

An Occasional Newsletter

Welcome to Issue 10 (Autumn 2017) of our Occasional Newsletter. Please feel free to photocopy this for distribution amongst your congregation.

CTIW AGM, TALKS & EXHIBITION

CTiW is supporting borough-wide eco-awareness by choosing Creation Care as the theme for its AGM in January. There will be a range of inspiring speakers and stalls with information and opportunity for conversation.

To date we have confirmation of attendance from A Rocha UK, Shrinking the Footprint, the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals, and The Big Church Switch with several more leading conservation and environmental organisations in the pipeline. So whether your church community has yet to launch its eco-journey, or is aware and willing but in need of a bit of extra support, or is already eco-active and carbon-reducing, there will be something for you at this event. **All are welcome.**

Details are:

6.30 – 9.00pm Monday 22 January 2018
Salvation Army Regent Hall
275 Oxford Street, W1C 2DJ

CTIW EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

We sadly say “goodbye” to **Ray Crocker** who has been CTiW Secretary for a number of years, but will now be standing down. We thank him for all his invaluable support, and send Ray and his wife, Diane, all good wishes for the future. Our thanks also go to **Deborah Colvin**, who, in Ray’s absence, has represented St James’s, Piccadilly for the past year, but who will also be standing down after the AGM.

David Mannarino, who has acted as CTiW Treasurer for the past couple of years, has now returned to America, and we would like to express our appreciation and thanks for all his assistance. We are pleased to welcome **Andreea Gherman** who has kindly agreed to take on the role of Treasurer. Andrea is from Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, so will continue to maintain our connection there.

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Dates for your diary

Sun 3 Dec—CTiW Advent Service
6pm hosted by St James’s Church,
Piccadilly. Title will be CHOOSE LIFE.
All welcome. Refreshments after
service.

18-25 Jan 2018—Week of Prayer for
Christian Unity

Mon 22 Jan— CTiW AGM, Talk &
Exhibition 7-9pm (open 6.30pm to
visit exhibits

- **“Meet the Neighbours”** - If your church is interested in hosting a future event, we should be very pleased to hear from you.
- **“Join the Neighbours”** - If you are holding a special event, festival etc to which you would care to invite people from other churches, please do let us know and we will pass on the invitation.

Contact us

Website: www.ctiw.london
Email: ctiw.net@gmail.com

Last time.... we drew attention to Pope Francis' encyclical '*Laudato si'*' with its insistent call to 'the whole of humanity to understand and respond to the destruction that we are causing to the environment and to other people'. Climate change is the defining issue of our time and the UK has set statutory national obligations, to cut carbon emissions by 42% by 2020, and 80% by 2050. For churches to lead by example and still keep warm, open and welcoming is a huge challenge.

In response to this challenge...In October, the first national Eco Church conference took place in London at St James's Piccadilly. The Anglican Bishop of Kingston, Richard Cheetam, set the scene by reminding us of why the environment is a gospel issue, and critiqued much Christian theology as being too narrowly focussed on our individual souls, rather than the truth of the redemption of all things in Christ. Jointly organised by Arocha UK and Shrinking the Footprint, the conference was a shining example of ecumenical action. The message that we are all working towards a common end – care for God's earth and responding to climate change – came through loud and clear. Over 80 people gathered to hear from eco-active congregations, and take part in workshops organised around the five Eco Church themes. The day ended with people exchanging contact details and action pledges to be followed up with each other.

If your church would like to know more about Eco Church and how to sign up, please visit

<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>

For Church of England congregations also see <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/shrinking-the-footprint>

Deborah Colvin

“MEET THE NEIGHBOURS” hosted by St. Saviour’s Anglo Catholic Church, Pimlico on Thursday, 28 September 2017

For our first MTN after the summer break, we visited St George’s Square, Pimlico in the southern part of Westminster, where Fr Matthew Catterick and members of the congregation warmly welcomed us to St Saviour’s Church.

During his talk on the history of the church, Fr Matthew explained how for the past 153 years St Saviour’s has continually served the people of Pimlico, its 170ft spire (the tallest in London in the 1860’s) remaining a constant landmark amongst the ever-changing street scene. The original English Gothic style church designed by Thomas Cundy was considered too plain internally, and it was subsequently “beautified”, with further features including stained glass, rood screen, oak pulpit, brass eagle lectern, choir stalls and reredos being added over the years. It is now listed Grade II.



After we had looked round the church, members of the congregation then shared more details about the present day life at St Saviour’s including music, social events, altar serving, finance and bell ringing (St Saviour’s are very proud of their peal of bells). The group, which numbered some 26 people from nine different churches, then enjoyed welcome refreshments and the opportunity to meet each other. Our visit concluded with the Office of Compline, the ancient Night Prayer of the Church, led by Fr Matthew.

Our grateful thanks go to Fr Matthew and everyone at St. Saviour’s for their hospitality.

A guide to St Saviour’s can be found at <http://www.stsp.org.uk/our-history.html>

Rosa Postance

NEW CHURCH

Notre Dame de France, the Roman Catholic church off Leicester Square is expected to formally “engage” with the CTIW Prisons Mission. They will thus join the small group of central London churches which have made a formal commitment to this initiative. The lack of an active Roman Catholic church has been a weakness of our Prisons Mission in the past. After reaching the decision to engage, a group of volunteers from each church then undertake the outreach work in support of the multi-faith Chaplaincy Team in one of the London prisons and report back on issues and activities to the management and congregations. The Coordinator is presently in negotiation with several churches which are also considering engagement and expected to join soon.

SERVICE EXTENSION

After careful consideration, we have decided to extend the reach of our Prisons Mission, but our objectives remain unchanged:

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

SEX OFFENDERS

Our volunteers have been concerned about the plight of men, convicted of sex offences, who are serving custodial sentences for sex offences. They are often particularly isolated, vulnerable and at risk of violence while in prisons. Such inmates are inclined to be excluded from befriending programmes which mentor men before and after discharge, to facilitate rehabilitation and resettlement. They are seldom able to return to families and homes on discharge and are prohibited from many types of employment.

We now have Prisons Mission volunteers working with Circles UK, a specialist, national, not for profit organisation, which provides a programme of training, support and counselling for recently discharged sex offenders to reduce the risks of reoffending. We seek a few additional volunteers to undertake training for this very sensitive, but valuable work.

IMMIGRATION REMOVAL CENTRES

Many readers will have seen the recent, deeply shocking, BBC Panorama programme which showed staff at an Immigration Removal Centre, violently abusing detainees. Well before this broadcast, our Prisons Mission volunteers had decided to offer support to the Managing Chaplain to the centre near Heathrow airport. This is

not a departure from the primary purpose of the mission, but an extension of its reach.

About 500 men and 20 women are detained, indefinitely at this centre, without judicial process, while appeals are heard, cases reviewed, asylum applications considered and decisions made as to whether they should be allowed to remain in the UK, temporarily or permanently, or be deported. On average, just over half of those detained are allowed to remain, often after months of custody. Apart from the question of legitimacy, these people suffer very severe anxiety, fear, distress and uncertainty. The Salvation Army recently identified one such detainee, at a different IRC, who had been illegally trafficked into this country and then kept in captivity on a cannabis farm, until this was raided by the police. Some would say that he could have been an invaluable prosecution witness in a case against the traffickers, but he was just sent for removal. The fear of this detainee, to find himself in custody again, can be imagined.

The chaplain wants our help and we seek additional volunteers. We will assist the multi-faith Chaplaincy Team, as they require and not be advocates, but befrienders of the detainees. The volunteers will not be pushed into the deep end, but be supported and learn with their peers through regular Review Meetings. For further information or for a preliminary discussion, contact

John Plummer,
Coordinator. Prisons Mission
Churches Together in Westminster
62 Perth Road, London N4 3HB
☎ 020 7272 1639

PRISONS WEEK 2017

Prisons Week this year was marked from 8th to 15th October. For the first time for many years all Christian denominations shared the same dates.

CTIW published our third Prisons Week booklet. This contains both old and new prayers, intercessions and reflections from a diverse selection of sources. There is a quiz about prison facts and figures and a list of not for profit organisations, which provide services and information on penal issues, relevant to churches. The striking artwork in the booklet is provided by the Koestler Trust, the UK's leading prisons art charity, which plays a valued part in the rehabilitation journey offered to prisoners and ex-prisoners. The foreword to the booklet was written by Bishop Richard Moth, the Roman Catholic Bishop for Prisons and author of “Faith Inside; A Guide for Catholics in Prison”. In this, Bishop Moth said.. “All that can be done in church communities to inform and educate people about the life and work of prisons and the wider justice system will facilitate a place of welcome for those who leave prison”.

Cont'd...

The purpose of the booklet is to provide resource material and ideas which are attractive to either lay or ordained people of different denominations, to share this with colleagues and begin to plan special Prisons Week services and other activities, relevant to their own styles and congregations.

The booklet was posted on the CTiW website, circulated to all members and printed copies made available to several congregations. In addition, the leaders of some denominations circulated it via their own networks, far beyond London and even overseas. Others, like St Pauls Institute and Westminster Abbey Institute sent copies to members.

We know that many more churches than ever before, in London and elsewhere made effective use of the booklet and called upon Prisons Mission volunteers for advice and assistance. They have told us about special Prisons Week services, post worship discussions, lectures and other activities which have brought this sensitive and controversial subject to the attention of congregations. Artwork from the booklet, including the sketch of HMP Wandsworth, by Prisons Mission volunteer, Finna Ayres of St James Piccadilly, were used for distinctive Orders of Service (properly accredited). Several also printed copies of the quiz and used this to facilitate discussions. Many appreciated and made use of the prayers about victims of crime, Prison Officers and the families of prisoners, as well as the inmates of prisons.

The following are brief extracts from reports we have received of Prisons Week activities at a few of the London churches:

St Martin in the Fields

Out of sight and out of mind would certainly describe my own previous lack of perception towards prisons and those in prisons. Over the past few weeks John Plummer, has come to speak to us at St Martin in the Fields to share with us his experience of working closely with prisoners. Through our Bread for the World service, we were able to engage with artwork from inside prisons and to discuss our own apathy and in some cases fear. John also spoke to our Club Wednesday group, where lively discussion showed that for us prisoners are no longer out of sight and out of mind.

St George's Hanover Square

Five Prisons Mission volunteers, who are members of the congregation took leading roles in the Prisons Week service. Alistair Milward gave "heart breaking" statistics, including that 65% of boys who have fathers in prison, go on to offend and 80% of boys who have been in care offend, as well as 76% of young offenders grew up in fatherless homes. He described some of the frustrations of trying to do worthwhile work within an often bureaucratic system. John Plummer outlined plans for the future development of the Prisons Mission and other volunteers read the Epistle and Intercessions.

PRISONS WEEK 2017 Cont'd

St Columba's Church of Scotland

The congregational prayer group who meet before Morning Worship held Prisons Week in their prayers and Rev'd Andrea Price borrowed from the CTiW booklet for the main service Intercessions. In the afternoon, the congregational talk was given by Jonathan Aitken and he was supported in part by Kenneth Mackenzie, representing the Prison Fellowship in Scotland. Jonathan spoke very well - with his customary blend of personal experience and humour - and there was an intent listening from a crowd of about fifty, which for a Sunday afternoon congregational talk is very good. Perhaps most heartening was the take up of the Prisons Week booklet after the talk. So I felt that it was, in a small way, a good honouring of Prisons Week. This is the third year we have engaged with it. I am not sure where the path is leading us as individuals or as a congregation, but I do believe that we are at least raising some degree of awareness about the world of prisons. And I acknowledge that Prisons Mission people have been instrumental in achieving this.

Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

The Prisons Week prayers formed the centre of our weekly prayer bulletin, through which we pray together, although a scattered community. We take different themes through the year, and being able to pray with a wider community for our week of prayer for prisons makes this an even deeper engagement.

Farm Street. London Jesuit Centre

Prisons Week was marked by special prayers for prisoners and prison ministry at all Masses and by an appeal for The Prison Advisory Care Trust. Also the CTiW Prisons Week booklet was made available to the London Jesuit Volunteers team for use in volunteers' work in prisons and detention centres for asylum seekers and refugees.

Grosvenor Chapel

The Prisons Week service was combined with the 40th anniversary of the formation of the Mayfair branch of Amnesty International. John Plummer explained the work of the CTiW Prisons Mission in several of London's huge prisons. The scale of the crisis, with overcrowding and lack of adequate mental health care, education and rehabilitation is so severe that the work of volunteers may seem puny, but is certainly worthwhile.

Prisons Week 2018

Next year Prisons Week will be marked from 14th to 21st October. Because the CTiW booklet has been used so widely and many people have commented very favourably on its value, we will endeavour to publish a "new and improved" version for 2018. For this purpose and to ensure that it appeals to churches of all traditions, we need your help, advice and suggestions. Please tell us how you think the resource can be made more useful and send us your suggestions of new or old material. We must aim to ensure that every church in London marks Prisons Week effectively next year. Please help.