

Minutes of
Churches Together meeting
held at Bridge Community Church, Bury St. Edmunds
on Monday 8th April 2024

Welcome: Helen welcomed everyone to the meeting and referred to Colossians 3.

Present: Helen Moore (Chair - Southgate), Andrew Caldecott (CCMH), Elaine Green (Treasurer - Quakers), Heather Corbell (Horringer), David Sutherland (Forge Com.Church), Andy Williams (St. Peter's), Regina Collender (St. Edmund's R.C.), Paula Ashman and Robert Mark (Salvation Army), Richard Shone (Seventh Day Adventist), David Wakeford/Catrin Diverres (Trinity Methodist), Pam Pitts (Cathedral), Sally McDermott (Vineyard), Claire Rose (All Saints), Andrew Soman (Bridge Com.), Gerda Tooley (Southgate), Margaret Steavenson (Minutes – LVNBT)

Hannah Moore attended as a visitor.

Apologies: Andy & Ali Miller, Rosie Perham, Peter Sebbage, Sharon Steven, Gavin Moss, Gavin Walter, Philip Lloyd-Jones.

Minutes of previous meeting: these were received as a correct record.

Heather mentioned that the Exchange of Greetings last year had been very well received. Owing to the death of Nic Wright (very much regretted) there was now a vacancy for a website manager. It is thought that the website needs modernising. David S. said he didn't wish to take this on, but he would try to publicise the Summer Event. Peter Sebbage wished to cease being co-ordinator for 'Thought for the Weekend', and a replacement for him is also sought.

Treasurer's Report: Elaine reported that income this year had been £4,652. Total expenses so far had been £3,519. Today's bank balance stood at £4,179 and £2,894 in the savings account. The Walk of Witness cash collection had been £1,012, and there were gift-aided donations to come. There was discussion about incomplete detail on gift-aid envelopes – perhaps another time would-be donors should be asked to be sure to complete these before inserting their donation.

Elaine reiterated that she is standing down as Treasurer in September and asked for a successor to come forward. She would be prepared to support someone until the end of 2024.

Chair's Report: .Helen reported as follows:

'Since we last met we have had 2 major events and 2 important ongoing features of CT.

Thanks as ever to Heather for keeping us updated with all the news of the local churches and Christian Organisations and for producing and circulating the What's On Sheet and thanks to Peter and his team of writers for their contributions to the BFP.

In January we had the launch service for the WPCU and the weekday meetings at churches around the town. The launch service was attended by about 100 and well led by Tiffer and the music group from St Mary's. We record our thanks to Tiffer and his team for taking on this service. There were good contributions from Graham Miles sharing about his role as Rural Chaplain, an area of church life which might be overlooked perhaps and from Jo Copsey who told us about the wonderful work of TP. Both of these fitted in so well with the theme of the Good Samaritan as both are great examples of that command to "go and do likewise". Simon Ladd spoke of what it is to be Churches and Christians together. There was good fellowship afterwards over refreshments. During the week that followed there were lunchtime meetings at different churches, which allowed us to consider our theme in some depth and to share in Bible study and prayer. Thanks to everyone who played a part in these meetings and in making this week such a positive experience.

Although NOT a CT event. I feel I should speak about the World Day of Prayer. Congratulations to all involved in a well organised, smoothly run service. The material from the women of Palestine obviously held added poignancy given the current context.

On the same day I visited most of the shops on Cornhill and Abbeygate Street to inform them of the Walk of Witness. Although dreading it, I received nothing but positive reactions from all, and many said they remembered the walk from previous years and were happy to hear it was happening again.

Another important job before the event itself was the publicity. Thanks to Simon for his poster and PowerPoint and to all those who made sure these got into your churches and to Heather for sending many articles to those parishes who still have magazines!

We had a very encouraging prayer meeting on March 23rd at St Edmunds, thanks to Regina, Eilish and their helpers for the breakfast and to St Edmunds for their hospitality. Prayer was uplifting as we focussed on the WoW and Easter events in our churches.

So to Good Friday. Despite fears before had about bad weather, the day itself, although not as tropical as last year, was dry and warm(ish). On Maundy Thursday as we closed off the car park, we realised that the signage was not as prominent as it needed to be about 20 cars were still in situ and couple of drivers were not pleased to be told that the car park was closed! Palmers (traffic management contractors) are aware for next year should we do the same again,

As last year, a rough estimate is that about 50 people representing 10 churches or benefices played an active role in the services and the walk. Special mention to the guys who carried the banner in the teeth of high winds. We had plentiful stewards and so many volunteering to wear a badge that I had to get more made.

Everything went smoothly, everyone did what they said they would do and did it well. We estimate 600 in the cathedral and about 400 on the walk and in Market Square. The seats provided for those who needed them most were well used. There appeared to be more younger people and families walking with us and those pushing buggies. Again, without any favouritism, I was delighted that Sophie aged 7 led our opening prayer so confidently. Emma Denton's message was spot on and the poems were very thought provoking. I'm pleased to say that 200 NT were taken, given that not all would have been shared that's still a lot of scripture out and about in BSE! There were so many people in Garland Street that we overflowed into the church and there was a lovely atmosphere, as many enjoyed fellowship, this was evident also on the square after the service as people met and talked. It may be a Walk of Witness to our town, but this is also a way in which we, as Christians across the town, can worship and fellowship together and that in and of itself is a powerful witness. We record our thanks to everyone who supported the Walk of Witness in any way.'

Upcoming events – Helen reported as follows:

Study and Share event in the autumn, possibly a one-day session or on three separate days (venue needed)

Prayer Meeting on 22nd June (venue?)

Exchange of Greetings – Claire is looking for a successor to co-ordinate this. Please contact her if interested.

Summer Event 30th June in the Abbey Gardens. It is planned to last around 2 hours, starting at 2.15 p.m. (music to precede this). Jim Herrington of St. Mary's is on board to organise the music, but a choir is needed and someone to direct it (Paul Doswell of the Salvation Army was suggested). Events will be given 20 minute slots, including children's events.

Helen and Andrew are in discussion as to presentations, testimonies etc.

Please would everyone note the date **30th June** and see it is mentioned in Church newsletters/magazines.

Reports from member Churches

Heather supplied much interesting information about Horringer benefice. It is a united benefice of 6 churches* surrounding Horringer, working under one Rector and a Ministry team (the position of Rector is currently vacant). Each parish has its own Wardens and PCC's, and has its own character. To keep together there are benefice service and events, a Lent course and a joint monthly notice sheet. Pastoral care is organised by the ministry team, who may invite others to take services. Uniquely the benefice has its own podcast link where a Christian message is regularly welcomed: <https://soundcloud.com/user-342833083>

*these comprise Horringer, Whepstead, Brockley, Westley, Nowton and Hawstead.

Any Other Business

Andrew Soman gave details of the National Day of Prayer & Worship (www.ndopw.com), of which Churches Together in England is one of the listed partners. This organisation is a way of encouraging unity and prayer nationally, and suggests regular fasting as part of the process.

It holds a Zoom-ed prayer meeting every Thursday at 7pm for about an hour. Currently between 150-200 people from across the UK meet online to pray together. For joining information and further details please contact Andrew at Bridge Community Church.

Southgate Community Church are planning a celebration of their 50th birthday on 19th May. Please contact the Church Office for further details.

Wedding news We are happy to announce the engagement of our Salvation Army members, Paula and Robert!

Date of next meeting: Monday 8th July 2024 (venue tbc).

