

## Faiths4Change

### May 2020 Report to SAS from Annie Merry

Our delivery is mostly face-to-face - the social, physical & emotional connectivity that people bring when they engage with practical environmental projects is the rich compost that enables projects & people to grow together, find strength and branch out.

Initially, we were able to make changes in line with the guidance to keep people safe so that our Monday social food market, lunch & activity and our Thursday gardening drop in & Myerscough College course could continue. Putting up clear guidance for people entering the building @ St Michael's in the City, providing hand sanitiser, paper towels (instead of cloth ones), picking up & bagging food products and making everyone's drinks were straight forward.

Social distancing and other changes presented different challenges.

We had intended to maintain the Monday market and planned a set up that would have enabled people to come in one door, out another and then head off. However, Micah, the charity that drops food to sell, began to run out of supplies due to panic buying & resulting restrictions on staple foods and needed to focus on their two food banks, the closure of all church buildings and lock down followed very quickly. We anticipate opening the market again but at present, we don't know when that will be feasible.

We had contacted all regular gardeners to advise that both gardening groups would stop in the short term and we'd look to find ways to keep in touch as Rosie would be maintaining the garden. For two weeks Rosie was able to maintain the garden with a long term volunteer - Caps - (an Asylum Seeker) & three long term regular gardeners (including a Refugee). Although social distancing was straight forward, other factors such as toilets & kitchen space were less so.

We decided that Rosie & Caps would maintain the garden until the lock down eased and they are doing an excellent job! The garden looks amazing - lots growing including the native hedging, herbs, flowers and food and they're keeping on the weeds & bamboo under control.

Three weeks ago we agreed with Micah that we would supply them with our fresh food - they are picking up freshly harvested salad, chard, spinach and herbs on Thursday mornings and giving them to mainly Asylum Seeker families who attend their food bank at St Bride's on Thursday afternoons.

We've taken steps to increase the food growing area - building an additional three large raised beds which Caps has filled with almost five tonnes of top soil / compost mix - so that we can sow more seeds & be able to supply fresh food to families attending the food bank over the coming months.

We're keeping in touch with gardeners via an e-newsletter giving updates from the garden & our Myerscough tutor Emma has been writing a column too. The first newsletter was so well received; our isolated gardeners have been emailing pictures and questions about their own spaces & requesting seeds, compost and pots too. Newsletter link below

<https://us19.campaign-archive.com/?u=2c9f889e78a4e55de245d178f&id=473d1ccb54>

We're looking to grow the newsletter to connect with other gardeners or would be gardeners and groups around the city & have submitted a funding bid to realise this & supply bespoke gardening kits to isolated / shielding households to help them grow their own food.