

Noah's Ark Hospice

I am delighted to be able to say a little about Noah's Ark Children's Hospice which the PCC on behalf of the church has agreed to support again. There is a difference from the last time we gave, a few years ago, in that the hospice is now a reality not just a pipe dream. So it is one of our newest charity trusts and you might not have heard much about it.

In 2010 the trust was able to become a leaseholder of ground in the north of Barnet in Byng Road near to Barnet Rugby club and Christ Church Primary school and where the Denis Bland environmental centre was situated. The determination to bring the building to fruition was fulfilled and the Ark was formally opened on September 26th 2019.

In those early days the work was totally an outreach to families in their homes.

The majority of babies and children they support are unlikely to reach their 18th birthday. The hospice's clear aims are to enable babies and children with life threatening and life limiting illnesses and their families to live fulfilling lives, die with dignity and face the future with hope.

Unless we have been the parent or carer of a child with a chronic illness we can have no idea of the impact this has on family life. I suspect we've all seen cases on television where dedicated parents make lifelong sacrifices for their children.

The Ark provides clinical, emotional and practical support to families across North and Central London and Hertsmere both in their own homes or at The Ark, a state-of-the art building so that families can make the most of the special time they have together. Parents have numerous demands upon their attention and siblings may be left feeling isolated.

Children have the chance to have fun and rewarding experiences and to make friends. Sometimes days out for the whole family are organised. There is an annual weekend away for siblings.

Nurse-trained specialist carers as well as an army of volunteers go into people's homes to help directly with the child and more broadly around

the home. They give parents a break to pop out for a cup of coffee or spend time with the unwell child's siblings.

The hospice had planned to admit patients one at a time in March 2020 but Covid-19 accelerated this plan and following the request of other hospitals there are now a number of patients.

However, the stories on the website which I recommend to you make an interesting read. Luke's story encapsulates the aim to face the future with hope. As a 7 year old he contracted leukemia. He was helped through this by a play therapist and a drama therapist provided through the outreach scheme. His mother says *"Noah's Ark was the only place that gave Luke the real psychological support that he needed. It was fantastic for him to have people he trusted who he could talk to, outside of the family."* Luke is now a healthy, bike-loving young man about to enter his teenage years. But he knows and understands that he's been lucky enough to emerge on the other side and wants to tell others about what happened to him. That's why he offered to share his experience with others who are going through the same thing as he did at Noah's Ark's new oncology support groups.

We are very lucky to have a children's hospice in our area and I feel we should continue to support it.