

## **Oxford Winter Night Shelter at St Matthew's Church**

### **A summary report on the arrangements from January – March 2019**

#### **Summary**

St Matthew's hosted guests who would otherwise be sleeping rough each Sunday night from January 6<sup>th</sup> to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2019. Up to 20 guests were allocated to 2 churches each night under the auspices of the Oxford Winter Night Shelter (OWNS). There were usually 7-8 guests at St Matthew's each week. Overall there was an average of 16 guests per night in the 2 churches, with a total of 58 people benefitting over the 3 months. Some guests moved into accommodation and/or employment during the winter. There were no waiting lists for beds in the churches on any night indicating that everyone who was eligible was offered accommodation through the coldest months of the year.

#### **The advance arrangements**

Over 300 volunteers signed up for OWNS and were trained in 2-hour sessions held at St Michael in the Northgate by the Chaplain to the Homeless Population and Chair of OWNS and the OWNS coordinator. Volunteer shifts were arranged through an on-line system called RotaCloud. More than 15 members of St Matthew's and St Luke's trained as volunteers. People from other churches or no church also volunteered at St Matz.

St Matthew's representatives attended the monthly steering group meetings at St Michael in the Northgate to represent St Matthew's.

The Parish Administrator worked hard to complete all the paperwork requirements before St Matthew's could be accepted as a venue. This included notifying the insurance company, getting Health and Safety certification, enabling an inspection by St Mungo's who make the guest allocations and completing paperwork.

Money was raised from the congregation and all the equipment was purchased in December 2018 (details of the budget are below). Some people also made donations of towels and pillows, including Grandpont Nursery. Three individuals who live locally and read the notices in the Parish Centre donated sleeping bags and money. Two large trunks were purchased and assembled in the Gallery for storage.

#### **Nightly arrangements**

The pattern for all the churches offering accommodation was adopted at St Matthew's:

- 9pm – 3 volunteers arrived to set up the beds and prepare drinks under the supervision of the volunteer Shift Leader. The St Matthew's coordinator came each week to unlock and help set up. Another member of St Matthew's also came most weeks as an extra helper to welcome guests too.

- 9.30pm – guests arrived and were checked in. Hot drinks and snacks were provided. Pot noodle was the most popular but our guests (several of whom are Polish) also enjoyed Polish meats, cake, biscuits, fruit etc.
- 11.30 – 2 overnight volunteers arrived and stayed with the Shift Leader. Volunteers took it in turns to sleep but the shift leader stayed awake all night.
- 6am - 3 volunteers arrived to prepare breakfast. Overnight volunteers left. Hot drinks, toast, porridge (more pot noodle!) were offered for breakfast.
- 7.30am – guests left and volunteers cleared away the beds and cleaned up.
- 8.00am – the premises were locked up and laundry taken away. At St Matthew's this was usually taken by a church member who had arranged for the Domestic Bursar at Balliol College to wash the towels and pillowcases. On the other weeks the laundry was done by the St Matthew's coordinator.

Total expenditure for set up and weekly food costs

£1117.02

**Gifts in kind** were also received including

- Pillows, towels, sleeping bags
- Gloves, socks, underwear to be given to guests
- Food from the Food Bank, selected for OWNS every week.

### **Equipment purchased**

The list of equipment purchased is given below, with some numbers approximated. This was all purchased from money donated at St Matthew's and no reimbursement has been sought from OWNS. A full inventory will be drawn up and left in the trunks ready for preparing for 2020.

- 12 steel framed camp beds
- 12 pillows
- 12 sleeping bags
- Pillow cases and towels
- 2 large storage trunks with padlocks. These can be used for sitting on.
- Storage bags – to shrink the pillows and towels for easier storage over summer.
- Laundry bag

Special thanks are also due to the Parish Administrator and Cleaner who made sure everything was in order in the Parish Centre.

### **End of the season celebrations**

PT, the shift leader, came to the morning service on Mothering Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup> March. He was interviewed in the service and outlined his own reasons for volunteering. He

gave some feedback on what has happened as a result of OWNS and some good news about a few of the guests who have moved into work or housing. All of the volunteers who had helped at St Matthews were invited to that service and 3 of them came who are not members, as well as many who are. Tasters of Pot Noodles were tried by many people – including the favourite of the guests which was Bombay Bad Boy!

**Prayer support** through our regular intercessions in St Matthew's and at the Prayer Meeting was appreciated. Our "Link Church" – St Michael's in Summertown, were also praying for us and on stand-by in case we had any needs. The St Matthew's Coordinator met the link people, kept them up to date with news and thanked them for their prayers. They were also invited to the morning service on 31<sup>st</sup> March but were unable to join us.

### **Discussion and Decision at the DCC**

Members of St Matthew's DCC agreed at their meeting in May 2019 that St Matthew's will participate in OWNS again in 2020 and that this report should be published on the website so that the whole congregation can be informed of the success of the project

JW, May 2019