



ARENACHURCH

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GOODNEWS

Reaching into Communities, Sharing Good News, Making a Difference

UNSTOPPABLE

FINDING HOPE WHEN FACING DARKNESS

How the son of a preacher avoided a life of crime and found his calling

Denzel Washington is one of the most famous names in Hollywood, but the 64-year-old actor's life could have taken a very different path.

Born in December 1954 to a Pentecostal preacher father and a beauty parlour-owning mother, Denzel had early aspirations of acting, performing in his first play when he was just 7 years

old. By the time he reached 14, his parents had divorced. His best friends were having a great influence on him, and his mother, Lennis, decided the best course of action was to send Denzel to a private prep school in New York.

Looking back, Denzel says, "That decision changed my life, because I wouldn't have survived in the direction I was going."

While it may sound like an overstatement, of his three best friends, only two now survive. For men in their 60s, that's not necessarily a bad average. What is concerning though is the amount of time each one spent in jail.

Because of his change of scenery, Denzel spent no time in jail. He had hope for his future. Unfortunately, one friend served 12 years...another served 20 years... and the third served 28 years. While Denzel admits to "dipping his toe in the water", being surrounded by different people changed his life for the better.

Denzel is proud of his Christian faith and very willing to talk about it but being

the son of a minister didn't inspire him. In fact, going to church felt "like a job", and he stopped attending church in his early teens.

Although his father had aspirations of Denzel becoming a preacher just like him, Denzel himself had other ideas in his teens. He studied pre-med and considered going to college and becoming a doctor, but then became distracted by political science. A brief fling with pre-law convinced him that being a lawyer was not what he was cut out for...and so he started to study journalism.

By his junior year in college, he'd been drawn into acting - and the rest is history. Had it not been for his mother pulling him out of a potential downward spiral, there would have been no hope in Denzel's life.

By now, Denzel has experienced multiple different lives. He loves the changes and challenges that acting presents, including learning to use a flight simulator for his movie, "Flight". Denzel says, "I didn't have to learn how to land, because we were gonna crash anyway!"

Once filming is complete, Denzel has the faith to know he's done his best and doesn't review his performance. "Once you make a movie, it belongs to the people. So, I don't look back."

As a Christian, he reads his Bible daily, and has considered becoming a preacher despite his earlier misgivings.

"A part of me still says, 'Maybe, Denzel, you're supposed to preach. Maybe you're still compromising.' I've had an opportunity to play great men and, through their words, to preach. I take what talent I've been given seriously, and I want to use it for good."



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HOPE



JOY



LOVE

Photo of Denzel Washington by Harry Wad. Used with permission.

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Or contact us by email at:
ADMIN@ARENACHURCH.CO.UK

Founded in 1929, Arena Church Ilkeston has been pioneered and guided by many faithful leaders. We plant and repurpose new churches both locally and further afield. Hundreds of people serve on our Dream Teams, impacting and serving thousands of people every month throughout local communities.

We have outstanding connections with local charities, business owners, Government leaders, MPs and the Police. Everybody is somebody at Arena Church, and all are welcome to connect through our Small Groups, where strong relationships are formed and discipleship is nurtured.

Come and see how exciting and vibrant church can be when the focus is clear and people are free to seek God with passion.



FOOD SERVED UNTIL 1.45PM

- BREAKFAST -		- JACKET POTATOES -	
BACON SANDWICH	£1.85	WITH BUTTER	£2.50
<small>Served with 3 toasters of bacon</small>		<small>Served with salad garnish</small>	
BACON BAGUETTE	£2.10	CHEESE, TUNA, COLESLAW, BEANS	£0.50 EACH
<small>Served with 3 toasters of bacon</small>		CHILLI, CHICKEN, CURRY OR PRAWNS	£3.85
BACON, MUSHROOM & MELTED CHEESE BAGUETTE	£2.60	<small>Served with salad garnish</small>	
BEANS ON TOAST	£1.80	- SALADS -	
TOAST	£1.10	CHOOSE FROM A VARIETY OF TOPPINGS:	
<small>2 slices served with butter</small>		EGG, TUNA, HAM OR CHEESE	£4.00
JAM OR MARMALADE	£0.20	<small>Served with half a baguette and butter</small>	
- TOASTED SANDWICHES -		PRAWNS IN ROSE MARIE SAUCE	£4.35
CHEESE	£2.30	<small>Served with half a baguette and butter</small>	
<small>Served with salad garnish</small>		- DRINKS -	
2 FILLINGS	£2.60	YORKSHIRE TEAS	£1.10
<small>CHOOSE FROM: HAM - MUSHROOM - ONION - TOMATO - TUNA</small>		FILTER COFFEE	£1.40
<small>Served with salad garnish</small>		CAPPUCCINO	£1.90
- SANDWICHES -		LATTE	£1.90
CHOOSE FROM:		WITH SYRUP	£2.25
EGG, TUNA, HAM OR CHEESE	£2.20	MOCHA	£2.20
<small>Served with salad garnish</small>		HOT CHOCOLATE	£1.85
PRAWNS IN ROSE MARIE SAUCE	£2.85	FRUIT TEAS	£1.20
<small>Served with salad garnish</small>		- KIDS LUNCH BOX -	
- BAGUETTES -		A CHOICE OF CHEESE, HAM, EGG OR TUNA SANDWICH WITH CRISPS, KRISPIE CAKE, FROMAGE FRAIS, AND CUP DRINK £2.35	
CHOOSE FROM:			
EGG, TUNA, HAM OR CHEESE	£2.60		
<small>Served with salad garnish</small>			
PRAWNS IN ROSE MARIE SAUCE	£3.00		
<small>Served with salad garnish</small>			

- SUNDAY SPECIALS -

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GOOD NEWS - CARPE DIEM!



love to believe the best! I know this may be irritating to some, but this is who I am. I don't live some charmed existence where all is well all the time. I have challenges and difficulties - we all do!

I have faced a few potentially large, life altering situations that were at the time robbing me of HOPE, JOY, LOVE. In fact, I felt utterly hopeless, defeated, discouraged, and very sad!

Do you know what I am talking about? **In these moments I couldn't think of seizing the day...I just wanted to get through the day!**

Time is a healer but the thing that got me through was my personal relationship with Jesus, my loving family and friends, and a great local church. These lifted me so that I could see a HOPE and a FUTURE, and I could once again begin to "seize the day"!

In this Easter edition you will hear stories from celebrities and locals alike who have had challenges and difficulties, heartbreak and loss, but they have gone from **HOPELESS to HOPE, from DEATH to LIFE, from SADNESS to JOY, all through getting to know Jesus personally!**

I love being one of the Pastors and Leaders of Arena Church

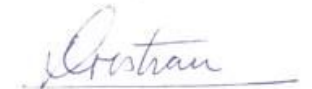
because I get to speak to people in the community who are despairing, hopeless, and sad, and I can let them know that they are **valued, loved, heard and understood!**

Life can be tough and bad, but my experience is that as people look to Jesus, put their trust in Jesus, and get connected to a life-giving church, they can begin to see and experience Life, Hope and Joy.

As I finish, know this: Jesus knows you by name, he loves you and demonstrated his love for you by dying on a cross for your sins, shame, and sorrow. Nothing and nobody is beyond the love and grace of God. His love is directed towards you.

I would love to be able to personally welcome you to one of our Sunday services or ministry outreaches. Please come along and see how God can change your life for the better!

Seize the Day!



Kristian Thorpe
Lead Pastor Arena Church

Carpe Diem - Latin translation
Seize the Day!

This is an inspirational phrase that is used in businesses, universities, and has been used in a blockbuster film of the late 80s called Dead Poet's Society.

Inspiring and truthful for sure, we all should embrace the

thought of seizing the day and opportunities. The problem is that so many are weighed down by the thoughts, emotions, backgrounds and experiences of yesterday. We become unable to lift up our eyes to see the light of the new day.

I am by nature an optimist. A glass half full person! I love to laugh, have fun, think big, dream, and I



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WHAT DOES EASTER MEAN TO YOU?

By Pastor Phil Pye

There are many values and traditions at the special holiday time of Easter. Who doesn't like to be on the receiving end of a great big Easter Egg!

For Christians, and maybe even some of no faith conviction, Easter is a primary time to think on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are some standout truths that emanate from this and HOPE has to be right up there

What a big bold word, a real contrast to fear, despair and instability that seems to blight many in the day we live

Let me take you to a real-life story that happened many hundreds of years ago. It found itself becoming a psalm-songs of hope in often challenging contexts- The psalm was about a friend of a musical minstrel group called the Sons of Korah. For whatever reason this friend found himself a prisoner, a hostage, in exile, many miles from his companions. He speaks of his despair and downcast state. How tears were his staple diet night and day, how ridicule from those who did not share his faith in God was never far from his ears. But then he begins to speak to himself inside and finds that hope arises 'Put your hope in God'. It seemed improbable, impossible, and whilst nothing

seemed to change immediately on the outside, something shifted internally.

The reason? True hope is more than sunny optimism or being at the mercy of whim, good fortune, superstition or chance. Yes, it carries a lot more substance than that.

The Christian defining hope sees it as 'A confident expectation regarding the unseen and future'. It's a head-lifting truth that helps negotiate tough times and so walk into a better future

'Hope means hoping when things seem hopeless or it has no future at all'

'Hope often begins in the dark knowing the dawn will come'

So let me take you to one final story. This one is from the good news book of Luke and comes on the back of the extraordinary events over three days of Jesus' death and resurrection reflected on afresh each Easter time

Jesus had defeated death and now alive again in the power of His raised body was showing Himself so.

Some still didn't get it! Including two of His close followers in deep discussion as they walked the seven miles from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. They were downcast and feeling hopeless, their friend, guide, mentor and leader was gone. Then Jesus came alongside and eventually they did get it. Things changed 'their hearts burned within

them' and they hotfooted it back to Jerusalem to tell their friends, now a fourteen-mile round trip!

Then and now, void of hope, the temptation is to fill the emptiness with other substitutes, often with devastating consequences. Could it be that a major marker in societal ills is hopelessness?

This Easter above all the clamouring noises and sounds of life, hear afresh the call to HOPE. Giving over our lives to God through Jesus, with a fresh 'confidence' for a better day ahead

Let it be foundational to life, internalised in your internal world (your heart). Let it inspire to new actions and initiatives. Let it answer questions about the forever of life

God once said to a man who was imprisoned for faith - 'I know what I am doing, I have it all planned out. Plans to give you the future you HOPED for'

Someone said 'Dare we hope? We dare. Can we hope? We can. Should we hope? We must. To do other would be to waste one of the most precious gifts freely given to us'

No one is suggesting life is always easy, but this Easter and always may we live not Hopeless but Hope filled lives. Energised by the reality of wherever we have been, whatever we have done and wherever we are going, we can 'Put our HOPE in God'



REACHING TO BELPER

By David Blyth

We are incredibly excited about the new campus at Belper and the opportunity to reach the town and people with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

We are thankful to New Life Church in giving us the Church building and with the generous spirit they have showed in wanting to partner with reaching the different people groups of the town.

We are so aware and thankful for all the foundations laid and all the prayer that has gone before us, without forgetting these things, it is a new day Isaiah 43 17-19 says **"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland."**

This is the time to step up not shrink back to embrace the adventure and take hold of and believe what God has said, to move forward with boldness and the

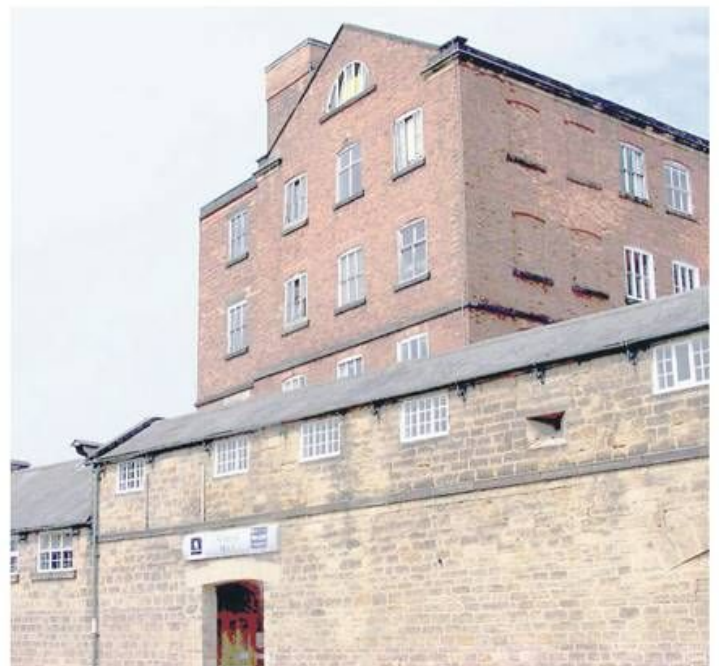
authority God has already given us.

We are looking forward to the day when every Bible-believing Christ-centred church will be full to capacity and more again, where hearts are united in the greater call that all should come to saving grace and none should perish. Letting go of the past of what was, to take hold of what is to come, seeing through the eyes of faith to all the possibilities there are before us for Belper and the villages that surround it.

We continue to pray that God's Kingdom will come, and His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. With Easter coming we look forward to opening the new building up to the community of Belper.

We will be launching the Word Alive a topical bible group and the Alpha course in May. There are lots more community ideas to come. Why not think about joining us for this new campus plant?

Find out more at:
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IT'S EASTER...

By Josh Turner

How is it Easter already? I mean, it feels like Christmas has only just ended and we are already over a quarter of the way through the year!

I love the hope that April brings, the dark nights have left us, the weather begins to heat up and the flowers begin to bloom again. The world feels like a different place. The start of this year has definitely been a bit of a roller coaster - politically, economically and I'm sure for a lot of people personally. When it comes to the issues in our world, I have heard people say, "there isn't much hope". Now, I can see why someone might take this standpoint, because at times the situations we find ourselves in can look bleak, like there is no way out.

The funny thing is, if you had lived through the events of Easter, if you had been there,

you probably would've made those same declarations - "there is no hope", "it's over", "He's dead". There are no two ways about it, the events of Easter were harrowing, horrifying, and the whole situation seemed hopeless. It looked like it was over, like this Jesus thing was going to fizzle out, like the religious people of the day had won - they had finally beaten Jesus. I mean, imagine being one of Jesus followers, you've given your life to this man for the last 3 years, and now he's gone. You'd feel betrayed, hurt, upset and lost.

I think a lot of people feel lost today. Maybe you have lost your passion, or dropped that dream, or stopped believing that life can be more like you did when you were a kid - this leads to a hopelessness that feels final.

There aren't many things more final than death and Jesus died on that cross - He was dead. For



His disciples it was game over, they went back to their old jobs, they were completely lost. But this is the genius of Easter. That God, from utter hopelessness, orchestrated a hope that would reverberate through every generation and every nation because on the third day, Jesus rose from the grave and conquered death. He ushered in a new day, the day of hope. He showed that no matter how dark the situation that in Him there is always hope, there is always a fighting chance, there is always a new day.

You might be in the darkest

situation of your life right now, you may be in the depth of depression or the heartache of loss - the offer to you today is the same as it was to those first disciples, there is hope in Jesus. He didn't die and rise again to get you to conform, or to fit in, or to follow rules and regulations, He came to this earth so that you could know Him, have relationship with Him and be set free from the hurt of your life.

If you want to know more about Jesus, get in touch with us, come along to one of our services - we'd love to see you!



THE PROJECT

Great Easter offers at The Workshop Cafe:

- Hot cross bun and tea/filter coffee £2.20
- Hot cross bun and latte/cappuccino £2.70
- Small Easter cakes 50p

New items on our specials board:

- Pie and peas £3
- Pie, peas and chips £4.50



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THE PRINCESS IN A RA-RA SKIRT

By Lisa Harrison

Easter for me symbolises hope, love and joy. I'm going to share a story with you that will help you get a glimpse of the God I know - the God of Easter.

When I was a little girl, our family was poor. There were four of us in total, my mum, dad, brother and me, but my dad was always in prison. This added to the poverty of our lives.

We were the kids that rarely got an ice cream when the van came around, because mum simply couldn't afford it.

We were the kids with holes in our shoes, and in bad weather we used to cut pieces of lino (do you remember lino?) out the dog's cupboard to patch the hole.

One day mum and dad went to court and dad didn't come back - nothing new there - but what was new was that later that day some older ladies who volunteered at the court on the refreshments counter came by our house.

They had in their possession a black bag. It contained clothing and toys for me and my brother. The ladies had come to know my mum and her children due to the many court appearances of our dad and they could see how she struggled. So, they had put together a bag for us kids.

That sounds nice enough, I guess. But what only God could know was the effect of the RA-RA SKIRT that was in that bag! Sorry men if I've lost you with the significance of a ra-ra skirt! I was only young and the in-thing for little ladies was the ra-ra skirt. I didn't pay them much mind because I was never going to get one. We couldn't afford ice cream!

However, there in my bag was a ra-ra skirt.

I put it on. Oh boy! I was a princess. Something deep inside me twirled and twirled round and round that day. That day I was NOT the little girl whose dad was in prison, who had holes in her shoes. I was THE PRINCESS IN A RA-RA SKIRT.

All day I walked with my head high in princess mode. Short of getting my brother to bow to me, the day was a fairy tale.

My point in sharing this story is simply to point out that the little girl twirling round and round in the best skirt EVER still had holes in her shoes and dirt on her face. We still couldn't afford ice cream, but God smiled at the twirling princess who was oblivious to the poverty and circumstance of her state that day.

God saw past the dirt and the holes. God only saw his twirling princess. This story is told that you will know no matter what dirt or holes have wreaked havoc in your life, no matter how hard it feels or how far from God or the rest of mankind you feel, God

sees the mighty man of valour... God sees the twirling princess.

God restores all things in his own time. Today as I write this, I'm in a very different place. I have (you'll be glad to know) plenty of shoes without holes. I'm the happiest I've ever been. Although my journey has been a colourful one, at the cross Jesus Christ rescued his twirling princess, dirt and all, and I'm now truly a REAL princess.



ARENA MINISTRY SCHOOL

By Pastor Phil Pye

At Arena Church we love launching new initiatives, we find it helps us stay fresh, current and relevant

One of our passions is Training. In one part of the Bible it uses the analogy of physical training - This has some value - But godly or spiritual training

has value for all things. As physical training builds muscle, endurance and strength, so too our inner life needs nurturing and developing on our journey of following the Saviour, Jesus Christ

real sacrifice and commitment from them to make it happen.

The people involved come from all sorts of backgrounds and ages, but one thread holds them together, a passion to let their lives be effective in ministering, helping, caring and blessing other people

Starting something new, you are never sure how things will go. As I write we are half way through the course, and it has been a blast! The engagement and enthusiasm to grow and learn has been beyond what could have been envisaged

Our intention is to run the school annually at the beginning of each year. Maybe next time it will be time for you to put on your 'running shoes', to get into training for that which is even more important than the physical, and be part of the Arena Ministry School.



So at the beginning of 2019 we began our first ever Arena Ministry School - A classroom environment taking place over seven sessions on a Thursday evening and then all day Friday for twelve weeks - we have fourteen students, and there has been some

COMMUNITY HUB NEWS

By Tracy Newton

The dictionary defines Hope as "the feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out for the best"

It doesn't sound much, does it? But for those attending The Hub, this little four-letter word can be the making or breaking of their day - or even their life.

It's not just service users though whose lives are affected by the absence of hope and joy. All of our volunteers have a story of their own.

Sue is one of our volunteers, I always call her our secret weapon. She goes about her work quietly and confidently with a huge smile on her face, but that's not always been the case.

When Sue first came to us, she had lost all hope. It's easy to talk about it now, but the Sue of today is barely recognisable from the nervous woman who walked into The Hub two years ago.

Sue explained that after a really abusive past she had met and married the love of her life, Colin.

Unfortunately, Colin died, and Sue was left with no hope in her life. She felt alone and was severely depressed. Life seemed to have to have no meaning.

"I knew I had to do something," Sue said. "If I didn't, I was going to take my own life"

Sue got in touch with a friend who suggested she tried volunteering at the local food bank. When Sue joined us, she realised that she did have something to live for.

She explained that volunteering at The Hub, going to church, and turning to God gave her something to live for.

Sue found HOPE, the feeling

that what is wanted can be had, or that events will turn out for the best.

Kath Mason is another of our volunteers who lives her life full of hope and joy. Again, it's easy to think it has always been this way.

To the rest of the world, Kath seemed to have it all, but the grief of losing her mum had caused Kath to become depressed and turn to drink as a comfort.

I asked Kath why she started coming to church and how she thought it would help.

Kath explained that she first started coming to church after her daughter invited her.

Initially Kath said 'no' because she didn't want to go and find that she disliked it.

Her daughter kept asking and eventually Kath gave in and went along.

Kath says, "Although I didn't really want to go to church, from the moment I walked in I loved it. I was in floods of tears and I just knew I would come again. Every Sunday morning, I would get up feeling fine and go to church. As soon as the music started, I would be in floods of tears again. I didn't need to drink anymore to feel happy and the pain of losing my mum got easier. Going to church has helped my marriage and my life. I just feel like a different person, more patient, forgiving - just different."

And that's the Easter story in a nutshell really. Those once in darkness, wandering around hopeless and joyless, have made a decision to put their trust in a loving God who gave it all to save them.

This gives them a hope, a future, and a deep sense of joy!

Happy Easter! Hope is Here!




Sue with BBC Radio Derby's Andy "Twiggy" Twigge



Inspire & Grow 2



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Contact:
Cathy Terzza—cathy@washarts.co.uk



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MANSFIELD COMMUNITY

By Louise Richardson

The winter months have been a busy time for the community teams in Mansfield. Care for a Coffee continues and the launch of the 'Snap Team' in December is another extension of Arena's commitment to "Go into all the world"

Both these initiatives provide food, drink, and companionship for people in the Mansfield area. Here's what one of our visitors had to say:

"I came to Care for a Coffee and met Lesley and Louise and I made good friends. At that time my life had no hope. They talked to me about church and invited to me to the Good Friday service. I came, and when I left, I felt more content than I had years. I knew there was something about God and I carried on coming every Sunday. Now when I wake up and open my eyes, it's to a

whole new world. I decided to get baptised in November and find my purpose. The people at Arena make me feel like I've joined a fantastic family."

This is the reason that we do what we do, to reach people and show them there is more to life. Here are some comments from our team members.

When I walk around Mansfield, especially in winter months, I have seen many homeless people. Sitting on the streets or in empty shop doorways with their bags and belongings, I have wondered, "Why?"

As someone once said we are all one step away from being homeless. I have also seen the police and community wardens moving them on especially in the bus station and shopping centre. I can understand why, but where else can they go to keep warm? In Mansfield this winter there

has been a night shelter for anyone who is homeless and hot food and drinks are provided when they are there.

At Arena after the Sunday service the Snap Team has been providing hot drinks, a snack and a food parcel. For vulnerable people to have somewhere to go and be shown that other people care, I feel this is really good.

Matthew 25v35 says for I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.

Sandra Carlin - SNAP TEAM

What a difference two years can make. When we first set up Care for a Coffee, we were lucky if one or two people came through the door. Now we have dozens of regulars whom we see every single session and new people are enjoying our activities every single week.

I feel very privileged to able serve God and the people of

Mansfield this way and love getting up on a Tuesday and Wednesday morning. It is so exciting knowing how many people we are helping and serving.

I love the fact that everyone is made to feel welcome and accepted at here Arena Church and this is having a massive impact on our community users. Through this amazing outreach we are seeing people attend church regularly, be baptized and even joining small groups and dream teams. By serving God we are literally watching people's lives transform before us.

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve;" - 1 Peter 5:2 NIV

Lesley Spowage, Care for a Coffee team leader

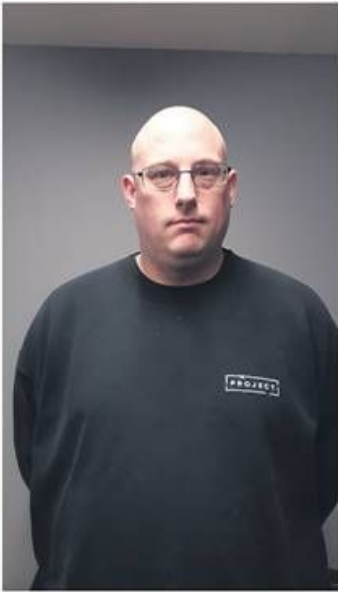


Care For A Coffee runs at Arena Church, 66 Leeming Street, Mansfield every Tuesday and Wednesday between 10am and 2pm. Everyone is welcome.

STORIES OF HOPE, JOY, AND LOVE

By Ann Simpson

For Arena Community, Easter is a season of hope, joy, and love. We've seen this expressed many times through the people who work in our shops. Here are some of their stories.



Scott Hind - Arena Hope

Scott has a background in retail but was made redundant from his last position. This put him under a cloud of depression as his job was important to him, providing both stability and an income.

He enjoyed working with people, and suddenly being unemployed left him without this part of his life.

He began volunteering at The Hub and found that his mood was lifted by the experience.

When a vacancy arose at the Arena Hope shop, he successfully secured the position of Sales Assistant due to both his previous experience and the quality of the work he delivered at The Hub.

Scott settled in quickly, and his work was consistently good. He was soon offered extra hours when The Project opened, and he now spends his time at both locations.

He has worked for Arena Community for several years now.

He has grown greatly in confidence since he started working at Arena and is excited by what the future may bring.

Luke Cumberland - The Project

Luke dropped out of college simply because he hated it so much.

Unfortunately, he had no other plans and had no idea what he was going to do, he simply knew



he could not continue at college.

His father, Sean, enquired about volunteering opportunities at The Project, and he was taken on in the furniture department. This is the area where the furniture is restored and painted in preparation for sale in the store.

Everything was new to him as he had never done anything like it before, but he found that he really enjoyed it. Luke discovered he was actually very good at painting and had a real eye for colours.

Luke was subsequently offered an apprenticeship and is now studying bench joinery at Nottingham College.

This is a complete turnaround from when he first came to The Project. At first, he was very quiet, with no self-confidence at all.

He has certainly come out of his shell - he is generally quiet by nature, but now he regularly has a smile on his face and has become more outgoing!

He feels much happier about his future and knows there are more options for him and much more potential than he thought was possible.

Margaret Fells - Open Door

Margaret comes from a place in life where she was struggling. She had already lost her husband and grandson, and had spent time in hospital where she had died and been brought back...twice!

In her words, she was existing and was not really enjoying life at all. In her search for something better, she decided that she wanted to try going



to church. Glenys, who was the manager at Open Door at that time, took her to Arena Church Mansfield.

While she was there, she heard Lead Pastor Kristian Thorpe speak on "Stepping Out of the Box" and she took the message to heart.

As a result of her attendance, she became a Christian and was baptised.

But one of the things that happened almost straightaway was that she booked herself onto a plane to go to Australia - on her own - to visit her son.

This was a massive step for her, truly out of her comfort zone, but she went ahead and did it. She is now hoping to go again soon.

She feels as if she has her life back and is ready to tackle whatever comes next.

ARENA HOPE COLOURING COMPETITION

A colouring competition will be held for children over the Easter period at the Arena Hope shop on Ilkeston Market Place.

The competition will be split into three age groups: 2-5 years, 5-8 years, and 8-11 years.

The prize for each age group will be an Easter egg. All entries are to be made at the shop - just pop in and collect your picture to colour in.



THE CHURCH IS BEING GENEROUS

By Julie Turner

One of the areas I oversee within Arena Church is finance. We have many people who regularly attend Arena Church, or are part of Arena Community, who generously give and support all that we do.

In 2018 we launched a 3-year campaign to raise money with the whole purpose of giving it away.

The leaders of Arena Church have been absolutely amazed and thankful for the tremendous giving within Arena to what we call our 2020 Fund.

Our 2020 Giving has created a fund where we have been able to meet needs wider and further than ever before. We have been able to launch new projects and initiatives - reaching further into our Community, our Nation and

our World.

Here are some examples of the work that has been accomplished through the 2020 Fund:-

- Renovations made to the building where our Foodbank is run creating an area which is so much warmer and welcoming for our foodbank clients.

- We surveyed the area to find local needs within our community and are pleased to be able to respond to one of the needs which was to provide a shower cubicle to help maintain the dignity of the homeless within our community.

- We are able to purchase a minibus which will be instrumental in launching our Acorns programme. An after-school programme working with referrals from local schools, providing a safe environment for children to play and receive

a meal at the end of their busy school day.

- We have been able to help and support people working to serve the communities in Birmingham, Scotland, France, Albania, Slovakia and Romania; just to name a few.

These are just some of the examples that this Fund has enabled Arena Church to do in the last year.

If you would like to be able to give to assist in this work, please email finance@arenachurch.co.uk.

We are so thankful for a group of people within and around Arena who have shown **OVERWHELMING GENEROSITY** - together we are able to do **MORE**, together we are able to **MAKE A DIFFERENCE** which we believe will last through generations.



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FINDING JOY IN DARKNESS

By Adam Newton

Debbie works for Arena Community, and to meet her now is to meet one of the happiest people you could hope for. She always goes out of her way to help people - it's even part of her job. But it wasn't always this way. In fact, just 14 years ago, her life was very different.

Before she became the Housing Manager at Arena Community, Debbie's life was full of darkness and despair. Since she was young, drugs and the way they affected people had played a big part in her life. This contributed to other problems she faced, including an inability to trust people and issues with anger - the slightest thing could send her into terrible fits of rage.

Her husband, Harvey, lived a lifestyle that was surrounded by drugs. It got progressively worse, and as their marriage went on, Harvey became addicted to heroin and crack cocaine. To fund his habit the couple ended up having to sell these drugs too, and there seemed to be no way out of the path they were on.

It all came to a head in October 2004 when Harvey was told that if he chose to continue living this kind of life, he would be dead within six months.

In April 2005, Harvey died from liver damage. Debbie's world was turned upside-down. She was left on her own to raise 7 children ranging in age from 15 months to 18 years. Debbie spiralled into a world of pure darkness.

She found she couldn't cope with everyday life and was petrified of what lay ahead. She drank to try and ease the pain, but with no money and barely surviving on benefits, there seemed to be no future to look forward to.

To try and lift herself from the pit she found herself in, Debbie decided to try to get a job. In the end, she had to take 3 jobs simultaneously just to make ends meet. Thoroughly exhausted and with nothing left to give, Debbie kept drinking to numb the pain of existence.

And then one day Debbie found herself in a very bad way, as drunk as she could be, but

engaged in a conversation with a lady named Tina. Tina spoke with Debbie for a very long time and invited her to have a coffee with her at Arena Church.

Debbie took her up on the offer, and met the pastor, who at the time was Eric Hobson. Debbie feels she encountered Jesus during this time, as Eric told her that the church was aware of her situation and that they had collectively been praying for her for the last 10 years.

This touched Debbie, who decided that she'd give church a go - after all, what did she have to lose?

As it turns out, quite a lot. She had a whole lifestyle to lose, a lot of emotional baggage, and a lot of anger. Debbie says it has been one of the hardest things she ever chose to do because there was so much about her that needed to change, but she knows that her trust and faith in Jesus has made it all possible.

These days, she is the opposite of what she once was. Always trying to help others, often smiling, and truly looking forward to the future. She's never looking back and is happy where she is, and where she is heading.

Looking back, in 2005 when you were on your own, what did you think would happen to you?

I thought I was going to die... and I probably wanted to die. I was frightened that I couldn't give the kids what they wanted, and I couldn't do what I was meant to as a mother.

You survived and ended up coming to church. Tell me about the first few times you came along.

I thought everyone was a bit weird. They were a bit too full-on. I ran off from people who were coming towards me and being nice, because I had no confidence...no self-esteem. They used to scare me. They were normal and I had no idea what normal was. It's like going into another world. Coming from a world of crime...It was like coming into a normal world from a dysfunctional world.

So, how did you get from there to ending up working at Arena Community?

Jesus had to change my



heart, and deal with things I didn't want to deal with, like swearing, anger, and trust. How can you put your faith and trust in something you can't see, when you can't trust people you can see?

I started in 2010 with foodbank to try and build my confidence up. Imagine your heart like it has a thick crust of rock or something around it. Now imagine it slowly being chipped away and your heart starts to beat again. As Jesus chips away at your heart you find that you have a heartbeat. It sounds daft but it's the only way I can describe it.

I started to develop this heart for addicts and lost people. I wanted people from my old world to come into my new one. If God can save me and turn me around, he can turn anyone. I think I was one of the hardest people to crack.

I started helping a lady who ran a shared house, taking one of her tenants out on Wednesdays, but then I got a longing for it. It was something I really wanted to do. But you don't know how to get into something like that... it's not an everyday kind of thing. Talking to Lisa (Harrison, Arena Community Pastor), we came up with a plan - and that's when Arena Supported Living was founded. It was an

idea that Lead Pastor Kristian Thorpe had been discussing for a couple of years. We started off with two houses and I worked as a volunteer for a few months working with these tenants. I put my heart and soul into it.

Lisa eventually told me there was a paid position for me...but by agreeing to do it I would be taking a risk because I had to give up my main job. I was the only breadwinner and having to look after everyone...I still had to feed the children. She told me to go away and pray about it. I did, and I came back having decided to take the risk.

I've been doing it since 2015, and never looked back. We now have 4 houses, a flat, and 11 tenants. I've become the housing manager and contented with what I do.

What's the thing you most enjoy about it?

Trying to change people's lives and being a positive influence on their lives.

What would you say to anyone who is facing dark times? Is there a way forward for them?

Yeah! Of course there is... Jesus! And that's all I've got to say about that...get in church and let Jesus take control of the steering wheel of your life. You've got nothing to lose. See what He can do for you.

REACHING OUT TO SENIOR CITIZENS

By Christine Austin

Here are some statistics regarding senior citizens in the UK:

In 2016, 18% of the UK population was over the age of 65, according to the Office for National Statistics. The data has revealed that in some regions, as many as 1 in 3 people are over 65 and that the UK population is predicted to continue growing, reaching over 74 million by 2039.

According to Age UK, more than 2 million people in England over the age of 75 live alone, and more than a million older people say they go for over a month without speaking to a friend, neighbour or family member.

Those who suffer from loneliness have a 64% greater risk of dementia, according to a Dutch study that appears in the Journal of Neurology,

Neurosurgery and Psychiatry. ... Feeling lonely can be considered "a major risk factor" for dementia, regardless of whether someone has vascular disease or depression, they add.

A study by The Co-op and the British Red Cross reveals over 9 million people in the UK across all adult ages - more than the population of London - are either always or often lonely.

Regardless of the causes of isolation, seniors who feel lonely and isolated are more likely to also report having poor physical and/or mental health.

The statistics show that we have an increasing population of senior citizens in the UK. We all probably dream of what retirement and our senior years will hold....time to take up hobbies, hopping on buses for day trips, hitting the golf course, spending time with family and

friends...etc. etc. but how sad it is to see that the reality for a large number of senior citizens is isolation and loneliness.

Arena Church celebrate the fact that they have a multi generational congregation where senior citizens sit alongside, young families, children, teenagers and middle agers. This said, they are passionate about extending their reach to engage with those who are in their older years and helping them to feel part of the community.

Arena Church in Ilkeston has been putting on events throughout the year, gathering around 90 seniors to enjoy lunch, quizzes and varied entertainment plus the opportunity to make friends. Their vision is to increase the opportunities for seniors to meet in both Ilkeston and Mansfield.

The first initiative being

launched is Blend & Brew Buddies in Ilkeston. Blend & Brew is the coffee shop which operates out of the Arena building on Rutland Street in Ilkeston.

They have recently had a refurbishment and updated the menu.

Blend & Brew Buddies will be launching on May 1st and will run weekly on Wednesday's between 10am and 12 noon. There will be opportunity to meet new friends over a drink and cake.

The Blend & Brew Buddies privilege card (available FOC to all senior citizens) will entitle seniors to discounts and specials in the coffee shop, including lunches which will be served from 12 noon.

Further information on Blend & Brew Buddies and activities for senior citizens is available at www.arenachurch.co.uk/seniors



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Email: admin@arenachurch.co.uk
Arena Church is an AOC church and a registered charity no. 1052643



WHAT DOES EASTER MEAN TO YOU?

By Helen Turner

What does Easter mean to you? It means so many different things to different people. For some people it's about the chocolate, for some it's about holidays and for some it's about spending time with family.

We asked some of the children that come to Arena Kids (ages 4-11) what Easter means to them, and this is what they said:

What does Easter mean to you?

Celyn - Joy, eating chocolate and celebrating when Jesus rose up to Heaven from the thingy.

Zara - When we celebrate God Faith - Easter means we are forgiven

Caitlin - Where we celebrate

Jesus because he rose.

Dante - Easter makes my family happier because we all get to spend time together celebrating when Jesus died for us all on the cross and that is why we go to church and talk about the cross, Jesus and God.

Louise - A day we celebrate Jesus dying on the cross for our sins. As well as Jesus rising from the dead miraculously.

Megan - Easter's about bunnies

For us Easter is about JESUS. It is a time for celebrating that Jesus died on the cross so that our sins are forgiven and then rose again on Easter day. People often wonder why we give chocolate eggs at Easter - this is because the egg represents new life as Jesus emerged from the tomb. We believe Jesus is the

Hope of the World!

Here's what the children at Arena Kids think Hope means:

Faith - Light in the darkness
Dante - To believe in something and to have an urge to believe in something

Sophie & Jack - Hope we get lots of Easter eggs

Caitlin - Something positive
Louise - A very special thing. I think when you hope for something you wish for something.

Celyn - Hope is when you believe that something is going to happen, so you pray for it to happen.

Emily - Hope you're going to do something, I hope

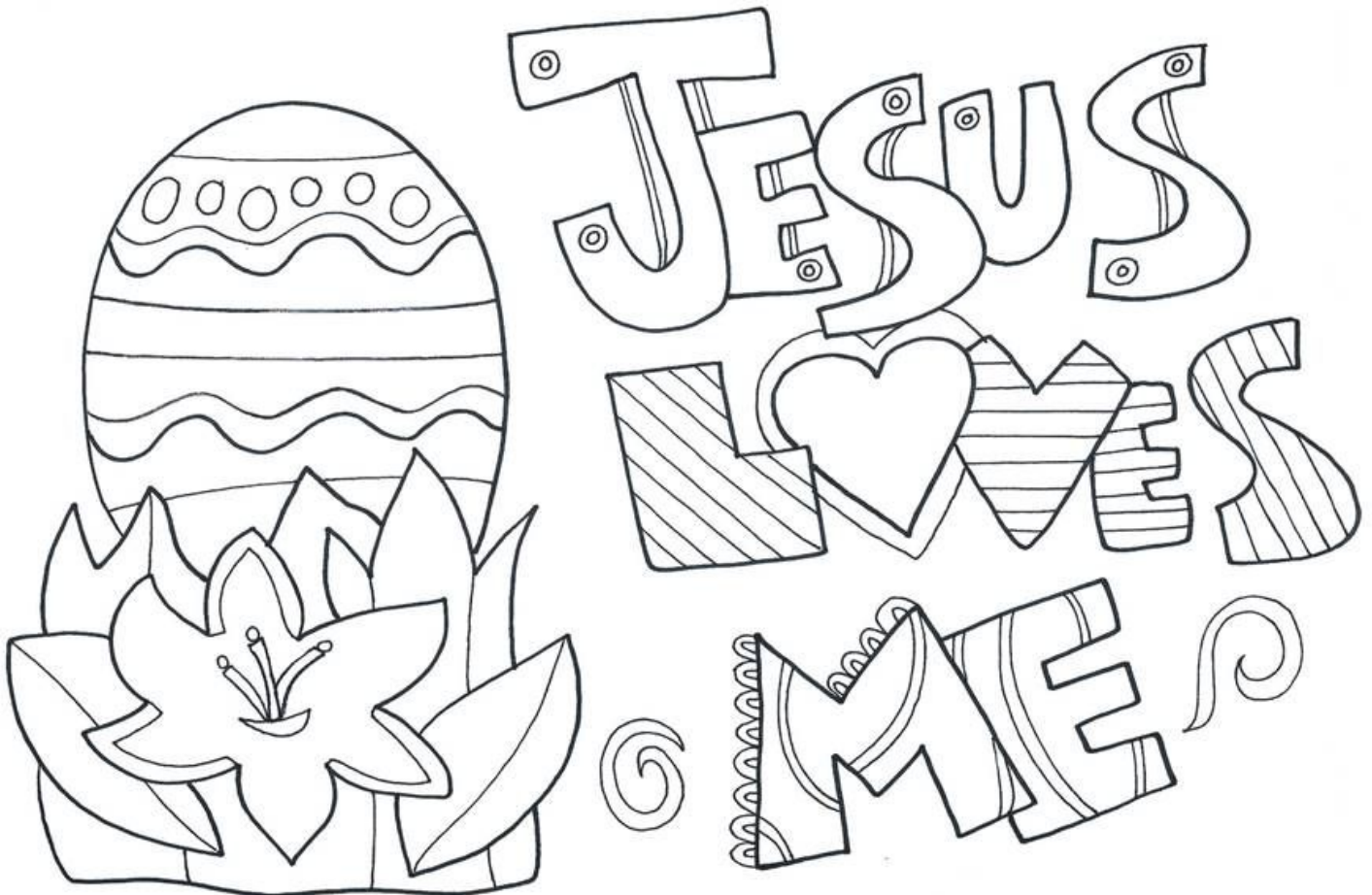
to become a police officer!

Maybe this Easter you feel like you need something new in your life. Come and give church a try and find out what a life with Jesus can be like.

We have some great services over Easter, and on Easter Sunday for the kids we have a party with lots of fun, games and chocolate. Hope to see you there!



EASTER COLOURING FOR KIDS





SMALL GROUPS BUILDING BIG RELATIONSHIPS

By Morgan Richardson

Of the four of our 'Growth Track' steps, Find Freedom has been the most difficult concept for me to grasp. But I grew to understand what it meant and what it entailed through meeting with one particular Small Group. A Small Group is simply what it says - a small group of people who just 'do life' together.

This group allowed me to be so open and honest about the struggles I was facing. For me, finding freedom means belonging, and feeling comfortable enough with the people that God has given you that you can bear all and grow together in Christ.

I then discovered that understanding 'find freedom' for myself was a lot easier than trying to help others to understand it.

For around 6-9 months, Eleanor and I have been leading a Small Group in Arena Students. This has become one of the biggest challenges and

learning curves I have had to face, but it has also given me the most growth as a young leader.

Our group have been very honest in the past months about their home situations, their struggles, their opinions and their questions about God and the idea of church. It has been very touching to know that they feel they have a trustworthy small group.

Often, many members of our group talk about their school experiences and struggles that they face every day, often referring to the overwhelming pressure that they are under. Some of them worry that they will mess up their own futures if they don't do very well and get high grades.

However, while being in this small group they have learned that God loves them no matter what, and it doesn't matter what grades they get, or whether they go to university or not, that God will always have an amazing plan for their lives,

and that if they keep walking in faith they will live out God's perfect plan.

A challenging area in our Small Group is the idea of forgiveness and unconditional love. In December we spoke on the series 'Come As You Are', and we had conversation around the fact that God loves absolutely everyone, no matter where they come from or what they have done. Our group understood how God could love some people, but not necessarily others.

Many of them were confused about how God could love the people that do terrible things. But that's the amazing thing about God, that his love is so great that we cannot possibly comprehend what it is capable of. It was overwhelming for them to hear.

Small Groups have taught me that the more that people find that they can trust who they are surrounded with, the more honest they can be, and therefore the more free they

become.

We have had some extremely challenging questions, such as 'why does God hate hell', but the more comfortable they feel asking these things, the more they can begin to ask the real questions, and truly develop their relationships with God.





A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

By Elliott Stockdale

The Derbyshire Church League does not have the most competitive football in the country. It does not have the most glamorous style and it is not the most entertaining. Those prizes would go to the top division in Britain in the form of the Premier League and the tier below that, the Sky Bet Championship.

However, what the Derbyshire Church League is, in the eyes of many, is important.

Since their debut season in 2012-13, Arena FC have won the league a total of three times. In that seven-year gap, they have competed for the title alongside the domestic trophies available under the different stewardships of Mark Ancliffe, Martin Gribby and Josh Holmes (with Douglas Pink standing by throughout).

Now in their 7th year of the competition, their focus, more than ever, is on winning the league; and also bringing people to Jesus.

The league has a main aim of 'bringing people to God through football', making it different from your average Saturday morning association.

Most members of Arena FC are not church goers, but at the

heart of the side are passionate people of God such as chairman and Arena Ilkeston pastor Phil Pye and Mansfield Pastor Josh Turner, who plays in the side.

The league has a different set of standards to most. Before kick-off, one of the team's captains will lead both sides in prayer. This introduces some of the players from the 10 teams in the division to the idea of praying, as many have not been to church or have been involved in a Christian environment.

The DCL also has specific rules on language used on the pitch. They have a strict no swearing policy which allows the referee to give them one or two warnings before issuing a yellow card.

Arena FC and the other teams all genuinely play an important role in people's lives and will continue to have an active role in player's lives as the season goes on.

The season however is coming to a close, but Arena FC who are after their fourth championship, would not say no to a little extra support in the closing stages of the campaign (they play on a Saturday morning at 10:30; ask Douglas Pink for more details.)

SPONSORED BIKE RIDE FOR PARKINSON'S UK

Rachel Lee, a member of Arena Church in Ilkeston, will be cycling over 130 miles from London to Amsterdam on 17th May to raise vital funds for the charity Parkinson's UK.

"I have been coming to Arena for at least 10 years now and I can honestly say that it has helped my relationship with God grow stronger and I have found myself turning to God for help in all aspects of my life.

I work for United Response, a charity that supports people with disabilities and learning difficulties to have independence and live in their own homes. We support a group of individuals to attend Arena Church on a Sunday. Amongst them was a gentleman called Peter Hopewell who not only had the challenges of living with severe autism and epilepsy but then went on to develop Parkinson's Disease, a horrible illness which my Grandad Charlie also had.

Peter was an inspiration to many and it was an honour to support him. He sadly passed away last May. This is why I have taken on the cycling challenge, in memory of two wonderful men who have impacted my life and my passion to help towards improving treatments and hopefully finding a cure for Parkinson's.

The training has been tough to fit in around work and family life and it is a little scary being on the roads, let alone cycling over 130 miles on them, but I know I can do it as my faith gives me strength and confidence in myself. I feel I can face any



challenge life has to offer as I know I never have to face them alone, God is always by my side."

'The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you, he will never leave you, nor forsake you. Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged.' Deuteronomy 31v8

About Parkinson's

- Every hour, two people in the UK are told they have Parkinson's
- It affects 145,000 people in the UK - which is around one



in 350 of the adult population

- Parkinson's is a degenerative neurological condition, for which there currently is no cure. There are more than 40 symptoms of the condition. As well as the most widely known symptom - tremor - these range from physical symptoms like muscle stiffness to depression, anxiety, hallucinations, memory problems and dementia, but Parkinson's affects everyone differently.

• Parkinson's UK is the UK's leading charity supporting those with the condition. Its mission is to find a cure and improve life for everyone affected by Parkinson's through cutting edge research, information, support and campaigning.

- For advice, information and support, visit www.parkinsons.org.uk or call its free, confidential helpline on 0808 800 0303

If anyone would like to sponsor Rachel please visit: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Rachel-Lee35