

Newsletter
December 2023


New Hope

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS.
TRANSFORMING LIVES.

HOPE

NOT HOMELESSNESS

at Christmas



“ At Christmas you’re seeing people, families, enjoying the lights and buying gifts. I was always in the shadows, and it reminded me that I was alone. I felt that no one wanted me. ”

INSIDE PLEASE DONATE TO ‘HOPE, NOT HOMELESSNESS’
AND HELP SOMEONE ESCAPE LIFE ON THE STREET.

Still Entertaining Angels

“*The unwashed, unshaven, squalid and dirty figures constantly running to and fro, rendered it a bewildering scene, which quite confounded the senses.*”

So wrote Dickens in *Oliver Twist* in his description of London in the mid-1800s.

A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of joining our street outreach team on an early morning shift. We came across Phil lying in a sleeping bag in a disused garage surrounded by mounds of rubbish. The scene felt Dickensian. Over the past two hundred years so much has changed but here was a scene where so little had changed. I was

deeply moved both by this sight and by the gentle way that the team spoke with him. Phil is not well. He has chosen to live that way at the moment. The team will continue to regularly visit him until hopefully he is ready to come in, as many others have done.

The complexity of service users' needs means that we now work more closely with other agencies than we have ever done but there is more to do, particularly in terms of supporting service users, like Phil, with their health needs. Swift and accessible interventions are



not only in the interest of the person but also in terms of the public purse. Over the past year we've had to call for an ambulance once every six days on average to respond to the physical and mental health needs of our service users. I find that figure worrying.

You're reading our newsletter because you care about what we do. Because you care about people like Phil. Whether you work or volunteer for us, support us financially or are part of a growing number of people who subscribe to our monthly prayer letter, you are

part of the ongoing extraordinary narrative of *Entertaining Angels*. Thank you. May God bless you this Christmas.

Matthew

Matthew Heasman
CEO

Have you read *Entertaining Angels* – the story of New Hope's early years? Please email Rebecca on rpalmer@newhope.org.uk if you would like a copy!



HOPE

NOT HOMELESSNESS

at Christmas

In the weeks leading up to Christmas, like so many towns and villages, Watford is a lively place. The shopping centre impossibly busy. The high street packed with people rushing to find last-minute gifts. Excited children pointing out the colourful festive displays through brightly lit windows.

In the background, mostly unseen, are those for whom Christmas is not a time of gift giving and celebration. People who instead are alone, cold and in need.

This year, the latest in a series of years demarcated by rapid inflation, has seen many more



people struggling – going out less, changing to a cheaper supermarket, barely heating their homes or eating fewer meals. For some, this was the year that pushed them over the edge. Eviction, then staying with friends until eventually, a tent becomes home.

When people are rough sleeping, cold, hungry and alone, the Haven

is there to give warmth, hot meals, and companionship. At Christmas and throughout the year, people can come for a cooked breakfast, packed lunch, clean clothes and showers, and are given support in identifying options for safe accommodation where they can close the door behind them instead of sleeping outdoors.



The Haven provides crucial support to some of the most vulnerable people in Watford and so, if you are able, please consider a donation to help the Haven to provide hope, not homelessness this Christmas.

Thank you.

Only gifts donated online between 28th November and 5th December are eligible for match-funding. If you would like to donate by cheque, please make it payable to New Hope and send it to New Hope, 67 Queens Road, Watford, WD17 2QN.

A donation of £46.76 can provide life-changing support at the Haven for someone rough sleeping or sofa-surfing – please help someone, like Katherine, escape street homelessness today.

All donations received from 28th November to 5th December will be doubled as part of the Big Give Christmas Challenge for 2023.



**Please give today at
newhope.org.uk/christmas**

HOPE

NOT HOMELESSNESS
at Christmas

“ I was homeless and on the streets for five years in Watford. I always found spots that were out of sight to set up my tent and I was mindful of not showing the public I was homeless.

I was always hoping it wasn't raining – you never have the right clothes so once you get wet, it's one of

Always in the shadows

the worst things because there is no easy way to get clean and dry off, especially at night.

“ At Christmas you're seeing people, families, enjoying the lights and buying gifts. I was always in the shadows, and it reminded me that I was alone.

I felt that no one wanted me. ”



On Christmas Day itself I would wake up and walk into town. Everything is closed, the weather is usually awful and there's no one around.

It's an overwhelming feeling of loneliness.

One morning the outreach team came to me and said 'come to the Haven today.' It was warm, inviting, no questions asked. It was such a safe environment for me that I used to sometimes nap on the sofa and that was like a week's worth of sleep. The Haven staff gave a human touch, always cheery, always welcoming.

The team got me into accommodation and things really started changing for me.

On Christmas now, I get to put my feet up while the staff rush about making us all a Christmas dinner – the chaos of it all really makes this place feel like a home. ”

“ It was such a safe environment for me that I used to sometimes nap on the sofa and that was like a week's worth of sleep. ”



All donations received from 28th November to 5th December will be doubled as part of the Big

Give Christmas Challenge for 2023. During this week, if you give £46.76 an extra £46.76 will be match-funded, meaning that New Hope will receive £93.52! Match-funding is only available for one week so don't miss out on making your donation go twice as far!



Only gifts donated online between 28th November and 5th December are eligible for match-funding. However, if you would like to donate by cheque, please make it payable to New Hope and send it to New Hope, 67 Queens Road, Watford, WD17 2QN.



Please give today at newhope.org.uk/christmas





Watford's Winter Shelter

Life-saving and life-changing accommodation this winter

Once again, New Hope is running a winter shelter. Opening on the evening of 1 December 2023 and running every single night until 31 March 2024, a hot meal and emergency accommodation will be provided for up to 15 people rough sleeping in Watford.

Temperatures dropped to -8 degrees in Watford last December and so this accommodation will be both life-saving and life-changing.

Funded by Watford Borough Council, the shelter at the Haven on Whippendell Road will be able

to accommodate 15 people each night. Our support workers will help people access appropriate, longer-term accommodation, including our Emergency Accommodation, which runs all year round and forms a critical part of Watford Borough Council's Single Homeless Pathway.

In the morning, people will be able to have a hot breakfast and a shower at the Haven drop-in – and again access further help from our support workers.

Volunteers will be helping each evening too, including Emma, who first volunteered in 2019.

“ I volunteered for the winter shelter back in 2019, after seeing an advert in the Watford Observer. I really wanted to do something in my local area, and this sounded ideal. Sadly, due to Covid, restrictions were put in place and the shelter had to stop. I was so excited when I saw the winter shelter was being reintroduced. It is an amazing way to know that you are helping an often-forgotten part of our community. You have some amazing chats and it’s comforting knowing that people are safe especially when the temperature dips or there is just relentless rain. ”

Elected Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor, said:

“ I am so grateful to the amazing team at New Hope who are working with us to provide a winter shelter once again. Thanks to staff and incredible volunteers we can provide this additional support during the winter months.

I am committed to ending rough sleeping in our community. Together we are making sure that free accommodation is readily accessible to those sleeping rough in town. I am pleased that we can work with New Hope to provide this much needed support, ensuring that no one has to endure the harsh realities of sleeping rough in Watford during the winter season. ”



Thank you to Wakelin Associates, a local architecture firm, for providing a gift of £419 for a new fridge-freezer enabling us to store donations of fresh food for the winter shelter!

If you would like to support our vital work in helping people who are rough sleeping, then please donate today to our Christmas appeal!


A Place to Remember

In November 2022, New Hope was thrilled to be awarded a grant from Watford Borough Council's Neighbourhood Grants scheme to create a new memorial garden space in the grounds of Watford's central church, St Mary's.

The installation of a new bench, flagstones and the hand-carved memorial stone (donated by a generous supporter in memory of his mother) is now complete and offers a peaceful place to sit and reflect close to the bustling town centre and in view of the recognisable structure of St Mary's Church – the place where New Hope began.

Thank you so much to everyone who voted for us last year in the Neighbourhood Grants! We really appreciate the support and it's wonderful to see the project come to fruition. We couldn't have done it without you.

If you are passing through the church grounds, please do have a look or take a moment to rest and reflect. The memorial garden can be accessed just past the existing paved seating area and opposite the southern entrance to the church.



Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Matthew 10:29-31

100 people who made Watford

As Watford continues to celebrate 100 years of being Watford Borough, the council has published a list of 100 people who have helped make Watford the town it is today and we are delighted

that New Hope's three co-founders plus Polly Odbert, the volunteer manager of our Watford shop, are on the list!



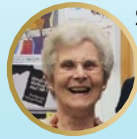
Janet Hosier - Janet's willingness to give so much of herself and her time to supporting people who were left

behind and often ignored was profound. From the humble beginnings of providing meals to vulnerable people at a local church, Janet was always committed to helping those experiencing homelessness which eventually led to the founding of New Hope.



Dr Tim Robson OBE

- Tim is a founding trustee of New Hope, leading the charity as Chairman from 1991 to 2008 and a trustee for many years. He is a qualified medical doctor who helped set-up a specialist surgery for people suffering health issues as a result of poverty and homelessness. Tim was awarded an OBE in the 2015 New Year Honours for services to the homeless in Hertfordshire.



Sheila Meaning BEM

- Sheila co-founded New Hope with her friend, the late Janet Hosier, who saw the many people sleeping rough in the centre of Watford and felt moved to act. Sheila has won various accolades for her work with those who are marginalised. Notably, in 2016, Sheila was awarded a British Empire Medal and in 2011, she was awarded the Lesley Peace 'Women of Courage' Award and Watford Borough Council's Audentior Award.



Polly Odbert - For over 20

years, Polly has been the volunteer manager of New Hope's Watford charity shop, a shop that provides much needed income to support people in their recovery from homelessness. Polly's enthusiasm and commitment to helping people is well-known and she has been recognised for her dedication with Volunteer of the Year from Watford's Audentior Awards in 2015.



Light in the darkness **IMPACT** **REPORT** 2023

Discover more about New Hope's work by reading **Light in the Darkness**, our latest impact report.

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Jan first came to the Haven in May 2022. He was at the time living on a boat with no utilities, it merely provided a roof over his head.

Jan had become homeless after his partner had passed away which greatly impacted him. His mental and physical health had rapidly declined and he had started drinking excessively and taking drugs. He also felt that he was unjustly judged because of his tattooed appearance which was contributing to his sense of

hopelessness. His desire was to find more suitable accommodation and start living a healthier life.

The Haven started to engage with Jan, encouraging him in his recovery and discussing his possible accommodation options. He was initially overwhelmed by the care he received, at one time becoming emotional when someone had taken the trouble to fold his laundry!

Jan moved into one of our HopeHomes in August 2022 but came back to the Haven to thank staff for their kindness and support – the Haven staff, equally pleased, congratulated him.

He was given help in furnishing his new home by the Tenancy Sustainment Team and provided with food parcels and encouraged along the way until he was settled. He took full responsibility for his new accommodation, keeping it clean and also working hard in the garden.

Fast forward to March 2023, Jan continues to thrive. He has been attending college gaining new qualifications and has just completed the 'Growing for Life' horticultural therapy programme with Cultivate. He is happy and comfortable in his accommodation and looks forward to a brighter future.

Remember – you can help people like Jan by donating to our Christmas appeal

Read our impact report here:
newhope.org.uk/light



Side by Side

Cultivate is New Hope's horticultural therapy and wellbeing service. Working across all of New Hope's services, from the Haven to HopeHomes, Ian and Lee come alongside people to support them in their personal growth.



By facilitating visits to places in our local community, Cultivate helps people find meaning and purpose, connect with happy memories from the past, create new positive experiences and connections, and gain more confidence for the future. In recent months, service users and staff have visited the Chiltern Open Air Museum, Top Golf, Cheslyn Gardens, the board games café, Leavesden Country Park, Oxhey Woods Sculpture Trail, Cassiobury Park, garden centres, Sanctuary Music Studios, and Restore Hope.

“Trips out to places in the local area foster a sense of community and togetherness. We are the facilitators; service users direct our activities and are given freedom to make choices – a freedom that may be lacking in other areas of their lives. We aim to

provide a safe space for people to chill out and relax outside of their everyday environment, helping them to have fun and get some ‘head space’ from the pressures of life.”

It's also a fantastic opportunity to celebrate successes and achievements together, whether that's a marvellous shot on the driving range or a win at Monopoly in the board games café! It's great to see everyone cheering each other on and being encouraging to one another. ”

Lee Wilson, Cultivate support worker

The Cultivate team have a ‘side-by-side’ role with our residents and service users, literally in some cases, when walking next to each other in Watford's local parks.

“ We often go out for walks one-to-one with residents. We have time to listen and chat with people and we aren't restricted to a building. A walk in a peaceful, natural environment, such as Cassiobury Park, provides a safe space for people to talk and open up. There's less pressure when there's no eye contact, no agenda, no to-do list. We find people open up and are able to talk more freely about painful episodes and events in their lives. These conversations help bring healing and freedom. ”

Ian Bond, Cultivate Manager

“ I just wanted to say thanks a lot for making my life busier, more meaningful and interesting. Your activities have cheered me up and I enjoyed everything very much. ”

“ It was a fantastic outing. I'd love to do it again. Being close to nature brings good feelings. Reminded me of my childhood home. ”

“ Overall a nice day out, nice communal feeling and had a laugh with everyone!! ”

For more information on Cultivate, please visit newhope.org.uk/cultivate

Meet the Cultivate team!

Ian manages Cultivate. He is a qualified horticultural therapist who has worked at New Hope since 2009. Ian is passionate about the restorative and healing potential of our connection to the natural world, and how it enhances our ability to nurture

safe, trusted relationships and positive community.



Lee is Cultivate's part-time support worker and has worked at New Hope

since 2019. Lee is trained in working with people who are affected by mental health challenges, supporting people who are alcohol and substance dependent, and in trauma-informed care. She is a qualified horticulturalist and gardener and is currently studying counselling and psychotherapy.



A Christmas Reflection

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never extinguish it.

John 1:5

This is not talking about an earthly light that can be put out or switched off. John the Apostle goes on to say: 'the one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world' (verse 9). This is talking about God, coming down in a human form and making His home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness and all who believed and accepted him could become children of God (verses 12-14). This is Jesus and the true meaning of Christmas. A story of hope and victory even in the darkest of places and it started with Jesus coming into the world as a baby.

He is the True Light and we are called to reflect him. My time as a chaplain has taught me one thing very clearly – I need to maintain a close walk with Jesus and allow Him to shine through me. I cannot do this role without him. I have to daily surrender my will, my ideas and learn how to 'be still and know that He is God' (Psalm 46:10) in



every situation. No matter how bleak things look, how difficult the situation is or how

disappointed I may feel with outcomes, His light cannot be extinguished and when I fix my thoughts on Him, I see situations from His perspective. He fills me with an inner rest and peace, knowing that He

is the answer and I am simply the messenger.

John 15: 5 says: 'Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing'.

Religion causes us to strive but Jesus calls us to Himself and then sets us free from the burden of performance. I pray that at this Christmas, no matter what you are going through, you will experience the love and hope that knowing Jesus brings.



Sarah Shaw,
Chaplain at
New Hope

Gifts of HOPE

Give a gift that
changes lives –
give a Gift of Hope



THE ESSENTIALS £4.98

£4.98 can provide someone with 'The Essentials' from the Haven. Help give someone dignity and comfort by providing a warm shower, fresh clothes, and a healthy meal.



SPACE TO GROW £20

£20 can provide a wellbeing session for someone struggling with their mental health.



ON YOUR SIDE £46.76

£46.76 could provide comprehensive, holistic and life-changing support at the Haven to someone facing homelessness in Watford.



To order a Gift of Hope, please visit
newhope.org.uk/gifts

Downloadable Gifts of Hope (for you to print at home) can be purchased at any time – making them perfect for a last-minute gift! If you would like us to print and send a 'Gift of Hope' card, please place your order by 12 noon on Friday 15th December to ensure it arrives before Christmas.

Retail with a heart

Our two charity shops (one in Queens Road, Watford and the other in New Road, Croxley Green) are more than just thriving retail establishments; both shops provide a sense of community and belonging where customers are known by name.

We caught up with Polly Odbert, volunteer manager of our Watford shop, and Bella Crawley, manager of our Croxley shop, to discover the latest news from the shop floors.

Polly:

“ The New Hope charity shop at 67 Queens Road, Watford is more than a shop – firstly it’s ministry, then it’s the community, then, lastly, retail. My day starts at 7.30am to get the shop ready for the daily volunteers to arrive by 9.30am. Putting the float into the tills, checking enough milk, tea, coffee and biscuits are available for the team, and getting certain jobs ready for each volunteer.

9.30am to 10am we all join together in our ‘chapel’ to give time to Jesus, reading the Bible, and sharing a time of prayer. Then everyone goes to their ‘stations’ ready for the first rush of customers coming through the front door. There isn’t a day that goes by when there’s not a queue waiting to be greeted into the shop at 10am. In fact, the customers in the fitness centre across the road wanted to know what goes on in the shop!

We are blessed with so many donations from clothes to books to bric-a-brac to baby equipment. After the pandemic we changed the opening times to four hours a day, but we found God blessed us with as much money in the tills as when we opened from 10am to 4pm! ”



Bella:

Our Croxley shop has been running for 10 years now and many of the volunteers have been with us since the beginning! We are the only charity shop in the village and are well-loved by our customers – most of whom we know by name! Some of the local children call us the ‘toy shop’ because of our wonderful selection of toys and other items for little ones (now in a beautiful new bespoke children’s area!).

Our purpose is multi-faceted; we are a community-based shop with events (such as a coffee morning and a visit from Father Christmas on 20 December!), we raise money for New Hope’s services, we enable people to buy good quality items (essential now that we all are watching our pennies), and we stop items from going to landfill!

We refurbished the shop in the summer – with the volunteers doing the majority of the work, and we are now looking forward to a busy Christmas season. Please pop in for fantastic bargains, volunteers in Christmas jumpers, and, of course, Father Christmas himself! ”



Thank you to everyone who uses our shops, either to donate or buy items. Did you know that last year our income from retail was £256,501!

Volunteering Update



Eamonn Bownes
HR and Volunteer
Administrator

Winter is upon us, which means we are busy recruiting volunteers for the Watford Winter Shelter and Christmas meals at our services. We've had a fantastic response so far, and, as always, I've been amazed by how generous our supporters are in committing their time to these projects. And it's not just our seasonal programmes; we've had several new starters joining New Hope as welcomers and Outreach Plus volunteers, including Emily, who is featured below. Thank you all for your incredible support!

Emily Taylor is volunteering with Outreach Plus.

“ Having grown up in Watford, I had heard about New Hope's work around the local area, particularly during the winter months. As an Emergency Nurse I regularly care for people experiencing homelessness; however, I've always felt as if emergency healthcare services did not meet their needs. I wanted to get involved in an organisation that does long-term work to connect with homeless people, understand their barriers to accessing services, and have their best interests at heart.

I volunteer as part of New Hope's Outreach Plus service. Here, I join a fantastic team that builds relationships with people experiencing homelessness. As part of this service, the team offers ongoing support to homeless people, providing basic humanitarian aid and guidance as to how to access accommodation.

It has been inspiring to work alongside a team of people with so much compassion and see for myself the difference they are making. ”



Pressure makes diamonds

Steve Devine, the manager of our Outreach Plus service, recently celebrated his 10th anniversary of working at New Hope.



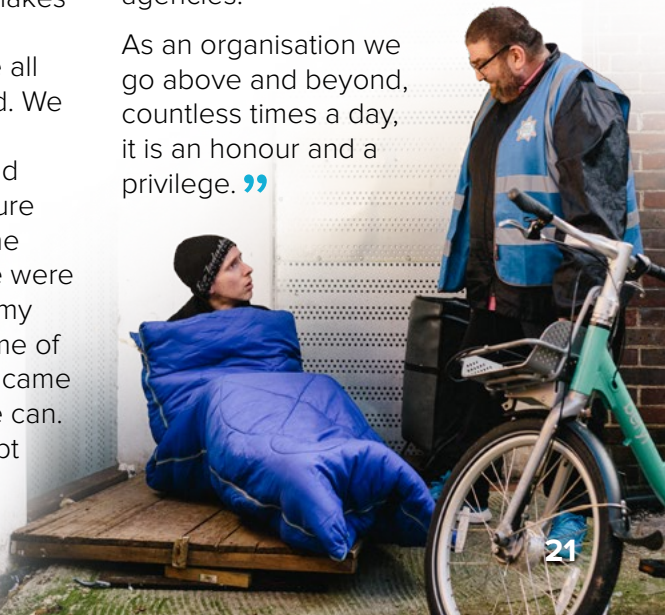
“ In September 2013, I started at New Hope, overseeing the Harvest donations. I then became a support worker, then the assistant manager at the Sanctuary Emergency Accommodation, before being asked to manage the Haven. This was a role I loved and cherished. Then Covid came...

What a rollercoaster that was! There is a saying, ‘Pressure makes diamonds’. Well, the staff and volunteers at the Haven were all diamonds to me in that period. We all just did what was needed, without expecting fanfares and banner headlines, just to ensure we were doing our best for the service users. Although these were some of the hardest times in my New Hope life, they were some of the most enjoyable, as we all came together to serve the best we can. We laughed, we cried, we kept going. This was reflected across all of our services.

“ We laughed, we cried, we kept going. ”

In September 2021, I became the manager of the new Outreach Plus service – managing a team to support people who are sleeping rough. I have the privilege of helping people journey through the new Watford Single Homeless Pathway and attend some of the most productive meetings you could imagine with partner agencies.

As an organisation we go above and beyond, countless times a day, it is an honour and a privilege. ”



THANK YOU!

Easy as PIE!

At New Hope, we talk a lot about PIE (Psychologically Informed Environments). PIE is defined as **“services that are designed and delivered in a way that takes into account the emotional and psychological needs of the individuals using them and working in them.”** (Centre for Homelessness Impact)

We would like to thank the following companies for providing decorating materials and volunteering over recent months, to help make the Sanctuary building more-PIE: B&Q, VINCI Facilities, Wickes, BRE and Lundbeck. Home to our Emergency Accommodation and Outreach Plus services, the Sanctuary is now looking brighter, cleaner, and calmer!

We would also like to thank The John Apthorp Charity for their grant for four new wonderful comfy armchairs to help make the new living space in the Sanctuary more homely.



Garden Transformation

VINCI Facilities, has been helping transform Cultivate’s therapeutic garden. Ian Bond, the manager of Cultivate and New Hope’s horticultural therapist, said: “We’ve loved working with Monika, VINCI Facilities’ Sustainable Procurement Manager, on this project. Not only have employees from VINCI Facilities got their hands dirty improving the garden space for our service users but volunteers from Tivoli, one of VINCI’s suppliers donated materials, including a new fence, and their labour. Another supplier, Reconomy, donated a skip and Ground Control created robust and attractive raised beds, a circular fire pit area and a fire bowl from which we can run wellbeing fireside sessions.

We are so grateful for everyone’s enthusiasm and hard work!”



A triathlon with a difference

Peter Caneparo raised £1,250 through a 100km gym-based triathlon. He bravely tackled 40km of cross-training, 40km of cycling, and then 20km walking – all in the gym and taking over 10 hours! Thank you, Peter!



I have received great support from Sandy Lodge Golf Club golf club members, friends and family in raising funds for the various charities I have supported. Thank you so much for your support also - the jelly babies were a life saver!!"

Walk of Hope leads to generous donations

Another local company, DLL, which has supported New Hope for many years, was invited on a Walk of Hope (a tour of our different services). The employees were moved to tears when they discovered more about what our service users face. Led by Kirsti, DLL first organised a collection of food and toiletries for the Haven to stock up our supplies of essential items, and then made a generous donation of £6,125! Thank you!



HARVEST Helps

Thank you to Abbots Langley Primary School, All Saints Church Croxley, Beechen Grove Baptist Church, Carpenders Park and South Oxhey Methodist Church, Church of God in Christ, Christ Church and St John's Church Radlett, Christ First, Derby Road Baptist Church, Fairfield Church Northwood Hills, Highwood School, Radlett Prep, St Luke's Church Watford, St Margaret's School Bushey, St Mary's Church Harefield, St Meryl Primary School and St Luke's, Bricket Wood who donated at Harvest.

Contact Rebecca and Hilary if you'd like to get involved with fundraising or corporate volunteering!

**email hgarcia@newhope.org.uk
or rpalmer@newhope.org.uk**





WATFORD
PHOENIX
CHOIR

IN AID OF
New Hope
PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS.
TRANSFORMING LIVES.

A Christmas Concert

Join us and let us light up your festive celebrations.

Saturday 9th December at 5.30pm
Doors open 5pm

PLUS Junior Phoenix Choir
from Central Primary School

St Mary's Church,
Church Street,
Watford,
WD18 OEG

Tickets £7.50
including refreshments
Children under 12 go free



www.ticketsource.co.uk/watford-phoenix-choir



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