

## Heaven Branch Update – October 2024

### Heavenly Committee

Fred Taylor, Keith Charlton, David Dent, Ray Heslop, Louise Wanless, Bradley Lowery, Brian Lang, Arthur Wright.

### Earthly Committee

Billy Wright, Gaz Nash, Tony Norman, Brian Leng, Chris Tague, Rob Mason, David Newham, John Helens, Malcolm Crosby

### Funding

Successful bid for £1,000 from the Community fund for monthly activities.

Successful lottery bid for £11,000 to access counselling for members.

This bought us 400 hours of qualified counselling that can be used 1-1, group, virtual or face to face. This is so we can include fans that do not live locally.

We are using the hours as follows:

- Monthly adult group
- Counsellors present at all our events
- Weekly young person bereavement group (6 weeks holiday)
- 1-1 counselling.

We have 7 members currently receiving 1-1 counselling, and one family centred for a 7-year-old. Each person referred were contacted within 3 days of the referral and were allocated their counsellor within 1 week. The organisation has been amazing for those who have engaged, they tailor all their materials in the young people group to be football/Sunderland related.

### Funeral Flags

Our 4 coffin flags remain busy, we have 2 x old badge style and 2 new badge style.



## Funeral flowers

In addition to our flowers to loan we now have large funeral flowers in the shape of the old badge that can be loaned out to save families time and money.

They are made of artificial silk flowers and were made possible by the donation of cash by Tom Lynns family after his passing. Flowers remain popular Tom's badge was used for 7 funerals in the first 8 weeks of us having it.



## Pitch clippings – new batch given by the groundsman.

We have provided almost 65 families with bottles / pouches of pitch clippings for funerals and many more of their family and friends with pitch clipping gifts.

We have held 2 workshops where families help make up the pitch clippings for future bereaved families as well as gifts for those left behind.



## Love bugs

Remains very popular for people visiting the memorial area, bugs are topped up weekly.

## Membership

Steadily increasing, we have 307 official heavenly branch members.

2600 in Facebook group.

## Spreading of ashes

We have now supported 17 families with the spreading of their loved one's ashes, preparing the area, love bugs and arranging someone to be there with them. We have 7 families current waiting to hear what is happening with the memorial area.

## Pin Badges

Selling well, we have 5 designs now each voted for by the Facebook members.



## Recent events

All events are very well attended and funded by badge sales and recent community Fund donation.

**Stepping back in time SAFC History talk in with Rob Mason – 11 February**

**Ukulele workshop – 17 March**

**Charlie Hurley memorial service – 7 May**

**Pitch workshops x2.**

**Pebble Painting session x 2**

**Watercolour workshop – 31 May**

**Young persons bereavement group – this ran weekly over summer holidays.**

**Adult bereavement group – this is the last Friday of the month and is ongoing.**

**Unity in the community 19 October – met many of our fans from different cultures and faiths – gave out Mackem pink slices.**

## Committee

I'm very happy to announce we have been joined by our former manager Malcom Crosby.

## Club / Memorial area.

We have struggled to engage with the club since our proposal of an expansion of the memorial area. Particularly in the last 6 months and we were asked to take a post down from our group stating we were upsetting fans. Although, at the end of last season the club announced they did plan to do work on the area. Some families were told July, then August then that it would be unveiled before the Burnley at home game. I tried to reach out to David Bruce and Chris Waters with no reply.

This was all very frustrating, but we did have it confirmed by Chris Waters we can still place memory pebbles and keep our love bug box at the memorial area.

We were invited in to see the plans for an extended memorial area in September and at the recent fans collective meeting an update was given that work on the memorial area will start soon. Amazing design and once announced i think our members will be very happy.

The Heaven branch section on the club website has been taken down, I suspect they want to take memorial/remembering fans in house now, the new memorial page on the club website asks for donations to go to the Foundation of Light. Our members views on this were shared at the collective meeting.

### Funeral Packs

In addition to certificate, flag, flowers, pitch clipping and gifts for family were donated funds which were used to make little Heaven Branch hug cards.



### Upcoming events

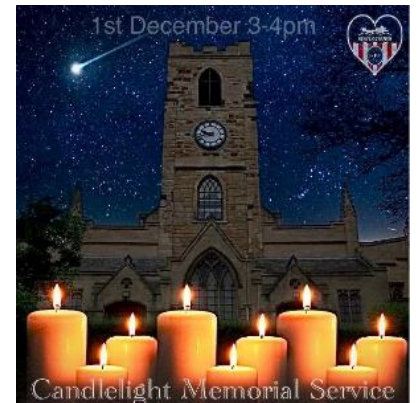
#### Talk in with Malcom Crosby at Sunderland deaf club (120 people)

A talk in with a difference. Due to losing 3 members of the deaf club who were all Sunderland fans and now branch members we aim to hold a talk in at their new premises that is accessible with sign language interpreters around the room. Malcom has kindly agreed to come up to Sunderland on 8 November and he will be joined by Gordon Armstrong and Kevin Ball, hosted by Nick Barnes. We will have several BSL interpreters around the room to ensure accessibility for all.



**Christmas Candlelight remembrance – 1<sup>st</sup> December Sunderland Minister.  
(approx. 200 people)**

We put the venue out to vote on the page as to whether people would mind us moving this to the Minster. We had no access to electricity, hot water, seating or toilets at the stadium and it was quite frustrating trying to organise. The Charlie Hurley service was wonderful, using this as a venue would mean we have access to electricity, seating, toilets, a kitchen area, and shelter should it be poor weather. We do have members whose mobility is poor which restricts them from coming to the memorial area. The first year we had around 50 attendees then around 120 last year, I'm sure this will rise again this year.



**Sunderland Youth choir singing Service led by – Father Marc and Canon Claire (I aim to reach out to other local faith leaders to be involved)**

**Speakers** – Nik Barnes and Rob Mason

All branch members receive a gift in memory of heaven branch member's 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday (funds donated by his family) Our volunteers have been in making these up.....

Hot drinks and cakes donated by Browns designs.



**Wellbeing at Christmas session – 8 December  
(20 spaces)**

Workshop on navigating grief at Christmas with build your own wellbeing box.

One hour with Grief counsellor 1 hour with myself building the box.



**Christmas Party - To be announced**

The Victory Club. (120 people)

Pie and peas, Santa visit with gift, caricatures and a quiz.

**Pebble Painting**

We need to plan this in the new year due to several families waiting.

## **Finance**

Thank you so much to treasurer John who keeps everything right when I go mad on Amazon and Temu. The balance of our account as I write this update is £2,995.47. (we are loaded and still have badges to sell)

I have applied to Durham Masons for £1,000 funding for our Christmas party, if this is not successful the ticket money for Malcom's talk in will cover the cost.

Due to the counselling being so well received and desperately needed I aim to apply for the funding again once the year is up.