



Churches
Together in
Westminster

An Occasional Newsletter

Welcome to Issue 14 (Autumn 2018) of our Occasional Newsletter. Please feel free to photocopy this for distribution amongst your congregation.

“MEET THE NEIGHBOURS” hosted by Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Holy Family, 22 Binney Street/Duke Street, Mayfair, W1K 5BQ on Wednesday, 19 Sept 2018



Our visit began at 6.15pm with Divine Liturgy, which gave us a taste of Ukrainian Eastern Rite Catholic worship and singing. Everyone was invited to come up for a blessing, and Catholics (Eastern and Western Rite) to receive Holy Communion.

This was followed by a brief explanation of the iconostasis. As we sat and admired the beautiful work of Ukrainian monk, Juvenalij Mokrytsky, many were surprised to learn that the building, designed by Alfred Waterhouse, was originally built in 1891 for occupation by members of the Congregational church, and was known as The King’s Weigh House Chapel. Hit by a bomb in 1940, derelict, then restored and used by an American Protestant church, it was subsequently sold to the Ukraine Catholics in 1967. To quote the Diocese of Westminster website “Although independent from the authority of the Latin Rite hierarchy in England and Wales, and instead under the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchial bishop, territorially, the cathedral is considered to be part of the Marylebone deanery of the Latin Rite Catholic Archdiocese of Westminster”.

<https://parish.rcdow.org.uk>

All were then invited into the hall for refreshments, during which Myrosia Matwijiwskyj (Head of Political Affairs and External Relations, Ukrainian Information Service) gave an illustrated presentation on the History of the Ukrainian Church, and Diaspora Life in the UK.

The year 2017 marked the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Apostolic Exarchate on 10 June 1957. More information can be found in their book *“Ukrainian Catholic Church in Great Britain”*. The story of their struggle can also be read in *“To the Light of Resurrection through the Thorns of Catacombs – The Underground Activity and Re-emergence of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church”*. Our grateful thanks to Rt Rev’d Bishop Hlib Lonchyna, to Fr Mykola Matwijiwskyj, and to everyone at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral for the very warm welcome which we received, and for a most interesting and enlightening evening.

Further details about this cathedral can be found at <https://www.ucc-gb.com/>

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Contact us

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



Crisis in Prisons

The government has, at long last, acknowledged that our prisons system is in crisis. Most of them are grossly overcrowded, often decayed and unsuitable Victorian buildings, with insufficient properly trained and paid staff. There are now nearly 100,000 men, women, and children in British prisons, more than any other European country. The Prisons Minister has identified “the ten worst jails”, one of which is HMP Wormwood Scrubs, here in London. Imprisonment in these circumstances is very unlikely to enable many inmates, even when they receive good training and encouragement, to begin the journey towards recovery and safe independent, crime-free lives after serving custodial sentences.

Volunteers Needed

Against this background, the efforts of our Prisons Mission and all the other faith based and secular work in this field seems very puny. Despite this, the work of volunteers, in support of the multi-faith Prison Chaplaincy Teams is definitely worthwhile. They are busy in three huge London prisons, as well as the detention centre at Heathrow. Volunteers are given training and support before working inside the establishments, where there are a variety of challenging and rewarding functions needing attention. Others can provide helpful support services outside the prisons. Anyone interested in considering volunteering from your church should contact the Coordinator for a discussion about the options and to arrange an exploratory visit. It may be that your church can “engage” with the Prisons Mission.

Prisons Week

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. The purpose is to provide a wide range of material to encourage and enable both lay and ordained people to devise interesting services and other activities to bring the real crisis in British prisons to the attention of all congregations. One of the primary purposes of the Prisons Mission is to bring information about this fundamentally flawed system to the surface. We consider that the ignorance about the system, within our churches, is an important part of the problem, which must be addressed. The 2018 Prisons Week booklet, available on our web-site, contains information of use for all fifty two weeks of the year. See <http://ctiw.london/wp-content/uploads/CTiW-Prison-week-booklet-2018.pdf>

Prisoners Art Shows

The Shows of Art by Prisoners which were mounted in three central London churches for several weeks during the summer attracted many hundreds of visitors. People came to see the very impressive visual art work, but also to attend a series of lectures, discussions, debates and informal gatherings. We believe that the interest generated by these shows justified the hard work involved. We are now considering how to take the idea forward to 2019, perhaps with different art forms and locations, but with the same objectives.

John Plummer

Co-ordinator, CTiW Prisons Mission

VOICES OF IRAQ: STORIES OF TRAUMA, SURVIVAL AND HOPE at All Saints Church, Margaret Street, Tuesday 11 September, at 7.30pm

Continuing All Saints leading role in the Deanery of St Marylebone and the Diocese of London, in promoting the cause of persecuted Christians in the Middle East, a joint CTiW and Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East* presentation was held at All Saints Church on the plight of Christians in Iraq, and those who fled to Jordan, and the challenges facing those returning to their ancestral homes in the Nineveh Plains and Mosul. The evening began with a showing of the short 10 minute film specially commissioned by FRRME “Voices of Iraq” which enabled Christians from Northern Iraq to talk about what happened to them when ISIL came to the area, and also their hopes for the future. The film is a moving tribute to a brave and resilient people.

It had been hoped that Fr Faiz, Anglican Vicar of St George’s, Bagdad, would be present to talk about the situation for Christians in a post ISIL Iraq and the pastoral, educational and medical work St George’s is undertaking.

Both Fr Faiz and the St George’s clinic (the only free medical centre in Baghdad), are supported by FRRME. Unfortunately he was unable to obtain a visa. However, following a recent visit to northern Iraq, Mike Simpson of FRRME was able to give an account of the initiatives being undertaken by the Christians returning to Nineveh to rebuild their lives and communities, and the extensive humanitarian work still needed. Christopher Segar also from FRRME spoke of the strength of faith and attachment to the soil of the people of Iraq, and the importance of churches in helping people back.

Our Christian brothers and sisters in Iraq urgently need the prayers and support of Christians and churches in the United Kingdom. They receive no international or government support and are dependent on the generosity of Christians around the world.

If you would like to show the film in your church, please get in touch - admin@frrme.org / 01730 267 673

* FRRME is a small inter-denominational Christian charity funded by churches and individual Christians throughout the UK dedicated to supporting Christians in the region and to building reconciliation.

Gillian Dare

CTIW's Prisons Mission Prayer Vigil took place at Notre Dame de France on Friday evening 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.

Fr Pascal Boldin welcomed us to Notre Dame de France. John Plummer introduced speakers who described experiences and observations of prisons and the prison system from several very different perspectives:

- Paula Harriott. Lead Prisoner Involvement. Prison Reform Trust
- Erica. Ex-offender and Award winning artist
- Ruth Fogg. Specialist in youth crime and related matters.
- Marcel McCarron. Managing Chaplain HMP & YOI Bronzefield.
- Joanna Ex-Offender. St Giles Trust
- Josie Bevan. Wife of a serving prisoner.
- Gethin Jones. Care system to youth crime, custody and reformer.

Shirley Vaughan sang pieces by Handel and Fauré, both of whom wrote on themes of imprisonment. This performance was followed by 'Voices from Prison', a drama for three voices written and compiled by Richard Carter, Associate Vicar at St Martin-in-the-Fields, based on: 'Koestler Voices: New Poetry from Prisons Volume One'. This book presents some of the best poetry from the 2016 and 2017 Koestler Awards. Poetry and prose has a long tradition in secure establishments and the criminal justice system. With the only materials needed being a pen and paper, poetry is the most popular type of Awards submission to Koestler Awards – with around 3,000 poems each submitted annually across Poem, Anthology, Poetry Collection and our Themed Category. One prisoner who writes explains the impulse like this: 'Jail is like purgatory. You are still around, but you have no impact. No effect. The point of your existence is void. You slowly begin to die ... In his introduction to 'The Illustrated Man', Ray Bradbury says that he writes "so as not to be dead." And that is it.'

The Prison's Mission Team at Notre Dame de France led by Sister Catherine Jones guided us in our first prayer session based on Desmond Tutu's prayer:

*Goodness is stronger than evil;
Love is stronger than hate;
Light is stronger than darkness;
Life is stronger than death;
Victory is ours through Him who loves us.*

I led the next prayer session based on prisoners & homelessness. Between April 2017 and March 2018, 38% of people (approx 491) seen rough sleeping in Westminster are known to have had experience of prison. 3% (14 people) of those new rough sleepers seen by outreach teams in Westminster were people who had been in prison prior to their rough sleeping. The majority (approx 79%) of these would have had alcohol, drugs or mental health support needs or a combination of these.



We prayed about the issues depicted in 'Coming out after Fourteen Years' by P and E (Manager): 'E and I created this piece by using cuttings from today's

newspapers about the complexities of society, which you are shielded from in prison. After 14 years I was that figure walking out into an overwhelming society, full of problems.'

P and E are both at KPH House, a hostel for 20 men convicted of criminal offences who have recently left prison. Their residents come to them from prison under license to continue their sentence within the community. It is one of 12 Independent Approved Premises in the country and is funded by the Ministry of Justice. We prayed for the ministry of KPH House and West London Mission.



The next time of Prayer was led by Major Richard Mingay, Corps Officer Regent Hall Corps. This session focused on Supporting Victims and was divided into four parts-

- 'The God of our Support'
- 'The God of Healing'
- 'The God of Forgiveness'
- 'The God of Hope'

Each section included a Scripture verse; a thought; prayer time and the song verse 'O Lord Hear my Prayer'.

Finally Prisons Mission volunteers presented their personal stories from prison visits and read contributions from other volunteers. Suggested areas for prayer included: those wrongly imprisoned; those who are depressed or lonely; those held beyond the end of their sentence; those experiencing ill health; and those fearing deportation.

Rev'd Jonathan Evens

“THE BEGINNING IS NIGH” ADVENT EVENING LITURGY at St James's Church, Piccadilly, Sunday 2nd December at 6.00pm

A handful of friends and neighbours representing Churches Together in Westminster were welcomed to an imaginative and creative celebration to mark the beginning of Advent in a service that culminated in the lighting of the Advent Fire in the church courtyard. The Revd Lindsay Meader led the worship and gave three reflections. There was a wide range of music chosen, from traditional Advent carols to more contemporary compositions in which it was easy for the congregation to participate. A highlight was the Air and Chorus 'O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion' from Handel's Messiah with a fine soloist and instrumentalists and the St James's Lay Singers. The service itself was structured in three sections - each comprising a Biblical reading - followed by either a reading or poem and then a reflection. 'Seeking to slow-down' (from excessive commercialism, opting out of the festive frenzy in order to connect deeply with God and with ourselves) followed a reading by Annie Dillard. After Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem 'God's Grandeur' Lindsay's middle section was entitled 'Apocalypse now' and spoke of how change is afoot in uncertain times. And then finally (before the prayers and the lighting of the Advent Fire) after a reading from Julian of Norwich the theme was 'O Come Emmanuel' and the message of God coming to us in all the mess and uncertainty of the world and of our own lives. Prayers included the work of local churches in the area of homelessness, refugees and prisoners.

Rev'd Roddy Lece

“MEET THE NEIGHBOURS” hosted by St. Martin-in-the-Fields (Anglican) Church, Trafalgar Square, WC2N 4JH on Wednesday, 24 October 2018

Our visit began with Rev'd Richard Carter warmly welcoming both regular worshippers and visitors to their popular informal Eucharist “Bread for the World”, which that evening had a particularly Ecumenical theme. The service included three brief reflections by people from one denomination about an occasion when their involvement with people from another denomination had particularly impressed them.

Rev'd Jonathan Evens, Associate Vicar for Partnerships at St Martin-in-the-Fields, said his faith had first developed in the Baptist Church before he became an Anglican priest. At SMiF Baptist ministers had again been an inspiration to him through their involvement with HeartEdge.

Sr Catherine Jones, a Marist from New Zealand now working at Notre Dame de France RC Church at Leicester Square, was most impressed on hearing a Salvation Army Major leading worship at a Prayer Vigil. He spoke of a God of support, healing, hope and forgiveness, and she said it was the first time she had heard someone from the Salvation Army praying in that way.

Rev'd Richard Carter, Associate Vicar for Mission at SMiF said he grew up in a vicarage, but he had greatly admired the Jesuits when working in New Guinea where there was no Anglican Church, and during a year at RC Seminary in Melbourne, when he came to appreciate the importance of the Sacrament and the pain of division.

Everyone was then invited for soup and sandwiches, following which Jonathan took us into the Dick Shepherd Chapel in the crypt, where he described the wide history of SMiF, especially its model of mission today and the importance of the four C's – Culture, Commerce, Charity and Congregational life. More info see <https://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org/life-st-martins/>

Our grateful thanks to everyone at SMiF for their kind invitation, and for making us all feel so very welcome.



The striking East Window at St-Martin-in-the-Fields - designed by Shirazeh Houshiary