

# An Occasional Newsletter

**W**elcome to Issue 8 (Spring 2017) of our Occasional Newsletter. Please feel free to photocopy this for distribution amongst your congregation. We hope you have had a blessed and peaceful Easter.

## THE CROSS ON VICTORIA STREET

CTiW took part in the Good Friday Ecumenical Walk of Witness in Westminster once again this year. Christians gathered at Methodist Central Hall at 12 noon. Then, led by a man carrying a cross, they walked down Victoria Street to Westminster Cathedral, later returning along the same route to Westminster Abbey.

See <https://methodist-central-hall.org.uk/cross-victoria-street-video/> for photos and video.



CTiW Chairman, Rev'd Dr Ruth Gouldbourne of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church gave the first reading. Photo courtesy of her co-minister, Rev'd Dr Simon Woodman.

Issue 8  
Spring 2017

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### Dates for your diary

**Thurs 1 June "Join the Neighbours"** for a Musical Evening by All Souls Church held at St Pauls, Robert Adam St, from 7.30-9pm. Sandwiches £4.

**Sun 4 June CTiW Pentecost Service "Creative Evening Worship"** hosted by Hinde St Methodist Church, at 6.30pm (refreshments at back of church from 5.30pm).

**Thurs 28 Sept "Meet the Neighbours"** hosted by St Saviours Anglican Church, Pimlico—time & details to be advised.

**Mon 9 Oct "Join the Neighbours"** for ASLAN Open Evening at All Souls Anglican Church, Langham Place, from 7-8.30pm.

**Wed 11 Oct "Meet the Neighbours"** hosted by Immaculate Conception RC Church, Farm Street —time & details to be advised.

### Contact us

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## REFORMATION 500

2017 is the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther posting his 95 theses on the door of the castle chapel in the German town of Wittenberg – an event that has become known as the starting point of the Reformation. Across the continent, numerous events are planned, from art to worship, to remember that episode in Christian history, and to reflect on its influence on our society as an extensive movement of reform. The anniversary is an opportunity to explore how a better understanding of what took place 500 years ago in Wittenberg can draw people and churches closer together.

Churches in England have been urged to keep this anniversary together in the spirit of five 'R's.

**Rejoicing** – because of the joy in the gospel which we share, and because what we have in common is greater than that which divides; and that God is patient with our divisions, that we are coming back together and can learn from each other.

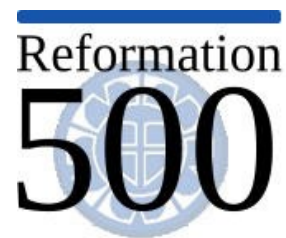
**Remembering** – because all three streams of the Reformation have their witnesses and one church's celebration could be another's painful memory; and yet all believed they acted in the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ for their time.

**Reforming** – because the Church needs always to grow closer to Christ, and therefore closer to all who proclaim him Lord, and it is by the mutual witness of faith that we will approach the unity for which Christ prayed for his followers.

**Repenting** – because the splintering of our unity led us to formulate stereotypes and prejudices about each other's traditions which have too often diverted our attention from our calling as witnesses together to the mercy of God in proclamation and service to the world.

**Reconciling** – because the call to oneness in Christ begins from the perspective of unity not division, strengthening what is held in common, even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced.

In national and local events, whether together or separately, churches are seeking to honour each other and give thanks for our growing friendship and fellowship in the Gospel. One such initiative is



'Still Reforming', in which twelve parishes across London are welcoming each other, fellow Londoners, and visitors on their doorsteps, inviting them to experience for themselves the diverse heritage of the Reformation. Each month, a different congregation is hosting an event beginning at its open door, in the hope that all those involved will learn something new, exchange ideas and perspectives, and attempt to understand together what the relevance of the Reformation is for us today. Several CTiW churches are involved.

The Anglican-Lutheran Society in Partnership with Women and the Church (WATCH) London and St Anne's Lutheran Church is organising three evenings of interactive presentations and social time to be held at St Mary-at-Hill, Lovat Lane, Eastcheap, London, EC3R 8EE, home to the Lutheran Congregation of St Anne's, on *Women of the Reformation: Overlooked Stories*. On Thursday 18 May, 6.30-8.30pm, Anne Boileau, author of *Katharina Luther: Nun. Rebel. Wife*, will present Katharina von Bora, Dr. Martin Luther's Wife. Then, on Thursday 22 June, 6.30-8.30pm, Rev'd Dr Roy Long, a retired Pastor in the Lutheran Church in Great Britain, will speak about Katherine Parr, Henry VIII's Last Wife. Finally, on Thursday 29 June, 6.30-8.30pm, Rev'd Eliza Zikmane (Lutheran Pastor), Rev'd Dr Julia Candie (Anglican Vicar) and Sally Barnes (Anglican Lay Woman) will provide stories of Women Reformers Then and Now.

Conferences which may be of interest include *Reformation 500: Ecumenical Perspectives*, the annual conference of the Society for Ecumenical Studies, on 17 June in Oxford and *Responding to the Reformation*, the Churches Together in England conference, from 16-18 October in Swanwick.

See [www.reformation500.uk](http://www.reformation500.uk) for a fuller listing of Reformation 500 events.

Rev'd Jonathan Evans

# PRISONS MISSION

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## THE BIG NEW LONDON PRISON FOR WOMEN

**H**olloway prison was closed last year after 165 years. During this time, both suffragettes and fascists were detained there. Ruth Ellis, the last woman to be executed in Britain, was hanged there in 1955, after a trial, which many experts argue, would not have resulted in a conviction today. Time will tell whether the closure is to enable the Ministry of Justice to provide more suitable facilities for women convicted by the courts, or to make different use of valuable real estate.

HMP Bronzefield, at Ashford in Middlesex, has taken over from Holloway and is now the largest prison for women in Europe. It holds 550 youths and adults remanded in custody while awaiting trial, or convicted and subject to short or long custodial sentences. The physical environment is much less threatening than the vast Victorian prisons which are such prominent landmarks. There are a dozen two story blocks, each with up to fifty cells, most of which are for single occupancy, as well as spaces for education, health services, training and some employment opportunities. The prison is run by the French giant corporate Sodexo, under contract with the government.

Volunteers with our Prisons Mission have begun work at Bronzefield in support of the Anglican Managing Chaplain Revd Marcel McCarron. He is very keen to identify the skills, experience and aptitudes of each volunteer in order to match them to activities which are most needed by members of his multi-faith Chaplaincy Team and offer worthwhile and rewarding opportunities. These range from attending services of worship in the chapel, assisting educational projects, mentoring inmates serving very long sentences, helping prepare for discharge, and working in the Visitors Centre, with parents, children and others who have made the arduous journey to visit inmates.

Bronzefield is not a happy place and none of the women want to be detained there. But, the Chaplaincy Team is determined to help the inmates, known to them as “residents”, to use the time as usefully as possible. Many have suffered chaotic lives and been victims of male abuse and violence. We are confident that our Prisons Mission will add value to the efforts of the chaplains and be a useful supplement to the team.

## PRISONS WEEK 8<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2017

**O**ur Newsletter number 7 reported many interesting services and other activities held by member churches to mark Prisons Week last year. It is clear that our Prisons Week booklet was well used far beyond London. As a result, the controversial and sensitive subject of prisons and the criminal justice system and the crisis indicated by rising levels of violence, self-harm and suicide, were brought to the attention of many church congregations.

We are now working on our “new and improved” booklet for 2017. The aim is to make this more useful and encourage and enable more churches to devise effective approaches this year. Bishop Richard Moth, the Roman Catholic Bishop for Prisons has agreed to write the foreword and the Koestler Trust will provide the artwork by prisoners. The booklet must be attractive and relevant to ordained and lay people of all denominations. Please send your suggestions for prayers, readings, music, or other material to help us achieve this purpose. (For reference the 2016 booklet can be found on the CTiW website.)

## NEW CHURCHES

**W**e need more churches to join our Prisons Mission, especially Roman Catholic and Free Churches, in order to spread the denominational reach of the initiative. This will add to the value of our work with the Chaplaincy Teams which aim to meet the needs of inmates from all Christian traditions. It will also mean that the learning and knowledge of volunteers from these churches who undertake the practical work inside prisons, is taken back to the Priests, Ministers and Congregations. By this means more people begin to understand a little about prisoners who are usually “out of sight and out of mind”.

If your church is interested in considering “engagement” with our Prisons Mission, please contact us for a discussion about the activities, challenges and rewards of this ministry.

**John Plummer**  
**Coordinator. Prisons Mission**  
**Churches Together in Westminster**  
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**T**he current crisis of mass migration requires a compassionate and robust response from Christian communities. In central London the churches are heavily involved through helping refugees, campaigning on their behalf and raising awareness of the issues involved at home and abroad.

In August 2016 a large and broad delegation of faith leaders from central London visited the Calais 'Jungle' in conjunction with various agencies to present a list of unaccompanied children who were being denied the right to enter the UK to either join family or be given a more dignified welcome. This was part of a campaign which, in conjunction with agencies and parliamentarians, led to the UK government allowing more of these children through to safety, shelter and education.

Through Citizens UK central London churches have also been in discussion with Westminster City Council to take fifty refugees from Syria, Iraq and other

places of conflict. This has now led to a pledge from the Council to welcome fifty on the new government scheme (VPR) which aims to work with the churches and other faith groups to find private landlords willing to host. Central London churches are now actively searching for individuals willing to welcome refugees into their homes. The churches themselves hope to take the lead on this, with Farm Street Church and Holy Apostles, Pimlico already hosting asylum seekers through the Jesuit Refugee Service At Home Scheme.

CTiW is also actively involved in raising awareness and prayers for the troubled Middle East region which is at the heart of the refugee crisis. In October 2015 CTiW organised an All Night Vigil for Syria and Iraq at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church which drew Christians and others from Middle Eastern communities in London and abroad to speak on the crisis and lead us in prayer.

*Rev'd Dominic Robinson, S.J.*

## THE WELCOMING CHURCH

**C**hurches in London are increasingly called upon and wish to provide for individuals and groups who do not form part of their worshipping congregations, or attend for other services provided by or at the church. These include "rough sleepers" and destitute and homeless men, women and young people. There are also groups such as refugees, asylum seekers and discharged prisoners, for whom the churches feel a sense of responsibility.

While many churches have learnt and devised, efficient and reliable methods of "managing" the demands of providing suitable services and support for these users, others are experiencing difficulties and are concerned about the risks which must be properly identified and addressed. CTiW has been encouraged to provide a useful service for its members by collecting and compiling guidance to help more of them to become safe, inclusive, open, accessible and welcoming churches.

For this purpose, the CTiW Executive will consult member churches which have devised rules and guidelines for dealing with aspects of risk, abuse, safeguarding, insurance and related difficulties. Some churches have developed exemplary models of good practice for the guidance and protection of their own staff and congregations in providing and caring for "others". These practices will be collected, analysed, discussed and prepared for circulation and application as and where appropriate.

On the positive side, it is known that some churches have developed imaginative approaches to the needs of particularly vulnerable and often isolated groups of people, who seldom enter churches for worship or sanctuary, out of fear, unfamiliarity, or anticipating that they will not be welcome. These include refugees, asylum seekers, discharged prisoners, those suffering mental health issues and others with special needs. We aim to learn from these churches, so that the lessons can be shared widely, to enable more London churches, of all denominations, to become a genuine and safe sanctuary to welcome the "outsider".

*John Plummer*

## Future Events (See Dates for Your Diary on page 1)

- **"Meet the Neighbours"** - If your church is interested in hosting a future event, we should be 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. Likewise, if you would like to invite other churches along to visit one of your church groups to see what they are doing.