

Churches Together AGM and General Meeting

14th May 2020

At the AGM and General Meeting by Zoom in May, David Griffiths retiring Chairman said as he handed over to Chris Holmes, from St John's, that this was happening amid the shock of the 'lockdown' arising from the Coronavirus crisis. 'The temptation to fear Coronavirus is real' he said 'and God knows this. That is why we read in the Bible hundreds of times "do not fear".' Though our church buildings are closed, the church is very much open and alive partly through the marvels of technology, and social media so our churches are offering virtual worship for an increasing number. However in other ways, in homes, through neighbours and friends caring for each other, through prayer, telephone, shopping for people who are locked at home; through organisations like Urban Outreach to help families that are really up against it in this pandemic. So the churches are demonstrating a transforming Christian presence at the heart of our community.

- Churches Together in Horwich and Rivington continues to involve the 9 churches of various denominations in serving the spiritual and community needs of our people.

Our churches are one in mission in promoting the love of God and our neighbour.

We have renewed and developed our brochure 'Come and See – Supporting Local People and the Community through the churches of Horwich and Rivington.' It is now available to be distributed in the community when the 'lockdown' is eased.

- Recently Monsignor John Daly has moved from St Mary's to Salford and Fr Richard Howard has been appointed as Priest in charge of St Mary's. Rev Stephen Fletcher, Horwich Team Rector of the Anglican Horwich Team has retired and moved to Leyland after 18 years outstanding service in Horwich. His wife Anne continues her ministry as a Probation Officer in Wymott Prison. Rev Michael Behrend is now acting Team Rector and Rev Nicola Butterworth has joined us as Team Curate whilst Rev Jo Smith has left us to be a vicar of Euxton. Rev Hilary Howarth has become Superintendent of the Bolton Methodist Circuit and Pastor Chris Holmes now has joint leadership with Rev Hilary for St John's Methodist Church. The Horwich Prayer House under the leadership of Catherine Powell continued to meet each month until the 'lockdown' at Vale Farm Cottage. The focus of the group continues to be on some words of Henri Nouwen, a Dutch Catholic Priest "Prayer is first listening to God. It is openness. God is always speaking; he is always doing something".

- Eric Kent has now taken on from Stephen Fletcher being chair of the Middlebrook and Horwich Chaplaincy Project Management Group. Keith Armstrong continues to lead the Middlebrook Angels whilst Janice Escourt under the guidance of Rev Caroline Tracey has started to establish Horwich Angels working to provide a listening ear and support to employers and employees in Horwich Town Centre.

- Gemma Garcete, Horwich Youth Minister has now returned after maternity leave to work in church and community with young people.

- Christian Aid raised £4750 including gift aid, by churches and the community in May 2019. Given the current situation, a traditional Christian Aid week is not possible this year, but is being conducted digitally. Though Coronavirus impacts us all - love unites us all and people across the world are still suffering hunger, violence, homelessness, climate change & untimely death on a vast scale, even without the present pandemic! The workload of all Aid Agencies is increasing with need just as their incomes are falling because of the lockdown. People were urged to continue to support Christian Aid, as well as Tearfund and the Catholic CAFOD

charity with prayers and financial generosity.

- 'Thy Kingdom Come' is a global prayer season between Ascension and Pentecost, this year 21st-31st May, which has mushroomed over the past four years, this year with the theme of Prayer and Care.

- In November, we worked with Horwich Royal British Legion, Horwich Council and the Rivington and Adlington Band for a crowded Remembrance Day Parade The celebrations of 75 years since VE day on May 8th which we had planned with Horwich Heritage, Royal British Legion and others in the community had had to be cancelled. As also did the Civic Service on 10th May following the Mayor Making at which Revd Hilary Haworth was due to preach.

- At Christmas, the churches again coordinated Christmas Shoeboxes this year through International Aid Trust following Operation Christmas Child closing the Horwich warehouse. Rev Caroline Tracey led prayers at the switching on of the Christmas lights at the Crown with Rotary's Santa Claus, a Brass Band from the Rivington and Blackrod High School and a large crowd of families with children.

- The Lenten series of meetings – this year entitled The Long Road to Heaven based on the film 'The Way' had to be cancelled after two successful meetings at St Catherine's and Horwich Bridge because of the 'lockdown'.

- Our website under the care of Robert Forrester has continued to help people to find out about the contribution of the churches to our community but it is dependent on people keeping Robert informed so that the website can be kept up to date.

- These are just some of the many projects undertaken by Churches Together this year which obviously demands time, commitment, energy and effort on the part of so many but knowing that people, our churches and community have benefited in some way from such involvement is reward in itself.

David said that we were fortunate to appoint Heather Holmes from St John's as our Treasurer and thanked her for all that she has done to sort things out with the bank after Andrew Morley's death.

It was agreed to give

- £1000 to Urban Outreach Food Bank.
Cheque handed to Laura Bagley at Humanitarian Hub.
- £1000 to Horwich Youth Ministry
- £1000 to the Destitution Project in Bolton for food vouchers and food for those refused Asylum
- £1000 to Fortalice Survivors appeal for those suffering from domestic violence in the town and borough.

Gloria Long was thanked for her work as secretary.

Chris Holmes was then appointed as

Chair for the next two years, Linda Gillet from New Chapel UR Church as Vice Chair, and Richard Skidmore from St Elizabeth's as Independent Examiner of accounts.

