

NEWSLETTER No 21

Autumn 2019

CHURCHES TOGETHER
IN CHESHIRE



Welcome!

Welcome to this, the latest of the newsletters 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. .

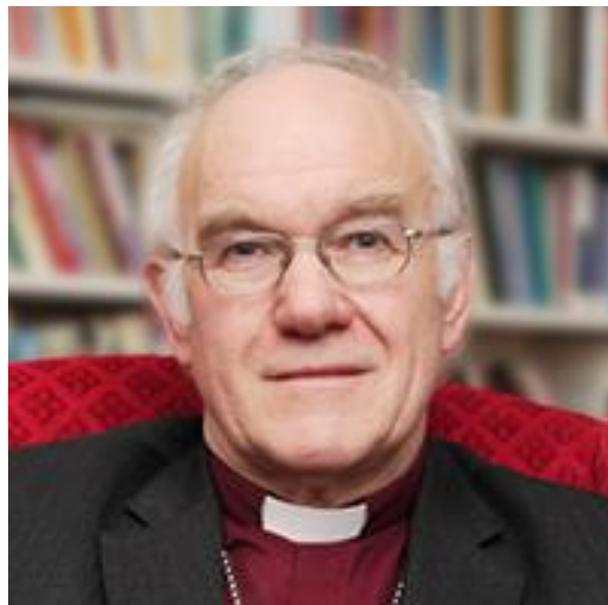
You will find my contact details at the end of this Newsletter, and if you wish any future edition to include reports of what has been happening in your neck of the woods, or to advertise any forthcoming event I would be pleased to hear from you

Andrew Taylor

Churches Together in Cheshire

Changes are taking place amongst the Church Leaders who comprise the Trustees of Churches Together in Cheshire. There have been two retirements, which have been publicised within their own denominations, but the contribution of the respective individuals should be more widely acknowledged.

The retirement of Rt. Revd Peter Forster as Bishop of Chester officially takes effect from the end of September, but + Peter took his final service at Chester Cathedral in July and whilst continuing to honour essential official engagement in the following two months has been making good his plans to retire to Scotland.



+ Peter was installed as Bishop of Chester in January 1997 and has helped lead and support Churches Together since that date. He was Chair of the charity from 2013 – 2016. We wish + Peter, and his wife Elizabeth, continued health and happiness in their new phase of life.

Also 'sitting down' (the formal Methodist term for retirement) is Revd. Peter Barber who has been Chair of the Chester and Stoke Methodist District since September 2008



In addition to supporting a number of existing Local Ecumenical Partnerships across the county and endorsing a number of new partnerships, he has chaired the Management Committee of the Cheshire Agricultural Chaplaincy for a number of years. We again wish Peter and his wife Jill a long and fulfilling retirement as they move to Aberystwyth, an area in which Peter ministered earlier in his career.

Peter is succeeded as Chair of the Chester and Stoke Methodist District by Revd. Helen Kirk, who was welcomed to the role at a service in Tunstall on 30th August.



Helen moves here from Aylesbury, but has previously served as a minister in the Crewe area and is therefore no stranger to this area.

The other church leaders who are the official body of Churches Together in Cheshire are:

Revd. Jacky Embery, Moderator of the Mersey Synod of the URC. Jacky is currently Chair of Churches Together.

Revd. Sheryl Anderson, Chair of the Liverpool District of the Methodist Church;

Rt. Revd. Mark Davies, Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Shrewsbury;

Revd. Phil Jump, Regional Minister of the North Western Baptist Association;

Mr. Michael Hennessey, representing the Cheshire meetings of the Society of Friends;

Major Gareth Dickens, representing the Northern and North Western Divisions of the Salvation Army

Thy Kingdom Come



As was clear from the Summer newsletter, Thy Kingdom Come, the all-church call to prayer which has now spread all around the world and across all church traditions, received a warm and positive response within the churches of Cheshire. In addition to those prayer services and events advertised there were many occasions when churches, on their own or with neighbours found the opportunity to come together to pray for the growth of God's Kingdom. Though there was no major 'Beacon' event organised, thousands of Christians in Cheshire have used the materials specially prepared for this period, and will continue to pray for situations and individuals that were identified at that time.



At Pentecost in Chester a crowd gathered at The Cross in the centre of the city, ignoring the poor weather conditions to offer up their prayers. St Peters at the Cross kindly provided the opportunity for fellowship and refreshment.

Those involved in planning the event felt able to give thanks in their own way for how it had gone!



Photos courtesy of Lizzy Biggs Photography

Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Appeal

A fun way to involve your church in overseas mission, while building relationships in your local community

Each November, Operation Christmas Child invites supporters and churches to pack shoebox gifts filled with fun toys, school supplies and hygiene items, and drop them at designated locations around the country. These, they then deliver to children in need around the world, demonstrating God's love in a tangible way. For many of these children, this surprise shoebox full of treasures is the first gift they have ever received.

Since 1990, Operation Christmas Child, the world's largest Christmas ministry of its kind and a major project of international

Christian relief charity Samaritan's Purse, has delivered more than 168 million shoebox gifts to children in more than 160 countries and territories. This enormous logistical undertaking is made possible by an established network of committed volunteers in recipient countries.

These in-country volunteers are intrinsic to how Operation Christmas Child is able to reach the normally hard-to-reach groups (for example, refugee children in the Middle East). They receive extensive training and support, and in turn train local ministry partners (church and community leaders), thereby ensuring that shoeboxes are delivered in safe, well-organised outreach events, over 75,000 of which typically take place each year.

In addition to hearing the Christmas story of Jesus as they receive their shoebox gift, children are offered a story book that shares Jesus' invitation to follow Him. They are also invited to attend a follow-up Bible discovery programme called The Greatest Journey. They need the consent of a parent or guardian to take part, and since 2009, more than 18,9 million children have participated in this programme.

Inviting people to pack Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes provides an opportunity to welcome them into the life of your church.

Local churches including New Life Church in Congleton and St John's in Sandbach have already joined in and Operation Christmas Child is hoping to welcome more Cheshire churches packing shoeboxes, or acting as local Church Collection Centres for members of the community to bring their shoeboxes to

during National Collection Week, 11-18 November.

Simply, this is a ministry that loves to engage the local church in mission, while changing lives and communities further afield around the world.

Taking part is simple and fun. For churches taking the opportunity to invite members and visitors to pack together, church kits including pre-printed shoeboxes can be ordered from **www.samaritans-purse.org.uk/mychurch**

Shoeboxes can be packed for boys or girls, and in three age groups and ideas of items to pack can be found at **www.samaritans-purse.org.uk/occ**. Operation Christmas Child suggest a donation of £5 accompany each shoebox; this funds all aspects of the project, from transporting shoeboxes to recipient countries, to training volunteers and local ministry partners. When project donations are made online, a barcode is generated. This can be printed and included in shoeboxes, and allows supporters to find out early in the new year which country their shoebox was sent to.

Operation Christmas Child provides many opportunities to get involved as a volunteer in the UK. From dropping in during the campaign season to help in a regional processing centre, to a range of interesting year-round roles, there are many ways to be part of the mission of delivering good news and great joy to children in need around the world.

Retreat in the City

Retreat House Chester celebrated its fourth birthday as a charity in August with the announcement of lots more on offer as it develops further its work of 'retreat in the city'. With an aim of offering retreat not in a traditional retreat house but as an essential part of living, the hope is that individuals, groups and communities will find something in the programme to help them benefit from the good things that retreat brings, non-residentially and in the midst of daily living. Its non-denominational ecumenical character makes the riches of Christian spirituality accessible to a wide range of people in a varied programme and right in the middle of the city. Attracting visitors from across the region, you'd be very welcome. Find out more on www.retreathousechester.co.uk

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 18th – 25th January, 2020



The Week of Prayer theme for 2020 has been chosen by the Churches of Malta and Gozo and draws on the account found in the Book of Acts, chapters 27 and 28 of Paul's shipwreck on the shores of Malta, when they were met with 'unusual kindness' by the local population. Introducing the material that has been

prepared, Bob Fyffe, the general Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland writes:

“We look but what kind of looking do we do? How do we see and understand ourselves, especially in light of our relationship with the Living Christ? We know that God speaks to us in still small voices, but also in the people and places we least expect. In supposed barren hard places there can spring unimaginable beauty and nourishment.

In spite of the turbulence of the world at the present time, we also discover acts of kindness, of love, forgiveness and hospitality in places or from people we did not expect. As in the natural world, there are still the places where the water of life seeps into the mainstream and brings colour and joy and offers a hopeful future.

But it is only when we immerse ourselves in the vitality of all that life brings do we find this water of life seeping into the mainstream. Our Bible story gives us a visceral story of human fear, survival, hope and love. It will invite us to reflect upon the abundance of God's grace and fullness, that we can see if only we stop and look closely at what is in front of us. In the most difficult situations, inhospitable places and even in the most inhospitable people, there we will find something of God's grace.

We are invited in this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity materials to see God working through people and places which offer unusual kindness. If

only we would do the appropriate kind of looking.”

The material for the Week can be found on the Churches Together in Britain and

Ireland website: ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer

The model ecumenical service suggests bringing a boat into the worship area. If, in January, there seems to be a shortage of boats – try looking in a church!

The Churches Together in Cheshire service will be held at Chester Cathedral at 3.30 pm on Sunday 19th January, when the speaker will be Lord Alton of Liverpool.

Churches Together in England

There have been some staff changes at Churches Together in England.



Jim Currin, pictured above with his wife Linda at his retirement gathering, left at the end of June after 14 years with CTE, leading in the areas of mission and evangelism. He organised The Group for Evangelisation, The Churches Co-ordinating Group for New Housing, and supported the Churches Rural Group.

Following Jim’s retirement, CTE has appointed Ben Aldous as Principle Officer for Evangelism & Mission, and Lucy Olofinjana as Communications and Media Officer. They both joined CTE on 1st June.

Funding to support work with children and young people



The Allchurches Trust has launched a new grants programme – Growing Lives – aimed at helping churches and Christian organisations throughout the UK and Ireland to connect with children and young people and forge lasting links with families in their local area.

Grants of up to £25,000 are available.

For more ideas about how this new programme could help your church or Christian organisation, and to apply online, visit www.allchurches.co.uk/growinglives

Homeless Sunday 13th Oct 2019



Housing Justice, the national Christian homelessness charity, is urging churches to take part in this year’s Homeless Sunday on 13th October.

Homeless Sunday has been part of the Christian calendar for more than a quarter of a century. It is an opportunity for churches of all denominations and people of all faiths to unite and show solidarity with those experiencing homelessness and to reflect and plan practical action on homelessness.

The focus this year is 'The impact of volunteering on the volunteer', apt as Christians and church communities are at the forefront of the response to the rise in homelessness including the most visible aspect, rough sleeping. There were just 65 night shelters operating across the Housing Justice network in 2013, and today there are 125 across England and Wales.

Around 500 or more churches across the country usually take part in Homeless Sunday, and it is hoped that the number will grow this year.

[Find free Homeless Sunday resources on the Housing Justice website...](#)

Prisons Week: 13th-19th October



For forty years, Prisons Week has prepared prayer literature to enable the Christian community to pray for the needs of all those affected by prisons: prisoners and their families, victims of crime and their communities, those working in the criminal justice system and the many people who are involved in caring for those affected by

crime on the inside and outside of our prisons. Find more information and prayer resources at **prisonsweek.org**



Autumn Training programme 2019:

The following events are organised by the Diocese of Chester (Church of England) and open to anyone in church roles from any church denomination in the geographical area of the Diocese of Chester (old county border of Cheshire, including the Wirral, Runcorn, Warrington and south Greater Manchester). Booking is essential. **To reserve a free place(s), click on the hyperlink(s).**

1. Explorers of Church Buildings: Audio/Visual

**Tuesday 26th September 2019,
10.00am to 12.30pm**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/explorers-of-church-buildings-audiovisual-at-st-marys-tickets-62566221252>

An example of a church building project, learn from the experience of churches managing capital projects, ask questions and see the completed project. For this event, we are visiting St Mary's, Eastham, to hear why and how St Mary's decided to install new A/V equipment in the church building and the difference it has made. There is also an opportunity to hear about improvements to their church hall to

enable them to respond to holiday hunger through establishing a children's meal club. Booking is essential.

2. Writing a Successful Grant

Application

Wednesday 2nd October 2019,

10.00am-3.30pm

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/how-to-write-a-successful-grant-application-tickets-55763638544>

3. (Repeat of) Writing a Successful Grant Application

Saturday 12th October 2019, 10.00-

3.3.0pm

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/how-to-write-a-successful-grant-application-tickets-55763657601>

As part of planning a successful fundraising plan for a church building project, the ability to write a clear, concise and compelling grant application can be an essential element. This one day workshop is designed to help you secure grant funding for church building/hall projects. *Workshop*

Aims

- Are you prepared? Learn key planning documents and establishing a clear fundraising strategy
- How will you make a compelling case for funding? Discover how to prepare a Case for Support
- How will you find and select grant funders? Learn how to identify grant making trusts/foundations and organisations.
- How to plan your approach. Learn tips on selecting funders and good administration

- How will you write effectively? Develop skills in writing strong fundraising applications and understanding what the funders are looking for.

4. Breaking New Ground: Engaging in New Housing Areas

Saturday 19th October 2019

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/braking-new-ground-engaging-in-new-housing-areas-tickets-67440854411>

A conference for Christians of all traditions who have a vision for engaging with new housing communities.

In this time of housing crisis, new housing developments are springing up all over Britain. Our challenge as Christians is to work out our response to this changing landscape, not just as individuals or churches but as the body of Christ across a range of denominations and Christian traditions.

At this event, we will explore some underlying principles for stepping off the map into the unknown, physically and spiritually, to welcome and bless new residents and create opportunities for the Christian faith to be explored and nurtured in ways that are appropriate to the new context.

The day will be led the Revd Ali Boulton, Co-Director of The New Housing Hub. Why not look at the New Housing Hub Network website before coming?

<https://newhousinghub.org>

5. Explorers of Church Buildings: Oakhanger: sharing ecumenical space

31st October 2019, 10.00am to 12.30pm

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/explorers-of-church-buildings-sharing-ecumenical-space-tickets-62562285480>

The 'Explorers of Church Building Projects' programme 2019 is an opportunity to see first-hand an example of a church building project, learn from the experience of churches managing capital projects, ask questions and see the completed project. This event is an opportunity to hear from Oakhanger Church in south Cheshire. Historically, there were both Anglican and Methodist buildings in the rural village of Oakhanger, but in recent years they have increasingly worshipped together. With the completion of a brand-new building in 2018, including kitchen and toilets, they are now able to always worship as one. See why and how this shared ecumenical space was developed, the lessons learnt from creating a new Church building and the impact it has made. This event is led by Graham Bushill, from Oakhanger project.

Next Edition

The issue will be in December. If you have any items you would like to be included, not least anything you might wish to publicise of your Christmas plans, please send them to me by 30th November, 2019

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