

Support of Samaritan's Purse

Samaritan's Purse is an international, non-denominational, evangelical Christian relief and development charity that works through local churches to proclaim and demonstrate the love of God amongst communities in need across the world (in countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia). Since 1970, Samaritan's Purse has helped meet the needs of people who are victims of war, poverty, natural disasters, disease, and famine, with the purpose of sharing God's love through his Son, Jesus Christ. Operation Christmas Child is a project of Samaritan's Purse delivering shoeboxes to needy children across the world.

For many years, All Saints' Church, Cottenham, under the excellent project leadership of Sue Hooks, has contributed thousands of boxes to needy children through Operation Christmas Child. It has been wonderful to see the community come together to assemble the boxes and to raise money to cover the increasing postage costs.

Whilst the contribution that Samaritan's Purse has made to the lives of people in need is not in doubt, there have been increasing concerns about the charity in recent years, in particular to the views held by its President and Chief Executive Officer Revd Franklin Graham. Concerns relate to his personal statements about the Christian faith in relation to his personal support for President Donald Trump, and comments made on his Twitter and Facebook accounts in relation to issues of sexuality and race. Graham is strongly anti-gay and anti-same sex marriage, and subsequently defended Vladimir Putin's 'gay propaganda' law, praising him for "*protecting children from any homosexual agenda or propaganda.*" During his trip to Russia in 2015, he was reported to have said "*Many churches in America have started to support homosexuality. This is terrible, it's a sin, and it's against God.*"

In relation to race, Graham has described Islam as a '*religion of war*', a '*very wicked and evil religion*' and urged Christians to attempt to convert Muslims to their own faith. He was supportive of Trump's attempt to restrict immigration, stating in a Facebook post that "*all Muslims should be barred from immigrating to America and treated like the Japanese and Germans during World War II*". He is critical of inter-faith co-operation which seeks to build positive relations with Muslims, a view that contrasts with the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury who both foster inter-faith relationships at every opportunity.

The concerns have led to many organisations, both nationally and locally, ending their support of Samaritan's Purse, aware that the general public will inevitably link the support of a charity with support of the views the charity espouses. In response to the concerns, the Church of England issued advice a few years ago urging churches to look into the charities they choose to support and to think about whether the charity fits with their own feelings about development, relief, aid and/or evangelism and faith sharing, and whether there was anything about the charity's provenance, statement of faith or intentions which gave cause for concern.

During May to July, All Saints' Cottenham with Rampton Parochial Church Council (PCC) considered its ongoing support of Samaritan's Purse and, at a meeting held on Mon 8th July, took the decision to end its association with the charity. As the church recently joined the

national network of 'Inclusive Churches', reflecting our position as a church to welcome *all*, the views held by Franklin Graham, which neither Samaritan's Purse or Samaritan's Purse UK have chosen to distance themselves from, are not views that we wish to be associated with.

Sue will continue to lead the project in the village, just not under the umbrella of the church. We thank Sue for her many years of outstanding service and wish her all the best for the future and her continuing support for needy children.

All Saints' Church, Cottenham with Rampton PCC.

12 July 2019