

CTiW AGM January 19th 2015

Held at St George's Church, Hanover Square.

Report of the Meeting:

1) Welcome: The Revd Roddy Leece, Rector of St George's and member of the CTiW Executive, welcomed everyone and led a bidding prayer.

2) Interim Chair's Report: Fr Dominic Robinson, of the Jesuit Church, Farm Street introduced the members of the Executive:

Evelyn Pellow, Crown Court Scottish Church, Covent Garden, Treasurer

Ray Crocker, St James's, Piccadilly, Secretary

Major Graham Mizon, Regent Hall Salvation Army

Revd Philip Majcher, Crown Court Scottish Church

Isobel Owen, Hinde Street Methodist Church

Revd Ruth Gouldbourne, Bloomsbury Baptist Church

Revd Roddy Leece, St George's, Hanover Square

John Plummer, St George's, Hanover Square

Rosa Postance, Administrator and Website Controller

Canon Jane Sinclair of Westminster Abbey was introduced as an Executive member in her absence. (She arrived later)

Fr Robinson reviewed the year's activities, mentioning the Annual Ecumenical Service for Pentecost, this year held at the Grosvenor Chapel and the Advent Service to which all churches of Westminster were invited at St James's, Piccadilly.

There have been two "Meet the Neighbour" events, one at All Saints' Church, Margaret Street the second at The Church of the Annunciation, Marble Arch.

There was also a conference on Ecumenism to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Vatican II on November 15th at Farm Street Jesuit Church, at which there were over 100 attendees.

He cited the projects in which CTiW is involved:

- Syrian Refugees (along with West London Citizens)
- The Prisons Mission
- The Homelessness Task Force.

3) Treasurer's Report:

- The number of CTiW events has increased, thus making good use of funds
- CTiW has raised its profile through advertising, producing and distributing posters and by producing a new information leaflet. This leaflet will be available to all churches. It sets out the mission, scope and activities of CTiW.
- The current balance of funds held is £5,337.41

4) Website/ Administrator's Report: A written report was prepared to ensure full coverage of the year's extensive activity. It was read out by Rosa Postance. It is reproduced here verbatim:

"Report for the CTiW AGM 19 January 2015

It is now a year since I became responsible for Administration and Communications for Churches Together in Westminster.

It was immediately obvious that nothing much appeared to have happened regarding the website for around 2 years – the CTiW Email address had lapsed through lack of use, the website information was out of date, as was much of the database I had been given.

My first tasks therefore were to set up a working Email and to create an accurate database, which meant checking information for each church; this included postal address, Email and telephone addresses, and where possible, the name of a contact person. From this new database I created a working list of Email and postal addresses so that everyone could be contacted quickly and efficiently. At the same time, I also updated the information displayed on the website for each of the entries, and as far as possible ensured the text was consistent and remained relevant by removing references to service times, and generally tidying the formatting.

The existing website was not ideal, and due to the way in which it had been set up, certain areas could not be accessed in order to make changes. The hosting contract was also due to expire early 2015. So the decision was taken in Summer 2014 to set up a new website with a new address, and with the assistance of Karl from Mount St Jesuit Centre, the new CTiW site at www.ctiw.london was negotiated. It became operational in the Autumn 2014.

Additionally, I have been in attendance at nearly every monthly Executive meeting, and other CTiW events. I have helped co-ordinate *Meet the Neighbours* events at All Saints, Margaret Street and The Annunciation, Marble Arch, and assisted with administration at the *Christian Unity since Vatican II* conference. I continue to monitor the CTiW Email and respond to requests including the circulation of news and posters of forthcoming events, Press Releases and other publicity, and to give appropriate support generally to both the CTiW Executive and the Prisons Project.

Rosa Postance, 19 January 2015"

5) Questions: A question was asked about attendance at the MTN Evenings. The reply was that this is growing in popularity and over 70 people attended the last one. Three are planned for 2015: at St Mary-le-Strand, at the German Church, (Deutsche Evangelische Christuskirche) Montpelier Place, Knightsbridge and at Hinde Street Methodist Church.

6) The Prisons Mission: John Plummer reported on this year's pilot mission to prisons project. His report can be found elsewhere on the website. John Rowlands, a participant in the project (SGHS), spoke of the next steps:

- One more year in the project
- 3 more churches to be added to the present 3 participating places of worship
- 6 participants sought from each of the 6 churches
- Add other prisons to the current one of HMP Wandsworth
- Communicate better about the project to all CTiW Churches.

7) The Homelessness Task Force: Revd Ruth Gouldbourne (Bloomsbury BC) reported on her church's involvement in collaboration with Camden Churches. She also spoke of the same project in Westminster which involves several of CTiW member churches. A group of homeless guests is given dinner bed and breakfast as well as enjoying fellowship and social time with volunteers. Churches work in groups of seven so that every day of the week is covered. Other churches are welcome to join the initiative and individuals whose churches are not hosts are welcome as volunteers in participating churches. She mentioned that witnessing changes in people's lives was very satisfying and makes the project rewarding.

Panel presentations and discussion on the topic: “Silent or Strident---Churches in Election Year”

Panellists:

Dr Andrew Chandler, Director of the George Bell Institute, University of Chichester, teaching in the departments of History and Theology.

David Burrowes MP, Member of Parliament for Enfield Southgate

Catherine West, Former Leader of Islington Council, prospective candidate as MP for Hornsey and Wood Green.

Dr Chandler gave an historical perspective by citing churches' active involvement in politics and social justice issues in the past, particularly in the late 19th century and early 20th

Century. He mentioned an important conference convened by Bishop Temple in Birmingham 90 years ago which examined the role of the Church in the nation's political life. The ground covered by the conference was remarkably similar to the areas of concern facing us today. He posed the question: Do churches have the capacity today to address the current situation, encompassing the length and breadth of social existence? He believes that churches have a responsibility towards the development of faith/ politics/ society.

The 1924 Conference explored the character and responsibilities of the democratic state. The Conference pondered on the notion that co-operative societies are more likely to succeed in ameliorating living conditions and citizen participation than competitive societies. This remains true today also. Constructive creative ideas are needed for progress; what might politicians be offering this year?

The 1924 Conference also identified the need for an international perspective on domestic affairs. A Nationalistic view of the world is inadequate. Currently the considerable world problems and migration call for an urgent international perspective.

Dr Chandler warned that a declining electorate and politicians who pander to the most powerful groups in the electorate are leading to difficulties in the future. Moral purpose and clear direction in what is believed are lacking and the electorate is becoming increasingly disenchanted and alienated by this.

Catherine West started her presentation by expressing admiration for the social justice projects in which CTiW is engaged. As a Quaker, she is familiar with all the types of work reported upon earlier.

She referred to the CTiW's website where a vision for a good society is mentioned through

- Access to sufficient income for each family
- A decent home
- The contribution of young people in society
- Economic growth.

[None of this is on the website but this is what the speaker said]

She outlined her own beliefs and ambitions for each area.

David Burrowes admitted that there is a high level of distrust of politicians in today's society. He believes that people of faith need to become involved in politics. The Bible is a highly political book with many comments on how to organise the "polis". The voice of the Christian in politics should not necessarily be strident but certainly be distinctive. He himself has become involved in areas which are of particular interest to people of faith: anti-slavery in the modern world and other social issues, including the campaign for the living wage. He is also on the Public Accounts Committee, which seeks to promote honest and honourable conduct in all political dealings.

At the local level, the role of churches in informing the area's MP is crucial and potent. This, in turn, impacts upon national politics. He feels that people are not meeting together enough to discuss these matters and lobby the MPs. Churches have potentially powerful contribution to make in setting up local debate and representation to the appropriate authorities.

Churches often become fixated on a single issue, such as sexuality. He feels that single issues should not warp the Christian voice and dominate our involvement. We need to broaden our range of interest for real effect and change. People with values need to be encouraged to join in the political life of our country.

A Range of Questions From The Floor were addressed covering such subjects as

- Economic growth and its detrimental effect on the environment.
- The disestablishment of the Church of England.
- Food banks.
- International affairs.
- Palestine.
- Echoing Dr Chandler's comments, the need for a paradigm shift in the way money, resources and individual participation in society are allowed/ controlled/ organised.

A comment which received general approval was that both The Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury are becoming increasingly involved in political matters and are making announcements which are being nationally and internationally heard and received. As a result, their standing is being enhanced as people recognise that these religious leaders are getting alongside the oppressed, poor and suffering in the world and are seeking to change political direction.