

**TOGETHER
NETWORK** ⊕



Together in Prayer

Reducing Loneliness:
Building Community

Lent 2019

Reducing Loneliness: Building Community

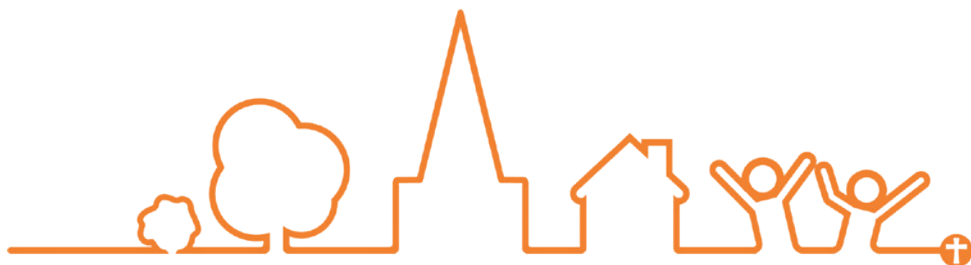
Loneliness is an increasingly common experience in Britain. Almost **one in five of us** say that we **feel lonely often** or always, **one in ten** say they **have no close friends**.

In addition, **64% of Anglican church leaders have told us** that **loneliness and isolation is the most significant problem they see in their parishes**.

As our society changes and people live longer, move further afield to work and are more likely to live on their own, increasing numbers of us are living with the kind of chronic, crippling loneliness that affects our sense of self, as well as our physical and mental health.

This prayer diary explores how our development workers are working to reduce loneliness and build real community on the ground, with suggestions of how you can support them in prayer.

Thank you for supporting our work with your prayers.





The **increasing loneliness problem** across the UK

15

Loneliness damages our physical and mental health. Studies show that being lonely can be as **harmful to our bodies as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.**

1/3

More than a third of 18-34 year olds worry about feeling lonely, yet 42% would be embarrassed to admit feeling lonely.

13%

Nearly half of those over 75 say that television or pets are their main form of company; **13% admit they are often or always lonely.**

64%

Loneliness is more damaging than obesity and increases the risk of developing a disability. Research has also found that lonely people are at greater risk of cognitive decline and have a **64% increased chance of developing clinical dementia.**



Find out more.

Read our publications on loneliness and isolation at www.cuf.org.uk

Prayer Points

Northern England



Diocese of York

Our Partnership in York diocese **Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland (TM&C)**, have created the Warm Welcome Network, which helps groups to support one another in offering hospitality in their local communities, linking up groups who provide a safe place for people to go along to and find free or low-cost refreshments, local advice and a listening ear.



Pray that this network grows and flourishes, and that it is able to retain its Christian ethos as more groups join.

Also pray for TM&C's Faithfully Ageing Better project which supports and encourages churches in their work with older people, aiming to reduce loneliness and isolation.

Thank God for the way this work is changing thinking and challenging generational perceptions, making people feel more connected. Pray that this initiative will continue to build stronger communities.

Diocese of Newcastle

Together Newcastle is working with a local group on a village garden. This is bringing together all kinds of people in the community to contribute their time, skills and resources, in order to grow fruit and vegetables together.

They are also supporting a church to open up their building to the community for the first time by running a parent and toddler group for those who may be isolated during the week.



Pray that both of these projects will lead to deep and lasting friendships.

Building a Community

St Martin's Church wanted to do something for people experiencing loneliness in their community. They were aware that isolation and lack of connection was an issue but were not sure of the best way to explore how they could make a difference.

Having heard about **Places of Welcome** from a presentation, the priest at St Martin's contacted **Greater Manchester Together** to see whether they could start one. Greater Together Manchester met with the priest and stakeholders, talking through the process of becoming a Place of Welcome,

and supporting them in pulling together a plan for the project. They also helped them to apply for funding for new tables and chairs, catering equipment and publicity materials. The new Place of Welcome was opened, and by the third week they had 15-20 people attending.



Places of Welcome is going really well at St Martin's and we're feeling very encouraged!

Diocese of Durham

Communities Together Durham is seeing growth through Places of Welcome, as it helps to provide and support local places for people to meet a friendly face, have a chat and some refreshments.



Pray that this growth continues so that more people have someone to talk to.

Pray also for Communities Together Durham's work in supporting the growing number of Syrian refugees in the North East, who can be isolated within their communities.



Image: © Outroslide Photography



Places of Welcome is a growing network of local community groups providing their neighbourhoods with places where all people feel safe to belong, connect and contribute. A Place of Welcome offers your neighbourhood a place where everyone can go for a friendly face, a cup of tea and a conversation if and when they need it.

Currently with 300 Places of Welcome across the UK (and growing daily) each Place of Welcome is unique but all provide a place for people to connect with one another, find belonging and offer gifts and skills that interest them. Places of Welcome take place in a variety of different venues including churches, community centres, libraries, mosques, temples and other community group buildings.

Development Workers from the Together Network, along with Near Neighbours, are working together to support and encourage local Places of Welcome so that more people have a safe space to connect, belong and contribute.

Find out more at
www.placesofwelcome.org.uk

Find out more about Near Neighbours at
www.near-neighbours.org.uk

Rachel's story



“ I'm Rachel. I'm a support worker for the YMCA and am also privileged to host our local **Place of Welcome**, which is held on Tuesdays at the **Small Street Centre in Walsall**.

I had moved away from my home town, and away from all my family and everything I had ever known. I was linked into the Small Street Centre for support with my mental health, but once I was well enough to leave the service I slipped into becoming quite isolated for a while, until I heard from a friend about Places of Welcome.

Places of Welcome enables everyone to

come together and socialise in a safe environment which doesn't cost anything for them to attend. All too often I've found from personal experience that the groups in the area would ask for money (even a minimal amount for coffee and the like) which quite often made them inaccessible for me as money was a huge problem. To be able to come to a place where I could easily mix with

others was brilliant. It's a small but very social group, and we have new people joining all the time. Moving to a new town was a very scary experience and so to be able to start making new connections and friends at the Place of Welcome meant the world to me, so now I'm happy to help through hosting, to help and support others so hopefully they won't have to go through what I did.



Places of Welcome Values:

Place - An accessible and hospitable building, open at the same time every week

People - Open to everyone regardless of their circumstances or situation, and staffed by volunteers

Presence - A place where people actively listen to one another

Provision - Offering free refreshments (at least a cup of tea and a biscuit) and basic local information

Participation - Every person will bring talents, experiences and skills that they may be willing to share locally

Prayer Points: Midlands

Diocese of Birmingham



Thrive Together Birmingham started Places of Welcome, in 2012, a network of community groups run by local people who want everyone in their neighbourhood to have a place to go for a friendly face, a cup of tea and a conversation if and when they need it.

The Places of Welcome network has now grown beyond Birmingham, into the Black Country, the West Midlands and across the country.



Thank God that each Place of Welcome is building community and friendships, helping to improve people's overall wellbeing.

Pray for all the volunteers that enable Places of Welcome to happen, and for more people to find their local Place of Welcome.

Pray that the network will continue to grow and support their local communities.

Diocese of Chester

Transforming Lives Together are running a 'Know Your Church, Know Your Neighbourhood' course with a church in Weaverham and are

beginning work with Chester Cathedral, looking at the best ways to reach lonely and isolated people in the city of Chester.



Pray that these partnerships are able to reach and connect people.

Diocese of Lichfield

Transforming Communities Together also has a large number of Places of Welcome in their area, which they support.



Pray for the network to expand into new areas and become even more diverse, so that every community has safe places that allow people to connect, belong and contribute.

Diocese of Nottingham

Transforming Notts Together are raising awareness of the work that local churches are doing to reduce loneliness in their

communities as well as how much the church has to offer in terms of drawing people in to real community.



Pray that people would be open to supporting what churches are doing.

Diocese of Coventry

Together for Change works in partnership with other organisations on Good Neighbours, a scheme that works with isolated and lonely older people by developing existing social networks and community resources to enable residents to support each other. This could take the form of group activities, one to one befriending support, or low-level practical assistance.

Together for Change's Fresh Start project befriends new arrivals to the city through football sessions and conversational English classes, helping to build friendships across diverse cultures.



Pray particularly for the elderly who are unable to leave their homes and that through the services provided by Together For Change they would experience their local community to its fullest.

Pray for the work of Fresh Start, as this winter they begin a refugee choir called 'Undivided'.

Diocese of Leicester

Together Leicester are working with Renew Wellbeing to spread the concept of Christian wellbeing café's, to create "quiet shared spaces where it is OK not to be OK".



Pray that churches hear about this initiative and want to get involved in building positive relationships with their local mental health trusts and professionals, so that churches across Leicestershire will be able to support those who are struggling with isolation and their mental wellbeing.

Prayer Points: Southern England

Diocese of London



Capital Mass is supporting churches that are running international groups where migrants are welcomed, they have a meal and some of their practical needs are met. These are places where friendships are formed, and people get to know and respect each other.

As the migrants take responsibility, in part, for running the groups, they have a sense of purpose and a way of using their skills. This in turn, is helping to build strong communities where the distinctions between volunteer and guest become less important as lasting friendships are made.



Pray for Capital Mass' Clergy Hosting Scheme, in collaboration with Housing Justice, which offers spare rooms in Clergy Homes to migrants. The scheme gives migrants a place to call home, have somewhere safe they can sleep and put their belongings and to become part of a community.

Pray for more hosts, that people would be moved to offer their spare rooms.

Diocese of Truro

Through their Food for Change partnership, **Transformation Cornwall's** Community Worker is providing one to one support, working alongside people experiencing isolation and loneliness. This helps to improve people's wellbeing and confidence as well as strengthening their networks.

They do this by introducing people to new activities centred around growing or cooking food, linking people into what's happening in their communities and hosting regular events to bring people together so that experiences can be shared and friendships formed.



Pray for those who feel alone and have no-one to turn to, that they will find friendship and support through this work.

Singing Together

Supported by Together For Change's Good Neighbours scheme, a church took over a redundant Baptist Chapel in North Coventry, with the specific intention of serving the elderly local community.



40

So far the Singing Club has brought together around 40 older people.

The church began an Elderly Singers Luncheon Club as a way for the church to serve older people in their local community.

It has attracted around 40 elderly people who used to go to the Chapel,

almost all widows and widowers, who have been reconnected with old friends. They have a free meal together and then sing their favourite hymns and songs, having fun together and enjoying each other's company.

Diocese of Norwich

Imagine Norfolk Together are supporting four lunchtime groups in Great Yarmouth and Gorleston which between them provide hot meals four days a week for those who are in need of food or socially isolated.



Please pray that the volunteers are able to provide friendly conversations that make a difference in the lives of those who attend.

Diocese of Southwark

Together Southwark is working with rural churches and local authorities in Surrey, supporting them to engage in work that helps prevent isolation, including improving public transport systems and job opportunities.



Pray that individuals and organisations would be moved to engage with these issues.

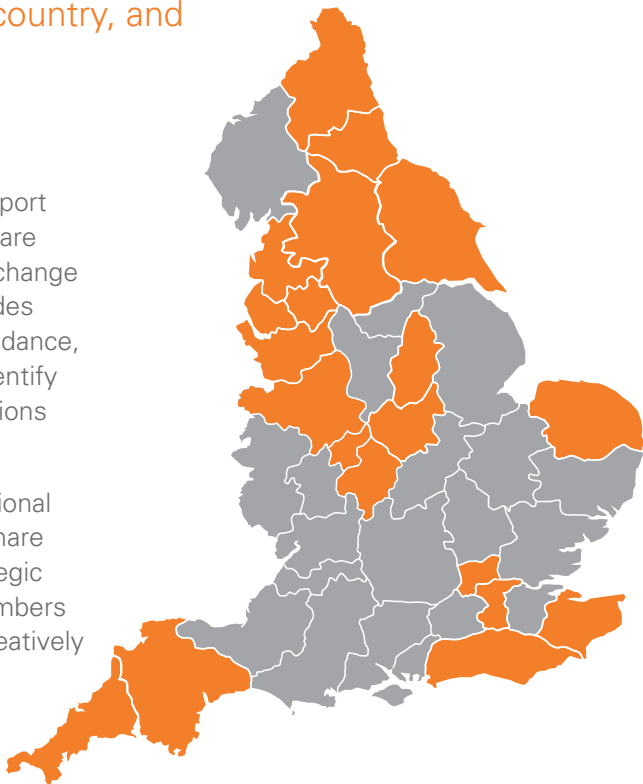
Pray also for Together Southwark as they support the running of a number of Places of Welcome locally, building positive relationships between people from diverse backgrounds.

What is the Together Network?

The Together Network is a key and distinctive aspect of CUF's work. It is currently comprised of 20 partnerships with Church of England dioceses working to support social action in specific areas of the country, and continues to grow.

Together Network member organisations employ dedicated Development Workers who support churches and other groups that are seeking to bring about positive change in their communities. This includes offering encouragement and guidance, delivering training, helping to identify resources, and building connections between groups.

Being part of an established national network enables members to share best practice and promote strategic working. At the same time, members can respond innovatively and creatively to specific opportunities and challenges in their areas.



Together Network members are having a powerful and demonstrably positive impact in the local communities they serve and are uniquely positioned to enable others to do the same.

Together Network Evaluation, Coventry University



TOGETHER NETWORK⁺

National movement, Local action

The Together Network is a subsidiary charity of the Church Urban Fund

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