

NEWSLETTER No 24

Summer 2020

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.

By any measure, the past three months have been extraordinary and church and inter-church activities have been both totally stalled and radically modified. Large societal issues, including the Coronavirus pandemic and the challenge of the Black Lives Matter campaign have required responses that run across church traditions and are not to be easily concentrated into newsletter formats. Therefore, in addition to the references made to those matters here I am also circulating other material I have received which address these matters. Much more information on these matters can be found on the Churches Together in England website: cte.org.uk.

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 warmly welcomes the news that Rt. Revd. Mark Tanner has been appointed as Bishop of Chester in succession to Rt. Revd. Peter Forster who retired last September. A date for Bishop Mark's physical arrival in the Diocese has yet to be announced – another casualty of the coronavirus restrictions. The Trustees of Churches Together in Cheshire look forward to him joining their number.

There will be further changes to that group as Revd. Jacky Embrey has announced that she will be moving on from her role as Moderator of the Mersey Synod of the United Reformed Church during the summer. Jacky has chaired Churches

Together in Cheshire for the past year, that role now being undertaken by Mr. Michael Hennessey of the Society of Friends.

Thy Kingdom Come



The hopes for activities relating to Thy Kingdom Come this year had been that they might be local and ecumenical, but the lockdown restrictions prevented all gatherings. However there were no restrictions placed on individual and household prayer, and the resources prepared were helpful in giving focus and structure to that. Similarly, virtual gatherings were possible and took place, with church leaders in Chester holding their planned 'Unity at the Cross' prayer time via Zoom and also streaming a 'gathering at the Cross, service for Pentecost.

On the national scene there was a 'Thy Kingdom Come' Pentecost service which can be viewed from the website:

www.thykingdomcome.global

The service includes contributions from Pope Francis, Archbishop Justin Welby,

Archbishop John Sentamu, Archbishop Angelos, Pastor Agu, Methodist Youth President Thelma Commey, Heidi Crowte, an advocate for people with Downs Syndrome, prayers from children, Bible readings from young people and a special multilingual version of the Lord's Prayer. Worship was led by Matt Redman including a special musical collaboration created especially for Thy Kingdom Come.

A short wrap-up film, giving a small snapshot of the range of TKC activity during the 11 days worldwide is in the process of production and a more detailed TKC wrap-up will be available in September.

A Fair and Just Society

Christian leaders from across the churches in Chester have issued the following as a public statement in response to Black Lives Matter. They are happy if other church groups wish to use it as a model for their own statements.

"A group of Christian leaders across Chester have come together to stand against racism, bullying and prejudice.

Protests continue to take place across the world in support for the Black Lives Matter movement, following the death of George Floyd.

Crowds of people gathered a few weeks ago outside Chester's Townhall for a "socially distanced protest", which was organised by BLM Chester.

Now, this group of Christian leaders, including the Bishop of Birkenhead and the Pastor of the Redeemed Christian Church of God congregation Calvary Love City Chester plus leaders from a

wide cross section of other Christian denominations have released a statement asking God to “bring an end to racial injustice”.

As Christian leaders in Chester we know that silence is no longer an option: Black Lives Matter.

Following the recent murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis we make it clear that we are appalled by the violence committed against a human being created in the image of God. Racial justice is not just a black or white issue; it is a Kingdom of God issue. Jesus came to destroy every dividing wall of hostility to make one new humanity in Christ.

The Christian scriptures contain a vision of the justice that Christ established through his life, death and resurrection: He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. In contrast to this, we recognise that racism is embedded in many institutions and cultures – including our own. For this we are truly sorry.

We recognise that we have allowed ourselves to become estranged from God’s heart and we have at times disregarded the people He loves including those from the Black, Asian and other ethnic minorities in our own churches and communities.

We recognise we need to listen to and learn from our Black, Asian and other ethnic minorities sisters and brothers. We need to reflect, repent and act differently across our city to forge together a better future where all have a voice, are able to contribute and live free from fear and oppression.

We wish to build relationships in our city so we value others, irrespective of differences, addressing problems together and finding common cause with partners and friends to forge a better future together.

We hope that through our listening we can shape the policies, practices and priorities of the institutions, churches, businesses and services of our city.

May God transform our hearts, renew our minds and lead us forwards in humility and love."

The letter is supported by an impressive list of the leaders of Chester churches and others from wider church structures.

Also attached to this newsletter is the June Newsletter of Churches Together in England which also addresses this matter more fully than can be properly encapsulated here.

Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility

Economic Inequality and Church Responses

A new report from the THEOS ThinkTank 'Bridging the Gap- Economic Inequality and Church Responses in the UK' says that after COVID-19, churches must lead the way in tackling economic inequality. Raising awareness is critical, though the message is clear: 'Inequality is the root of social evil' (Pope Francis, 2014); 'Economic inequality is the most destabilising and unjust feature of our society' (Justin Welby, 2018). The recovery after the financial crash of 2008 simply reinforced and exacerbated the structural inequality around us. We must make sure that the next recovery does better.

Many churches are working hard on this issue, of course, but there is always more that we can do. Anything that reduces even the sense of inequality will pay a dividend - we can organise events that bring people together across the economic spectrum to

work towards common goals. We can ensure that fair wages are paid in the areas where we live. We can ensure that our investments, both private and church, do not promote inequality. We can support Poverty Truth Commissions and Fairness Commissions. We must uncover and root out the causes of social and economic injustice.

The report is available at:

<https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/Reportfiles/Theos---Bridging-the-Gap---Economic-Inequality-and-the-Churches.pdf>

Money Makes Change workshops – Wednesdays 1, 8 and 15 July

The Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR) will be running on-line Money Makes Change Workshops, for anyone who'd like to explore how better to connect their faith with their finances for a fairer world. They'll be using the material from their interactive workshop resource and meeting on-line via Zoom. They're running a morning (11am – 12:30pm) and an evening (8pm – 9:30pm) group and places are limited, so it is advised to sign up early to avoid disappointment.

All are welcome – please do spread the word. If you have any questions about these events please contact info@eccr.org.uk. All the sessions are free but if you are able to make a donation towards ongoing work, that would be greatly appreciated.

More details, and signing up, on the ECCR website:

<https://www.eccr.org.uk/news/online-money-makes-change-events-june-july-2020/>



World Compassion is a charity that has been working for over 50 years with local churches and Christians in nations hostile to the Gospel. World Compassion works with churches in Iraq, Iran, China, Myanmar and Cuba. By working closely with the local church in target nations programs are sustainable and have a lasting impact.

World Compassion works with churches in 4 ways:

- **Compassion**
- **Evangelism**
- **Discipleship**
- **Church Planting**

Whilst the approach in each country can be a little different because of the local political and social environment, the goal remains the same: to strengthen local churches and Christians so that the Gospel flourishes and disciples are multiplied.

Despite facing significant risks, churches in these nations are growing with churches in Iran and China experiencing some of the fastest growth rates in the World.

Adrian Curtis works with churches in the UK and is running a free webinar to share news about the needs of Christians in these nations, to consider what we can learn in

the UK as we strive for growth in our churches and to give Christians in the UK the opportunity to pray those in hostile nations.

The webinar will take place on zoom on July 7th at 7pm.

Anyone wanting attend can reserve a place using the following link:

<https://bit.ly/faith-frontline>. Attendees will be sent a link to the zoom meeting 24 hours before the event starts.

Anyone wanting to know more about the work of World Compassion can:

- Complete the form at <https://bit.ly/world-compassion> to receive further information.
- Email adrian.curtis@worldcompassion.tv
- Visit their website: www.worldcompassion.tv

Telling the Story (2020 Edition)

The Council for Christian Unity has recently published this booklet by Rt. Revd David Hawtin and Revd Dr Roger Paul, describing the origin and development of Local Ecumenical Partnerships. In a commendation, Revd Dr. David Cornick, formerly general Secretary of Churches Together in England writes:

“Although the paper inevitably has an Anglican audience in mind, it offers a singularly valuable resource to all who seek to make sense of English ecumenism and be open in the future to the ways in

which the people of God seek to respond to Christ’s prayer that they may all be one.”

For further details visit the Resources page of cte.org.uk.

Next Edition

The next issue of the Newsletter will be issued in September.

If you have any items you would like to be included, please send them in by 31st August, 2020.

Revd. Andrew Taylor,
Ecumenical Development Officer
11 Broadacres, Broomhall,
Nantwich. CW5 8BH
-e-mail: ceo.ctic@gmail.com