

THIN PLACE, ANDOVER



**God is good all the time;
all the time, God is good**

The vision for *Thin Place* came in the summer of 2010 when 2 young men from Andover Baptist Church read Pete Grieg's 'Punk Monk' and were captivated by the idea of a new monastic life, a life that was marked by rhythm and service.

Andy Fitchet and Paul Cable were ready to move onto a housing estate, King Arthur's Way, in Andover, which has the highest rate of crime, highest number of unemployed, lowest rate of education achievement. There was a vision to become a beacon of light and hospitality on King Arthur's.



Paul and Andy, however, then both got girlfriends and subsequently both got married; this made the idea of moving in together somewhat more difficult. After much prayer and discussion Andy and his new wife, Zoe, decided that God was calling them as a couple to move onto the estate.

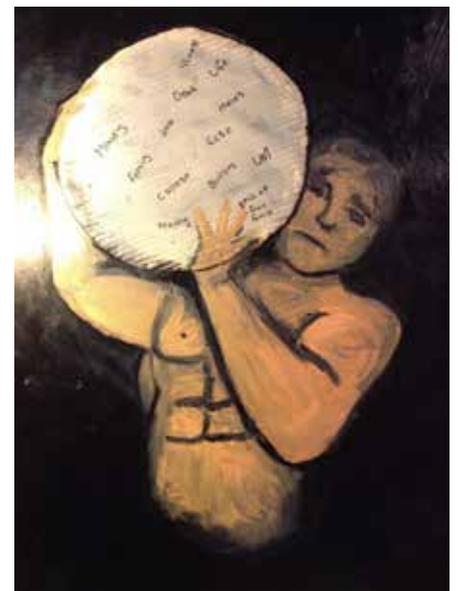
After spending two weeks in Kolkata, India with BMS in May 2012, Andy and Zoe were inspired by the work of Benjamin Francis and Big Life and how they use a 'Person of Peace' model of church planting. When they go into a village they find a person of peace who will be open to their message and also have influence or authority in that place. Usually after that person opens to the gospel, many of the others will also. So Zoe and Andy looked at using this model in the UK.

There was a group of young people they had worked with over a few years at a youth group, of the young people, Tim (*not his real name*), was a man of peace. He just drew people around him. He became a Christian and would come to Andy and Zoe's house on a Sunday afternoon for lunch, bringing with him 6-8 other young people. Sunday afternoon worked



best as many of the young people were on a police tag so had to be home by 5:30.

The church plant grew and people came to know Jesus. Tim, however, moved on after much work reconciling a broken relationship with a parent. Interestingly the



Picture painted at *Thin Place* by the young people, representing every burden they carry.

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other young people stopped coming, as the person who drew them all together was no longer there and many stopped hanging around with each other.

At the current time, no church is meeting in Andy and Zoe's house. This is frustrating and disappointing, after such early success. However, God isn't a God who abandons or leaves. He is a God who plants and waters and grows. So Andy and Zoe continue to build relationships and meet with people, run a youth group and pray. Wondering what God is doing and where he is leading.

The other half of the story is Whitchurch Baptist Church. Whitchurch was a small church with a small amount of money. Discussions were being had about whether/when to close the church.

After discussions with Regent's Park College, Andover Baptist Church and the Southern Counties Baptist Association (SCBA), it was agreed that Andy would be placed half time at Whitchurch and half at Thin Place, in amongst Formation at Regent's.



Over 150 new people came to Whitchurch Baptist Church's Christmas Fayre

Whitchurch has seen growth in a phenomenal way over that last year. Average attendance is up from 28 to around 45. There are now two children's groups meeting on a Sunday morning, where as there were none last year. Membership is up 10% on last year and the church are currently praying through their vision and values and seeing where God is leading them.

The sum up – God is good, all the time; and all the time, God is good.

Andy Fitchet
Minister in Training

Please pray:

- » For encouragement for Andy and Zoe as they support their community at Thin Place, and also the church family at Whitchurch alongside study at Regent's Park College
- » For the young people who have stopped coming to Andy and Zoe's since Tim left
- » For a sense of vision for the future of Thin Place - and for another 'person of peace' that they can relate to
- » Give thanks for the signs of growth at Whitchurch Baptist Church