

An Occasional Newsletter

Welcome to Issue 23 (Winter 2021/22) of our Occasional Newsletter. Please feel free to photocopy this for distribution amongst your congregation.

REPORT OF CTIW ACTIVITIES GIVEN AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON 17 JANUARY 2022 by Rev'd Jonathan Evens as Chairman

Our activity in CTiW focuses around three areas: education and getting to know one another; worship; and social action. In 2021, the particular challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic have impacted our activities within these three areas considerably.

As a result of restrictions on meetings we were often only able to pursue our first aim through hosting events online. We began our education programme at the 2021 AGM with an exploration of the spiritual health of the nation led by our two eminent speakers Fr Roger Dawson, SJ, Director St Beuno's Jesuit Spirituality Centre, and Ann Morisy, Community theologian and director of the Commission that wrote the report 'Faithful Cities'. Roger Dawson noted that more people on Google have searched 'Does God exist?' and 'How to pray' than ever before and this is a sign that we are becoming 'more spiritual'. Ann Morisy concluded by talking about the role of forgiveness (of self and others), of our unique value in the sight of God. Christians can be confident that we live within the grace of the Holy Spirit. This is where our spiritual health lies and is nurtured.

Our annual services enabled us to visit St Mary-le-Strand virtually and St James Piccadilly in their building. We also visited Westminster Quakers for an event on 'Becoming A Westminster EcoChurch'.

We also adapted our "Meet the Neighbours" events which have been hosted by CTiW member churches, by meeting online in October with chaplains from a number of different sectors (see https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL043Y1gJDjYSsN_5knpJK45scuDeQkXOT). This event enabled chaplains to speak about their ministry and the ways in which this has been impacted by the pandemic. Many chaplains have been with those most affected by the pandemic, whether those without work or home, or in prison, or with education significantly impacted. This event enabled us to hear real stories of chaplains in good times and bad, enabling us to pray and support their ministries more effectively. Contributing chaplains included: Rev Ruth Bottoms, Head of Faith and Spirituality, WLM Central Office; Revd Mark Dean, Chaplain and Interfaith Advisor to University of the Arts London, including Central Saint Martins, Camberwell, Chelsea, and Wimbledon Colleges of Arts; Rev Gill Long, Free Church Chaplain, HMP/YOI Downview; Revd Lindsay Meader, Senior Chaplain of Theatre Chaplaincy UK and Lead Theatre Chaplain for the Diocese of London; and Revd Ian Worsfold, Coordinating Chaplain, City, University of London.

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Issue 23
Winter 2021/22

Contents

Report of CTiW activities given
at the Annual General
Meeting on 17 January 2022
by Rev'd Jonathan Evens
as Chairman 1-3

AGM 2022: "Beyond Cop26 –
what next? EcoChurch & other
steps" 3

London Prisons Mission (LPM)
Report to CTiW Annual Meeting
17 January 2022 by John
Plummer 4-7

Black Lives Matter Book
Study 7

Black History Month at Hinde
Street 8

Contact us

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Our second aim invites us to worship together regularly. In 2021 St Mary-le-Strand hosted an Ecumenical Service of the Word for Pentecost on 23 May ably prepared and led by Revd Canon Peter Babington (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nq5CmXeJDYw&t=2s>). In this service we prayed that as Churches Together we might be renewed and sent out in the power of the Holy Spirit. CTiW Executive members Gillian Dare, from All Saints, Margaret Street, Anglican Church, read two scripture passages, and a scripture reading and the Prayers of Intercession were read by Rev'd Dr Dominic Robinson SJ, Parish Priest at Farm Street R.C. Church. At the Blessing of Light, the congregation, both in church and at home, was invited to light a candle whilst listening to the singing of the Hymn "One is the Body and One is the Head".

Our Advent Service of readings and carols was led by Revd Dr Ivan Khovacs at St James Piccadilly with readers from American International Church, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, Hinde Street Methodist Church, London Prisons Mission, St James Roman Catholic Church Spanish Place and St Martin-in-the-Fields. The service included poems by Andrew Hudgins and U.A. Fanthorpe from whose 'BC:AD' the title of the service, 'Walking by Starlight' was taken.

Our third aim involves us in support of the London Prisons Mission about which we will hear more in a separate report. LPM has once again shared their excellent resource booklet for Prisons Week and continued a substantive project around Safe Homes for Women Leaving Prison which is of national significance.

Following suggestions made at the 2021 AGM, and with the support of St James Piccadilly, in the autumn we ran a Black Lives Matter Reading Group in which we discussed "We Need to Talk About Race – Understanding the Black Experience in White Majority Churches" by Ben Lindsay. This group enabled us to explore eye-opening insights into the black religious experience, challenging the status quo in white majority churches and discuss how we can work together to create a truly inclusive church community. From the UK Church's complicity in the transatlantic slave trade to the whitewashing of Christianity throughout history, the Church has a lot to answer for when it comes to race relations. Christianity has been dubbed the white man's religion, yet the Bible speaks of an impartial God and shows us a diverse body of believers. It's time for the Church to start talking about race and this group began the conversation within CTiW.

Through our 'Becoming a Westminster EcoChurch' event at Westminster Quakers in November we learnt more about the EcoChurch process and met others from different Westminster faith groups who are also interested in this subject. In light of the challenge of the global climate emergency and COP26 we considered how to respond locally as faith groups in Westminster and how we might

take a lead as institutions of faith in answering the need to live sustainably. One response is to develop concrete local climate action through EcoChurch. This event helped us make personal connections, raise the potential of our own emerging 'EcoChurch' and gave us an opportunity to gain insight from people who have experience transforming their local faith communities through the EcoChurch process.

CTiW has also been raising awareness of the impact of the congestion charge extension on London's churches, including letters to the Mayor and the consultation on changes to the Congestion Charge. We contributed to a meeting on the issue held with TfL representatives that, in addition to CTiW was attended by representatives of Emmanuel Church Westminster, Bevis Marks Synagogue, Christchurch Mayfair, Emmanuel Chinese Church, Farm Street Catholic Church Mayfair, Grace London, Kingdom Faith, Methodist Central Hall, Redeemed Church of God, St Etheldreda's Catholic Church, Westminster Chapel, Street Pastors, and Outbreak Youth. The Mayor's decision was that, from 21 February 2022, the operating hours for the Congestion Charge will be 07:00-18:00 on weekdays and 12:00-18:00 on weekends and Bank Holidays.

The Exec this year has included: 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) our Treasurer, Rev'd Roderick Leece (St George's Hanover Square), Majors Richard & Caroline Mingay (Salvation Army, Regent Hall), John Plummer (St George's Church, Hanover Square), Rev'd Dominic Robinson (The Immaculate Conception, Farm Street), Rob Thompson (Hinde Street Methodist Church), Martyn Watson (Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church), Canon Peter Babington (St Mary le Strand), Cathy Slater (Hinde St Methodist Church/WLM), Deacon Ali McMillan (Methodist Central Hall, Westminster), Major Geoff Chape (Salvation Army, Regent Hall), and myself as Chair.

In the course of the year, we said "goodbye" and our very grateful thanks for their help and support to Majors Richard and Caroline Mingay from the Salvation Army, Regent Hall, Canon Anthony Ball from Westminster Abbey, and Rob Thompson from Hinde St Methodist Church/WLM. We welcomed Canon Peter Babington from St Mary le Strand, Cathy Slater from Hinde St Methodist Church/WLM, Deacon Ali McMillan from Methodist Central Hall, Westminster and Major Geoff Chape from Salvation Army Regent Hall. My thanks to all the Exec for their support and input in challenging times and especially to Joan Ishibashi for her very effective work as Treasurer. The Exec has been ably supported, as in recent years, by Rosa Postance who, as Administrator, keeps CTiW running and looks after our communications including our website and Newsletter. My thanks to everyone who has played a part for the tremendous contribution made.

New Members of the Executive

The approval of the meeting was sought and received for those who have been co-opted in the course of this year. These people are: **Canon Peter Babington (St Mary le Strand), Cathy Slater (Hinde St Methodist Church/WLM), Deacon Ali McMillan (Methodist Central Hall, Westminster), Major Geoff Chape (Salvation Army, Regent Hall).**

CTiW Executive Members for 2022 are as follows:-

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 Dr Peter Babington - St Mary le Strand
Rev'd Matthew Catterick, St Saviours Church, St Georges Square, Pimlico
Major Geoff Chape - Salvation Army, Regent Hall
Rev'd Roderick Leece – St George's Church, Hanover Square
Deacon Ali McMillan - Methodist Central Hall, Westminster
John Plummer – Coordinator. London Prisons Mission.
Rev'd Dominic Robinson SJ, - The Immaculate Conception, Farm Street
Catherine Slater – WLM & Hinde Street Methodist Church
Martyn Watson – Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

We continue to welcome additional representatives from CTiW member churches, and if necessary we can again co-opt in the course of the year. So if your church would be interested, or you know of other churches who might wish to join us, please let us know. We will also be actively seeking a Chair going forward as Rev'd Jonathan Evens has a new role beginning in May as Team Rector of Wickford and Runwell. Our grateful thanks were given to Jonathan for so ably acting as CTiW Chair, and we wish him many blessings in his new post.

Future Plans

We plan to continue with our annual services at Pentecost and Advent, and recommence our programme of “Meet the Neighbours” and “Join the Neighbours” events, as well as the continuation of our support for London Prisons Mission. Beyond these ongoing activities, we would value your thoughts and ideas on other activities and events that CTiW could consider for the coming year and, in particular, any celebrations or foci for mission and ministry that are particular to 2022.

AGM 2022: “Beyond Cop26 – What next? EcoChurch & other steps”

Cop26 was a hugely important focus for awareness of the climate emergency whilst proving somewhat frustrating in the extent to which the nations involved were able to reach agreement on co-ordinated global action in response to the climate emergency. Many CTiW churches and members were involved in raising awareness around Cop26, and many are involved with initiatives like EcoChurch and Just Transition.

However, there are more who can become involved, and there is always more that can be done in response to this critical issue to the future of the planet and for future generations. As a result, we want to ask the question, Beyond Cop26 - What next? And explore EcoChurch & other steps in the remainder of our time tonight.

The meeting was then joined by Helen Stephens, Church Relations Manager, A Rocha UK; Rev Simon Woodman, Minister, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church/Westminster Citizens and Sarah Forsey, Citizens UK; and Rev Joan Ishibashi, St James Piccadilly. Through their inputs we heard how to become an EcoChurch and how to get involved in Citizens UK Just Transition campaign. The evening ended with a prayer by Rev'd Joan Ishibashi.

A video of the talks can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yr90iRinxU4&list=PLO43Y1gJDjYSsN_5knpJK45scuDcQkXOT&index=2&t=131s

LONDON PRISONS MISSION - REPORT TO THE CTiW ANNUAL MEETING ON 17TH JANUARY 2022



The entire Criminal Justice and Penal System, of which the London Prisons Mission (LPM) is a very minor, charitable element, has like every other public, private and voluntary sector agency, including churches, and places of worship by all faiths, been substantially effected by the Covid 19 pandemic. We are well aware that how best to deal with the pandemic has been a major item on the agenda for everyone attending this meeting.

The LPM Coordinator also serves as a member of the Executive of Churches Together in Westminster (CTiW) and quite detailed reports of activities, relevant developments and issues are presented to each meeting of the Executive. This is not an official report by LPM Trustees, but the Coordinator's note of matters he believes to be of interest and relevance to delegates to CTiW's Annual Meeting.

The purpose of this report to the CTiW Annual Meeting is to provide a very brief report of LPM developments to all delegates and for the Coordinator to answer questions. It is also hoped that the information will enable delegates to bring their churches up to date. All LPM volunteers consider that helping delegates to build well informed congregations will encourage them to gain accurate and reliable knowledge about the topics covered, and they will then wish to contribute to debates about essential reforms.

Please note that further information can be provided about any of the matters listed within this report, by raising questions via email, with the Coordinator.

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID PANDEMIC ON THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PENAL SYSTEM

- The severe restrictions imposed by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) on all prisons, have continued to maintain lower levels of Covid related mortalities than initially feared among both prisoners and staff.
- Whilst this is welcome, the restrictions have substantially reduced the capacity of prisons to make available most of the activities and facilities which are essential if the establishments are to achieve any positive benefits for offenders.
- The loss of activities such as education, work (except cleaning and catering), recreation, training, exercise, mobility with wings for assembly, let alone more widely, worship in Chapels, has added to the isolation and loss of well-being of all inmates, but especially to the high proportion of those with very poor mental and or physical health.
- Inmates, including those held on remand and not yet convicted or sentenced are frequently locked in single or double cells for 23 or even 24 hours of every day, and only unlocked, one at a time, for brief showers, or very limited exercise.
- All family visits were prohibited during the main lockdowns and are frequently re-imposed during subsequent Covid surges and outbreaks at prisons, often related to new receptions of ref prisoners remanded or convicted from courts.
- The loss of family visits is a grave hardship for both parties, and an obstacle to the maintenance of family and home relationships which are acknowledged to be an important and key aid to resettlement and eventual rehabilitation.
- In addition to religious education and holding services in prison chapels, an important role of members of the multi-faith chaplaincy team is to be visible and approachable by inmates as they "patrol" the wings. Such mobility is now not allowed, which impairs their usefulness.
- Prison officers have been encouraged to endeavour to develop constructive and positive relationships with a group of inmates. This is also now reduced by restricted mobility, thus confining them largely to key holders.
- Violence between inmates and against staff has increased sharply, and this is often cited as a consequence of the frustration and anger caused by prolonged isolation, denial of access to facilities, and lack of family visits.
- Incidents of self-harm have risen as a direct result of the combination of these severe restrictions.
- The immediate and potential long term of the restrictions on the well-being and mental health of inmates has been frequently observed by prison management and staff and reported by the HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. Such reports are presented to the Justice Secretary and are open to the public.

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- The Covid pandemic has caused a huge backlog of cases awaiting hearings by all courts, which many expect will take several years to reduce. One consequence of this is to extend the duration of custodial remands while awaiting trials.
- All new receptions from courts on remand or following convictions are tested for Covid and isolated if found to be positive, in an attempt to reduce viral transmission. Management and staff are usually tested daily.
- Many prison management teams have been frustrated by the reluctance of the Ministry of Justice to allow them to adjust specific restrictions to meet changes in local pandemic risks and circumstances.
- One of the few potential benefits of Covid pandemic restrictions is the growing use of audio-video technology for such essential functions as remand hearings, bail applications, probation service reviews and even some pre-release meetings with accommodation providers. There is also the prospect of more family visits being conducted via IT. There has also been a long awaited and welcome expansion of restricted in-cell telephony.

LONDON PRISONS MISSION – VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

- Since commencing work as the CTiW Prisons Mission in 2012, a modest team of volunteers, who visit three London prisons, usually weekly, to perform duties for or proposed by the multi-faith chaplaincy team, has gradually grown.
- Most of them have been recruited from CTiW member churches, attend introductory sessions outside and then, if still willing, go behind prison walls, under supervision to meet several chaplains and discuss opportunities and challenges.
- If initial duties are agreed they will then be given any necessary training, and undergo security clearance before commencing. They will continue to attend LPM Review meetings to exchange and share learning. As they gain confidence and experience of this very unfamiliar environment, they will often move from job to job inside the prison and become more useful. (Examples of these activities are summarised by volunteers in the October 2021 CTiW Newsletter)
- Volunteers often also play a very valuable role by reporting on their own activities behind prison walls to friends and colleagues within their churches. (Any confidential data is carefully respected.)
- Since the imposition of the first Covid pandemic lockdown in early 2019, when access to all prisons was not allowed, as described previously, some previously active volunteers have effectively gone into unpaid furlough and withdrawn from this service. A small group have however committed much vital time, energy and skill to the development and geographical extension of the Café Homes initiative.
- Through our many and frequent contacts with both chaplains and other members of the senior management teams of prisons, we will learn immediately when pandemic restrictions are eased and volunteers able to resume visits. We then hope and expect most volunteers presently on furlough to be keen to resume work inside.
- We also then expect multi-faith chaplaincy teams to need additional volunteers and we will then contact CTiW member churches in order to explain developments and opportunities and recruit suitable additional volunteers. The Trustees of the LPM Charity met in October to review progress in the light of our much stretched human resource capacity. It was decided that, until as much as feasible of the original purpose of the Safe Homes initiative has been achieved or effectively passed on for delivery in London or nationally by suitable and responsible agencies, all resources must be devoted to this, in the hope that mainstream LPM activities could then be resumed.

THE SAFE HOMES INITIATIVE

- The purpose of this initiative, agreed in early 2019 and remaining unchanged is: "To Identify realistic and sustainable solutions to the plight of women who leave prison to homelessness".
- LPM then formed informal partnerships with the Prison Reform Trust, HMP Bronzefield, and the Church of St Martin-in-the-Fields, and have since then developed close working links with scores of relevant and pan-sectoral organisations which share the agreed purpose.
- The group which comprise the main Safe Homes Leadership Team is LPM Coordinator John Plummer, Sarah Tubbs, Sarah Jane Vernon and Alasdair Mackenzie, with Jenny Earle joining in 2021, after retiring from her position leading the Prison Reform Trust's work on Women in Contact with the Criminal Justice System. While the demands and pressures upon this team have been extremely heavy, some encouraging progress has been achieved.
- As reported to the Annual Meeting of CTiW in 2021, modest funding was unexpectedly secured from the Bernard Lewis Family Trust and this enabled the engagement of Tendo Consulting, whose parliamentary and media expertise was of great value for the launch of the Safe Homes report and recommendations, and continued to guide the work throughout 2021.

- During 2021, the report was presented and discussed with relevant Ministers and numerous senior officials of Departments responsible and many other key agencies in London and beyond. This process provided evidence of one major concern, namely that most significant decision makers, including Ministers, are male. They know that women comprise only 5% of the total UK prison population, but do not acknowledge that their entire journey through the criminal justice system, including prison and the circumstances and risks on release are **FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT** from men. These differences necessitate more than mere adjustment to services which are intended to meet the circumstances of men leaving prison, but require fundamentally different arrangements.
 - The campaign attracted the active support of 80 cross-bench MPs and Peers who repeatedly pressed Ministers to respond to relevant PQs concerning the risks faced by vulnerable women leaving prison, and the need for secure accommodation and support to facilitate resettlement and reduce the probability of danger, destitution and prevent resettlement.
 - A parliamentary event benefitted from the leadership and authority of Bishop Rachel Treweek, the Bishop for Prisons and a very busy member of the House of Lords. Other speakers were two women with lived experience of custody in prisons. The Safe Homes team also met several of the MPs who have prisons for women within their constituencies. Most of whom had no idea of the plight of these women, but are useful supporters.
 - Outside parliament, meetings have also been held with the Deputy Mayor who leads the Mayor's Office for Police and Crime, the GLA's Housing Committee, and its Police and Crime Committees, as well as officers of London Councils. All these, as well as individual London boroughs, can play a crucial role in respect of vulnerable women leaving prisons and require substantial further effort.
 - Early in 2021 the Justice Committee announced a new Inquiry into Women in Prison. We recognised this to be a unique opportunity to present the case for the purposes of our campaign and promptly submitted evidence, focussed on the needs for new approaches to preparations for release, and safe and suitable support to allow for complete resettlement and rehabilitation. We encouraged others to also submit broadly similar evidence.
 - The Safe Homes team was one of only three agencies called in October to an oral hearing as witnesses on this aspect of the Inquiry. We have kept closely informed of developments and expect the Justice Committee's report to be published in late January. This could attract a significant level of parliamentary, media and public interest in the subject. Our Safe Homes Team, with Tendo's guidance, will be poised to exploit this as effectively as possible.
 - The reality is that although many of these meetings were very constructive, friendly and seemed encouraging, very little tangible progress was achieved in terms of essential changes to policies and practices.
 - In October 2021, additional funding was secured from the Barrow Cadbury Trust. This has enabled the Safe Homes team to re-engage Tendo and resume the campaign until mid-March. We have now agreed a vigorous future.
 - A new Declaration has recently been agreed setting out our aims and endorsed by many relevant organisations. It is intended to release this to the press at a suitable opportunity quite soon and present it to another parliamentary event on 24th January, which Bishop Rachel has agreed to lead once more. Copies of the Declaration will be made available shortly and it is hoped that these will be useful for churches.
 - Work continues on the development of several specific projects which began in early 2019, and have attracted significant support and interest among Ministers, and which have potential for replication in London or nationally. These are the Women's Prison Release Protocol and the Single definition project.
- The Independent Monitoring Board for HMP Bronzefield, recently announced that the percentage of women leaving to homelessness in July was 77%. While it is outrageous to know that some of these women are experiencing danger and destitution, the Safe Homes team and many other organisations are taking this up vigorously, and will not forget them.

GENERAL LPM NEWS, DEVELOPMENTS AND QUESTIONS

- We were not able to commit as much time and attention to Prisons Week as in previous years, due to the heavy pressures summarised above. We did not produce a new booklet of material for Prisons Week, but were advised that the 2020 booklet continued to be very useful, and could clearly remain so for much more than 52 weeks. The Coordinator was consulted by ordained and lay leaders of several member churches about Prisons Week worship and related events, but pandemic restrictions did not permit him or other LPM volunteers attending as many churches as usual. It is hoped, but not yet certain that it will be feasible for LPM to contribute much more for Prisons Week 2022, as this is believed to be an important opportunity to share knowledge and encourage interest in the issues.
- In 2019 LPM arranged several shows of Art by Prisoners in four CTiW member churches. These were considered to be successful by the local congregations, but also attracted visitors, who became interested in the subject. Events which included expert speakers, former prisoner artists and others with lived experience of the prison and criminal justice

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system, added to the value. LPM volunteers and churches are keen to arrange further Shows of Art events by prisoners well after the pandemic, and when the time is right.

- The Away Days for the entire Multi Faith Chaplaincy Teams of both HMP Wormwood Scrubs and Bronzefield were held at the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields and hosted by LPM in 2018 and 2019, and found to be an unusual, but very effective way of sharing and learning together. While prison chaplains frequently need to discuss their daily duties, they seldom consider the purposes of their work behind bars, relationships with vulnerable prisoners, or sensitive issues like self-harm or violence, either before or during custody. Some Managing Chaplains and LPM consider that after the pandemic, more such Away-Days would be a worthwhile use of time and resources.
- In December 2021 the Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice presented a Strategy White Paper to Parliament. This indicates some potentially constructive reforms concerning resettlement of all prisoners on release, and an entire section about women offenders. LPM will submit a constructive response by 02.02.2022.

The LPM Coordinator will continue to present regular reports to each meeting of the CTiW Executive. Such data could also be made available to member churches as good use could be made of this to communicate with congregations

Finally, we have emphasised above, as well as within previous reports to CTiW Annual Meetings, that LPM is keen to provide information for member churches so that they can play an important role in communicating knowledge about the issues which impact on prisoners, staff, families, victims of crime and the criminal justice system. In our view a much wider and better informed network would be a valuable beneficial side effect of LPM's work and purpose. To achieve this we really need requests from all CTiW member churches. What information do you need from LPM?

For further information about any aspect of the present and future work of the London Prisons Mission please contact its Coordinator, John Plummer, Tel: 020 7272 1639 Mob 07967 761841, Email johnplummer@londonprisonsmission.org

BLACK LIVES MATTER BOOK STUDY

At the 2020 AGM meeting of Churches Together in Westminster, some of the members noted that there was a lack of racial and ethnic diversity amongst the attendees. The murder of George Floyd in America and the Black Lives Matter movement have raised our awareness in the UK to the pressing issues of racial justice.

In response, CTiW organized a book study for the autumn. We realize this is a baby step in addressing the issue, but felt we needed to take a start with the basics. A number of our member churches have been addressing this issue in the life of their congregation, and we hope to broaden this into the ecumenical realm of CTiW. St. James's Church Piccadilly members Carolyn Davies, Cornell Jackson and Joan Ishibashi offered to help organize and lead the book study for us.

We Need to Talk About Race: Understanding the Black Experience in White Majority Churches by Ben Lindsay precisely addresses the situation within our UK churches and is arranged in such a way as to encourage study and discussion. We ran the study over the course of four weeks. A diverse group of people participated. At the conclusion participants were glad they were able to share their personal stories. White participants also felt that their awareness was raised where white privilege may have led them to be unaware of the oppressive dynamics present in society and church itself.

We want to encourage our member churches to embark on consciousness raising and action. CTiW thanks our facilitators from St. James's Church Piccadilly and hopes we can build on this small beginning as we work for justice and peace for all people.

Rev'd Joan Ishibashi

Cathy Slater represents Hinde Street Methodist Church on the CTiW Executive, and in the hope that it will encourage other Westminster churches, she has shared with us the series of activities celebrating ethnicity which were initiated there during Black History Month. These included exhibitions on prominent Black Christian leaders, and articles in church newsletters featuring or written by BAME congregational members.

It all began when during Gay Pride month, some of our members took the initiative of celebrating this by having a weekly essay in our church notice sheet, and a weekly prayer in the service which was inclusive of people from the LGBT+ community.

Our church has signed up to the Inclusive Church movement, and the church stewards decided it would be a good idea to cover other similar topics over the next year in the same way. So during Black History month we had contributions in our notice sheet, prayers in church, and a special service commemorating Black History month. The prayers and essays were all written by Black members of our Church and the preacher at the special service was a local preacher originally from Sierra Leone.

In addition to the services though, we had an exhibition throughout the month on eminent British Black Christians, some well-known like Archbishop Sentamu, Doreen Lawrence, Mary Seacole, and Rose Hudson Wilson, but also many unsung heroes like Walter Tull or Thomas Birch Freeman.

The exhibition consisted of 14 or so photographs of these people with a short biography next to each photo, and there was also a booklet giving fuller biographies. The exhibition does not need display boards or much preparation in setting up, and **we are very happy to lend the posters and other material to other churches in Westminster to display.**

Here is an example of **A Prayer for Black History Month** by *Paul Boateng*

Dear Lord

Joseph and Mary took you as a child to Africa so that you might be spared the wrath of Herod. Give us a Heart for Refugees from wheresoever they come and in whatever circumstances who likewise seek shelter and a Head so that we may practice what we preach.

Sweet Lord

Who told of the Samaritan and asked who it was that was our neighbour.

We pray that we may not pass by on the other side of the road when confronted by the needy "other" and that we may see the neighbour in all and love as you would have us love all others as ourselves.

Precious Lord

Who slept in the Houses of the Gentiles and Broke Bread with them and who made no distinction between slave and free set us free from the captivity of prejudice and bigotry and the tyranny of racial stereotypes and structural discrimination so that we may find a shared identity in your love.

Suffering Lord

Who on the way to the Golgotha found at the hands of Simon of Cyrene, an African, someone who took up your cross so that you might find some relief from your pain and showed a way for others to do likewise in a world whose sins of racism and neglect of justice continue to cause you pain. Relieve us dear Lord and free us from the sin that would deny the rights of others.

Resurrected Lord

You showed yourself to the Ethiopian who went on his way rejoicing. Show yourself dear Lord to us all that we too might likewise go on our way witnessing to your precious love and a life given for us all. We pray that we may celebrate not in a month alone but in every moment of every day of every month in every year the wonder and diversity of your creation in all of humanity so that we may be made finally one in you!

"Free at last free at last ! Thank God Almighty! Free at Last "

Amen.