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**REPORT OF CHURCHES TOGETHER IN WESTMINSTER ANNUAL MEETING**

**HELD AT 6.30PM ON MONDAY, 21 JANUARY 2019 AT SALVATION ARMY REGENT HALL, OXFORD STREET, LONDON W1**

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1. **Welcome & Introductions:** The meeting was chaired by Rev’d Jonathan Evens from St Martin-in-the-Fields. He began by welcoming everyone to the meeting and thanking the Salvation Army for hosting the meeting at Regent Hall.

2. **Report of CTiW Activities**: The Meeting Chairman reported on a full programme of CTiW activities for the past year, which included a number of ecumenical events such as “*Meet the Neighbours*” at The Immaculate Conception, Farm St RC Church, the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Holy Family, and St Martin-in-the-Fields Anglican Church. Our Advent Sunday service was hosted by St James’ Piccadilly Anglican Church, and by the Salvation Army Regent Hall on Pentecost. CTiW members again took part in the Ecumenical Good Friday Walk of Witness on Victoria St, as well as hearing about *Voices of Iraq: Stories of Trauma, Survival & Hope* at All Saints Margaret St. Our Ecumenical Prisons Mission Vigil was held in Notre Dame de France RC church and involved prayers, readings, music and drama. The Prisons Mission’s 2018 booklet was felt to be the most successful yet, and the “*First Impressions: Portraits from Prison*” Art Exhibition curated by Koeslter Trust, along with the accompanying events at St James’ Piccadilly, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church and St Martin-in-the-Fields were well-received, and attracted a large number of visitors. (See Document 1)

3. **Introduction of the Executive:** These are:

**Andreea Gherman** – Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, Shaftesbury Avenue (Treasurer)
**\*Rev’d Canon Anthony Ball**– Westminster Abbey
**\*Rev’d Matthew Catterick**, St Saviours Church, St Georges Square, Pimlico
**Rev’d Jonathan Evens** – St Martin-in-the-Fields Church, Trafalgar Square
**Rev’d Roderick Leece** – St George’s Church, Hanover Square
**Major Richard Mingay & Major Caroline Mingay** – Salvation Army, Regent Hall, Oxford St
**John Plummer** – St George’s Church, Hanover Square
**Rev’d Dominic Robinson SJ** - The Immaculate Conception, Farm Street

**\*Gillian Dare** – All Saints Church, Margaret Street

**\*Rev’d Joan Ishibashi** – St James’s, Piccadilly
**\*Rob Thompson** – Hinde Street Methodist Church

**Rosa Postance** (Administration & Communications (inc Website & Newsletter)

\*New Exec members

Everyone was thanked for all their hard work.

A vote was held, and the meeting unanimously approved the new Executive members. The Meeting Chairman then welcomed the new members, and thanked all members of the Executive for their service.

4. **Membership & Finance Report:** This was presented by the Treasurer. In the year 2018, encouragingly 33 churches had paid their membership donations, although unfortunately almost the same number still remained to do so. New member churches are always welcome. The Membership Donation will remain at £30 for 2019, and requests will be sent out in the early part of the year. The Treasurer anticipated that the finances would break even, for which CTiW would like to thank everyone for their support. A vote was held and the meeting unanimously approved the Finance Report. The Treasurer was thanked for her Report. (See Document 2)

Andreea Gherman had indicated to the Executive that she wishes to retire from the Executive in June 2019, or sooner if a replacement Treasurer is appointed. A new Treasurer is being sought.

5. **Prisons Mission Report:** John Plummer gave a brief report of activities in the past year, pointing out that more churches were needed to engage. John and his team were thanked for the tremendous amount of work which he has put into the Prisons Mission.

John Plummer has indicated he wishes to retire from the Executive with immediate effect, but will remain Coordinator for the Prisons Mission, attending meetings of the Executive, and presenting reports on the Prisons Mission, when requested/required by the Executive. John was thanked for all the work that he has done in the past five years for the CTiW. (Written Report appended hereto – Document 3)

6. **Future Plans:** It was agreed to continue with our present activities, including “*Meet the Neighbours”* and The Prisons Mission. However, the Executive would be willing to consider any suggestions for 2019.

7. **Questions:**

* It was suggested that we might participate in the annual Remembrance Day service at the Animals in War Memorial in Park Lane.
* An exercise in receptive ecumenism occurred during the 2019 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity when a plaque was unveiled at St Giles-in-the-Fields Anglican Church by Fr Dominic Robinson SJ, Parish Priest at The Immaculate Conception RC church, to commemorate the Jesuits and other Catholics who in giving their lives for their faith, also have a connection with those who die today for their faith.

This part of the meeting closed at 7pm and was followed by the speakers on the subject of HeartEdge. The evening ended with a prayer.

Document 1

**REPORT GIVEN TO CTIW ANNUAL MEETING ON 21 JANUARY 2019**

**BY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER, REV’D JONATHAN EVENS AS ACTING CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2019 ANNUAL MEETING**

**REPORT OF CTIW ACTIVITIES**

Our year in CTiW has focussed around our three areas of activity; education and getting to know one another; worship and social action.

We pursue our first aim largely through Meet The Neighbours and Join The Neighbours – inviting people to join in regular events at various churches. These have taken us to The Jesuit Church of the Immaculate Conception (Farm Street), Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Holy Family and St Martin-in-the-Fields. We have heard the history of Jesuits in both London and Britain, the History of the Ukrainian Church and Diaspora Life in the UK, and the wide history of St Martin’s, especially its model of mission to-day and the importance of the four C’s – Culture, Commerce, Charity and Congregational life. We also went to All Saints Margaret Street for Voices of Iraq: Stories of Trauma, Survival and Hope. If you would like to be part of either MTN or JTN in any way, please let us know. Rosa, our admin officer is great at passing news on among our churches both through our newsletter which she is responsible for editing and sending out, and through the database which she uses to share invitations and items of interest among churches. Rosa has prepared Newsletters – No. 11 (Report of last AGM), No. 12, No. 13 (Prisons Mission special), No. 14.

Our second aim regularly invites us to worship together, and we did this on Advent Sunday at St James Piccadilly, where Lindsey Meader led us in Advent reflections, and on Pentecost, this year here at Regent Hall where we were led by Major Richard Mingay. We also shared in the Cross on Victoria Street; a Good Friday Walk of Witness.

In October our Prisons Mission Prayer Vigil took place at Notre Dame de France and included a sequence of readings, dialogue, testimonies, reflections, music and prayer on the themes of prison reform, rehabilitation of prisoners, needs of victims and the Christian response. Speakers described experiences and observations of prisons and the prison system from several very different perspectives. There were performances of pieces by Handel and Fauré, both of whom wrote on themes of imprisonment, and ‘Voices from Prison’, a drama for three voices based on: ‘Koestler Voices: New Poetry from Prisons Volume One’. Prayers were led by The Prison's Mission Team at Notre Dame de France, Jonathan Evens, Richard Mingay and the Prison’s Mission volunteers.

Our third aim involves us in the prison ministry which we will hear about later in the meeting, and as well as the actual visiting of prisons which is great work, also in praying together in prisons week. The resources that are produced for that are significant. The 2018 Prisons Week booklet was used by scores of churches and circulated to churches of all Christian denominations, far beyond London. Many people told us that it was the best yet, so, if you haven’t used them before, can I recommend that you look out for them later in the year; prisons week is in October – and see how they might best serve you.

Additionally, this year, “First Impressions: Portraits from Prison”, an exhibition of paintings by men, women and children, curated by the Koestler Trust, was organised for St James’s Piccadilly, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church and St Martin-in-the-Fields. At each church, the exhibition was the focus for worship, lectures, debates and discussions on the subject of penal policy and the crisis in British prisons. Many visitors attended from churches in London and far beyond, including Prison Chaplaincy team members of different faiths, as well as other individuals and organisations. This was a major initiative led by the Prisons Mission. The venture involved a partnership with the host churches and the Koestler Trust, which for over fifty years has promoted the visual arts in prisons as an aid to education, recover and rehabilitation. The Prisons Mission raised over £10,000 from individual benefactors so that there would be no financial burden on either the churches or the Koestler Trust.

Our theme for the AGM usually reflects an aspect of mission and ministry in Westminster. This year we are exploring the model of mission (congregation, compassion, culture and commerce) advocated by HeartEdge, a new ecumenical movement for renewal. HeartEdge has been initiated by St Martin-in-the-Fields and churches in Westminster have been early adopters in the movement. We look forward to hearing from Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, Notre Dame de France, St Martin-in-the-Fields and St James Piccadilly about innovative mission activity in Westminster to do with the 4Cs of congregation, compassion, culture and commerce.

The exec has, as always, gone through various changes, and we have had to say goodbye to our former Chair Ruth Gouldbourne from Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, who has moved to become Minister of Grove Lane Baptist Church, Cheadle. We wish to record our thanks to Ruth for all that she did as Chair of CTiW, not only in the interesting and varied programme that she oversaw as Chair but also by responding to the need for a new constitution that she saw through to completion and which was adopted last year.

Andreea Gherman (Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church - Treasurer) and Majors Richard & Caroline Mingay (Salvation Army, Regent Hall) have all completed a full first year on the Exec and we have benefited hugely from their input. We have been very glad to welcome and co-opt Rev’d Canon Anthony Ball (Westminster Abbey), Rev’d Matthew Catterick (St Saviours Pimlico), Gillian Dare (All Saints Church, Margaret Street), Rev’d Joan Ishibashi (St James’s, Piccadilly) and Rob Thompson (Hinde Street Methodist Church) during the year. They have joined the other members of the Exec: John Plummer (St George’s Church, Hanover Square), Rev’d Dominic Robinson (The Immaculate Conception, Farm Street), Rev’d Roderick Leece (St George’s Hanover Square) and myself.

We have been ably supported, as in recent years, by Rosa Postance who, as Secretary, undertakes administration and communications including our website and Newsletter. Our thanks to everyone who has served on the Exec this year for the tremendous contribution made. In a moment we will ask the approval of the meeting for those who have been co-opted in the course of this year and will note that Andreea Gherman and John Plummer are standing down from the Exec.

Andreea’s work schedule, family and church commitments have become such that she cannot continue to volunteer the time necessary to do my job as treasurer and member of the Executive with the thoroughness she would like and she is therefore resigning effective June 1st, 2019. We are all very sorry to hear this news because of the significant contribution Andreea has made to CTiW through her helpful and constructive contributions to Exec meetings and especially for the way in which she was able to take on the Treasurer role without a handover and sort through the hiatus in order to get us back on track with up-to-date information and effective systems. We are all very grateful for this very significant piece of work as well as being appreciative both of the time that Andreea has had to commit to undertaking it and the patient and constructive way in which she have gone about it.

John Plummer brings huge energy and enthusiasm to all his commitments and undertakings combined with a very precise knowledge of the issues and tasks he addresses. All these have been abundantly evident in the time that he has spent as a CTiW Executive member. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the work he did to draft a new constitution for CTiW. We are much in John’s debt for all his input to the Executive and, in particular, for our constitution. So, as with Andreea, while we understand the reasons for his decision to stand down, it is with real regret that we lose his input at this stage. We are glad, however, that he will continue to be a force for mission, and for change in the Prison Service, through his continued leadership of CTiW’s Prison’s Mission.

To lessen the burden of monthly meetings on busy people, it was decided that the Executive will meet approximately five times a year for “themed” meetings, and that when necessary smaller “task groups” will be set up to work on specific projects as has been the case with the organisation of the prayer vigil and the AGM.

As part of the MTN at St Martin-in-the-Fields members from one denomination spoke of things they particularly appreciated about a different denomination. I spoke about the development of my faith as a child in a Baptist Church and the more recent inspiration provided by Baptist ministers through their involvement with HeartEdge. Sr Catherine Jones of Notre Dame de France had been impressed by the way in which Major Richard Mingay of the Salvation Army had led prayer for support, healing, hope and forgiveness at the Prayer Vigil. Rev’d Richard Carter, Associate Vicar at St Martin’s, spoke about his admiration for the Jesuits when working in New Guinea and a new appreciation the importance of the Sacrament during a year spent at a Roman Catholic Seminary in Melbourne. These personal stories and appreciations of other denominations demonstrate the value of the links, understanding, friendships and fellowship built up through the work of CTiW, which is based on, but which transcends, the educative element of our work through events such as MTN and JTN. It is real experience and encounter of each other in our similarities and differences that can lead to real appreciation for and understanding of each other. This is why worshipping and praying together, whether in Advent or at Pentecost as well as in Vigils and at MTNS or JTNs is at the heart of all we do. Our work together – getting to know and understand one another better; sharing in prayer and worship and taking on challenging social issues still matters. The Kingdom has not yet come in its fullness; we are still called to seek it, and to explore it. Thank you for being here tonight to take part in this expression, and thank you, too, to all of those who do various things during the year to keep those glimpses of the Kingdom of God coming.

Document 2

*January 2019, Churches Together in Westminster*

*Treasurer: Andreea Gherman*

Finance report

Jan-Dec 2018

**Current balance: £ 1539.76**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Total Income (£)**  | **1965**  |
| *Base donation 2017*  | 750  |
| *Base donation 2018*  | 990  |
| *Extra donation 2018*  | *200*  |

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| --- | --- |
| **Total Expenditure (£)**  | **(1391.13)**  |
| *Admin*  | (1000)  |
| *Website + Domain*  | (391.13)  |

Notes:

1) Payments were made in 2018 for memberships in 2017 2) The website payment covers 2 years.

3) Membership donations received from 33 churches.

**At this rate, we should break even in 2019.**

Document 3

**REPORT OF THE PRISONS MISSION TO THE ANNUAL MEETING**

**OF CHURCHES TOGETHER IN WESTMINSTER ON 21st JANUARY 2019**

**CRISIS IN PRISONS**

It is, at last, officially acknowledged that the British prison system is in “crisis”.  HMP Birmingham has been re-nationalised after riots and the Prisons Minister has identified the “ten worst jails”, which include HMP Wormwood Scrubs, here in London.  Unfortunately, these are only the outward and visible signs of a very deep and widespread malaise.  Our prisons consistently fail offenders, victims of crime and tax-payers.  The high levels of re-offending are further evidence of failure.  Most prisons are grossly overcrowded, have too few adequately trained staff and are required to detain many vulnerable men, women and children with acute mental health and educational needs, for whom incarceration offers little prospect of recovery.

The increased media attention might have resulted in greater public awareness, not only to the chaos in particular prisons, but to the systemic defects of the entire system.  There is little evidence that either church-goers or the general public are any more concerned, or determined to influence change and reform.  If such apathy persists at a time of “crisis” and “riots” and nearly 100,000 men, women and children are held in British prisons, there is clearly an urgent need for our Prisons Mission, and many other initiatives in this field, to become very much more effective and vigorous.

**CHURCHES**

The three founding churches, St James’s Piccadilly, St Martin-in-the-Fields and St George’s Hanover Square, have been joined by All Saint’s Fulham and Notre Dame de France of Leicester Square.  They are committed to the purposes of the Prisons Mission.

* To provide support and assistance identified and needed by the multi-faith Prisons Chaplaincy Teams.
* For volunteers to practice their Christian ministry with a vulnerable and often neglected section of society.
* For congregations of the engaged churches to become better informed about prisoners, their families, prison staff, victims of crime and issues concerning the criminal justice system.

Several other churches actively support the Prisons Mission, receive advice and information and are presently considering engagement.

**VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers are recruited from these churches to undertake work inside prisons and related work in support of the purposes of the Prisons Mission.  They are supported by more experienced colleagues, attend regular meetings to review progress and problems and learn from each other.  They also make introductory visits to prisons to meet members of the multi-faith Chaplaincy Teams and discuss how best their individual skills, experience and available time can be matched with the needs of the chaplains and inmates.  The activities undertaken by the volunteers vary widely and usually expand and change as each volunteer becomes more familiar with the strange and often initially quite hostile environment.  Volunteers invariably find their regular visits and the time spent “behind prison walls” to be both challenging and rewarding.  More volunteers are needed and a Volunteer Recruitment leaflet can be found on the CTiW web-site.

**PRISONS**

Work continues at HMPs Wormwood Scrubs and Wandsworth and has developed at HMP & YOI Bronzefield.  The latter contains some 550 women and girls (aged 10-17) who are remanded while awaiting trial or sentence, as well as those serving either short or “life” prison sentences.  Work within the prison system is often intensely frustrating and requires endless patience and perseverance.  Many vulnerable people are further damaged by incarceration and thus less able to become independent, law abiding and useful; citizens on discharge.  Against this tragic and avoidable background, the efforts of our Prisons Mission can seem almost worthless.  Despite the difficulties, our experience convinces us that it is not only worthwhile, but essential.

**IMMIGRATION REMOVAL CENTRES**

The centre at Heathrow airport is used to detain some 600 men and 30 women.  Nearly 30,000 such people, who are subject to immigration controls are detained in such centres throughout Britain each year, while awaiting outstanding appeals and pending deportation or removal.  About 40% of these are eventually allowed to remain in this country, either temporarily or permanently.  Many such people are detained indefinitely, without charge, trial, conviction, or sentence.  They often suffer great fear and anxiety, especially those who have claimed asylum.

Our work in support of the multi-faith Chaplaincy Team at Heathrow IRC has been led by volunteers from Notre Dame de France, which church has a long record of work with generations of refugees and asylum seekers.  Additional volunteers are also needed for this important work.

**VOLUNTEERS OUTSIDE PRISONS**

Prisons Mission volunteers also undertake useful work without going inside prisons.  This includes working with a specialist, professional organisation to support recently discharged sex-offenders, and promoting Prisoners Penfriends to exchange regular letters with serving offenders.  Suitable training and security arrangements are provided. There is also a growing need for some volunteers to devote regular time to improving communications with churches.

**PRISONS WEEK**

Once again this year, considerable effort was invested in the production of our new booklet of resource material for Prisons Week.  This was circulated far beyond London and was widely described as the best yet.  It is intended to encourage and enable ordained and lay people of all denominations to devise interesting and effective services and other activities for Prisons Week.  The booklet contains much information about the prisons system and lists of relevant organisations, so that it can be useful for 52 weeks.

**SHOWS OF ART BY PRISONERS**

During the spring and summer the Prisons Mission arranged Shows of Art by Prisoners, curated by the Koestler Trust, at three central London churches - St James’s Piccadilly, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church and St Martin-in-the-Fields.  The impressive displays of visual arts attracted many visitors, but the art was deployed as the focus for a series of lectures, discussions and events, which brought the knowledge of experts to the attention of a wider audience.  A full report of these shows and the related events is set out in CTiW Newsletter Number 13, available on the website.

**CHAPLAINCY AWAY DAY**

Multi-faith Chaplaincy Teams work under often intense daily pressures in prisons.  Almost all their “congregations” are very anxious, angry, depressed, distressed, resentful, remorseful, and often also mentally ill and addicted.  The chaplains are often rather detached from their own churches, temples, or mosques and have little external support.  After consultation about this, the team at HMP Wormwood Scrubs accepted an invitation to hold an Away Day, jointly hosted by the Prisons Mission and St Martin-in-the-Fields.  Twenty one members, including part-timers and chaplaincy volunteers spent the entire day at the church, as our guests.  This was the first time they had ever attended an off-site conference and found it extremely productive.  This programme will be repeated and extended in the future.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

The crisis in the British prisons system is such that the Prisons Mission must improve its efforts to achieve its third purpose – for congregations to “become better informed about prisoners, their families, prison staff, victims of crime and issues concerning the criminal justice system”.  For this purpose the Prisons Mission aims to publish a regular Newsletter to aid churches to do this much better in the future.

If you have any questions about this report or require further information about the Prisons Mission, please contact the Coordinator, John Plummer (johnplummer.audax@gmail.com)  Tel. 0207 272 1639.