



AMERSHAM FREE CHURCH

Amersham Free Church makes its Christmas Collections for 2021



During the month of December each year, it is our practice at Amersham Free Church to give special additional Mission contributions in support of 3 causes. We identify an international cause, one supporting a national objective, and one which is local to our area around Buckinghamshire. We can contribute to these causes, both by using the monthly envelope system, and by giving at the services immediately around Christmas.

We have chosen to recognise during Christmas 2021
the following commendable causes:

Street Kids Direct

Child Bereavement UK

PACE



This leaflet provides pen pictures of these three organisations, which are warmly deserving of our financial support, commending them, at the same time, to our informed and prayerful support.

Partnership in Mission, Amersham Free Church, Christmas 2021

Street Kids Direct

This organisation, based in Amersham, works in Guatemala City and a town in Honduras. It was established by Duncan Dyason, known to us by several visits to Amersham Free Church over the years, and financially supported by us from time to time by various Mission Offerings.

It has the vision to reach out to children under 18 years, who either live on the streets of the city, or who are at risk of becoming homeless and then moving into the city. It has the simple intent to 'rescue kids from the streets'.

The streets of this city are a dangerous place for children, with a history of crime and abuse, and where the torture and murder of children are not unknown. Without family contact, and probably already suffering the privations of abuse and poverty, they may easily drift into the underworld of drug use and violence. The volunteers working with Street Kids Direct, and their partner agencies, work at the level of these streets to bring hope and practical help, such as food, conversation, and pointers to school places and associated facilities.

The other main prong of this work of outreach lies in the active prevention of children slipping into life on the streets. They are likely to be 'street connected' if they fall into 4 out of 10 categories of defined risk. These include emotional abuse, violent mother, family mental health issues, family members in prison, sexual abuse, and similarly. This comprehensive risk assessment will suggest whether such children are more likely to fall into circles of violence, drug abuse, and suicidal intentions. The volunteers will seek to get alongside the children at risk, hopefully enlisting parental support, and encouraging them towards school.

Working with partner agencies, Street Kids Direct work according to a Development Plan, Child Protection Policy, and a Code of Ethics. But, putting those necessary formal arrangements on one side for the moment, members of the organisation value the help that comes from people, mostly in this country, maintaining the prayerful and financial support. Despite the pandemic effects, the past year has seen 700 families supported, and 400 children in daily school.

Child Bereavement UK

It is a salutary reflection that more than 7600 babies, children and young people (under the age of 18) die each year – that's 21 every day. But then think of the parents, who are bereaved, and that is estimated at over 23.600 per year, and then the close siblings ...and the list goes on. This represents the size of the task which the Child Bereavement Trust potentially confronts, as they seek to counsel the people caught up in this focused bereavement situation. Interestingly, this organisation had its beginnings in High Wycombe, where a local nurse became aware of the acute anguish and heartache as she worked amongst dying children and the impact on parents. Their mission is to ensure the accessibility of high-quality child bereavement support, and information to all families and professionals dealing with loss amongst children, adults and families.

They offer free, confidential bereavement support by phone, video, and face to face engagements from a number of locations around the UK. In addition to the support for bereaved individuals, children and young people, and families, they provide groups where families, young people, and parents can meet in a supportive environment, often joining in social and creative activities.

An important part of their work is in the provision of support and training. They want professionals in the field to better understand the needs of bereaved children and their families, and so this training is based on learning from families, underpinned by relevant theory and practice. They also provide support and training for schools and further education colleges. There is a range of online resources, appropriate throughout the school years, webinars for teachers, and bereavement awareness programmes for primary school children, helping them to develop emotional literacy and coping skills.

There have been substantial pressures during the period of the Covid emergency. Phone help lines have been busy, counselling time has been in demand, and online services have been stretched. Let's make our Christmas Mission Offering a help in easing many of the pressures currently being experienced by the Child Bereavement Trust.

PACE

Pace is a charity that provides first class education, therapy and support for children aged 0-18 with neuro-disabilities such as cerebral palsy and development delay, and support and guidance for their families. Its aim is to lead the way in the delivery of innovative and effective educational provision that focuses on the development of independence skills in all areas, whilst recognising that all children are different and have unique personalities. It is based in Aylesbury, where there is a school and a therapy and support centre.

About 1 in 400 children are born with cerebral palsy each year, and there are more boys than girls. Cerebral palsy can exhibit in a wide range of conditions, including difficulties with walking, dressing and feeding, learning disabilities, and deafness, short-sightedness, and blindness. Whatever the physical and sensory challenges facing the children, the plan is to help such children to achieve their full potential, and to be as independent as they possibly can, both now and later.

Baby and family therapy services are offered for children in 0-3 year group. Following a full multi-disciplinary assessment of the needs of the child, then parents will benefit from an on-going therapy programme involving both them and the specialist staff. For children in the 4-16 age group then they can join the specialist school on site in Aylesbury, with 36 children. Teachers work alongside therapists to foster a learning ethos with a supportive environment. The staff understand the particular issues which confront the children, and are able to provide a tailored learning style. The third area of activity is the Family Therapy Centre, leading in therapeutic programmes for children with motor disorders, their parents, and various schools. It helps to promote development and inclusion within the wider community. It works on skills to actively participate in social and leisure activities, promoting independence, resilience, and improving emotional well-being.

Funding comes from donations, together with local authorities which supply about 75% of total revenue. There are 100 members of staff, reflecting the specialisms necessary to support such an organisation.

This cause reaches into parts of our common life together. Having lifted a little of the curtain, let's support it with a Christmas contribution, and a prayer for the children, parents, and staff of **PACE**.