

NEWSLETTER No 25

Autumn 2020

CHURCHES TOGETHER
IN CHESHIRE



Welcome!

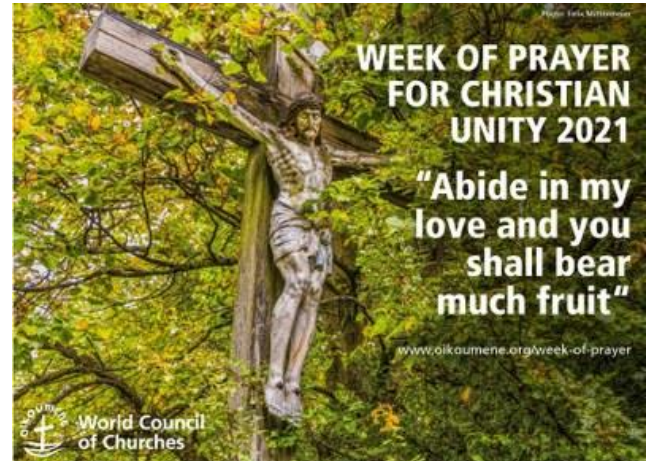
Welcome to this, the latest of the newsletters from Churches Together in Cheshire. As before the newsletter seeks to include both news items and notices of ecumenical activities and events that are taking place within Cheshire, and also information relating more widely to the ecumenical scene across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

We continue to live in extraordinary times, which have not only impacted the activities and finances of churches, but have challenged notions that have been held about the nature of church, the nature of liturgy and of sacraments. All denominations and traditions have sought to address these matters and to encourage fellowship in ways that are safe, and it has been heartening to see that there has been much sharing and borrowing of advice as to best practice.

More information on these matters can be found on the Churches Together in England website: www.cte.org.uk, which has sought to bring together the thoughts and ideas that have been circulating.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

As ever the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will run between the 18th and 25th January 2021. This year theme has been



selected by the Monastic Community of Grandchamp and is 'Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit' (John 15. 5-9). This theme expresses Grandchamp Community's vocation to prayer, reconciliation and unity in the church and the human family.

Material for the Week is now available from : www.oikoumene.org

Further material will be available in due course from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. In addition, Churches Together in Cheshire is also preparing material that will be made available on-line and again more details about this will be circulated in due course.

Plans as to activities to mark the Week of Prayer will, inevitably, be fluid at this stage and further information will be shared nearer the end of the year, informed by the regulations and restrictions that may apply at that time.

Ecumenical Statements of Welcome

Churches Together in Cheshire is aware that in consequence of the constraints and restrictions that have applied over the past six months, not all church fellowship will be able to continue. Whilst it is always sad when this happens, but such situations also open doors to other opportunities. For some affected by possible church closure the concern will be to continue to worship within the tradition to which they are accustomed and they will have the means to travel to where that might be found; for others that may not be possible or their preference will be to remain in an ecumenically oriented worshipping Christian fellowship that witnesses to and serves their local community. In either instance what will be important is the outstretched hand of welcome that they find is being offered.

The Trustees of Churches Together in Cheshire therefore encourage all to be alert to the situation of churches round them, and wish to promote that willingness to offer generous invitations of welcome to those who find that their previous worship home is no longer there for them. This can involve an acknowledgement that one's own habits and practices may need to be modified if others are to feel 'at home'. After all, we have all been doing something rather different in recent weeks, and in some instances have grown because of that, reaching others whom we might not have seen before.

Wheels do not have to be re-invented in this process, and there are ideas and

resources to help churches offer warm welcomes. Churches Together in England (www.cte.org.uk) has prepared the attached document for an Ecumenical Statement of Welcome. The County Ecumenical Officer and the Denominational Ecumenical Officers in Cheshire will be pleased to give support, advice and encouragement as required.

Buildings may close, but the Church's mission marches on.



Cheshire Agricultural Chaplaincy

Sharon Mayer, the Lead Chaplain of the Agricultural Chaplaincy has reported that the team was having to operate in a very different fashion because of the pandemic. She explained that there had been two key arms to the team's work: Individual referrals, often in response to crisis, and the more general pastoral support given to the lonely and vulnerable in the farming community by way of the lunch clubs that had run. There could now be no meetings, but suitably distanced visits were being made, often linked to the distribution of food parcels, these leading to significant periods of contact.

As restrictions were slowly lifting, some of the lunch club groups were beginning to meet again as the venues re-opened, and any distribution of food sought to make use of locally produced items. The personal vulnerability of some of the team meant that fewer chaplains were carrying a lot of the work, often with situations of family tension and breakdown, exacerbated by the lockdown and restrictions and this was very demanding.

The restrictions on holding church services meant that the usual call on the Chaplaincy to attend and address Harvest Festivals was not happening, which could have an impact on the level of donations received. Sharon hoped that churches would still remember the on-going work which the Chaplaincy continued to carry out in the name of all churches, both in prayer and in financial support.

Sharon reflected on the challenge of sustaining the team when they were unable to meet. Zoom sessions had been held, but they were not the same as direct contact. Church Leaders have expressed their appreciation for all that Sharon was doing and the concern that was felt for Sharon as she addressed these challenges.

New mission resource -Walk, Pray, Talk

Walk, Pray, Talk is a short five-part resource from the [Evangelical Alliance](#),

which can be used in small groups or amongst Christian friends. It unpacks how we can be praying for the community in which we live and creating mission opportunities for those on our doorstep. It focuses on exploring prayers through the themes of:

- **Plugging in** – being intentional in both prayer and mission opportunities where we live
- **People of God** – sensing God’s call to use each of us powerfully amongst our friends and in our neighbourhoods
- Being **Present** in your community – seeking out prayer needs and interceding for others
- **Participating** in God’s plan for those around you – catching the wave of where God’s spirit is already at work around us
- Caring for **Place** and people – seeing these opportunities for prayer and mission as part of our worship to God

[More details on Walk-Pray-Talk are available online.](#)



CTE Presidents call all churches to address racial injustice in church life and wider society

Presidents of Churches Together in England, named below, with the support of the Fourth Presidency Group, have issued a statement calling on churches to travel together on the journey of racial justice, addressing injustices both within our church life and in wider society. They write...

We as Presidents of Churches Together in England have responded to the killing of George Floyd in the United States, and the widespread call for real change to combat racial injustice in our world, above all in our own country. We have spent time over the past few weeks listening to voices of people from the black community, especially the younger generation. This has been a deeply moving experience and illustrated powerfully the many profound changes of heart and actions that need to be made. The attitude that regards black people – and indeed other people of ethnic minorities – as inferior is evil and mars our common humanity. We challenge this unreservedly, recognising the constant experiences of racism, including micro aggression, which black people face.

We believe that churches have a significant role to play in combating racial injustice. If we are to be effective in doing so, we must look at ourselves.

We are painfully aware of the racism that blights the life of our churches. We are intent upon a process of identifying racial injustice within our churches – current and historic – repenting of it and taking action to effect real change. This includes the potential for discriminatory behaviour in the way that we make church appointments, which we know can happen at the conscious or unconscious level. We want to ensure that these processes are just and demonstrate the so often neglected gospel truth of Colossians 3:11 “there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all”. In this verse Paul makes it clear that racial injustice and discrimination is not only profoundly unjust and an affront to God but also the very denial of Christ who reached out to all human beings.

Some Member Churches of Churches Together in England have already embarked upon this journey of tackling racial injustice. The Church of England plans a new action group, and among the Free Churches work by the Methodist and United Reformed Churches, together with Baptists Together is already under way, as is also true for the Catholic Church. The Pentecostal Forum has long held this issue in its view, as have the Orthodox Churches.

We call upon all churches to travel together on this journey of racial justice so that

together, as one community of churches in England, we may reach out in love and respect to one another in pursuit of our common witness.

An area of great concern to us as Presidents is the relationship between the black community and the criminal justice system. We will therefore be facilitating conversations between young black women and men and senior members of the police service. We are also seeking to engage both the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice in further considering the day-to-day experience of many young black people in England.

We encourage all churches throughout England to do all they can to build trust and improve accountability between black communities, the police, civic bodies and wider community groups. In particular we call upon groupings of Church Leaders throughout the nation to reach out to their black colleagues in church leadership who are currently absent from their membership, making more inclusive ecumenical leadership. Our desire is that these groups will create spaces for those in authority to listen, as we have, to the powerful testimony of young black women and men as a step towards greater social cohesion.

We see these issues as matters of gospel and faith for all who follow Jesus Christ, the one who calls every nation and people to the justice of the Kingdom of God.

Presidents of Churches Together in England:

Archbishop Justin Welby, The Archbishop of Canterbury

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

Revd Dr Hugh Osgood, The Free Churches Moderator

His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos, Coptic Orthodox Archbishop of London and CTE

President for the Orthodox Churches

Pastor Agu Irukwu, head of Redeemed Christian Church of God UK and CTE Pentecostal President

The Fourth Presidency Group comprises Lutheran, Quaker and The Church of Scotland (English Presbytery) Member Churches.

Covid webinars from the Society of Ecumenical Studies



The Society for Ecumenical Studies has been holding a series of three webinars to discussing the response of the Churches to the situation created by the current pandemic.

The spiritual health of the nation Tuesday 15 September from 6 to 7.30 pm

Covid has been a time of huge upheaval and an opportunity for soul-searching. What are we learning as individuals and as society?

The speakers are Roger Dawson, Ann Morisy and John Swinton. Dominic Robinson will be in the chair.

The webinar will include a short time for discussion in randomly allocated small groups.

[Find more details and how to book a ticket...](#)

Communion in the light of COVID-19: Shining a light on different views of Eucharist

John Bradbury, Sarah Parvis and Matthew Cheung Salisbury shared their perspectives and responded to questions from the Zoom audience.

[Watch the video from the 16 July webinar...](#)

Covid-19 and the World Church

What can we learn from each other and share together across ecclesial and geographical boundaries during these unprecedented times? The speakers were Jooseop Keum, Elena Narinskaya, Moses Owusu-Sekyere and Philip Vinod Peacock. Victoria Turner was in the chair.

[Watch the video of the 19 August webinar...](#)

Prisons Week - 11 to 17 October

For more than forty years, Prisons Week has prepared prayer literature to enable the Christian community to pray for the needs of all those affected by prisons. Find more information and prayer resources at prisonsworld.org

Law Commission consultation on weddings law

Professor Nicholas Hopkins, Law Commissioner writes:

The Law Commission has today published *Getting Married: A Consultation Paper on Weddings Law*. In the Consultation Paper, we make provisional proposals for a comprehensive new legislative scheme to replace the outdated, overly-restrictive current law of weddings, much of which dates from 1836. We ask questions for consultees on each aspect of the law governing how and where couples can get married in England and Wales, from giving notice, to the location and content of the ceremony, the people who must attend, and how marriages are registered. Our proposals aim to give couples greater choice within a simple, fair and consistent legal structure, so that people can have a wedding that is meaningful to them. Our review also considers the consequences for the validity of weddings when any of the legal requirements are not met.

Alongside the Consultation Paper, available [here](#), we have published a shorter summary document, [here](#), and an at-a-glance overview, [here](#).

The publication of the Consultation Paper marks the opening of a period of public consultation, which will last until **3 December 2020**. Written submissions to our consultation can be sent to us using the [online response form](#). Where possible, it would be helpful if this form was used.

Alternatively, comments may be sent:

• to weddings@lawcommission.gov.uk; or

· by post to Weddings Team,
Law Commission, 1st Floor, 52
Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1H
9AG. (If you send your comments
by post, it would be helpful if,
whenever possible, you could also
send them electronically.)

We are keen to hear the full range of views,
and would welcome your submission
answering as many or as few questions as
you like. We would be grateful if you would
share this email with any individuals or
organisations who you think may be
interested in our project.

More information about our project can be
found on our website, [here](#). Updates about
consultation events will be published on
our website in the coming weeks.

Ecumenical Development Officer

The appointment has now been made of
Revd. Charlotte Truman to the interim post
of Ecumenical Development Officer for
Churches Together in Cheshire, to succeed
Andrew Taylor who will leave the post at
the end of October. Charlotte, an Anglican
priest with experience of working as an
ecumenical Chaplain in the Prison Service,
has begun work, so that there can be a
period of handover, and in the first
instance her appointment will cover the
period in which the Trustees of Churches
Together review the work of the
organisation and reflect on the vision for
the future.

Next Edition

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

If you have any items you would like to be
included, please send them in by 30th
November, 2020.

Revd. Charlotte Truman,
Ecumenical Development Officer
-e-mail: ceo.ctic@gmail.com