

An Occasional Newsletter

We are delighted to welcome you to the first issue of our occasional Newsletter. We hope to keep you in touch approximately four times a year with news of Churches Together in Westminster, and our recent and future activities.

For the latest news and information, please visit our website www.ctiw.london

Prisons Mission

The pilot project of the CTiW Prisons Mission was judged to be a success with modest but encouraging progress recorded by participants and churches. Due to this it has been decided to make small but significant extensions to the initiative.

At present three churches take part – Farm Street Jesuit Centre (RC), St James’s Piccadilly and St George’s Hanover Square (CoE) – and one prison, HMP Wandsworth. The plan is to include up to six more churches of different denominations and traditions and two more of the huge London prisons – HMPs Pentonville and Wormwood Scrubs.

The Prisons Mission has three equally important objectives.

- For prison chaplaincies to receive support in areas they themselves identify.
- For participants to practise their Christian Mission with a vulnerable and neglected section of our society.
- For the congregations of the churches to become better informed about prisons, prisoners, their families, prison staff, victims of crime and issues concerning the prison system.

Discussions are continuing with several churches. Each church interested in joining the Prisons Missions needs to identify two or three members who are willing to visit one of the prisons to explore the opportunities for service which best suit their time availability and skills. The options vary considerably and these participants will be supported in their learning by others who have progressed and become more comfortable in the initially very unfamiliar and foreign environment. Members of the Chaplaincy Team will also show them what needs to be done and how to do it. There is also specific training for those participants who wish to play a part through such activities as mentoring prisoners soon to be discharged.

Secondly the church should agree to “engage” with the initiative. This requires the agreement of its management committee or other body and establishes a procedure for the participants to report back on their learning experiences, problems and activities to the church, its management and congregation. It is important to understand that the Prisons Mission is not just a voluntary visitors scheme like hospital visiting, but endeavors to build a sustainable and reciprocal relationship between each church and a prison Chaplaincy Team. The aim is that, in a few years’ time, when the church has become better informed and interested in prisons and the people detained there “in our name”, it will be decided to publicly state that “X Church is twinned with Y Prison”.

Contents

Welcome	1
Prisons Mission	1
Prisons Week 11-22 November 2015	2
“Meet the Neighbours” at St. Mary le Strand 13 th April 2015	2
Good Friday 2015 Walk of Witness	3
CTiW Pentecost Service	3
Dates for your diary	3
“Meet the Neighbours” at Deutsche Evangelische Christuskirche (German Lutheran Church) Montpelier Place June 17th 2015	4

Contact us

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Prisons Week 15-22 November 2015

For Prisons Week in 2014 we produced a new leaflet containing model prayers, intercessions and sermons intended for use by churches of different denominations and traditions.

Prisons Week has been marked by many RC churches and a few churches of other denominations since 1975.

Reports indicate that our leaflet was of value to CTiW members and more of them used some of the material to devise special services to suit their own distinctive style of worship. The leaflet included references not only to the 85,000 men, women and children detained in British prisons today but their families, prison officers and the victims of crime.

We aim to produce an improved Prisons Week leaflet for this year which will have sections written by prisoners as well as chaplains and we welcome ideas and suggestions from member churches. When you are planning your special services for November, please send your thoughts to us for inclusion and circulation to others.

John Plummer

“Meet the Neighbours” at St. Mary le Strand 13th April 2015

Over sixty people gathered from places of worship across Westminster to hear the timeless and wonderful language of Evensong from The Book of Common Prayer. It was a joy to immerse oneself in this language and imagery in the jewel box setting of this Queen Anne Church.

Following this age-old liturgy, we were introduced to the main features of this building’s history and architecture. Simon Jenkins in *“England’s Thousand Best Churches”* describes St Mary’s as “the finest 18th Century church in London, a match for the best of Rome”. This is an apt observation since the Scottish architect of this church, James Gibbs, studied in Rome and was much influenced by what he saw there by way of the Baroque. Many of us felt uplifted by the architecture, particularly by the ornate ceilings. Being there reminded me of comments by The Ship of Fools’ Mystery Worshipper, who, when answering the question, “Which part of the service was like being in Heaven?” answered “All of it! St Mary le Strand is a real gem of a church, both aesthetically and liturgically”.

The position of the church, marooned as it is on what seems to be a traffic island in the middle of The Strand, is worthy of note. Again, Simon Jenkins describes it beautifully: “With Wren’s St Clement Danes, the two churches have been likened to two stately barques, gliding west out of the City, down The Strand, buffeted by swirling traffic”. Buffeted indeed! We heard how the church has survived several attempts by “Progress” to demolish it, as the perceived needs of a developing important thoroughfare were stridently expressed. However, survived it has. It is now regarded as an important and treasured part of that area.



The Churchwardens have valiantly kept the place going over the past few years in the absence of a permanent incumbent. Happier and more secure days lie ahead as St Mary’s is teamed with St Matthew’s, Westminster with the shared incumbent, Fr Philip Chester. The two parishes are working together and are pleased to announce their mounting of an arts festival entitled “Just Festival Westminster June 10th-23rd”.

St Mary’s has forged and continues to develop close links with its neighbours on The Strand. They are currently embarking on a programme of renewal, not just of the building, but also of its life and mission. In common with many Central London churches, it is reaching out to those in need in the area, with various projects being developed.

The evening continued with refreshments and a chance to talk with Christians of other denominations. We were also able to explore the less obvious parts of the building and many of us were captivated by what must be the smallest vestries in London, tucked each side of the Chancel. We were equally impressed by the most elegant wood panelled Rest Room, complete with antique fittings and tasteful lighting!

Ray Crocker

Good Friday 2015 Walk of Witness

On Friday 3 April, Good Friday, Churches Together in Westminster joined in the popular annual Walk of Witness in Westminster. Organised jointly by Methodist Central Hall, Westminster Abbey and Westminster Cathedral, the Good Friday Procession gathers several hundred Christians of all denominations in a Walk of Witness along Victoria Street.



The procession is led by a man carrying a Cross, symbolising Christ's journey to His death. Starting with readings, hymns and prayers led by representatives of the Christian congregations of central London, the procession made its way to Westminster Cathedral where Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, preached to the assembled crowd who had gathered, speaking about how Jesus' passion and death can inspire Christian lives that shape our society to strive for the common good. The Procession then moved on back down Victoria Street to Westminster

Abbey for a short service of scripture, prayers and praise, led by the Abbey Clergy, with an address by the Revd Martin Turner, Superintendent Minister at Methodist Central Hall, who invited the now sizeable congregation gathered to reflect on our experience of what the Cross means for us in our lives.

Rev'd Dominic Robinson SJ

Dates for your diary

2015

6 October—"Meet the Neighbours" at Hinde Street Methodist Church 7-9pm

16 October—All Night Prayer Vigil for Syria & Iraq at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church (details to be confirmed)

15-22 November—Prisons Week

29 November— CTiW Advent Service at St James's Piccadilly (details to be confirmed)

2016

18 January—CTiW AGM and Panel discussion (details and venue to be confirmed)

Note: Venues and dates may be subject to change

If your church would like to host a future "Meet the Neighbours" or other CTiW event, or you have an event of your own to which you would like to invite members of other churches, please do contact us on ctiw.net@gmail.com

CTiW 2015 Pentecost Service

It was a delight for Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church to host this year's united Pentecost service. And we were grateful for all those who came and joined in a slightly modified version of Informal Church, and were willing to eat, talk, join in and offer different views.

"Receptive Ecumenism" - meeting each other in our normality is a wonderful way to be real together, and we believe we went some way towards it in that service. For those of us who regularly attend Informal Church, it felt different because the numbers changed the sense of "informality" - but also brought new insights and interesting questions, which greatly enriched our evening's worship and reflection. For those who attended as part of the ecumenical venture - well, you'll need to ask them what they thought. But some of them didn't want to go home, but instead to carry on the conversation, so we take that as a good sign!

Opportunities to discuss our understanding of church, our experience of church, and in particular, our sense of what it means to be church in the contemporary context is something clergy get to do in all sorts of contexts - but sometimes get limited to a clergy discussion. It was enlightening and interesting to have the conversation across such a broad range of church identities, and life experiences.

Thank you to all who came and took part.

And the next united service will be at the beginning of Advent; see you all there.

Rev'd Ruth Goldbourne

“Meet the Neighbours” at Deutsche Evangelische Christuskirche (German Lutheran Church) Montpelier Place June 17th 2015

We were mesmerised by Jane Parker-Smith’s playing of Bach on the Bruhn Baroque-style organ in Christuskirche when a crowd of us almost filled this Edwardian building at a Meet the Neighbours event. This provided an excellent introduction to an evening in which we learnt much about the congregation which meets in this beautiful church tucked amongst the elegant streets near Harrods.

We participated in a short act of worship, hearing a homily from Pastorin Laura, which reminded us so clearly of major principles within ecumenism: to “develop the listening heart” and “delight in one another, showing the wisdom to learn from each other”. It was also a great pleasure to sing together in German and English:

“Der Tag, mein Gott, ist nun vergangen”
 (“The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended”)



The history of this congregation is fascinating, revealing the pleasures and joys, the tensions and difficulties, for foreign nationals settling or temporarily staying in another country. This congregation dates back to the beginning of the 18th Century when Queen Anne’s consort, Prince George of Denmark brought a German Lutheran Chaplain with him to the English Court. A German chapel was instituted, meeting in what is now called the Queen’s Chapel, St James’s Palace. This continued for two hundred years, with members of the Royal Family, many of whom had a background of German language and culture, worshipping alongside Germans who might be living or working in London.

As Georg Amann, the Pastor, expressed it, “In 1901 the German Congregation at Queen’s Chapel had to leave at rather short notice” (For those of a curious disposition, the Internet offers various explanations for this move!) and they were offered temporary accommodation by Lord Radstock at Eccleston Hall.

Baron Schroder stepped in and financed a permanent church in Montpelier Place. It was erected in the phenomenally short period of June- November 1904. It is a splendidly elegant and dignified building with many fittings and artefacts originating from Germany. Worthy of note is the altar silver, designed and given by no less a personage than Kaiser Wilhelm II. We were rather intrigued by the Kaiser Box, a kind of royal box fitted out with two thrones, maintained in case The Kaiser came!

The present day congregation has many links with other churches, including being long-time and loyal supporters of CTIW. The pastors also serve other German communities in the south-east, such as those in Sydenham, Farnborough, Reading and Oxford. Polish Lutherans worship there twice a month.

There was a lively question time, focusing strongly on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who attended the 1934 Conference in the hall there. His opposition to Nazism, his founding of The Confessing Church, his commitment to ecumenism and forward-looking theological thinking are well known. Attendees were also interested in funding, the nature of the CDU in Germany and in the use of language in services.

The evening ended with what turned into being a party in the Bonhoeffer Hall with plentiful refreshments, including delicious German delicacies!

Ray Crocker