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Image source: [Pye Green room interior](#) black and white

Pye Green Christian Centre in the Midlands started out as a house-church in the 1990s. The house they were meeting in was empty, and this made them uncomfortable – it didn't feel like the best use of space. They found someone who needed a home, and they let them live there. While this didn't last long, a new mission for the church had been born: to house those in need.

In 2004, a member of their congregation was renovating a house to sell on, and he had a spare room. Again, someone who needed accommodation quickly moved in. Eventually, the owner moved out and realised that he could continue to house people there rather than sell it on. Working with the rest of the congregation, they used the four bedrooms to provide a home for people who were at risk of homelessness. At the same time, they started offering additional support to those who lived there, to help them get back on their feet.

By 2013, Pye Green wanted to expand this work, but they couldn't afford to do so alone. They came across an organisation called Green Pastures, who help churches provide supported accommodation to people in housing need, by purchasing suitable properties (with capital from philanthropic investors) and leasing them to partner churches or housing charities. The cost of the lease and other costs are then covered by claiming housing benefit for the residents. Green Pastures also helps with preparing support plans and other policies that are needed as a provider of supported accommodation services.

This has allowed Pye Green to get a second house and hire a professional support worker to provide more intensive support for their residents. By partnering with Green Pastures, they've been able to help dozens of men – many of them ex-offenders – make the transition into independent living. Of those who have a previous criminal conviction, 95% do not go on to reoffend. As David Spencer, one of the trustees at the church, says: "At the end of it we see God-given miracles".

Although they get help from Green Pastures, the church is still key to this success. They have an "army" of volunteers from their church who provide pastoral support to the residents. They also run monthly meetings with guest speakers and organise days out and weeks away. This amount of love and support wouldn't otherwise be possible.

They also introduce people to God if they are open to it, by offering prayer and inviting them to attend an Alpha course. As a result, many of their residents choose to attend church and three-quarters have started a "lasting" relationship with Jesus. This led one former resident to ask Pye Green to hold his father's funeral.

This holistic approach to preventing homelessness wasn't happening anywhere else. Pye Green's ethos is that it's those gaps in society where the church needs to find its claws. The Archbishop of Canterbury's Housing Commission is looking to encourage more churches to meet local housing need in different ways. Green Pastures already partners with 150 churches to do just this. Could your church be next?

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## Notes

1. The residents either present themselves directly or are referred by other services, such as the prison services. They are all at risk of homelessness.
2. These residents receive a higher rate of housing benefit to pay for the additional support that Pye Green provides alongside the accommodation.
3. This support is crucial to making sure that they are ready to move on after about 12 months.
4. Although many of their residents come to church meetings, this is not a requirement for residency.
5. Green Pastures helps churches to house people by allowing them to lease houses rather than buy themselves. This lease is paid for through housing benefit payments to residents. Green Pastures also provides practical support, mentoring and training. Find out more about them [here](#).

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