

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 vary in size and offer a variety of styles and forms of worship for all ages but are one in mission in promoting the love of God and our neighbour. It has been very good to welcome: Monsignor John Daly, Vicar General as Parish Priest of St Mary's together with Fr Richard Howard; Rev Hilary Howarth and Pastor Chris Holmes at St John's Methodist; and John Squires at Bridge, Horwich, a rebranding of the Liberty Christian Centre in Rock Street. This year has also seen the development of the Horwich Prayer House which has met several times during the year at Vale Farm Cottage, Vale Avenue, under the leadership of Catherine Powell. The focus of the group has been on some words of Henri Nouwen, a Dutch Catholic Priest *"Prayer is first of all listening to God. It's openness. God is always speaking; he's always doing something"*.

In the 70th anniversary of Christian Aid week the churches raised nearly £5,500 to help those in dire straits with a further money being raised through the Disaster Emergency Committee appeal, not just through the churches, for the people of Yemen and those affected by the Cyclone in Mozambique. It goes back to those words of Jesus about caring for those in need. We have now completed Christian Aid Week again with Big Brekki's, Soup Lunches as well as collections at supermarkets, envelope and door to door collections. Thank you to those involved in organising.

Our churches were involved in different ways in 'Thy Kingdom Come'. 'Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven' as Jesus taught us to pray, through prayer walks, prayer meetings, prayer through craft, meditation, in regular worship and prayer and in other ways in the 9 days of focussed prayer from Ascension Day to Pentecost. We were grateful to Rev Caroline Tracey, Rev Gill Smart, Vicky Holden, and Eileen Jepson for their coordination of events which initially was an Anglican initiative but has now been taken up and promoted by all national church leaders and this year has been affirmed by Pope Francis.

This year through the work of Rev Caroline Tracey we have produced an excellent brochure 'Come and See – Supporting Local People and Community through the churches of Horwich and Rivington.' It included a section on Youth Ministry with Gemma Garcete, a Youth Minister appointed by the Horwich Anglican Team but working across the churches. Also, a section on The Middlebrook Angels under the leadership of the team of volunteers by Keith Armstrong, offering a listening ear and support to those who work on the Middlebrook Retail Park. Keith also headed up a stall assisted by volunteers at the Horwich Carnival at which the brochure was distributed. We have encouraged churches to distribute copies to people in their neighbourhood through their congregations offering support and care at those important milestones of birth, marriage and death as well as in everyday life with all its ups and downs.

Our website under the care of Robert Forrester is another way in which people can find out about the contribution of the churches to our community but it is dependent on CTHR Leaders and Reps. keeping Robert informed so that the website can be kept up to date. This year has seen the development of the Horwich Angels – a chaplaincy to Horwich Shops under the coordinating leadership of Rev Caroline Tracey. We have volunteers and are in the process of recruiting more to visit shops and provide a listening ear and support to employers and employees in Horwich Town Centre.

In November, we commemorated the 100th anniversary of the ending of World

War 1 with a crowded Remembrance Day Parade remembering the 3000 Horwich soldiers who left from Horwich station to fight on the western front – and the 258 who didn't return together with those who died in World War 11 and in conflicts since, as representatives from all our churches led the service together with the Royal British Legion and the Rivington and Adlington Band. Horwich Heritage provided the names and addresses of those from the town who died in World War 1 many of whom were read out at the service and they organised a variety of exhibitions, presentations and commemorations in the town which were much appreciated.

At Christmas the churches again coordinated Christmas Shoeboxes through Operation Christmas Child. There was a huge involvement of donors, drivers, checkers, and packers so that nearly 6000 Christmas Shoeboxes were sent off to children in the Ukraine. We will know more about whether we are likely to have a Horwich warehouse this coming Christmas after a meeting with Operation Christmas Child representatives at the end of May.

A church representative Chris Holmes led prayers at the switching on of the Christmas lights at the Crown with Rotary's Santa Claus, a lantern procession from St Catherine's school, members of RMI Brass Band and a large crowd of families with children.

Again, we organised a Lenten series of meetings in preparation for Easter – this year entitled Meekness and Majesty – the humanity of the Servant King. We had a greater focus this year on group discussions which was appreciated by those from across our churches who attended.

As chair of CTHR I led prayers at the Annual Meeting of the Town Council and appointing of the new Mayor, Councillor Gordon Stone and then led the Civic Service with the Mayor and Councillors, representatives of some of the 80 + organisations in the town, as well as the normal congregation at Holy Trinity when Chris Holmes from St John's Methodist was the visiting preacher.

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.

The great sadness of this year was the death of our Treasurer Andrew Morley. He was so involved in the life of our town, the choir at Holy Trinity and other musical activities as well as being our Treasurer – his death was a great tragedy. However, I am hopeful that we will soon have a new Treasurer. I am very grateful for Gloria Long's support during this interim period, along with her normal duties as our secretary. I am also grateful to Chris Holmes for his commitment as our Vice Chair, and for all my colleagues as church leaders. To all who help in fulfilling the mission of Churches Together in Horwich and Rivington thank you so much for all your efforts, it is very much appreciated.

[This is based on Chairman David Griffith's Report, with a slight adaptation for public audience.] 23.5.19