Brixton and Norwood Foodbank have operated for ten years out of St Luke's church in West Norwood, and St Paul's in Ferndale Road Brixton. Just a year ago they received funding from Asda to recruit a warehouse manager and open a warehouse that would serve the needs of Trussell Trust Foodbanks across Lambeth, Southwark, Wandsworth and Lewisham. Half of the enormous grade 2 listed church of St Margaret the Queen in Barcombe Road Streatham was given over to a warehouse space fitted out with monster shelving. When the COVID



crisis hit, and face to face distribution of food became impossible just as need across our



community rose rapidly, the whole of the church was given over to food storage and packing to enable food parcels to go out directly to people's door. The community response has been



overwhelming - from individual volunteers and donations to corporate involvement - with local events lighting company Focus giving over the use of their large vans and their staff to resource deliveries and bulk buying, to British Gas providing vans and drivers for delivery. Supermarkets and local traders have all risen to the challenge and provided fantastic support and resource. The number of food parcels delivered over this period has increased by about 150%.

For more information on **Christ Church** on Gipsy Hill follow <http://www.gipsyhill.org.uk>

