



Young @ Heart Café aims to provide companionship and support to those who live with dementia and their

family carers. It came into being after many parishioners had attended Dementia information sessions provided by Home Instead Senior Care, a local Care Company owned by one of our parishioners. These parishioners wanted to make a practical difference and joined Maria in her vision for a community Café.

The Café attendees have grown and grown since we opened in September 2016. Initially our guests were referred to us but by word of mouth and recommendations by health professionals, our numbers have grown. We have also enhanced our entertainment by having a variety of musicians who entertain our guests on different weeks. Each musician offering their own repertoire and leading the singing from the five different songbooks we have created. Once a month we have a reminisce theme to encourage guests to talk – these chatterbox themes have included a focus on the seasons, films, jobs and a visit to an old sweet shop.



We have formed a Choir "Friends with Voices" by collaborating with Stopsley singing Café. Our Choir has performed around the town, singing at Luton Airport and the local Dementia Conference in November 2017.

Christmas 2017 was a new venture with a dementia friendly carol concert in St John the Apostle church and other Choirs joined us to celebrate. The Café finished 2017 with a Christmas party, the table flower decorations were made by guests and carers.

We have supported the Café with a lively fund-raising programme, led by Christine Boyd, including curry nights at The Dildar restaurant, quiz night, and other events promoted by South Beds Golf Club and the Luton Mayo Association. Christine has led negotiations with Luton Borough Council to successfully access grant funding for our Christmas parties.



This week we held a Picnic in the Park at Wardown Park. 74 guests sat in the dappled sunshine in front of the Museum eating a variety of sandwiches, delicious cakes and fresh fruit. We enjoyed a good 'ole sing song' with the highlight being a rickshaw ride for everyone through the Park. The aim was to help bring back memories for our guests, of being young and cycling in parks and open space, and based on a project from Denmark called 'Cycling without Age'. Funding for this event was donated by the "Working Men's Riverdance" - a project involving our own Deacon, Jim Hannigan and 10 other guys who learned the famous Riverdance sequence.



Volunteers support our Café in many differing ways. They either bake cakes, attend the café and join in the activities with our guests, provide admin support, provide music, transport or help with fundraising. But each and every one of them, say they get back more than they put in as they see the difference they are making to the individuals we support. We recognise there are many of you in our Parish community that have talents that would be great to share in this initiative and invite you to consider giving us a little of your time - we use a rotational system for those who have very limited time available.

If you would like to join us - please contact either Maria Collins on 07767 880358 or Christine Boyd on 01582 650826, for a chat in the first instance.

Other links have been made with the local NHS Memory Services – we now can offer a post-diagnostic follow up at our Café supported by the Clinical Nurse Specialist for those newly diagnosed with dementia. A really valuable service and shows how communities can work together with the specialist services to make this journey an easier one.

We also work with the Alzheimer's Society by having a support session at the time the Café is in progress.

Plans for the future

We want to provide a Carers Group once a month and have secured the services of a volunteer facilitator who has lived experience of dementia. This will be our "Tea and Talk Support Group" but we need more volunteers who are willing to be with us in the Café once a month, why not come and join us?

Young @ Heart Café - Wednesday 2pm to 4pm - St John's Parish Centre in Sundon Park, Luton and is free to attend