



MAY/JUNE 2019

From Dom, Hannah, Jonny, Emily, Becky, Stephen and James

“IF I WANTED A BOAT...”

“...I would want a boat I couldn't steer.”

So reads a line from Mary Oliver's most recent poetry collection, *Blue Horses*. And if we needed any reminding that church planting is that kind of un-steerable boat, the closure of Persian Palace (our venue until last week) certainly brought that home! With that in mind, this prayer letter will be more about the church community than the seven of us – with gratitude for your support in prayer and friendship.



(Some of) the story of the last three months:

Since our first Sunday gathering just over three months ago as Upper Room Cheetham Hill, several people have started to worship with us regularly: most from outside Christian community (including one lady from a Muslim background), and a family who are exploring church planting elsewhere.

There's been a tangible shift in the community atmosphere as we've become 'more comfortable in our own skin' – able to relax and focus on welcoming people and God's presence. Visitors have spoken to us of the warm welcome they've received; thanks God for small church, good food, and the Holy Spirit!

Exploring Acts together has been brilliant: Luke's themes of the Spirit's power, community formation, and perseverance in the good news have been so applicable for us, and lots of people have taught, often for the first time.

We've established rhythms of prayer (Monday lunchtimes and Tuesday early mornings), and begun a Wednesday mid-week group for anyone in the church community – food, prayer, and Bible. There have also been a few church walks, and ad-hoc meals between various people in the community.

So, what now?

Although the news of Persian Palace's closure was obviously a surprise, we're all quite excited about how God is going to work through it for good. We'd almost outgrown the original Upper Room, so it feels like quite a natural (albeit abrupt) transition point – and God is excellently creative at turning 'setbacks' around... (For the short term, we're gathering in our friend Wendy's living room.)

The Mary Oliver poem quoted earlier also contains the words, “What kind of life is it [...] to wish for the near and safe?” What kind of life indeed? So we pray that God would keep leading us on, steering this little boat of his out into deeper waters, greater trust, and larger love.

How can you join us in prayer?

Church Plant Changes:

- For Persian Palace's staff and owners: for their livelihood to be restored, and for God's wise help as we look to bless and support them.
- For a new, welcoming, venue to become clear. (We're exploring renting on our high street.)
- For good and open team communication through the changes.

Broader requests:

- Ramadan (the Muslim month of fasting) ended on 4th/5th June. Please pray for opportunities to build on relationships and reconnect with Muslim friends.
- BECKY AND EMILY'S FIRE ALARM IS FIXED AT LAST! Rejoice with those who rejoice... :)
- Shifts in the spiritual atmosphere of Cheetham Hill: from fear to hope and darkness to light.

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.” (Matt 5:14)
Our prayer is for God's light to shine in Cheetham Hill/Crumpsall