



• *Report 2024-2025* •

Our relatively new project in the borough of Croydon has become a mainstay of our domestic work. It comprises two parts: a weekly 'Church in a Pub,' where those attending are given lunch as well as being able to enjoy a low-key Bible talk; and the 'Croydon Lunchtime Church,' where a similar approach is taken on weekdays at a town-centre venue. These have been very successful with good numbers attending, and many of those coming have committed themselves to Jesus Christ through baptism as a result. A considerable number of those attending are homeless or otherwise challenged in life, so the meals are much appreciated, as is other material help such as clothing. What is more, a strong sense of community and mutual support has developed as a result. This has been reinforced during the year by two weekends at a residential centre in Kent which have provided excellent fellowship and support for many who have never before experienced something similar.

The Croydon sessions are streamed on YouTube which means that they have been enjoyed by many from other parts of the UK and round the world, awakening their interest in the Bible and Christianity in general. As a result of this and our other activities (see below), more than 120 people in the UK and 160 in other countries, supported by us, committed themselves to Jesus Christ during the year through baptism. A number of these were refugees and asylum seekers, some in the UK and others in countries such as Turkey, Germany and Israel. Others still live in countries where as Christians they are liable to persecution, such as Iran and Afghanistan. Online support in particular remains very important to these people, though this has become increasingly difficult as the local authorities have blocked direct internet access to our (and many other) websites and apps, forcing them to use Virtual Private Networks.

We have also delivered both practical and pastoral support to those in need in several countries overseas, ranging from help for a number of people seriously affected by the war in Ukraine to providing welfare, clothing and firewood to those in poverty in western Europe.

Our *Bible Companion* app therefore continues to be a crucial and well-used tool in our work. The app, which is cost- and advertisement-free, comprises a full Bible text including audio; deeper commentary on every verse; basic devotionals, an audio and a youth message on every chapter; a daily sermon and thought for the day, a reading planner; a *Bible Basics* study course; and powerful search functionality. We believe that this app offers more features and resources than any other free Bible

app. It is available on both Android and Apple, in English, Russian, Farsi, French, Spanish and Ukrainian.

Alongside the app, we run a 'Virtual Church' (www.virtualchurch.cc) which is a gateway to both pastoral support and to regular online communion services along with Q&A sessions and talks.