

NEWSLETTER No4

Summer 2015

CHURCHES TOGETHER
IN CHESHIRE



Welcome!

Welcome to this, the fourth of the newsletters which I am circulating from Churches Together in Cheshire. As before I seek to include both news items and notices of ecumenical activities and events that are taking place within Cheshire, and also information relating more widely to the ecumenical scene across the country.

In this newsletter we note some of the events of recent months and look ahead to significant events of the next three months. Please see the items in this newsletter relating to these matters.

You will find my contact details at the end of this Newsletter, and if you wish any future edition to include reports of what has been happening in your neck of the woods, or to advertise any forthcoming event I would be pleased to hear from you

Andrew Taylor

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

In 2016 the service arranged by Churches Together in Cheshire will be held in Chester Cathedral on 24th January, when the preacher will be the Revd. Lord Leslie Griffiths. Further details of this service, and of the material being made available from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland for the Week of Prayer next year will be circulated in the autumn.

Churches and the General Election



A letter from the House of Bishops and material circulated from the Joint Public Issues Team of the Methodist, Baptist and URC churches encouraged churches to engage with the process of last month's General Election. From notices I have received it seems that church-sponsored hustings meetings were organised in almost all of the local constituencies. Reports subsequently received indicated that meetings had been well-attended, and attracted full turn-outs of candidates, who appear to trust the impartiality and ordering that the church groups are able to provide. If you have a particular report of your local hustings meeting or any observations on that process it can be included in the next Newsletter



Christian Aid



Helen Howe, the Regional Co-ordinator for Cheshire has supplied the following article in preparation for Christian Aid's campaign in relation to climate change.

Critical Year for Climate Change

On June 17 the UK will see the largest mass lobby of Parliament on the issue of climate change in our history. Thousands of people will line up along the Thames to speak to their MP and share with them, at the start of this new Parliament, a vision of a cleaner and greener planet and urge them to make tackling climate change a priority. Christian Aid and a host of other organisations are asking as many people as possible to go along.

This year is a crucial one for anyone who cares about how creation is affected by climate change. In December the world's governments will meet in Paris to hammer out a deal which will be the first global agreement of its kind, incorporating all UN member states. As the first country to industrialise Britain has a moral duty to help lead the response of dealing with the consequences of global warming. This September will also see the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals which if creation care is included correctly will go a long way to protecting the people most vulnerable to climate change.

And Christians have the potential to have a crucial role in this movement. Pope Francis is expected to publish his Papal Encyclical on the Environment later this summer which will outline a Christian vision for creation care rooted in Genesis 2:15 on the sacred duty to till and keep the earth. As the Vatican's Cardinal Peter Turkson said recently, "humanity may now have tilled too much and kept too little." Christians have been at the forefront of the world's great social justice movements, whether it was William Wilberforce and the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Martin Luther King and American civil rights or Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the end of Apartheid.

Climate change threatens the things that we love, from the cocoa that makes our chocolate to the British football calendar not to mention the lives of some of the poorest people in the world. That is why it has the power to bring us together. In a world riven with conflict and division climate change is our common enemy. It has the potential to bridge political, cultural and even religious divides.

Which is why Christian Aid are inviting as many people as possible to come along and join with thousands of others on June 17 to make their voices heard to our new Government and inspire them with a vision of a cleaner and safer home for us and for the world's poor. For details and to sign up to the lobby visit

www.christianaid.org/climate-summer

Night Shelters

Over the winter months, two Churches Together groups, in Crewe and Macclesfield, ran night shelters. They followed different models: that in Crewe, ii) which is now in its fourth year, operates every night for a six week period, hopefully anticipating the coldest period of the year, each night of the week being run by and within a different church centre within the town; that in Macclesfield has operated at weekends only but for the period from the beginning of December until 22nd March. In that instance seven centres were used (6 churches and 1 Scout Headquarters), each centre being used across the full, 3-night weekend. The reports prepared by each of the schemes indicate:

i) Crewe

The centres provided a maximum of ten beds, and for most of the six weeks of operation all beds were occupied, and on occasions when Severe Weather Provision produced particularly high demand additional accommodation was provided by the YMCA. A variety of guests were accommodated, with a 50/50 British/Polish nationality split. One client was escaping domestic abuse, whilst others, as in previous years, had issues with alcohol and drug addictions. Each church supplies an evening meal, and staffs the evening, night time and morning periods in a suitable and safe manner. Clear statements of Rights and Responsibilities are posted and enforced. Beds, bedding and personal belongings were transported between the churches through the vans of Christian Concern, and the YMCA supplied support staff who managed the risk assessments

and housing advice to guests. In most instances this advice and assistance with referral to Cheshire East produced move-on accommodation to those who wished it once the night shelter finished operating. Macclesfield

There was one night when 5 guests were accommodated, but generally three was the maximum, and on some occasions there were no takers. Over the period that the night shelter operated 21 different people were given at least one night's shelter and exactly 100 nights accommodation were supplied. 130 volunteers from over 15 churches helped in the running of the shelter, with additional volunteers coming from Peaks and Plains Housing, other faith groups and Macclesfield Scouts. A variety of grants were received in addition to contributions of food. Good and supportive relationships were established with the police, the Council's Housing Options Team and Citizens Advice. Plans are now in hand for a similar scheme to operate across the coming winter.

Both schemes feel that their projects were successful, with little trouble, peaceful nights and guests valuing the safety and security they experienced. Homelessness and rough sleeping can be a hidden problem, yet on at least one occasion these schemes, both within Cheshire East, between them sheltered 20 individuals. As the Macclesfield report concludes: 'It has really been an example of Churches working together to help with a problem which symbolises the broken make-up of much of our society'.

Human Trafficking

The group from the Frodsham Churches that is pursuing concerns in relation to Human Trafficking and modern day slavery has remained active in seeking to promote awareness of these issues, and to that end have linked up with the Soroptimists to have an interactive display at the Cheshire Show on 23rd and 24th June. Please look in at the Soroptimists stand at the Show, to learn more about this. They are also in discussion with the Rhema Theatre Company to bring their production 'Its not Fair!' to a local venue within that company's wider national tour. Further details will be circulated or can be obtained from:

Stephen Pickett:

frodshamforuminfo@gmail.com;

Easter Witness



Easter witness events were held in many places across Cheshire, taking over public places to recount or enact our wonderful and amazing Easter story. I have been sent pictures of this year's Passion Play by Churches Together in Sandbach, of which these two are but a selection. If your group is doing something similar, and would wish

to send pictures of your witness next year I would be pleased to receive them.



DEOs

Several of the denominations in Cheshire appoint someone to be their Ecumenical Officer, promoting and addressing ecumenical issues across their churches, particularly in relation to Local Ecumenical Partnerships, such as that at Garden Lane, Chester, which is celebrating its new LEP constitution on 5th July.

The Diocesan Ecumenical Officer in recent years has been Canon Mike Lowe, who has now retired from that role. His contribution has been very much valued. The person appointed to succeed Mike is, subject to all legal formalities being completed, Revd. Steve Clapham, currently Vicar of All Saints and St Peter's parishes in Crewe. The post will be linked to that of Priest in Charge at All Saints, Church Lawton.

Other Denominational Officers are:
Methodist: Revds. Pat Billsborrow and Amanda Boon

Roman Catholic: Revd. Paul Shaw

URC: Revd Murray George

Society of Friends: Mr. Peter Speirs

Churches Together in England

Churches Together in England (CTE) has recently sent out a number of documents that are either of general interest and/or are inviting responses. These include:

A new framework for local ecumenism: A consultation paper

As part of CTE's remit to support and encourage local ecumenism, a sub-group of the National Ecumenical Officers have been exploring the issues facing Local Ecumenical Partnerships and the new ecumenical contexts in England.

The consultation paper downloadable below is the fruit of their work. It is not the final word but is meant to stimulate discussion and reflection. It has been sent to CTE's Member Churches and to Intermediate Bodies and responses are also invited from others with a heart for Christian unity.

- Read the covering note which is the first page of the document.
- Reflect on the questions in Annex 1.
- Send in your thoughts by 31 October 2015 to 'lep@cte.org.uk'.

Link to the webpage, consultation paper and email reply:

<http://www.cte.org.uk/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=441164>

Support the most vulnerable, says Churches in open letter to Prime Minister

Leaders from four major UK Churches have signed an open letter to the re-appointed Prime Minister, David Cameron, congratulating him on his election and encouraging him to hold 'truth, justice, peace and wellbeing' at the heart of the government.

With a focus on 'loving our neighbour', the letter reminds the Prime Minister that a wholesome society should be concerned for the weakest and most vulnerable, both locally and globally.

The letter, signed by leaders of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, highlights several of the key concerns that the Churches believe should be high on the agenda of the new government, calling for:

- a full review of the impact of the benefits sanctions system
- a postponement of further spending on Trident and a serious re-assessment of the need for nuclear weapons
- assertive international action to uphold human rights and deliver humanitarian assistance in Syria
- action to make freedom of religion a human rights priority in all aspects of foreign policy

"Remembering our neighbours is vital for a healthy society," said Rachel Lampard, leader of the Joint Public Issues Team, which works on behalf of the Churches. "Whilst policies protecting the most weak and vulnerable of society may not always be the most popular, they are necessary to live out the common good, regardless of political perspective."

The Revd Sally Foster-Fulton, Convener of the Church and Society Council of the Church of Scotland added, "The very significant growth in the number of people voting in Scotland – up 7.3% from the last General Election – and the sweeping victories for the Scottish National Party means that the UK Government must engage with the Scottish Government and people as an absolute priority. The Scottish people have voted in huge numbers for

change and that must be respected.”

“The implementation of government policies is always difficult when resources are limited,” the Revd Stephen Keyworth, Faith and Society Team Leader of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, said. “Whilst we applaud some of the achievements of the previous government, such as the reduction in unemployment, a commitment to combat climate change and ensuring 0.7% of the national income is given in overseas aid, it is important for the new government to remember the key foundations for both domestic and global policies: truth, justice, peace and wellbeing.”

The Revd John Proctor, General Secretary of the United Reformed Church, added, “Our churches are particularly concerned about the places and communities our society too often overlooks. We care that the needs and hurts of all our people should inform those who lead our country and write our laws.”

Proclaim'15 Request for Prayer

HE Cardinal Vincent Nichols, one of the six Presidents of CTE, invites all Christians in England to share in prayer for Proclaim '15.

PROCLAIM '15 PRAYER

Loving Father,
You so loved the world that you sent us your only Son, that we might believe in him and have eternal life.
May we encounter Jesus Christ anew this day and live the Good News with joy.
Through the power of your Holy Spirit, help us to “go out to the whole world and proclaim” our faith with confidence.
Give us the courage to witness to the Joy of the Gospel by our words and actions.
Help our parish to become more

welcoming and missionary, so that you may be known and loved by all people.
We make this prayer through Our Lord Jesus Christ Your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever,
Amen.

Faith in Foodbanks: Joint Public Issues Report



Across the United Kingdom, in towns, cities and rural communities, there has emerged a rapidly growing network of foodbanks. Some are relatively small “community larders” while others operate on an almost industrial scale. Local churches and congregations have often played a key role in their establishment.

Why is it that we are one of the wealthiest nations in the world, yet an increasing number of our population are reliant on foodbanks to sustain their families? How is it that some of our key producers of food struggle to maintain a basic livelihood while some food retailers and distributors announce enormous profits? Is it right that something which began as a way of providing an “occasional stop-gap in an emergency” is becoming more of an ongoing necessity for some? Are foodbanks, and churches, becoming unofficially part of the welfare state? These resources from the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and Church Action on Poverty have been put together to help churches explore issues raised by foodbanks, and to make connections between the work of these foodbanks and the life, worship and witness of local churches and fellowships.

See: www.jointpublicissues.org.uk

Further news and notices can be found at:
www.cte.org.uk/news

Cinnamon Network



In introducing the Cinnamon Faith Action Audit Report, Matt Bird, founder of the Cinnamon Network writes:

‘The purpose of the Cinnamon Faith Action Audit 2015 was to provide evidence for both the social impact and the economic value of all that faith groups do in communities across the UK. Cinnamon Network hopes that the evidence provided in this report will inspire a greater confidence that faith and faith-based social action is a force for good in our society. As a Christian my dream is that this renewed confidence will help local churches have new conversations and form new partnerships with Local Authorities, Police, other agencies, funders and businesses to help those people most at need in our communities.

The full report can be accessed at:
www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk

Forthcoming events

Salt of the Earth

The Salt of the Earth network has the following events planned:

The Cheshire County Show, 23rd & 24th June.

Find us in the Church Tent.

Network Meeting, 2nd July, 2015

Speaker: John Weaver

To Frack or not to Frack?

Oil and gas extraction by “Fracking” has been proposed as the short to medium term solution to our nation’s energy needs. But what are the environmental risks of the process and what are the environmental costs to ourselves and our neighbours of relying more on carbon-based energy supplies? Geologist and theologian, John Weaver asks some important questions.

Venue: Lion Saltworks, Northwich

10.00 am start finishing with lunch at around 1.00 pm

Suggested Donation £5.00 (inc. buffet)

for more details contact Henry Ratter - ratterh@aol.com

Korean Prayer Mission

Following the visit of the Prayer Mission from South Korea last year, there is to be a repeat visit happening 24th - 28th June. 15-20 Intercessors from Korea will be operating around Mid-Cheshire, and the programme includes:

- A prayer drive starting from St. Wilfred’s, Davenham
- A prayer time at Old Pale in Delamere Forest
- Prayer time with Church Leaders in Northwich
- A Prayer walk and prayer celebrations at Weaverham
- A Sunday evening Prayer service at URC at Winsford

There is much work being done in preparation for the visit, and it is significant that this year's visit is involving a larger number of churches than in 2014.

For further information contact:
caroline.prayermission@gmail.com

Pause for Hope

A service for families and friends who have been affected by CANCER has been held for the past two years, and this year will be held at St. Columba's Roman Catholic Church, Plas Newton Lane, Chester, CH2 1SA on Sunday, 21st June at 3.00 pm.

For further information contact:
raymond.donnelly@roycastle.org

Cre8

The Cre8 Youth and Community Programme is a Hope in North East Cheshire Initiative and provides projects and activities for young people and their families on the Moss Rose Estate in Macclesfield – empowering young people and adults to make change happen for themselves.

From 13th -19th June they are holding a Festival:

A week of music, storytelling, work, art installations, dancing and food. All inspired, created and performed by our wonderful young people, this is not to be missed!

You might think you know what Cre8 does, but come to the Festival and discover something more...

To see the full details of all the events and activities happening during the Festival week:

www.cre8festival.org
festival@cre8macclesfield.org
01625 503740
[facebook.com/cre8macclesfield](https://www.facebook.com/cre8macclesfield)

Next Edition

The next issue of the Newsletter will be in September. If you have any items you would like to be included please send them in by 24th August, 2015.

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