



CTOD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2019-2020

Chairman's report

Welcome to the annual report of Churches Together in Oxted and District.

It's good to be together, to share in God's mission in the place where God has called us. Even though we are different, we are part of the same family as we have all been adopted in to God's family. CTOD helps us to acknowledge how similar we are, even when our worship and ways of being church are different.

This report tells of the many ways we are similar and how we join together as CTOD to build and strengthen the relationships between churches in the area. I hope you find joy in reading about all that is happening in Oxted and district.

We started the year in the usual fashion with 5th Sunday services and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. However the latter part of this year has been unprecedented in our lifetimes and has forced us to reimagine how we 'do church' whilst keeping constant what we hold to be important. We've had an unexpected opportunity to join with other churches online and to see how others have responded to the restrictions.

I am grateful to all those whose participation and contributions make CTOD a success. Thank you

Rev'd Mark Anderson

Chairman

[CTOD Affiliated Groups](#)

Housing & Homeless Action Group

Members of our Group normally meet twice a year but because of the Coronavirus pandemic we have not been able to meet since the September 2019 meeting mentioned in our 2018-19 Annual Report.

The £50 donated to Oxted Citizens Advice in July 2019 towards the fund-raising effort of one of its advisers was eventually used this summer after lockdown to reunite the elderly couple in Smallfield with their furniture which had been stored in Perth for over a year. Further details of this project are in the 2018-19 CTOD Annual Report.

The Group still has £118-68 remaining in its funds held by CTOD. This is still being held in reserve in case funding is needed towards transport costs for homeless people from Tandridge District to travel to identified accommodation outside our area. Because of a lack of further income we have not been able to donate to any further projects such as those run by the Renewed Hope Trust to which we donated £100 in 2018.

Stuart Paterson

TicToc report for CTOD Report 2020

Have we managed to continue our usual interesting and varied program in spite of all the social restrictions imposed by Covid? YES! Our numbers remain strong and we gained a new member during lockdown!

However this report covers a whole year from September 2019-20 and there was life before Covid!

We have gained three new members this year one from Edenbridge and one from Tatsfield. We greatly enjoy their contributions and experience.

Last Autumn Mark Anderson led a session encouraging us to think about 'How do different songs affect how we feel about worshipping?' We reflected on the meaning of the word *worship* and what it meant to all of us. We listened to four different songs from different churches and different centuries, concluding with a recording of Stormzy. We considered whether they were accurate to Biblical text and what mood they left us in. It was a very interesting session. Perhaps all clergy and choir leaders ask themselves these questions before each service? The questions posed during this session will provide a useful format for future sessions. Mark also suggested we read 'Phoebe' by Paula Gooder. We all read this novel during the summer break and will discuss it in October. Thank you Mark for so many ideas.

In October 2019 Rev'd James Percival talked about his experience of 'Forgiveness', and in November Rev'd David Skitt talked about a close member of his family who had served and died in WW1, but his memory and name lives on as each new generation includes the name Jack amongst their sons and grandsons. It was a very moving story.

In January we all watched the two episode BBC documentary 'Exposed' in our own homes. We were all shocked in different ways. We were relieved to discuss it amongst ourselves in a very safe and confidential setting. We learnt many aspects of staff selection in Christian circles which need to be scrutinised in more detail for future staff and volunteer appointments.

We started the Lent group studies 'Oh sing to the Lord a new song' but only completed 2 sessions before lock down.

It was with huge sadness we said farewell to a highly valued and close friend Pastor Margaret Cox as she and Steven moved to Nottingham to retire near family. We could not give her the farewell we would have chosen due to lockdown. However we made a very special card with a collage of photos of past activities and an engraved glass carafe. This special gift was to symbolise how she 'so easily changed, average 'waterful' discussions and bible studies into 'wineful' enthusiastic thought provoking events'. We thought we would miss her deeply....but no! She still joins us via zoom. Hallelujah for Zoom technology.

Having mastered the techniques of Zoom we continued meetings in May. We have met Keith Dickson the new minister of Hurst Green Evangelical Church and just last week we met Christine Perkin, wife of Paul Perkin the new minister at St Andrew's on the Chart. We have had some lovely local walks led by members, leaving in groups of 6 from different addresses, thereby actually seeing each other face to face occasionally.

Sarah Darby

Christian Men's Prayer Breakfast

In normal times we meet early on the second Monday of each month in the upper room of the Gospel Hall, Old Oxted. Unfortunately the March meeting had to be our last before lockdown and so no physical get-together with sharing of croissants and prayer has been possible since.

However, fired by the increasing confidence in the use of video conferencing acquired by several members during lockdown, we arranged our first virtual prayer (non)breakfast early September. Our numbers were understandably reduced, but it was a success and so was followed by our second "Zoom" meeting October 12th when it was a real pleasure to welcome Keith Dickson, the new pastor of the Hurst Green Evangelical church.

New members will be very welcome to join us in future months as it would seem that this will be the only possible way to meet for the foreseeable future. Please email John Roberts at robertsin67@yahoo.co.uk for the Zoom invitation each month.

John Roberts

CTOD Singers

Our last singing together gathering was in February. Following guidance from Downing Street regarding coronavirus, a notice was sent out on 17th March cancelling all further monthly meetings.

In order to keep everyone singing, it was suggested perhaps they could sing along with Songs of Praise.

Notwithstanding, each month five or six suitable hymns were also sourced on You Tube which especially had words on screen. Links to these would be included in a monthly style 'Bulletin'. The idea was for everyone to be able to continue to enjoy singing despite not being able to gather together. Hopefully, although not ideal, the wish was to help lift one's spirits whilst singing and absorbing the meaningful words of chosen hymns during periods of isolation.

Molly Holman

Lent Groups 2020

This year's Lent Course was another homemade one "Sing unto the Lord a New Song" largely devised by Wendy Hewitt but contributed to by others. It was based on hymns and other Christian music and song and their depiction of some of our basic beliefs. The course did not attract many members but people will recall that Lent was the start of the attack of the pandemic – the period ended with the national lockdown. As a result the 10 small groups completed only 2 or 3 of the planned 5 sessions. Many thought that the idea was a good one but people did not appear to be as interested as in previous years. We are thinking that we will not be proposing a homemade course for 2021 (even if meetings will be possible in Lent).

John Tolley

St Mary's Bletchingley

We were able to start the year as planned with something new - An Advent corner. This consisted of a life size Crib with additional artefacts to aid meditation with room for chairs. This was lit up and available every day up to Christmas and beyond.

We also followed our usual Christmas programme which included our Nine Lessons and Carols, Candlelit Carol Service and the ever popular children's Christingle.

For Lent we even managed The Stations of the Cross and the Good Friday Tenabrae Service before Lockdown.

As COVID 19 shook up future plans our Rector Phaedra quickly established our on line Sunday Service available at 9:30 am through YouTube for all those unable to attend church. This and other CTOD on line Services are greatly appreciated.

News of our refugee family:

The Jakmara family have settled in at the Clerk`s House, a church property which was vacant at the time they needed a home. There are eight of them altogether. There`s baby Cilla whose sister Fatima has started at the local Primary School. Said is at Warwick Secondary School. Omran and Mohammed with his wife, Nariman are at East Surrey College. We are very proud of Omran who has been upgraded to take a GCSE course in English. The senior citizens Fatme and Maher run the home! I head up the team of volunteers and we get good support from Tandridge Council. But the family are making their own friends locally and through other Syrians in the area.

But of course like us all they have been affected by COVID 19 and we manage as best we can. I am frequently in touch through WhatsApp Translater and Facetime. Their English is so good now that we are able to help them over the phone. Using this method we were able to avert a flood by explaining what a stopcock was and where to find it!

Marian Buck

Their Voice - CTOD Charity for 2019-20

As we come toward the end of 2020 we have been greatly encouraged by being able to reach more families and expect to reach over 1000 by the end of the year. We managed to remain open throughout lockdown where the demand picked up dramatically but, due to Government restrictions and volunteer safety, our volunteer workforce was depleted. I can only say it was through God`s grace and strength we managed to help 260 families during this time.

We continue to reach out to the community by providing essential products which is easing financial pressures by providing free of charge items that could not be afforded or easily accessed. We recently supplied a new washing machine to a mother of three children as the landlord refused to replace white goods in her flat and using the local launderette so exacerbated her son`s eczema, that he ended requiring hospital treatment.

We have noticed that poverty is increasing with many not having the financial means to purchase personal hygiene items for themselves or their children. One woman was drying out used disposable nappies as she did not have the means to purchase new. We were so glad that her plight was referred to us and we were able to help. By supplying adult clothing and toiletries for men we assisted a man to go for a job interview with confidence and increased self-worth.

Another woman and her children were experiencing extreme hardship as all four were sleeping in a single bed and were extremely sleep deprived. We were able to eliminate this by supplying two cots and bedding for her 7-month-old twins and a toddler bed for her 3-year-old. We also gave her a bag of toiletries for herself which she said made her feel valued.

Our work at the safe house continues and we are at full capacity of residents and our thoughts are now towards Christmas and presents for 15 babies and children. One of the women who had recently been rescued had her baby two weeks ago, told me she was taken to the safehouse by an elderly couple from the Salvation Army who told her that from that day her life was going to change. I have spent time with her, she is a Christian and it has been so encouraging to share verses with her from the Bible to give her hope and

that God is love and wants the best for her. We have been able to provide a lot of practical help for her in respect of baby and personal items, she had absolutely nothing when she arrived. I stand in awe of how God uses people to tell and show them of His Great Love.

We have continued to suffer floods at the premises causing a lot of disruption of service, loss of stock and expense clearing up afterwards. We have now found a new premises at Caterham Barracks and are hoping to move in next month, we thank God for his faithfulness and provision.

Once again many, many thanks for your continued support and prayers.

God Bless

Carolyn Thom

CTOD Churches

Hurst Green Methodist Church

Our Church year begins in September. We support the Surrey Churches Ride and Stride. Harvest was celebrated with monies sent to "All we can" and goods to the East Grinstead Food Bank. Revd Sephen Mares led our church anniversary celebrations.

In December we support various CTOD carol singing events at the station, Boots and the Diamond pub.

We joined in with the Lent course until everything ground to a halt with the Covid19 lockdown. Until then the Wednesday Fellowship had me regularly.

During lockdown everything has been done on Zoom. Stephen has presented regular Sunday services as well as a Bible study. We have met via Zoom each Sunday at 12, just to see each other and keep in touch. For those not on the internet, copies of Sunday services from the Vine have been put through doors. Our pastoral visitors have kept in touch with everyone via phone calls.

Once it was agreed that churches could re-open, we made plans to re-open – but it soon became apparent that we no longer had enough people to carry on. Unfortunately, we are now in the position of closing permanently shortly.

St John's Hurst Green

2019 is a year that we are not likely to forget in a hurry (and we suspect that will apply to 2020 too!). It started well as the familiar rhythms of post-Christmas, Lent, Easter, Trinity got underway. In May, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of Mary's ordination to the priesthood and she was presented with a purple stole which Hilary Dilnot had embroidered with flowers. A tea party attended by over 80 people was also held to mark the occasion. Another happy event took place at the end of June when many of us attended the Collation and Induction of Anna Eltringham as the Team Rector of the Oxted Team Ministry; we're delighted how this brought attention to the links between the four Oxted Team churches and has resulted in increased interaction.

And just five days later, we were all reeling from the news that Anna had been taken very seriously ill and was in hospital following a cardiac arrest. Testing times for Anna, her family and for our church family as we held her in our prayers. We found ourselves in a quasi-interregnum and had to quickly learn how to ensure services continued, PCC meetings were chaired and a whole host of other things. Over the coming months,

we drew on the support of many of our congregation and, of course, Mary who played such a big role in running the services. Anna returned to us in time for Harvest, a joyous service - not least because of the 41 children in attendance!

One of our biggest projects in 2019 was "Let There be Light" for which we needed to raise £25,000 to pay for a replacement LED lighting system for the church as the existing system was out of date and non-sustainable. At the start, we had no idea how we were going to meet this target, but somehow this captured everyone's imagination and through a number of grants, donations, and fundraising events we hit the target in just over six months. We remain incredibly grateful to everyone who helped.

2019 was a full and varied year and we would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who does so much work on behalf of St John's. Not only Anna, Mary, Charles, Wendy and Monica but the unsung helpers who stand on the PCC, look after our church admin and finances, clean, arrange flowers, provide us with beautiful music, provide refreshments, prepare the church for services, look after the grounds, fundraise, the servers, the crucifers, the sidespersons, the intercessors and many more. Thank you for all that you do.

St Mary's Oxted

2019/20 has been marked by the installation of Rev James Ashton as Oxted Team Vicar in January 2020 after the long vacancy period.

James has brought us new energy and commitment and has led us in new ways of worshipping during the Covid lockdown.

Our Zoom services and Bible studies have been popular – as well as telephone services for those members who are not so technically inclined. Socially distanced Services in Church have resumed although the wearing of masks is always a challenge.

St Mary's members have been involved in the Love Your Neighbour scheme. Our diligent Wardens, Catherine Hough and Stu Murden have been faithful stewards in their duties.

David Cook

St Peter's Tandridge

We started 2020 by welcoming our new Team Vicar who started in January. Having had only a few months to settle in, Rev'd James Ashton had to work with a closed church building and a dispersed church.

Before the building was closed for services, St Peter's was able to be open for prayer during the week. We were able to welcome, meet and speak with the many walkers who pass by our countryside church. We value being a presence in our community and doing what we can do make our village vibrant and sustainable for the future. We have enjoyed helped to make and joining in with the online services created by the Oxted Team of Churches.

We continue to work on providing better facilities in the building. Our Heritage Group is now in place and are fundraising for us. The group has people from both church and village and it's good to bring the two together with a common purpose. We need to find the best place for the inside toilet and kitchen facilities, which isn't easy in a Grade 1 listed building

Despite the covid restrictions we continue to join in with the life of St Peter's Infant School in the village. Life goes on and God is still with us, causing us to grow, even when we don't see it.

Rev'd Mark Anderson, Curate at St Peter's Tandridge

Kings Church

In 2019 we were able to build on some of the initiatives that have involved partnering with other local churches, most notable Criss-Cross and the Winter Night Shelter.

Criss-Cross is a week's holiday club for 4-11 years olds held at Oxted School at the beginning of the school summer holidays. The aim is for the children to hear the good news of Jesus Christ while having a lot of fun. In total, almost one hundred children attended the week, and the volunteer team included people from six different local churches.

This was the third winter we provided a venue for the East Surrey Winter Night Shelter, and again we benefited greatly from the support of people from other local churches in manning the sessions. Both of these activities were or are unable to take place in 2020 due to Covid-19. Our hope and prayer is that we will be able to re-start these projects again in 2021.

In addition, our intention is to consider new ways in which we as a church can serve our local community. We're aware that the long-term impact of lockdown and the continued restrictions will increase needs among local people in the years ahead.

Our prayer is that we, along with other local churches, will make a difference to our community. At present all our regular church activities remain online, including our Sunday meetings, mid-week small groups, youth group, prayer meetings, Alpha Course and discipleship courses.

United Reformed Church

In common with all other churches, Oxted URC, during these difficult and unprecedented times, has prayerfully sought and implemented new ways of maintaining worship and fellowship. Repeatedly remembering that the church is its people and not its buildings.

From early days of lockdown, Sunday worship continued via weekly Zoom services, shared with our sister church, Marsh Green URC. Mindful of those unable to access Zoom, the full text of the service was circulated to the congregation by email and delivered by hand to those without computer access. Following the Zoom services, there was opportunity, much appreciated, for socialising in small virtual groups.

From the beginning, of paramount importance was the need to ensure that no member of the congregation, particularly the elderly and those living alone, felt isolated. This was achieved through the minister regularly contacting members of the congregation by phone, emails from the church secretary and by Elders keeping in regular touch with those in their pastoral groups - by phone, sometimes by Skype, sometimes in garden gatherings. What a blessing the good weather! There was, and is, also a good deal of networking by other congregants keeping in touch with each other by regular phone calls, skyping and socially distanced meetings.

After careful preparation, following government guidelines, worship in the church building resumed on Sunday 6 September. Masked and with no singing or socialising, it was, nevertheless, a great joy to those who came together in worship. Plans are now underway to investigate the possibility of streaming morning worship to those unable, for whatever reason, to attend worship.

Other activities have included:

Prayer and Share, a group of less than six, have started to meet again on Tuesdays, appropriately socially distanced.

Three editions of the **News Quarterly** have been produced and distributed electronically, with a few paper copies distributed by hand, as required.

An electronic vote on our next environmental charity chose *Water Aid*. Over the summer in the region of £300 was raised for *Water Aid* from donations for reusable masks made from fabric offcuts and surplus vegetables, church members successfully growing tomatoes, cucumber, courgettes, chard, squash, kale and Cape gooseberry.

In September a small number from OURC took part in the annual Ride and Stride, visiting 7 churches in a socially distanced walk.

On Friday, 25 September a group met together virtually, via Zoom, for a Macmillan Coffee morning. The opportunity to see one another, share coffee, cake and news, was much enjoyed.

Oxted URC remains in good heart, thanking God for many blessings in the full knowledge of His everlasting love.

Diana Jones

All Saints'

This year has been beyond bizarre and more than challenging for most. As for all churches, worship in our Oxted and Warlingham Parish churches came to an abrupt halt towards the end of March. Of course, it was not only the gatherings in our churches that were curtailed, but all house groups had to cease too. For us that meant stopping house prayer groups and also our first Alpha Course which was being run to train up the leaders. Fortunately, this had only one session to go, so little was lost from what we all felt was a very worthwhile course. The plan was to be ready to hold our first course proper this autumn, but that is on hold for now, though we hope to explore the Alpha Online option. We would love to hear from anyone who has experience of running the online version of Alpha.

At the time of lockdown, members of All Saints' were in the middle of running a Week of Accompanied Prayer that had been organised across our Deanery. When on the Tuesday of the Week we learned that the churches were to shut immediately, one of the guides made the suggestion that, rather than abandon the event, we move "on-line" using a product not many of us were familiar with, called "Zoom". It was a great success and we were able to finish the Week. For many of the pilgrims, some of whom were over 90, this was their first taste of video conferencing and they loved it!! Zoom now seems to be part of our everyday language.

Many of us were delighted to discover another "new" technology, that being the internet live streaming of services from churches - anywhere. Much "sofa surfing" has been in evidence as parishioners roamed the globe tuning into Masses at places as wide apart as Vancouver, Seoul, New Zealand, Rome, etc. and across the UK. Unfortunately, All Saints' does not have the facility (yet – it arrives next month), but when our priests

were allowed back into their churches, Fr Stephen was able to go up to Sacred Heart, Caterham and say Mass online from there – which he did almost every day of the week. So indeed, we were spoilt for choice.

On the first weekend of July our churches were able to open for public Mass for a maximum of 30 people. A challenge at first with all the precautionary measures, but it is wonderful to see how adaptable people are and now Mass is available on at least 4 days per week in both churches.

And Zoom is still playing its part, as several of the liturgy groups have started to meet virtually and our weekly Wednesday meditation group has built up an online following of over 20 people most weeks. This is available to all the churches, so please let me know if you would like a Zoom invite forwarded to you too!

As it now seems the virus will be around for some time, it raises many questions as to how we “do church” now and into the future. Perhaps this can be a great opportunity to not only reevaluate existing norms as a church in order to meet temporary needs but to make a decisive shift from maintenance to mission. Are there initiatives we can take as Churches Together which can help us all come to terms with today's new reality and become a more visible Christian voice in the community?

St Mary's Tatsfield

The community of St Mary's and the village of Tatsfield as a whole was very shocked and saddened by the sudden death of Brian Cook at the beginning of April. Brian was a long-term resident of Tatsfield and a much loved and very active member of St Mary's. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with his wife Sheila and his daughters and grandchildren.

Zoom services from the Rectory started at the beginning of April. St Mary's reopened for public worship on 9th August. There is now a weekly, 9am service in church followed by a Zoom service from the Rectory. Since April, the church has been open at set times during the week for private prayer.

As a community we have been blessed by the arrival of Bishop Chris and his wife Revd Ellen Goldsmith who moved into the village earlier in the year. Since the beginning of May, Chris and Ellen have been hosting a weekly Lectio Divina Bible study via Zoom. Bishop Chris is the Church of England's National Director of Ministry. We look forward to their licensing in the Southwark Diocese and to their continued contribution to the life of St Mary's.

At present St Mary's together with the Parish Council are exploring setting up a community care scheme in Tatsfield with a particular focus on the lonely and isolated. We look forward to the resumption of our monthly **Hear Here** Hearing Aid Clinics. At present we are managing to keep in touch with many of our 'clients' by delivering batteries.

As we look towards the future, we most look forward to:

Working more closely with our Team churches in Limpsfield and Limpsfield Chart, including their new ministry team members

Our next Flower Festival due in 2021.

The extension to our churchyard with its incomparable views of the North Downs.

Reopening our Millennium Hall to regular users, including art groups and Tots on Top, and our very popular church teas.

The weddings in 2021 and 2022 that have been postponed from 2020.

St Peter's Limpsfield

This year the main event has been the knowledge of James Percival's imminent departure as Rector following the announcement of his wife's appointment as canon of Portsmouth Cathedral. This was, at the time, a far more important announcement for us at St Peter's than the report of a mysterious new virus at Wuhan in China. Also we were going to lose our choir director, Ann Osborn, who retired at Christmas, having run our church choir since the 1980s. This was a double whammy but we all felt that the problem was more than this because people who had been mainstays of the church were getting older but younger people did not seem to have enough time to do the things that needed to be done. In the end the virus won everything in that we had to close the church and hold services on line. However whilst he was still here, James and his family – forming themselves into the Antiviral Singers – did marvellously in bringing us services from the Rectory every Sunday.

We were greatly helped by having Caroline Campbell, our parish administrator, who very quickly learned how to produce the services on Facebook live and introduced us all to Zoom coffee mornings. The elderly and disabled were supported by teams set up by Helen Ireland and her pastoral committee. In the later summer she organised a socially distanced Friday coffee morning on the Glebe Field.

Our Bishop asked Revd Helen Cook, who had trained at St Peter's and was already known to us, to look after the parish during the interregnum and she and our Churchwardens have brilliantly worked out ways in which we can open the church for services as well as looking after all the rest of us. We still have online services for those who can't or shouldn't get to church and are now starting a Zoom bible study on the epistle of St James with Sarah Paxton, who has just been licensed as a lay minister. We are also grateful to God for our lovely summer weather.

St Andrew's Limpsfield Chart

This has been a year unlike any other as it began by our Priest-in charge, Wendy Harvey, announcing that her last service would be on Christmas morning! After a remarkable five and a half years of her guidance we were to say good-bye. That occasion was unlike any in the past with people from Tatsfield and Limpsfield as well the Chart gathering in the Hall to give her presents from all three of our Team churches – a truly memorable send-off.

Fortunately our curate, the Reverend Ruth Rainbird, could take over for a very unusual interregnum. We had about two and a half months before the Church and all of us faced lockdown when her principle way of keeping in touch was regularly telephoning St Andrew's congregation!

By the time we were ready to re-open the church building after weeks of intensive cleaning and clearing and tidying up was done (and overseen) by our church warden, Diana Davy, we only had three weeks of Services before our newly chosen Minister, Rev. Paul Perkin was inducted and ready to take over! Paul comes from a different church background, making a change which is suiting St Andrew's – his preaching is remarkable and weekly attendance has increased. He and his wife, Christine, are well settled in St Andrew's House and their walks in the Chart Woods as well as round the Chart give them the opportunity to introduce themselves to all whom they meet. They are happily entering into the different life of a small rural parish which is totally unlike that of their long stay at St Mark's, Battersea!

Sue Compton