



LEAF PROJECT

Report for Hereford Diocesan Strategic Project Management Board

*"I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message...
so all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you...
so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:20-21)*

Preface

Last month (April 2022) saw the first anniversary of the charity. The year has seen great progress made in many areas and in ways we could not have imagined. Tony remains the driving force for much of this work and this is underpinned by the excellent relationships he has built with the churches and their congregations. There is a more unified support for LEAF in all the churches than previously simply because people are seeing its inherent value to the town and also its value as a powerful expression of God's love poured out into the community.

Physical Well-Being

Denise, who is a CAP Debt Counsellor, is now funded to work in Ledbury one day a week and is working with a number of clients in the area. She is working well with our CAP Befrienders and so far, four people have been befriended by three different volunteers. As a by-product of this we know one family were invited to an event at St Andrews Church, Malvern and came to faith. CAP will be running a money course this year and there have been conversations with the Ledbury Children's Centre looking at the option of running a course there for young parents.

Clare and Val (the project leads) are now networked with a lot of local charities and are now in a position to offer a wide range of practical support to many in Ledbury. One of the larger projects relates to the housing of refugees in the town as LEAF has become the focal charity for this in Ledbury working in conjunction with Liz Mackay from the Diocese.

Emotional Well-Being

The first Kintsugi Hope course concluded in December and was well received by all who attended. A new course has just started up in April and is reaching a greater variety of people within the community. Some are coming through CAP contacts, others through the work of the chaplaincy (see below) and there is clear evidence that the "joined up" thinking that LEAF offers is reaping a rich dividend.

LEAF now has two professional counsellors who work in the community. It is hoped that another counsellor will be added to the ranks as we develop a funding stream for this work. With the links made with the Primary School (see below) one of the counsellors is now supporting one of the children and their family in the school. There is potential (funding permitting) for this work to grow.

Spiritual Well-Being

In the past year LEAF has run three Alpha courses all have been well received and many of those attending have come to faith or have been moved appreciably forward on that journey. One person attending the most recent course played drums under the Market House at the joint churches Good Friday service.

One exciting project is the development of a chaplaincy service that now operates within the surgery in the town. This started in January and the two chaplains have had over 55 referrals so far from the GPs. There is scope for this to expand and the hope is that recent grant requests will release funds for this work to expand.

The Monday Worship evening remains an arena for those of any denomination to seek God. This runs alongside the 7/12/7 prayer times which continues each Thursday and is the key underpinning for the work of LEAF in the town. The annual 24/7 prayer was again held on Maundy Thursday and attracted people from all churches, this has been running for 7 years now and is part of the Ledbury Church calendar.

Children

LEAF held two highly successful events in the summer, one was held in the local park and attracted 89 children. This was followed up in the autumn by The Light Party in October with 43 children attending and the Advent party which was also well attended. It is also worth noting that these events have been supported by 25 people from all the churches within the town.

Alongside these events LEAF purchased Advent Calendars for each class (Real Advent Calendar) in Ledbury and Eastnor Primary Schools. LEAF also supported a new event, a Nativity Festival, which was held at the Methodist Church. The Easter Experience held in St Michaels was attended by over 200 children from the two local schools.

Tony and an ex-teacher visit Ledbury Primary school each week to mentor some of the more challenging children. This is the genesis of a longer-term project as there is a high possibility that these children will maintain a link with LEAF through the Youth Drop-in in future years. LEAF also has a representative on the governing body of the school as one of the trustees was appointed to the board recently.

Tony and one of the trustees had a good meeting with Julie Rees head of the primary school looking at how LEAF can support the school and the children. Plans are in the initial stages to build on the mentoring and offer some children alternative provision in the afternoon based around gardening projects in the school grounds.

Youth

The issue of restarting the Youth drop in continues to be thwarted by the lack of suitable premises. Since the Poetry Festival took over the previous location Tony has been hard negotiating with various bodies to find a suitable location for the work. A promised site at the Police Station was rejected at the last minute and at present there are negotiations with Herefordshire Council regarding another building.

Seat at the Table

This group is primarily one for the 20-30's and whilst it thrived pre-covid it struggled to maintain a presence online and now needs to be re-formed. Interestingly many of the "leaders" in the group have

become parents and this is changing the demographics and dynamics of the group from a support for late teens and early 20's to a support group for young families.

Other News

Leaf's finances have finally fully migrated from the churches to the charity and Tony is now a formal employee of LEAF. This allows for greater streamlining in terms of financial planning and all the team leaders are now able to work on project plans with budgets for the coming financial year.

Regarding grant funding, LEAF put in applications to the town council. They agreed to give two tranches of £3,000 for the chaplaincy and the counselling. Whilst this was less than we had bid for it has opened the door for Tony to give a presentation to the town council explaining the work of LEAF and the hope is that this will become a more regular funding stream in the future through multi-year applications.

The reputation of the charity continues to grow as we build links with others. LEAF is now integrated into Talk Community, and this enabled Aimee Williams from Herefordshire Council to hear of our work at a local meeting. She was excited by our projects and will be attending the next project leaders meeting in May. Similarly, Amy Roberts from the NHS is working in conjunction with Ledbury Health Care to seek to gain additional funding for the chaplaincy work. All these links are good and will exponentially grow the work we are trying to achieve.

Finally, Rev. Kevin Cecil is providing a free concert in St Michaels in May where all the profits will go to the work of LEAF. Again, this is an example of another individual who heard of the work we are seeking to do in the town and wishes to support it.