

An Occasional Newsletter

The CTiW AGM 2016 with Panel Discussion was held on 18 January 2016 at St George's Church, Hanover Square, London W1S 1FX

The 2016 CTiW AGM opened with worship written for the Week of Christian Unity led by Rev'd Roddy Leece, Rector of St George's, followed by a welcome and report given by the CTiW Interim Chair, Fr Dominic Robinson SJ, from Farm Street Jesuit Church and Community.

Members of the current Executive were introduced and thanked for their services. They are:

Ray Crocker, Secretary (St James's, Piccadilly) – not present due to illness
Revd Ruth Gouldbourne (Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church)
Revd Roddy Leece (St George's, Hanover Square)
Revd Philip Majcher (Crown Court Scottish Church)
David Mannarino, Treasurer (Our Lady, St Johns Wood)
Major Graham Mizon (Regent Hall Salvation Army)
Isobel Owen (Hinde Street Methodist Church/Anglican Alliance)
John Plummer (St George's, Hanover Square)
Evelyn Pellow (Crown Court Scottish Church) – not present due to illness
Canon Jane Sinclair (Westminster Abbey) – not present due to illness
Rosa Postance, Administration & Communications (Non-Exec)

Fr Robinson went on to speak of the CTiW Ecumenical Service for Pentecost and the All Night Vigil for Syria and Iraq, both of which were held at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, as well as the CTiW Ecumenical Advent Service hosted by St James' Piccadilly. On behalf of CTiW, he thanked all who had been involved. (Music from the All Night Vigil had been played prior to the AGM).

In addition to the Prisons Mission (see separate report), Fr Robinson said CTiW continued to support efforts to assist migrants and refugees, and, along with other churches in Westminster, various Homeless services operating in Central London generally.

Other CTiW activities during 2015 included three "Meet the Neighbours" events hosted by St Mary le Strand (Anglican Church) The German Lutheran Church, Knightsbridge, and Hinde Street Methodist Church. Future events planned for 2016 will include "Meet the Neighbours" visits to Regent Hall (The Salvation Army), and Notre Dame de France (R.C.).

Finally, Fr Robinson drew attention to the improved website, and also to the CTiW "Occasional Newsletter", which it is hoped will be published approximately four times a year. This contains news of CTiW activities, and can be downloaded and printed for distribution in churches.

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Dates for your diary

2016

1 March—CTiW "Meet the Neighbours" at Salvation Army, Regent Hall, 275 Oxford St, W1C 2DS (opp BHS) at 6:30pm

19 May—CTiW "Meet the Neighbours" at Notre Dame de France, 5 Leicester Pl, London WC2H 7BX at **time TBA**

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

Contact us

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

CTiW Prisons Mission Report to Annual General Meeting 17 January 2016

Our Prisons Mission, which began in 2013, has made encouraging progress during 2015.

Churches

The three founding churches, St James's Piccadilly (CoE), St George's Hanover Square (CoE) and Mount Street Jesuit Centre (RC) have continued to learn and develop. We have also been joined by St Marin in the Fields (CoE) and St Columba's Knightsbridge (CoScotland). Several other churches of different denominations have agreed in principle to "engage" with the Prisons Mission, but not yet commenced activities.

Prisons

Our participants continue to support of the Prison Chaplaincy Team at HMP Wandsworth. The Befriending Programme there, which provides trained mentors for prisoners for several weeks before and after discharge, has recently gained the Bronze Prize in the "Best Faith Inspired Social Action Project" of the Christian Funders Forum.

We have extended our reach to the multi-faith Chaplaincy Team at HMP Wormwood Scrubs, another of London's huge prisons which holds some 1,200 men and youths, both on remand and serving custodial sentences.

An agreement was made to also engage with the Chaplaincy Team at HMP Pentonville but this is presently delayed.

Participant and church activities

It is important to note that participants are not merely volunteers from each member church who agree to undertake visits to prisons. They are representatives of churches which engage with the Prisons Mission. This means that the participants learn from, cooperate with and support the Chaplaincy Teams and the churches agree to receive formal and informal reports from participants and to communicate lessons about prison related issues to congregations. The Prisons Mission is not a campaign to reform prison policy or the criminal justice system, but it acknowledges the duty to inform congregations about some of the 86,000 men, women and children detained in prisons, in our name. Participants from Mount Street Jesuit Centre have decided to relate closely with the London Jesuit Centre rather than the CTiW initiative.

Participants undertake a variety of activities at the prisons, depending on the requirements of the Chaplaincy

Teams, their skills, experience and available time. These include mentoring, supporting Bible studies classes, attending chapel services and just listening and talking with inmates. They also report to their church committees and congregations, write articles for parish magazines and contribute to services.

Participants attend bi-monthly Prisons Mission review meetings at which progress and problems are considered with the proviso that details about individual inmates are strictly confidential and never disclosed. Candid discussions have been found to be an extremely useful part of the learning process which allows for the fact that, for most participants, the prison environment is unfamiliar and initially quite hostile and strange. These meetings also consider recent press and "political" reports on prison issues e.g. population changes, reoffending rates, inspection reports, approaches to rehabilitation and access to education.

Prisons Week

In 2014 a new collection of resource material was distributed to all CTiW member churches. This comprised model prayers, intercessions and sermons from a variety of sources. This was revised, extended and refreshed for Prisons Week 2015 from 15-22 November and the week was marked by more churches which devised new ways of introducing the subject to their congregations. Participants attended, contributed and assisted at Prisons Week services, not only at their own churches but at other London churches which are keen to support the Prisons Mission.

Future developments

Discussions and negotiations will continue with a view to engaging more CTiW member churches to ensure that all the denominations are included within the Prisons Mission. The project has now gained sufficient practical experience to show the nature, range and value of the work for both Prison Chaplaincy Teams and member churches. We will also aim to engage with churches which include congregations of Eastern European and Caribbean origin as these people are often isolated in British prisons. We will also aim to provide more participants and become more useful to the Chaplaincy Teams at HMPs Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs and commence work at HMP Pentonville. Discussions will also commence at several further London prisons to review the prospects of useful services.

The CTiW Executive Committee receives regular monthly reports on the activities of the Prisons Missions and takes a close interest in its progress, problems and future developments. Any comments or questions on this brief report will be valued.

John Plummer

Treasurers Report for Annual General Meeting January 2016

Financial Update:

As of January 1, 2016 Churches Together in Westminster (CTiW) had a cash balance of £4,840.14. This balance was a balance transfer from the Cooperative Bank, London as the account was closed. As of January, 2016 there were no disbursements to the operating account as there was not a cheque book to write cheques from. The previous Treasurer who became ill had the cheque book and was unable to forward it to London. There was no additional income in 2015 due to no membership/subscription invoicing (described below). Cash expenditures will be presented and approved at the February, 2016 Executive meeting. Going forward there will be a policy and procedure in place for the following topics:

1. Cheque requests – approved and signed at monthly Executive meetings
2. Monthly Treasurers Report – including cash balance roll forward, cheque register and bank statement reconciliation.

Membership/Subscription Situation:

During 2015 the previous Treasurer became ill and was unable to process and mail out the 2015 invoices. When the new Treasurer assumed the responsibility it became a priority along with organizing the finances of the CTiW group. Priority was given to sorting out the operating cash accounts before working on invoicing to set the appropriate starting point for invoicing. Invoices for 2015 and 2016 will be submitted in February and members can pay for both years. 2015 will be an optional payment, however, it is anticipated that most members will pay both years.

Changes to Bank Accounts:

It was presented and agreed to move the CTiW bank account(s) from The Cooperative Bank to Lloyds Bank. This was because of the following reasons:

- 1) Coop Bank had excessive turnover of relationship managers making it impossible to update account signers. This ultimately delayed the deposits and disbursements of the CTiW operations.
- 2) Lloyds Bank is better positioned to handle a clubs/charity account and has superior ancillary services such as credit card acceptance and insurance products as the club moves to a potential non profit status/structure.
- 3) A cheque book could not be obtained through Coop Bank given an outdated signature card at the bank.

David Mannarino



Panel Discussion: “MASS MIGRATION: CHURCHES’ ROLE? How do we respond? What do we want? What do we do?” What is a migrant? What is a refugee?

The main panel discussion at this year’s AGM was focussed on the experience of people movements that is occurring across Europe at the moment, its background, its impact, and in particular how churches are and can respond.

We had a panel of three (there should have been four, but Julian Colman was unwell and unable to attend at the last moment), chaired by Canon Alistair MacDonald Radcliffe. The panellists were Revd Bob Fyffe (General Secretary, Churches Together in Britain & Ireland) Ambra Longatti (International development project worker) and Rev’d Nadim Nassar (Director, Awareness Foundation for Syria). Between and among them they brought a vast amount of understanding and experience.

Canon MacDonald Radcliffe and Ambra Longatti both helped us to understand the context of the issues we were addressing, by giving us statistics and facts about the work of NGOs in particular. Thus, we learned that according to the UN, the number of forcibly displaced people in 2014 was 59.5 million – the highest recorded number since World War II. 19.5 million of these are refugees – that is, have left their own country. The rest are internally displaced. Six out of the largest countries of origin of those displaced in any way are in Africa. Within Europe, the current largest group are Syrians, who have recently overtaken Afghans...and so the figures went on – almost incomprehensible in their hugeness, and hard always to remember that each of these numbers represents a real person – man, woman, child – living away from home because of fear, danger, violence....

Ambra helped us understand the difference between a “migrant”; someone who has resided for more than one year in a foreign country, irrespective of causes, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, and irrespective of the means used to travel – and a refugee – one who, owing to a well-founded fear owing to race, nationality, religion, membership of a social group or a political opinion is outside their country of origin and is unable or because of fear unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country.

To have this distinction clearly spelled out – and to begin to understand its implications was an important part of the enlightening nature of this discussion; in the face of the rhetoric in our national discourse, grasping the

nuances matters if we are to tell truth and speak well into the discussion.

Ambra also helped us understand what NGOs in particular are doing with help both immediate and developmental, and the issues that they face in terms of accountability, proliferation, difficulties of relationship with other organisations, as well as their strengths of flexibility, good awareness of what is happening on the ground and an ability to respond very directly.

Then we had the opportunity to hear from two people bringing us very different, but equally powerful personal experiences. Fr Nadim Nassar, speaking as a Syrian spoke with passion of his heart’s wound at the pain of his people, his distress at being told by a British MP that bombing was important because “unless we are part of the war we cannot be part of the peace” and of the possibilities that he sees in training young people as “Ambassadors for peace” – as well as challenging the church in the UK not to forget our brothers and sisters. He also pointed out that the UK pledge to take people was unclear about whether this would bring in Christians – who on the whole, are not going to the refugee camps. He challenged the role of the media and challenged us to listen carefully, and to find ways of managing what we hear and what we say.

Rev’d Bob Fyffe spoke of his visit to Greece to see what is going on, and of the impact on him at a personal level of meeting people and hearing stories. He opened up the experience of understanding a wider context and also of personalising the issues; the reminder again that this is about real people. He spoke of the need to find ways to provide “safe passage” for those who are fleeing and challenged us to think theologically about these issues – not for the sake of the theology, but to change things. He helped us ask questions about the role of the arms trade, and of the impact of climate change – all contributing to the mass people movements that are and will remain a fact of our world for the foreseeable future.

The discussion that followed was necessarily short – but the questions, the new understanding, and the realisation that it can’t stop at this panel reflection is the abiding effect; What are we doing and what can we do – above all, what we cannot do is go back to sleep.

Rev’d Ruth Gouldbourne