

An Occasional Newsletter

Welcome to Issue 17 (Autumn 2019) of our Occasional Newsletter. Please feel free to photocopy this for distribution amongst your congregation.

“MEET THE NEIGHBOURS” hosted by Crown Court Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) Russell Street, Covent Garden, WC2B 5EZ on Monday, 14 October 2019 at 6.30pm

The weather may have been wet and miserable outside, but the warm welcome members of CTiW received at Crown Court certainly made up for it.



Photo Jonathan Evens

The church was looking splendid with Harvest Festival decorations, and our evening began with a welcome from the Minister, Rev'd Philip Majcher, who then went on to tell us about the history of Crown Court and how the Church of Scotland has been active in England since the time of King James VI of Scotland who was also James I of England. However, as the congregation grew, it moved to Covent Garden in 1719, and the current building dates from 1909.

Apparently the title “Crown Court Church” is drawn from the name of this site, although it also looks back to the Union of the Crowns of 1603.

A question time followed, during which Philip spoke further about the organisation of the church, its services, and changes which had been made to the building over the years. He also told us of the work of ScotsCare and Borderline who help Scots living in London, especially the vulnerable and homeless.

We then had the opportunity to admire the features of the building, including the wonderful Iona marble font which was carved from a single block and required the floor to be strengthened! Unfortunately as it was dark outside we were unable to see the stained glass windows, but were told they are well worth a visit in daylight.

Finally, we were treated to refreshments including home made cakes and Scotch pancakes, during which we were able to chat further with members of the congregation.

Our thanks to Philip and everyone at Crown Court for a most interesting and informative evening, and for making us so welcome.

**Issue 17
Autumn 2019**

Contents

“Meet the Neighbours” at Crown Court Church of Scotland	1
Dates for your Diary & News from the Executive	2
The Prisons Mission Grows Up	3
Art in Prisons Week	4
Prisons Week 2019	5
CTiW Executive Members	6

Contact us

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



Photo Jonathan Evens

“JOIN THE NEIGHBOURS”

- A Memorial Service for those who have died Homeless in London in the past year organised by The Connection at St Martin’s, St Martin-in-the-Fields and Housing Justice 11am **Thursday, 14 November**.
- “World Day of the Poor: Homeless in London” an Ecumenical Service at The Church of the Immaculate Conception, Farm Street, W1K 3AH 3pm **Sunday, 17 November**.

CTiW BREXIT PRAYER VIGIL

CTiW Brexit Prayer Vigil is to be held in the Desmond Tutu Room at St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, WC2N 4JJ from 6.30 - 9.30pm. **Thursday, 31 October**.

Our intent is to pray into the current political situation on the day when the Government say we will be leaving the EU. Our prayers will not be politically aligned but instead will seek areas of common ground between the remainers and leavers, such as the unity of our nation and good relations with the EU whether we leave or remain.

CTiW ADVENT SERVICE

The Annual CTiW Advent Service will be held on **Sunday, 2nd December** (Advent Sunday) at St James’ Church, Piccadilly, W1J 9LL. Further details to follow.

CTiW 2020 AGM

The CTiW 2020 AGM will be held at Hinde Street Methodist Church, 19 Thayer Street, W1U 2QJ. Further details to follow.

NEWS FROM THE CTiW EXECUTIVE

The Executive would like to thank everyone for their continuing support of CTiW, and would respectfully remind you that Membership Donations for 2019 are now overdue.

May we also remind you that our last Newsletter (No. 16) sent out on 7 July, contained the following request:

CTiW is currently reviewing its programme of activities to assess their appropriateness going forward and whether changes or new developments are required. We need to consult member churches in CTiW both on their views on the value of CTiW, and what kind of events and initiatives they would like to see in order to understand what people want, what motivates them and what prevents them from participating.

A questionnaire has been sent to all member churches as part of Newsletter No. 16, asking them to complete the questions with groups from their congregations. The questionnaire explores the impact of popular CTiW events such as “Meet the Neighbours” while also exploring scope for working alongside other existing or developing networks and the extent to which our focus should be on face-to-face meetings or side-by-side working. Questionnaire returns are invited from all churches in Westminster, so if you have yet to see a copy please request one from Rosa Postance ctiw.net@gmail.com or see our website <http://ctiw.london>

THE PRISONS MISSION GROWS UP

In 2013 the CTiW Executive was keen to explore new opportunities to reach out. In these circumstances it welcomed a proposal to establish a new approach to the needs of prisoners, who are often vulnerable and isolated. The proposal, devised by a group of church going individuals with extensive knowledge and experience of the prisons and criminal justice systems, envisaged a Prisons Mission with these three simple purposes:

- To provide support and assistance identified and needed by multi-faith Prison Chaplaincy Teams.
- To enable suitable volunteers to practice their own ministry with a vulnerable and often neglected section of society.
- To aid education and information so that churches and congregations become better informed about prisoners, their families, prison staff, victims of crime and issues concerning the criminal justice system.
- Work has continued and developed since then, but the purposes remain unchanged.

The Prisons Mission was established under the auspices of CTiW, but secured no funds from this source. It presented regular reports of activities, progress and problems to the Executive and to the full membership at Annual Meetings. The first churches to engage were St James's Piccadilly, St George's Hanover Square and St Martin in the Fields (Anglican). These were later joined by Bloomsbury Central Baptist church and Notre Dame de France, Leicester Square (Roman Catholic) and All Saints Fulham (Anglican). Volunteers were recruited from these churches to undertake regular work inside HMPs Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs (male) and HMP & YOI Bronzefield (female). Suitable training and support was provided and volunteers took on a wide variety of challenging but rewarding activities. Other volunteers supported the project outside the prisons.

The third purpose has been addressed in many ways. The first being to report back frequently to each volunteer's church, so that they are kept informed of developments. Each year a booklet of resource material has been published for Prisons Week. This assists and advises CTiW member churches and many others on services and related activities to mark Prisons Week effectively. In 2018 the Prisons Mission mounted a series of Shows of Art by Prisoners in three major central London churches with a heavy foot-fall. The Shows, which ran for several weeks, drew attention to the beneficial use of visual and other art forms to the process of recovery and rehabilitation of offenders. They were also the focus for lectures, debates and discussions explaining the crisis within the British prison system to a wider audience. These activities require a great deal of work by volunteers, who must also raise funds to cover the costs of materials, but not of course the cost of their time or effort!

Volunteers have reviewed this progress and considered the most appropriate arrangements for the future. The fact is that the Prisons Mission has outgrown its incubation under the informal auspices of CTiW. There are no prisons in Westminster and churches far outside the metropolis are actively involved. In future it will be known as the London Prisons Mission (LPM). It will set up its own management structure and potentially become a registered charity, so that it can raise funds independently. This plan has been put to the Executive and agreed after careful discussion. The London Prisons Mission will continue to collaborate with CTiW, submit regular reports and attend meetings of the Executive. John Plummer will continue to serve as a member of the Executive. All concerned believe that this will be a friendly, mutually supportive and appropriate relationship for the future.

John Plummer
Coordinator. London Prisons Mission
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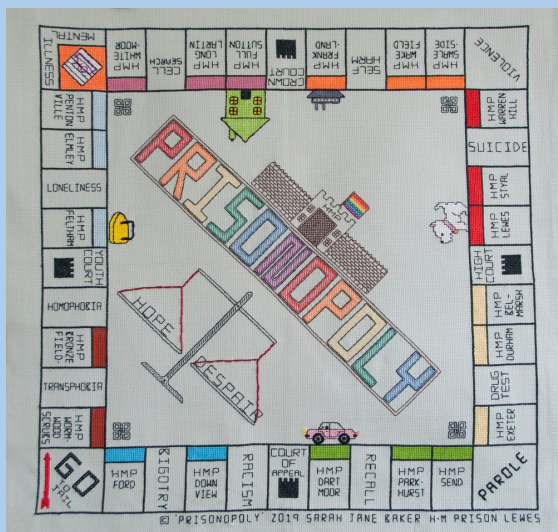
Following the success of the art shows in early 2018, this year has seen our art endeavours focus on Prisons Week.

We are delighted to be working with Sussex Prisoners' Families and the children's charity Spurgeons to exhibit artworks by prisoners from HMP Lewes in Sussex and their families. The theme for the exhibition is *Connections* and it is being held at Methodist Central Hall in Westminster from 13th – 24th October.

Prisons create barriers. Walls, bars and gates separate inmates from the outside world, isolating them from families, friends, work and communities. Yet as these bonds are fractured, new and unexpected ones are formed. *Connections* explores what is lost and what new networks can form during a prison sentence.

Eleanor the Education Manager at Weston College, HMP Lewes comments: “Many participants who benefit from having their work displayed in public spaces speak of the positive impact of knowing that people outside the prison can see their work. They feel they are contributing to a collaborative event.”

The art shows in CTIW churches have been a highly effective means of highlighting the crisis in prison for congregations and the wider public. Last year's art shows brought several dynamic new members to our London Prisons Mission. In future we are keen to involve other art forms beyond the two and three dimensional and have been exploring the possibilities of drama and musical performance.



Prisonopoly (Embroidered panel)



After Picasso



The Shadow doesn't do time

A special booklet of resource material has been published each year since 2014. This year, many churches, far and wide consider the booklet to be the best yet. It still bears the CTiW logo, as well as LPM's.

The new booklet again includes illustrations by Koesler Arts and many new prayers, reflections, essays, facts and figures and a quiz. The purpose is to include material which is attractive and relevant to church people of every denomination. By this means, as well as by the active promotion, attendance and advice of LPM volunteers, the aim is to encourage more churches to deliver interesting and effective services and post worship discussions to mark Prisons Week. Many churches reprint pictures, prayers and other pages into their own special Orders of Service. The Foreword is ideal for this purpose and the quiz, when reprinted forms the basis for useful discussions.

While Prisons Week is concentrated into a single week, which this year runs from 13th until 20th October – thus including two Sundays, the booklet contains material which can be used throughout the entire year. There are serious problems within our prisons. Many consider that the system seriously fails to meet the needs of inmates, victims of crime, or the tax-payer every day of the year.

Please report on your churches Prisons Week services and related activities to LPM. This will enable us to learn from your experiences and suggestions and continue the process of improvement in future.

SAFE HOMES FOR WOMEN LEAVING PRISON

The Independent Monitoring Board of Bronzefield prison reported that up to 50 women were discharged each month to No Fixed Abode. Such women, sleeping under London Bridges, are extremely vulnerable to abuse, resuming crime to survive before being returned to custody and being a heavy cost to public funds. Many organisations consider that to discharge a single woman to homelessness is a grave failure.

The Mayors Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) executes the functions of directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners elsewhere. The LPM has joined MOPAC, Bronzefields prison, the Prison Reform Trust and St Martin in-the-Fields to address this issue. The aim is to work with the 32 London Boroughs and public, private and voluntary sector leaders to identify re

alistic and sustainable solutions. Progress is encouraging, but the work is intense and many consultations must be undertaken in preparation for the Summit Event, to be Chaired by Dame Anne Owers on 21st November.

This is by far the biggest project undertaken by the LPM and it places a very heavy burden on its modest human and financial resources. Regular progress reports will be given to the CTiW Executive.

TRAGEDY AT BRONZEFIELD PRISON

The press recently reported that a woman had given birth, alone, at night in her cell at Bronzefield prison. The infant was found to be dead by staff early next morning. The immediate concern is of course for the mother and her family. This shocking incident will be the subject of rigorous official enquiries and investigations, as to how it occurred, who knew or should have known and acted, and how such a tragedy can be avoided in future.

Unfortunately, our overcrowded and under resourced prisons are sadly the scene of many sad, violent and distressing incidents, almost every day. It is not LPM's role to comment on all of these. We are however mentioning this one because many readers of the CTiW Newsletter are aware that LPM volunteers work regularly at Bronzefield, and it is appropriate to include this brief report.

I have personally visited scores of prisons over the years. Bronzefield is certainly not perfect, but I have found its management to be unusually open and progressive. The care taken to support some particularly vulnerable "residents" who have often been victims of abuse, and some with serious mental health issues, and substance misuse, is very impressive. Every year about 600 pregnant women are received into prisons in England and Wales, with about 200 into Bronzefield. They have a well-equipped and staffed Mother and Baby Unit, which can provide for up to 20 infants for up to 18 months.

The management and staff of Bronzefield are deeply shocked and distressed by this incident, and are determined to identify just what went wrong and why. The outcomes of all the numerous enquiries will be very closely studied both internally and externally. LPM volunteers will continue regular work there and do their very best to support all who live and work there.

John Plummer
Coordinator. London Prisons Mission

CTiW 2019 Executive Members

Members of the Churches Together in Westminster Executive

Rev'd Jonathan Evens – St Martin-in-the-Fields Church, Trafalgar Square – Chairman

Gillian Dare – All Saints Church, Margaret Street – Minutes Secretary

Rev'd Joan Ishibashi – St James's, Piccadilly – Treasurer

Rev'd Canon Anthony Ball – Westminster Abbey

Rev'd Matthew Catterick, St Saviours Church, St Georges Square, Pimlico

Rev'd Roderick Leece – St George's Church, Hanover Square

Major Richard Mingay & Major Caroline Mingay – Salvation Army, Regent Hall, Oxford Street

John Plummer – Coordinator. Prisons Mission.

Rev'd Dominic Robinson SJ, - The Immaculate Conception, Farm Street

Rob Thompson – Hinde Street Methodist Church

Martyn Watson – Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

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

- **“Meet the Neighbours”** - If your church is interested in hosting a future event, we should be very pleased to hear from you. See also our Guidelines for Hosts on <http://ctiw.london/meet-the-neighbours/> As well as being happy, sociable events, they are excellent Ecumenical opportunities for the hosts to showcase their church and for everyone to visit other congregations, join with them in prayer, and learn more about their church organisations & activities.
- **“Join the Neighbours”** - If you are holding a special event, Patronal festival etc to which you would care to invite people from other CTiW churches, please do let us know and we will pass on the invitation.