

Note of Churches Together in Shirley AGM: held at West Wickham and Shirley Baptist Church on Thursday 12th March 2026 at 8 p.m. after CTIS Prayers

Apologies: Rev Lu Gale, Rev Tabitha Singh, Rev Richard Lowson, Claire Baracliffe, Helen McMullan

Present: Rev Jon Hills (WWSBC Chair). Rev Jennifer Walpole (St George's Vice Chair), Deacon Al (Shirley Methodist); Gillian Goldsmith (St John's), Liz Bebington (St George's), Andy Bebington (Our Lady's), Trevor Ashby (WWSBC), Jonathan Baxter (Shirley Methodist), Cliff Underhay (WWSBC), Brian McGinnis (St George's Secretary)

Jon welcomed everybody

Note of 4/2/25 AGM and matters arising: Jon thanked Brian for paperwork. Brian invited member churches to check that the CTIS website and the CTIS contact list still reflected their current realities. Noted that Alex Walshe had replaced Trevor as Shrublands Trust Chair. It was agreed that it would be good to be able to track any CTIS bank balance, but that this might not be possible. Lack of CTIS insurance cover was probably not an issue; but we would need to risk assess any new activities.

Election of Officers: Rev Jennifer would become Chair after the AGM, Deacon Al would become Vice Chair. Brian would continue as Secretary.

Shirley Neighbourhood Care Report: It would be good to have an official SNC representative at the next AGM. The report showed clearly both the range of valuable work being done, and the restrictions on funds and need for more volunteers. Volunteers needed safeguarding vetting, and the cost of vetting now had to be met by SNC itself. The move to Shirley Library opened new possibilities. Member churches needed to keep their support for SNC under review, and not just assume that resources match needs. SNC was a vital part of CTIS community engagement.

Shrublands Trust Report: It would be good to have a Trust representative at the next AGM. The cost of living issues that brought people to the Food Bank also affected the Food Bank supply costs: rising food costs. The Trust's range of partnerships was essential to its continuing work. A new/re-visited Trust project was English language teaching – to help people whose inadequate English was holding them back. Volunteer teachers would be needed.

Christian Aid in 2026: Liz Bebington spoke to her report. Christian Aid Week will run from May 9th to May 16th, with a CTIS CA planning meeting at Liz and Andy's house on Tuesday 17th March at 10 30 a.m. It was hoped that all church's would be represented, whatever their likely level of involvement. Key elements in involvement were prayer, having CA envelopes available in church, delivering envelopes, hosting returned envelopes, and special fund-raising events including coffee mornings, and sponsored events. Last year, we raised £2,300+ On Saturday May 9th, there was a sponsored London Churches walk, which many had enjoyed in previous years – especially Shirley Methodist members.

Our Lady's Church: A new Assistant Priest Father Cajetan Dara (from Nigeria) had joined Fr Keith Sylvia. The church Diversity Group was proving a very effective and enjoyable way of celebrating Our Lady's cultural diversity.

Shirley Methodist Church: The November Lantern Festival had been a great success despite the awful weather on that day. The Lent course had focussed on the journey to the cross and pilgrimage, and had included a visit to crucifixion pictures in the National Gallery. Details of Rev Richard Lawson's farewell arrangements would be shared in due course.

St John's Church: Hard work and considerable investment had enabled the All Saints building to become an active worship space again, and a congregation was building up. The St John's 9 a.m. Family Service was thriving. For Lent, St John's was using one of the Paula Gooder Women of the Bible books (as Shirley Methodist had for Advent). St John's was working towards a silver ECO award.

St George's Church: The Mission Action Plan was being lived out, with both specific church activities and community outreach. St George's was anxious to develop further its CTIS involvement in joint projects. The gold ECO award was part of continuing ECO commitment – not the end of the line. Re-building the 1937 Church Hall (the church until 1952) was the major physical project.

West Wickham and Shirley Baptist Church: A very informative leaflet on Community Building was shared. This included details of THE HUB: Coffee Shop with soft play, Baby Bank with practical support for low income families, The Pantry with low cost basic food supplies, and Book Nook with books and board games. There was to be a free entry new passion play on Thursday 2nd April at 7 0 p.m. The Alpha Course had 17 participants.

ECO Champion: Jan Turner, Churchwarden at St George's and Chair of St George's ECO Group was Croydon ECO Champion, and offered to meet any church reviewing its ECO activities – whether or not awards were a target, jan.m.turner09@gmail.com

January 2027 Unity Week Service: Jon thanked Rev Jennifer and Liz for their parts in the St George's-hosted 2026 service. All Saints was suggested as the location for 2027, subject to Lu Gale's agreement. It seemed likely that there would be a separate Shirley event, rather than joining in with West Wickham or Addiscombe or Selsdon CTIS.

Advent Quiet Day : Jon agreed to explore the possibility of a Prayer Labyrinth, possibly at St George's, with Jim Bailey – an experienced facilitator of such things. It would be inclusive of those less mobile than others. Timing was flexible, but probably warmer time of year, and not Advent.

Prayer Meetings and Prayer Notes: After some debate, it was agreed that Brian would circulate proposals for monthly meetings, with a Zoom option where possible, and a short prayer leaflet to involve those who could not join in the actual meeting. The aim would be for as many churches as possible to be involved in hosting – given the value of visiting each other.

Good Friday Act of Witness: Rev Jennifer raised the possibility of some shared public act of witness on Good Friday. It was suggested that while a few people witnessing was good, it would have more impact on the general public if numbers were substantial. If a Walk of Witness was involved, it would be good to offer a static experience for the less mobile at one or both ends of the walk. Jennifer would explore further.

Rev Jennifer closed the meeting with prayer.