

Ecumenical NewsBrief

2024



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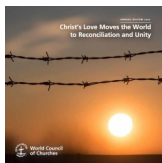
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News from the World Council of Churches (WCC)



WCC Annual Review 2022/2023



The annual review of the activity of the WCC records many of the activities undertaken by the council during 2022 and continuing into 2023. To download/ view the Annual Review 2022 please follow this [link](#):

Front cover of the WCC Annual Review 2022. *Photo: WCC*

Advocacy for Climate and Ecological Justice, Season of Creation, COP28

The 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28) of the United Nations Framework



Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) took place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 30 November - 12 December 2023. This significant global event brought together leaders, policymakers, scientists, and advocates worldwide to address the pressing issues of climate change and chart a path toward a sustainable and resilient future.

8 December 2023, Dubai, United Arab Emirates: People from a variety of faith traditions gather at the United Nations climate summit COP28 for an interfaith walk through the venue, calling together from their respective perspectives for climate justice. Behind them, the words 'Unite. Act. Deliver.' sit on the wall. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

Following up on a long history of engagement on climate justice in UN climate conferences, the participation of the WCC delegation at COP28, was also an opportunity for WCC to express its concerns about the climate emergency, raising its prophetic voice and bringing to light good practices and strong testimonies from voices of the ecumenical fellowship. Equally important was the opportunity to add spiritual dimensions to the topic and underline the need for scientific and religious aspects to cope with climate change and promote climate justice. Click [here](#) to find out more about WCC involvement in COP28.

News from WCC cont.



Top Honour For On-line Engagement With The World

The World Council of Churches has received the top honour from Geneva Engage for the WCC's online engagement with the world via social media.

Receiving the highest honour for a non-governmental organization in international Geneva, the WCC received acknowledgment on 1 February 2023 for its innovative, effective social media outreach and engagement. To find out more, please follow this [link](#).

What leads to a Geneva Engage Award? Clear structure, efficient methodology, and dedicated content?



Members of the WCC communication team shared insights and reflections into what makes up a successful social media strategy.

Further information can be found by following this [link](#).

Photo: WCC

Students From 19 Countries Complete Ecumenical Studies In Bossey

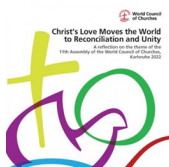


At the graduation ceremony of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Ecumenical Institute at Bossey on 27 January, 27 students received certificates for their completed studies in ecumenism that prepared them to become future leaders and ambassadors of the ecumenical movement. For further details,

please follow this [link](#)

Photo: WCC

After the World Council of Churches General Assembly



The most recent World Council of Churches General Assembly took place in Karlsruhe, Germany, and documents of this assembly are available on-line. Please follow this [link](#) to access reflections after the World Council of Churches Assembly 2022.

WCC –Resources



The World Council of Churches also provides online access to Bible studies by authors from various denominations about [Advent](#), [Lent](#), [Transfiguration](#), [Easter](#), [Ascension](#), [Pentecost](#), etc. Please note that, additionally, a search filter allows access to many other documents and to some publications which can be downloaded.

The Ecumenical Review looks to 2025 anniversary of the Council of Nicaea



The latest issue of The Ecumenical Review, the quarterly journal of the World Council of Churches, focuses on the 1700th anniversary in 2025 of the first Ecumenical Council at Nicaea, a key moment in the history of Christian faith and for the ecumenical journey today. To find out more, please follow this link: © Gloria Koymans/WCC

World Council of Churches 75th Anniversary

One anniversary which may have slipped the radar is the [75th birthday of the World Council of Churches](#). The origins of the WCC were birthed in student lay movements of the 19th century, the 1910 Edinburgh mission conference and the 1920 encyclical from the Synod of Constantinople which called for a 'fellowship of churches.' However, it wasn't until



1948, in the shadow of global destruction from World War II, that the first gathering took place in Amsterdam. Please follow this [link](#) to read Rev Dr Ben Aldous reflection on the influence of the World Council of Churches. Ben is CTE's Principal officer for Mission and Evangelism.

© Albin Hillert/WCC

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)



Racial Justice Sunday 11 February 2024 Resources 'Exodus: God's people on the Move'



Resources for Racial Justice Sunday 2024 explore the movement of people from their homelands to the places they now call home and examine the motivations behind this movement – the journeys made, and the reception or welcome received on arrival.

To find out more and to download resources, please follow this [link](#)

Image Credit: CTBI

Shaping the Future General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) 2023

The theme for the CEC 2023 was 'Under God's blessing — shaping the future'.



General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland,



Dr Nicola Brady (pictured), represented Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) at this event and spent time with the representatives of member churches and the national ecumenical bodies in attendance. Nicola gathered reflections from some of the representatives from CTE member churches on this critical moment in the life of the Church in Europe. To read Nicola's full article please follow this [link](#) *Photos: CTBI*

For CTBI resources for Week of Prayer for Christian Unity please see page 7.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

From 18th until 25th January the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is being celebrated by many countries around the world. This year's



theme is 'You shall love the Lord your God... and your neighbour as yourself. '(Lk 10:27). Each year ecumenical partners in a different region are asked to prepare the materials. For 2024, materials were prepared by an ecumenical team from

Burkina Faso facilitated by the local Chemin Neuf Community (CCN).

Photo: JESUS MAFA. The Good Samaritan, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.

Here is a [link](#) to the English pamphlet with resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024 which can be found on the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland website.

Posting photos of event held during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity to Twitter

Please post any photos and details of events you hold to the 'Week of Prayer for Christian Unity wall' by posting to Twitter with the hashtag #wpcuwall.

For resources from the World Council of Churches, please follow this [link](#)

Photo: Paul Jeffrey/Life on Earth pictures



A visit, a phone call & a prayer

I took courage and knocked at the door of a church which was unknown to me. I normally pass it after work. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity gave me an 'excuse'. It was a brief encounter, but a real gift for me to make contact and I hope the other person felt the same.

Why not pick up the phone and contact someone from a different denomination during this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Also, why not consider dedicating each day during this octave to pray for a church of a different denominations in your area.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Service in Liverpool

Sunday, 28th January 2024, 3pm. Please see back page for further details

News from Churches Together in England (CTE)



New CTE President

Churches Together in England announced the appointment of a new President, to represent their Fourth Presidency Group. [Dr Anna Krauss](#), General Secretary of the Council of Lutheran Churches in Great Britain, was nominated by the Group's members. Her term of office began at the start of May 2023 for four years. Sarah Ball interviewed Anna as her term of office began and among other things asked her what she thought are the current challenges facing ecumenism in England? To find out more, please visit the [July 2023 edition of CTE](#) news.



© Anna Krauss

Current Staff at CTE



Pictured is current team at Churches Together in England: from left to right: Sarah Ball, Senior Communications and Media Manager; Bishop Mike Royal, General Secretary; Doral Hayes, Principal Officer for Ecumenical Development and Relations; Lorraine Shannon, Operations Manager;

Rev Dr Ben Aldous, Principal Officer for Mission and Evangelism; Ben Cross, Head of Operations; Shermara Fletcher, Principal Officer for Pentecostal, Charismatic and Multi-cultural Relations.

© CTE

CTE Enabling Group and Young Adults in England's ecumenical movement

CTE Enabling Group brings together CTE's [Member Churches](#), alongside representatives from [Intermediate Bodies](#) and [Charities and Networks in Association](#).

What does the Enabling Group do?



Meeting twice a year, the group has the task of nurturing ecumenism in England



(encouraging churches to work together) and provides a space for churches to discuss issues of common concern.

The Autumn 2023 [Enabling Group](#) focused on encouraging the engagement of young adults in England's

ecumenical movement. This is [a current strategic priority for Churches Together in England](#).

The Bill Snelson Young Ecumenists Fund was launched at this event. Please see page 10.

Voices of young leaders from across our Member Church traditions



Attendees also heard from young leaders from across our Member Church traditions.

In an opening reflection, CTE Trustee and theologian Victoria Turner asked: Are young voices important? Please follow this [link](#) to access a video of Victoria's talk - about 30 minutes.

Using the same [link](#) as above you can access a video of Rachel Gardner from Youthscape sharing research on the current youth cultures to help church leaders engage with younger generations. It is entitled: "Young adults and the broader landscape". - about 30 minutes

Again following the same [link](#) enables you to read what young voices said at their first Enabling Group.

Photos: © CTE

Launch of 'Bill Snelson 's Young Ecumenists' Fund'



A new fund which will help young adults – aged 18 to 35 – to experience ecumenism outside England is now open for applications. It was launched at the most recent [CTE Enabling Group](#). Their experience can be study, pilgrimage, volunteering or any activity that promotes church unity.



[The Bill Snelson Young Ecumenists Fund](#) has been set up by Churches Together in England and the Snelson family in memory of Bill Snelson. A dedicated ecumenist, he was General Secretary of Churches Together England from 1997 to 2008.

©CTE

Engaging with young ecumenists is a key priority for CTE, which is working to involve them across all its workstreams and in all its events.

The first round of applications for The Bill Snelson Young Ecumenists Fund ended in October 2023.

CTMR were delighted to learn that Sam Rigby (first on the left) from the



CTMR young adults group applied and reported the following: "I've been awarded £608 to visit the World Council of Churches in Geneva and the Chemin Neuf community at Haut-combe Abbey in France. I'm really pleased to have been given the funding for this experience and feel like it will

be a great opportunity to experience ecumenism in action."

©Andrew Edwards

The fund will open for the next round of applications in early 2024. Across these two rounds, there is approximately £6,000 available. There are no minimum or maximum amounts for which one can apply.

Together in Rome



CTE's General Secretary Bishop Mike Royal and CTE Principal Officer for Ecumenical Development and Relations Doral Hayes represented CTE in Rome at two special events that took place on 30 September 2023. © CTE



They attended the ecumenical prayer vigil in St Peter's Square called by Pope Francis as part of [Together: A Gathering of God's People](#) on the eve of the RC Synod on synodality.

© Synod_va

They were also present at the opening of an exhibition to mark 50 years of the John Moorman Library at the [Anglican Centre in Rome](#). To find out more, please follow this [link](#).

A flood of Christian Youth

Daud Irfan, Former Methodist Youth President, joined the flood of Christian youth from every corner of Europe, as they gathered in Rome, from 30 September through to 2 October 2023, to pray, worship, learn, and journey together with one another as a collective body of Christ. The event was called [Together 2023](#).

The city was truly a magnificent sight to behold as parishes across the Italian capital lovingly opened their arms and their homes to welcome guests of all different cultures, customs and nations into their communities. To read Daud's reflections on how he answered Pope Francis' invitation for all young Christians to be part of Together 2023, please follow this [link](#).

Photos below © Daud Irfan





Charities & Networks in Association with Churches Together in England



Focolare Summer Gathering
Mariapolis 25 - 28th July 2024

Harper Adams University, Newport, Shropshire

For the first time since 2019, Mariapolis GB will be a nationwide event. In common with so many other communities, the gathering was moved online by the pandemic. This was followed in subsequent years by smaller, local in-person meetings. During this period, ecumenical conversations have in fact been strengthened and deepened, with new opportunities to get to know one another's traditions, sufferings and joys.

Building on this, we are looking forward to welcoming friends old and new to an experience of gospel life together. With activities for all ages and open to everyone (including families), the Mariapolis provides a space to grow in faith together, through reflection, connection and fun! Full board, self-catering and camping available.

More details to follow soon at <https://www.focolare.org/gb/>

Click here <https://www.focolare.org/gb/mariapolis-2023/> for a glimpse of Mariapolis GB in 2023.

By Helen Copeland

Independent Faith Engagement Review

CTE made us aware that Colin Bloom's Independent Faith Engagement Review: '[Does government do God?](#)' was published in April 2023. The press notice issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities can be found [here](#).



The review considers government's engagement with faith, people of faith and places of worship across a broad range of themes including faith literacy across public services, faith in education, prisons and the probation service, the UK Armed Forces, faith-based extremism, financial and social exploitation, and forced marriage.

More than 21,000 people responded to the public consultation and Colin Bloom had set 22 recommendations for government to consider. The key messages are that faith is an 'overriding force for good' and government needs to improve its engagement with these groups, and that a better understanding of faith will help government tackle systematic issues. This review is independent and does not represent UK government policy.

Ecumenical Officers



National, County and Denominational Ecumenical Officers in England are in place to encourage, assist, and resource Christian unity in a particular area or network. A key part of their work is to connect, encourage and communicate.

CofE National Officer for Local Ecumenism

This is a new local ecumenical role for the Church of England (CofE). In



his new role, Rev Tim Norwood will advise on local ecumenical arrangements in which the CofE is involved, including local ecumenical partnerships (LEPs), liaison with partner churches, and cooperation with local, regional and national ecumenical bodies such as Churches Together in England. He will work closely with the Rev Canon Dr Jeremy Morris, National Ecumenical Adviser for the CofE.

© Lambeth Palace

National Ecumenical Officers (NEOs)



Leao Neto, NEO for the Methodist Church, received a very cordial send off at the most recent National All Ecumenical Representatives meeting in September 2023 as he moves on to pastures new. The atmosphere of friendship is tangible among the National Ecumenical Officers team. Thank you, Leao.

Northern County Ecumenical Officers (NCEOs)

NCEOs continue their tri-annual meetings for mutual support, networking and exchange of ideas. There have been some changes in the Northern Ecumenical Officers team in 2023: Jo Phillips, Ecumenical Social Responsibility Officer, Cumbria, Joanne Thorns, NE Regional Ecumenical Officer and Charlotte Trueman, CEO Cheshire have moved on. We thank them for their support and friendship. Currently on the group are: Elisabeth Hachmoeller, Ecumenical Co-ordinator, Merseyside, Anton Muller, CEO Lancashire; Peter Colwell, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland; Beatrice Smith, CEO Greater Manchester.

Thy Kingdom Come 2024

Light up the World in Prayer

Thy Kingdom Come (TKC) is a global ecumenical prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray from Ascension to Pentecost for more people to come to know Jesus.

Since it began in May 2016, TKC grew from a dream of possibility into a movement which unites more than a million Christians in prayer, in nearly 90% of countries worldwide, across 85 different denominations and traditions- so that friends and family, neighbours and colleagues might come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Every person, household and church are encouraged to pray during the 11 days in their own way.

Specifically, every Christian across the globe is invited to pray that God's Spirit might work in the lives of 5 people who have not responded with their 'Yes' to God's call.



Please use this [link](#) to access a form which allows you to add a star to the map.

News from Merseyside

CTMR Church Leaders' Group



CTMR Church Leaders met 4 times in 2023 and continue to give direction to the work of CTMR. They rotate the chair of their meetings, pray together and share highlights and concerns. Together they host an annual Civic Reception, a lunch for local MPs and a Pentecost event.

At one of their regular meetings the Church Leaders had some fruitful discussions around some national issues of mutual concern; some specific issues around our relationships with civic authorities, and their shared mission priorities and opportunities. The discussion was helpful, but a degree of frustration was expressed that the timescale of those meetings made it difficult to take these conversations anywhere further. It was at this point that it was suggested and agreed that their retreat day might be re-purposed for a more strategic and missional discussion.

Photo: CTMR Church Leaders at their strategic planning day in November 2023



In considering this further, they noted the importance of their predecessors having genuine and visible relationships with one another. These were forged at a time in the life of our city and our Churches that was still marked with sectarianism. The Church Leaders recognise the vital importance of maintaining these good relationships, especially when there is a turnover of personnel, but also recognised that some decades have passed since those vital initial connections were forged. They sense that ecumenism has reached a place where we need more than genuine and visible relationships, and rather need to consider how we can better use our combined strength and identity to engage effectively in the mission of God together.

Image below from Pixabay



Their strategic planning day in November was facilitated brilliantly by Peter Lawrence from AI Change Management and the conversation about future steps will continue.

They are planning a gathering for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which will be one practical response to that as we seek to “deepen” our engaging together by introducing our broader teams to one another.

By Rev Phil Jump

CTMR Church Leaders Invite Local MPs



Photo: Merseyside MPs and Church Leaders at their lunch time event

In March 2023, MPs attended a lunch hosted by CTMR Church Leaders. Their conversation took place in a warm and friendly atmosphere and centred around the following themes:

- Wellbeing of MP's and politics
- World of Work – how can healing and wellbeing be brought to workplaces that have become bitter conflict zones.
- Cost of living – how can we build on the church's response? COVID and Warm Spaces have revealed the power and importance of community building. How can we perhaps depoliticise that agenda?
- EUROVISION and Justice – what opportunities do we have to build on our legacy?
- Support for Asylum seekers – how churches are responding and how can we build on this?

MPs are invited annually by CTMR Church Leaders and the next lunch will take place in March 2024.

By Rev Phil Jump

CTMR Church Leaders host Civic Reception



A Civic Reception for Leaders of the Borough Councils and Mayors within the Merseyside Region is hosted annually by CTMR Church Leaders. It is an opportunity for Mayors and Leaders of the Council to network among themselves and with the Church Leaders. Sometimes it is also used to award recognition on civic members of the Region for their contribution to Merseyside and often beyond.

Last year's reception was hosted by the Anglican Cathedral at the Welshford Bistro and on his retirement the Church Leaders wanted to honour Bishop Tom Williams. They presented him with a recognition for his invaluable service to Merseyside throughout his many years of serving as a Bishop.

Photos below: Civic & Church Leaders in conversation. Bottom photo below : group photo of CTMR Church Leaders & Civic Leaders on the steps by the Welshford Bistro, Liverpool Cathedral



CTMR Management Council

The Management group is responsible for ensuring that the charity sets budgets, produces accounts and annual reports, provides governance and compliance oversight to the Church Leaders group. It monitors the working of the charity so that it is safe, legal and appropriate. It ensures that standing responsibilities are met, such as emergency planning, the support of LEPs and good practice in the employment of staff. They meet three times a year. After a recent meeting, one of the trustees couldn't help but saying that they actually enjoy being part of this team.



Denominational Ecumenical Officers

Denominational Officers from Merseyside also continue to meet via zoom three times annually for mutual support, updating and to enable working together more closely.



Allister Versfeld
Salvation Army



Andrew Edwards
Church of England



Ultan Russell
Roman Catholic



Ian Smith
United Reformed Church

To get in touch with your DEO, please follow this [link](#).

From the CTMR Office



A year ago, CTMR relocated to new premises at the Margaret Clitherow Centre by Sefton Park.

During the week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2023, CTMR Trustees



and Volunteers hosted an open day inviting all staff of the St Margaret Clitherow Centre for a coffee. It gave us all the opportunity to find out about the work we are doing. Trustees and Volunteers were delighted about several visits during the day, allowing them to interact, to get to know some staff and to have some fun and cakes.

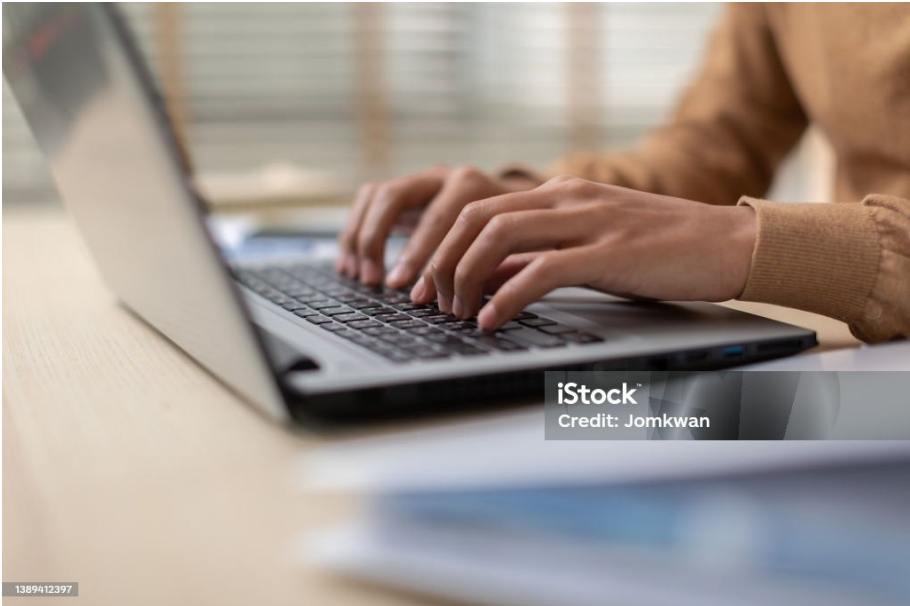
CTMR are very pleased to have made many new connections and new friends throughout the year. A big thank you to all at the St Margaret Clitherow Centre.

Photos: Andrew Edwards

Volunteer needed in the CTMR Office



A huge thank you to Charlie Lasham (pictured 1st on the right, bottom image of p20) for his invaluable service at the CTMR office. Last year he completed his service and now there is a vacancy for a Volunteer role within the CTMR Office.



Volunteers are a vital resource for CTMR. Their contribution supports our mission and strategic aims, and complements the role of our paid staff, trustees and committee members.

We are looking for someone who:

- Is willing to help us update our database
- Is familiar with Microsoft excel or willing to learn
- Can offer around 2-4 hours a week during office hours

If you would like to find out more, please contact Elisabeth at office@ctmr.org.uk or call 0151 709 0125 for a chat and more information.

To find out more about CTMR please visit our [website](#).

Churches Together in the North West Safeguarding Safeguarding Group



The ecumenical safeguarding group widened the range of the meeting to reflect the large area they cover between them as it is well beyond the Merseyside region. To reflect this they now call themselves 'Churches Together in the North West Safeguarding Group'

The Northwest Churches Safeguarding Leads met via zoom in September with six members present, representing the Church of England, Catholic and Methodist denominations. The small turnout did not stop a useful discussion about ways of working within the denominations which included safeguarding audits, central record keeping, good practice and sharing concerns.

It is always apparent at their meetings that they have much in common in their ways of working and they all value the opportunity to share and learn from each other. They will meet again in the Spring of 2024.

CTMR Church Leaders are aware that other Safeguarding Officers read their report and acknowledge that this group works best as a Northwest group rather than a CTMR group, because it operates on a wider scale and there are increased possibilities for joined up working.



Photo: Cheryl Holt from Pixabay (pixabay.com)

CTMR Social Justice Group

“Can I just take this call?”. This is not usually what you want to hear when you’ve just gathered to start a meeting. But this was not a usual, everyday call. It was a call from the Home Office. The member of the meeting taking the call was being summoned to explain the letter they had written regarding an asylum seeker known to them. This was social justice in action.

This event occurred during a recent meeting of the church representatives and workers who come together and to share what is happening across our denominations. Meeting four times a



year, it is a chance to identify ways of better working together.

In a recent November meeting, it was agreed to support church leaders in putting out a statement on the UN Climate Summit. The group gathered information from the international and regional situation and composed a letter inviting all church leaders to sign up to. The letter is available in full [here](#).

From left to right: Pablo Guidi, Archdiocese of Liverpool, Social Action Coordinator; Ellen Loudon, Director of Social Justice & Canon Chancellor, Diocese of Liverpool, Phil Jump, NW Baptist Regional Minister & “Free Churches” representative; James Green, Together Liverpool, Executive Director

The group looks to further amplify the voice of churches and church leaders. This may be done through civic forums or engaging with local political leaders. Another area being developed is how to better engage with the [VS6](#) – which supports voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise across the city region.

In the coming years events celebrating Merseyside’s ecumenical tradition will be used to re-engage communities in dialogue and action – events such as the 40-year anniversary of “Faith in the City” (1985) and the appointment of Archbishop Warlock (1976) who with Bishop Sheppard contributed significantly to the ecumenical movement. These examples of prophecy and partnership work included other Christian traditions across Merseyside and were highlighted in the Call to Partnership issued by Church Leaders their churches at Pentecost 1985. pto.



CTMR Social Justice Group cont.



At its heart, the work of the group continues to help identify, discern and promote the work of social justice - "Doing things ecumenically rather than doing ecumenical things." If you would like to find out more, please contact the [Ecumenical Co-ordinator](#), at CTMR.

By Pablo Guidi, Social Action Co-ordinator, Archdiocese of Liverpool



Refugee Housing Crisis

At their last meeting the Churches Together in the Merseyside Region (CTMR) Social Justice Group took note of an alarming development of the Refugee Housing Crisis. Thousands of people are at risk of homelessness because of change in the way government policy is being applied, giving refugees just seven days (in place of the previous 28-day notice period) to leave Home Office hotel accommodation after their asylum claim has been accepted.



To find out more, please watch [the conversation](#) between the Chair of Churches Together in Merseyside, Northwest Baptist Regional Minister Phil Jump and Rev Canon Dr Ellen Loudon, Director of Social Justice & Canon Chancellor at Liverpool Cathedral, Diocese of Liverpool. (see image above) They explore the worrying implications, as Merseyside organisations report an influx of people presenting as homeless since 7-day eviction notices began being issued in August.

[Watch here](#)

CTMR Social Justice Group cont.



Ecumenical Prayer at the Labour Party Conference Autumn 2023

Standing outside the Labour party conference the noise and bustle was overwhelming. All manner of people were shouting their political causes, to whoever would listen. The noise was almost deafening. And yet standing quietly to one side were a small group, with banners calling for an end to poverty. This was the second day of prayers, led by churches in Merseyside, that brought people together to pray that political leaders will join us in working for an end to poverty.

The day before around 20 people gathered at St Bride's. This was Monday 9th October, and the Labour party conference in Liverpool was in full swing. The Archdiocese of Liverpool led the first prayer, using the story of the Good Samaritan – which was the reading of the day. People then listened to real life stories of those in need who attend Compassionate Acts welfare service, and concluded with the prayer attributed to St. Teresa of Ávila – “I have no hands but yours”.



The second prayer was led by Churches Together in Merseyside Region and focused on the values of God's kingdom that guide us in our daily lives. After a prayerful space for intentions the group concluded in saying the Our Father together.



The Christian community coming together in prayerful partnership was an antidote to the turmoil of the conference. It was also an important act of solidarity. But perhaps most of all it was a representation of the voices of those who are so often lost in the noise of politics.

Photos: Pablo Guidi

By Pablo Guidi, Catholic Social Action Coordinator & Andrew Edwards, LEP Co-ordinator for CTMR, & Bishop of Liverpool's Chaplain for Ecumenism

CTMR Social Justice Group cont.

Joint Statement on COP28 by CTMR to PM



In consultation with the CTMR Social Justice Group a letter to the Prime Minister re COP28 was drawn up and signed by all CTMR Church Leaders. It was sent to the PM on the 29th November and shared with all our CTMR contacts.



The following is an extract of the letter to the Prime Minister:

“Therefore, as you prepare for the forthcoming meeting, we ask that you:

- Continue to support regional and local initiatives, allowing leadership to emerge at all levels, in line with the principles of subsidiarity.
- Do all you can to meet the NDCs, both in the UK but also by leading partnerships with other nations to reduce emissions and keep within stated goals.
- Support poorer and more vulnerable communities in the face of the devastating effects of climate change.”

To read the FULL STATEMENT, please follow this [link](#).

Many Churches in our various areas...

.....pray for their local churches of different denominations on a rota basis. Why not include a prayer in your services for the local Churches in your area.

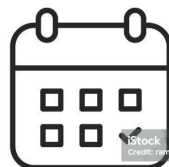


Image: pixabay: rambo 182

Please Tell Us

We are aware that there will have been countless local ecumenical events throughout the year. We would love to hear from you about any ecumenical initiative at this time.



Image from Pixabay (pixabay.com)

Network of Kindness Cost of Living Assembly hears call to join the Let's End Poverty movement

Faith and community groups heard a call to join the new [Let's End Poverty](#) movement, at the Network of Kindness Cost of Living Assembly on November 16th.

Co-hosted by [Together Liverpool](#), a social justice charity of the Diocese of Liverpool & CUF, and the Archdiocese of Liverpool's [social justice team](#), groups came together



on-line to connect about responses to the cost of living crisis.

Guest speaker Gareth McNab, Director of External Affairs for Christians Against Poverty (CAPUK), spoke about the roots of the current poverty crisis which has pushed 3.8 million people in to destitution in the UK including 1 million children ([source: JRF](#)).

Attendees heard further shocking statistics including that 28% of adults in the UK regularly skip meals and 50% of CAPUK clients had considered or attempted suicide as a way out of debt. (Source: [CAPUK](#))

The Assembly discussed a need to speak about poverty in our churches and faith groups, to speak truth to power about the impact of poverty in our communities and challenge unjust systems which keep people in poverty.

Together Liverpool are helping facilitate the Lets End Poverty movement in the Liverpool City Region following a local launch in October co-hosted with [St Andrew's Community Network](#) and the Joint Public Issues Team ([JPIT](#)). The Network of Kindness is free and open for people of all faiths and none to join: [Join the Network of Kindness - members sign up - Together Liverpool](#) Get involved in the Lets End Poverty movement here: <https://letsendpoverty.co.uk/join-in/>

Image credit: Let's End Poverty + stock meeting image

Pentecost Two Cathedrals Ecumenical Celebration 2023 & 2024



Ecumenical Celebrations 2023



The Pentecost Joint Afternoon Service last year entitled 'One Church, Many Nations' was a truly happy and joyful occasion attended by 350-400 people. Bishop John gave a short address at Liverpool Cathedral encouraging us to be a church that embraces the challenge of treating people of all cultures and walks of life equally.



The journey along Hope Street was a colourful occasion with a considerable collection of national flags, colourful vestments and giant puppets. Bystanders were intrigued by the sight with some joining in for the final part of the walk and service. The conclusion of the service on the steps of the Metropolitan Cathedral brought everyone together in prayer and celebration.



There was a real sense of unity and togetherness with games, dancing and music at the finish. Even the ice cream man left in a happy mood having had a steady trail of customers on such a warm and sunny afternoon.

By Revd Provost Tony O'Brien

Photos: top: at the Anglican Cathedral, below: the walk along Hope Street, bottom: prayer at the Metropolitan Cathedral. Credit: Sue Mannings

Pentecost Two Cathedrals Ecumenical Celebration 2023 & 2024 cont.



Ecumenical Celebrations 2024

Pentecost Sunday 19 May 2024, 3-5pm

Pentecost 2024 will mark 100 years of the Anglican Cathedral. The theme of the celebrations will centre around how to bring us from being a group of disparate people to people who are working together.

The event will start at the Metropolitan Cathedral at 3pm and then move to the Anglican Cathedral where the main speaker will address the congregation.



Photo taken at a previous Pentecost event

Please hold this date, Sunday, 19 May 2024, 3 –5pm in your diaries.

For more details as we get closer to Pentecost 2024 please follow this [link](#), call 0151 709 0125 or email: office@ctmr.org.uk

Please Tell Us

We would be delighted to hear about any ecumenical celebrations which you are planning locally at Pentecost 2024.

Working together more and more? Ready to commit? LEPs and more....



You have a vision for working with other Christians on a new or existing venture, sharing your insights, resources, creativity and prayer. It may be an idea at the planning stage, or an existing venture that has changed. Sooner or later those things that may begin with an informal understanding will benefit from a clearer expression of your commitments. Pitch it right and it will go smoothly. You will be in a good position to recall, review, renew, change direction if need be, or even end well.



Photo: Andrew Edwards

At what point do you need to put something on paper? What would be appropriate for you? What will strengthen your partnership at this stage?



Who do you need to talk to? Are there others doing something like this? Churches Together in England have created '[A Flexible Framework for local Unity in Mission](#)' which helps with questions like this. Its Toolkit can help you develop the right agreement for your venture.

Photo: front cover of 'A Flexible Framework for local Unity in Mission' document

There are nineteen LEPs (Local Ecumenical Partnerships) worshipping congregations in our region.

They have a formal written agreement affecting the ministry, congregational life, buildings and/or mission projects of more than one denomination, with authorization by the appropriate denominational authorities and the registration of the agreement with CTMR. More information about LEPs can be found by following this [link](#) to the CTMR website.

LEPs open up opportunities for sharing resources and mission initiatives – they also throw up their own questions and challenges. We're here to offer advice, or point in the direction of others who can.

Please feel free to contact Andrew Edwards, LEP Co-ordinator for CTMR, by calling: 0151 203 9117 or by emailing him at: andrew.edwards@liverpool.anglican.org.

By Andrew Edwards

Liverpool Cologne Church Partnership



Churches Together in the Merseyside Region (CTMR) are very pleased with the Liverpool Cologne link but are currently reviewing the way forward for the Liverpool Cologne-Link group. To find out more about the Liverpool Cologne Partnership, please follow this [link](#) to the CTMR website. The link between the Cathedral Choirs of the two cities is continuing and the exchange will resume in 2024.



Liverpool Seafarers Centre (LSC)

During the festive season a Merseyside-based charity dedicated to supporting seafarers was reaching out to local businesses, urging them to contribute generously to the cause.

They responded to the invitation to donate branded merchandise, electrical equipment, warm clothing, confectionery or monetary contributions and their generous offerings enabled the LSC to assemble Christmas parcels for distribution to over 1000 seafarers who visited Merseyside ports over the Christmas period.



Seafarers are often from disadvantaged countries, and they work to provide for their own families back home. Photo: Seafarers Centre

The LSC are grateful for all donations received. These cherished gifts were distributed not only to ships calling at Merseyside ports during Christmas but also to ships that docked earlier in December and were at sea during the festive holiday. LSC also held its annual seafarer Christmas Eve Mass at the chapel located within its Crosby headquarters.

To find out more about the Seafarers Centre, please visit their [website](#).

Support for Asylum Seekers (SAS) Destitution Project - 2023



Destitution Project Delivery

In 2023 SAS partner agencies have continued to provide practical humanitarian and wellbeing support for people seeking asylum and refuge in our local community. Where possible activities and social interaction have been made available in order to support their wellbeing and provide hope for the future.

SAS main partner agencies include Asylum Link Merseyside, Faiths4Change, Merseyside Refugee Support Network and Refugee Women Connect.

Faiths4Change

Faiths4Change benefits from regularly monthly funding from SAS.



Funding contributes towards the costs of growing fresh vegetables and herbs in the Roots Community Garden at St Michael's in the City for people attending Micah foodbank at St Bride's Church, Liverpool.

People attending the foodbank at St Brides are predominantly Asylum Seekers and Refugees. Since January 2023 we've grown a whopping 447.83kg of organic vegetables and herbs. We know that fresh herbs are popular with families attending the foodbank – they are the difference between bland dried & tinned food and flavourful meals.

Photo: Annie with herbs this summer

We facilitate 4 weekly groups in the Garden, all contribute to growing for the foodbank. The Myerscough groups care for the herb garden, removing brambles and weeds so the

Faith4Change cont.



herbs can flourish. As a result, we have been able to increase the volume and variety of herbs to just over 7kg this year. People from all groups report benefits including a sense



of purpose and fulfilment, joy in giving to others and greater personal wellbeing.

The Foodbank has stopped providing onions because the price has tripled. This year we planted 20+ chive plants, 100 + onions, 50 cloves of garlic & 40 leek plants. Some families have enjoyed our different alliums this year, and our leeks are still being harvested.

Our vegetables and herbs are top quality, locally grown, organic food at its best - harvested in the morning, taken home in the afternoon.

Tuesday seed sowing Spring 2023

By Annie Merry, Faiths4Change

Joint report from Asylum Link & Merseyside Refugee Support Network

M is a tall thin Sudanese man. Thin is perhaps an understatement as the bottom of his shin is about the width of my wrist. Malnourished might be a better description. For weeks he has been coming to St Anne's to see MRSN, to see if there is any word of accommodation but there's still nothing. His health is poor and his mental health even more so. He struggles to engage with statutory services and as a result is both destitute (until we can get him back in the benefits system) and street homeless/rough sleeping. MRSN have asked our housing solicitor colleagues at Vauxhall Law Centre to see if they can help with his complex case

M is one of so many now presenting as homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. MRSN estimate they have worked with at least 130 clients in this situation since August. The numbers could be higher, we are not prioritising people over the paperwork (16 new cases today 20.11.23).



After years of inactivity, the Home Office are now pushing so many people out of the Asylum System, there is not enough housing available to give everyone a bed. This is the responsibility of the local authority who are clearly struggling with the new Home Office procedures, as are we all.

The people affected are newly granted Refugees - entitled to live and work in the UK with access to our support systems. People who sought sanctuary and their asylum claims have been granted, but now with nowhere to go, nowhere to rebuild their lives, and another interminable wait, but this time without shelter.

Communicating is difficult with M, English is not his first language so we rely on interpreters, volunteers or staff members, to understand what is happening. His is a complicated case. He has leave to remain and is entitled to support, but there is nothing available: no suitable housing. So he comes to MRSN and ALM every day, to see if there is any update on his chance of housing, to dry out his sodden clothes, to eat the only meal he's going to get for the next 24 hours, to warm up and be around people. He can also get a shower and staff take home his clothes to wash and dry them. Most weeks he gets a new sleeping bag as the old one is lost or soaked.

An ALM volunteer, Mohan, was given 24 hours notice of his move to Coventry. Still in the Asylum System, he has no choice about where he lives, and to refuse to move, risks the loss of housing and support. There is nothing he or we can do to challenge this. He was informed of the move on Thursday and on Friday he was gone.

Speaking to another volunteer Ahmad this week, the joy at being given leave to remain two months ago has turned to uncertainty as he has been told to leave his asylum accommodation for the last time. He, like anyone else coming through the system, unless they are vulnerable in some way, are not seen as a priority for housing, and so become street homeless. He has been working on the Bike Hut for the last year and

Asylum Link Merseyside (ALM) cont.



was part of a small team repairing bikes brought in or fixing up old bikes to give out.

The system is both brutal and miserable in equal measure. At the point where someone has been given Refugee Status, they become homeless. Welcome to Britain.

Image below: Pixabay.com



And as we write this joint article, in solidarity but also as the result of interdependent working between ALM and MRSN, we are beginning to see the negative decisions coming through. The Asylum refusals who will be destitute and homeless in weeks themselves, but with No Recourse to Public Funds. This is a desperate time of year for anyone to be homeless, but for many refused Asylum Seekers, the only help they will be able to find is from us or from those that will take advantage of them. We have created a system that is a dead end for so many people who could otherwise be contributing to and being a part of the community we all live in.

By Ewan Roberts – Manager, Asylum Link Merseyside & Seána Roberts – Manager, Merseyside Refugee Support Network

Refugee Women Connect (RWC) Destitution Fund (DF)



Marie (not her real name) is a 68 year old woman with diagnosed physical and mental health conditions. Her asylum case was refused after many years in the UK, and support was cut off. We put her on Destitution Fund while we explored options to secure statutory support. This gave Marie some money for basic necessities while she sofa-surfed, staying with a series of friends most of whom were themselves asylum seekers. During this time, we advocated for referrals to medical specialists to obtain diagnoses. After many months of work and financial support through DF, we had proof of her medical conditions and the risks that forced return to her country of origin would pose, and therefore could apply for Section 4 (accommodation & financial support) from the Home Office for Marie. DF stopped once Marie started receiving Section 4, but casework support continues as we had also used the time on DF to explore the reasons why Marie had been unable to present her case fully to the Home Office previously and to start gathering new evidence for her case with the aim of securing Marie's long-term status.



Historically funding has been used for payments to destitute women of £25 (slightly more if they have children) for 10 weeks which we could extend if we needed to. We are finding that needs are changing, firstly it is taking us longer to get women back into the system so they can receive support from the National Asylum Support Service (NASS). So, they need support a lot longer. Secondly, because asylum support funding is so low, women are unable to pay for bus fare or essential items required by women or children.

Photos supplied by Alison Moore

By Alison Moore, Refugee Women Connect

Dialogue Between Faith Communities



The Faith Leaders' Group in the region continue to meet together regularly as a large group, and this forms the basis for on-going relationships throughout the year.

Pixabay Credit: mattJeacock

In the weeks following the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October I brought together some Jewish and Muslim community leaders in dialogue. These have been important but challenging conversations as we listened to each other and learned about the impact of the attack and the subsequent military action in Gaza.

We are committed to continuing this dialogue and to understanding the pain felt by all as a direct consequence of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

We are also committed to public visibility of good relations between faiths in Merseyside.

The Addullah Quilliam Mosque has invited a delegation of Jewish leaders to visit the Mosque to learn more about Islam and to continue the conversation, and members of the press will be invited to join the visit.

It is an invitation which can be reciprocated in the new year.

Please do continue to pray for all involved. *Photo: Pixabay Credit: pcess609*



A thoughtful reflection on the situation has been written here by one of my colleagues at Liverpool Parish Church, the Revd Dr Yazid Said. Fr Yazid is a Palestinian who is an Israel citizen and he is Senior Lecturer in Islamic Studies at Liverpool Hope University: [https://](https://williamtemplefoundation.org.uk/the-archbishop-of-canterbury-palestine-and-israel/)

williamtemplefoundation.org.uk/the-archbishop-of-canterbury-palestine-and-israel/.

*By The Revd Canon Dr Crispin Pailing
Rector of Liverpool*

CTMR Emergency Planning



During the course of this year, CTMR has asked Mission in the Economy to coordinate the Faith Emergency Response Team on its behalf.



Mission in the Economy (www.mite.org.uk) is an ecumenical charity which provides workplace chaplaincy in a variety of settings, from the commissioned chaplaincy service for Merseyside Police through to volunteer retail chaplains.

The Emergency Response ('Unity') for the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector are managed by the British Red Cross and MitE will provide an emergency 'on call' contact system for them.

We are currently concluding our initial recruitment phase for a Faith Emergency Response Team at the moment and have had a number of applications from members of Christian churches. Applications are from Anglicans, Catholics, Methodists, and URC.

We are also recruiting to the Response Team from other faiths at the moment.

Following this initial recruitment phase we shall be putting on training sessions in the new year.

This is, of course, a service which we hope will never be used, but we know that the pastoral care which responders can provide can be an important part of the infrastructure of dealing with a major emergency.

By The Revd Canon Dr Crispin Pailing
Chair, Mission in the Economy

CTMR Young Adults Group



On 17th January 2023 Rebecca (*on wedding photo pto*) and Liam (*first on the left in the second photo below*) shared their experience of the CTMR young adults with a group of students at Liverpool Hope University. After hearing their presentation, Tinu decided to join the group.

She joined them at a zoom meeting and shared her very strong story. The young adults were amazed that she had so much courage to confide in them the first time she attended. In their turn members of the group spontaneously shared what it meant for them to be part of this group: a safe space, respect for each other's traditions, focusing on what we have in common, support during COVID, a place to love and support one another.

During the summer, the group had catch ups at a café in Hope Street.



Hearing about it via Churches Together in England, some members applied for a bursary to be part of the Tantar Ecumenical Young Adults Pilgrimage of Reconciliation to the Holy Land in 2024 and two of them got accepted. This has now been postponed because of the current situation in

the Holy Land. Pto.

CTMR Young Adults Group cont.



In October Rebecca got married to Ross and everyone in the group was invited to the service followed by delicious cake and tea. The service was very meaningful and on the day the weather was exceptionally good. Congratulations poured in from various members of the group.

Sam Rigby (pictured below third on the right) made a successful application to the Bill Snelson Young Ecumenists Fund (*please see page 10*).

He will fly to Geneva on 15th February 2024 and will spend 3 days at the World Council of Churches until heading off to France to spend the rest of the time with Chemin Neuf at Hautecombe Abbey until 24th February when he will head back to the UK.



The December gathering (*pictured above*) allowed for a lot of sharing, catching up and some honest discussion around the table (see picture) amidst a lot of laughter.

By Veronica McDonnell & Elisabeth Hachmoeller

CTMR and Eurovision



...Imagine Peace – Eurovision 2023 - Liverpool

I had volunteered to help with Imagine Peace – Eurovision 2023 - Liverpool. The Methodist Church had invested in this event nationally with the Salvation Army on board too. The CTMR Church Leaders endorsed what they had



planned also in conjunction with Catholics and Anglicans in Liverpool. A list of events was publicised on various denominational websites showing that the Church communities in Liverpool provided opportunities for people to come together in prayer, fellowship

and worship.

Photo: Members of our team of volunteers getting to know one another

One day I was waiting for a bus to go to Strawberry Field to volunteer there. By now it was well overdue, and trains were on strike. I was wondering whether to send a text to the team that I was unable to come or go in search of a different bus? Trying to discern, I decided to wait at that bus stop a little longer. A few moments later, a car pulled over and the driver asked: “Are you hoping to go to Strawberry Field?”



This was one of my fellow volunteers who had recognised the hoodies we were all wearing. So, we got there in good time and various people came to see us. One lady had been to ‘United in Worship’, the Ecumenical Flagship event at the Metropolitan Cathedral.

When she referred to the common witness people of different Churches had given there her eyes filled with tears. Here was evidence of various Churches giving a witness of unity which resonated deeply with her.

Photo: Imagine Peace Event at Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral

At the end of the same event a young adult from our Churches Together in the Merseyside Region Young Adults group came up to me and thanked me for inviting her. She had brought her sister along too and

CTMR and Eurovision cont.

...Imagine Peace – Eurovision 2023 - Liverpool

The Rev Jackie Belfield, who was seconded part time by the Methodist Church for Eurovision 2023, gave about 30 interviews from Jersey to York and everywhere in between. At the end of the week, in a text on our Imagine Peace- Eurovision 2023 WhatsApp group she said: “We have worked so wondrously as a team this week. Learned new things, laughed, got wet and allowed God to be the centre of it all. We have shared Jesus with so many people, prayed God’s blessing, glorified God in worship and imagined peace.”

For me too it was a privilege to be part of a group of Methodists, Anglicans, Catholics and Salvationists totally committed to God and to their neighbours.



Left photo above: Group of Eurovision visitors at Strawberry Field talking to Major Kathy Versfeld (in purple)

Right photo above: Jigsaw of dove with fingerprints of participants of various 'Imagine Peace – Eurovision 2023' events

CTMR and Eurovision cont.

...Imagine Peace – Eurovision 2023 - Liverpool



Photos below: Methodist Church



Top left and right: During the United Worship Service at the Metropolitan Cathedral



Above: Hope & Anchor tipi at Strawberry Field



Left: Ukrainian Peace Monument at Strawberry Field

By Elisabeth Hachmoeller, Ecumenical Co-ordinator CTMR

Wirral Activities

Collaboration initiatives with key faith organisations, CVS partners and Wirral council have continued to grow favourably through 2023.

A call for help from the council’s housing resettlement team who were



New residential development at Wirral Well

struggling to respond to an influx of refugees and asylum seekers saw us hosting a refugee summit which resulted in our recently appointed Community Development Worker being deployed to head up a successful weekly asylum seeker task group. The success of the joint collaboration brought additional match funding and enabled the original part time post to become a full time with a firm promise of further extension and strong Council and CVS collaboration through 2024 and beyond.

A new Wirral CVS initiative has now been established in the borough. A community development pillar within its delivery plan includes a commitment to

- develop infrastructure support with the faith sector
- help the faith sector receive and share information and develop links with community and voluntary organisations

Wirral Activities cont.

- · map faith organisations and contacts across the borough
- · develop a codesigned forum/plan or mechanism supported by WCVS.

During October and November the council, Wirral's 'Infobank' and Wirral's Community Connectors service supported Together Wirral in undertaking a council grant funded Cinnamon Social Action Audit across Wirral's faith sector which has seen a response from over 95 faith organisations across the borough.

Wirral is currently enjoying a significant new season of redevelopment



which includes 'Wirral Waters' (*see picture above*) the largest urban development scheme outside of London. An exciting new Bishop's Mission Order has been initiated which has already seen a community missioner and her family moving into one of the first available residents and the encouraging establishment of 'The Well' an already growing worshipping community seated right in the heart of the new development and meeting regularly in the developers' new state of the art reception building.

Credit: both photos: Peel Holdings

There is a growing need now to consolidate and strengthen and build on these encouraging developments and to establish a stronger faith partnership infrastructure both locally and regionally on which to build on these successes.

*By Phil Dickson, Secretary Wirral Together,
Chair of Metropolitan Borough of Wirral & Faith sector Community Faith Forum*

Fourth Dimension in a Nutshell

What was it all about – this Church thing? Wasn't there more to Christi-



anity than services? And more to ecumenism than joint services? Dissident questions or wise wonderings? They were prompted by an individual's vision for the churches in Huyton in 1980. They stirred nine local churches into commitment and cooperation that trans-

formed their worship and practice.

Opened in the summer of 1981 by the Bishop David Sheppard, 'Fourth Dimension', the Huyton Churches' Shop has been both its own individual self and also a model for others.

The local authority, Knowsley Borough, responded to persistent requests and made property available at a minimal rent so that the churches could set up a shop that would retail 'Fairly Traded' goods, books (new – on 'sale or return' - and second-hand ones), quality refreshments with a high proportion of home-made produce and –a rarity in those days – freshly made 'real' coffee. All as a background to the recycling of good quality clothing, and bric-a brac.

Any profit to be divided 25% to local charities nominated by the staff and 75% to Christian Aid well-digging in Mali, West (1980 opened as UN Decade for Water – and 2003 was Int. Year for Freshwater for all, part of the UN Decade for a Culture of Peace).

The Shop was - and still is -staffed by a rota of 30+/- helpers from the nine founding churches plus some friends and carried out its business faithfully and effectively so that by the time of its 40th birthday in 2021 it had given away about £400,000+/- . Turning throwaways into water. A modern miracle! In July 2016 the AGM was able to pledge for Christian Aid £15,000 for water pump renovation in Nonkon, Mali.

Fourth Dimension in a Nutshell cont.

This in a significantly impoverished area like Knowsley is a huge achievement and meets three aims.

First it gives real money to its local and international causes; then it provides good things at good prices for those in need of them; thirdly it indicates what can be achieved when God's people work together. The Churches have a presence - maybe more people come into the Shop during the week to find concern and friendship as well as goods than go to some church services. A real outreach. A real place of welcome.

In the giddy eighties and early nineties there was a flurry of activity - Shop inspired - the Knowsley Peace Festivals, Fashion Shows with Christian Aid, annual Barn Dances in the Huyton Suite even Week of Prayer for Christian Unity services - yes, there were services!

So much to enthuse about and be thankful for. Then and now.

A group of helpers went out to Mali to see for themselves how the money was making a difference and came back transformed. Wonderful to see, the Mali co-ordinator for the well-digging programme came to Huyton to tell us about it two years later - paid for by the efforts of the helpers.

There are of course downsides. A lot of energy now goes on paying the rent. The Council couldn't provide premises for ever and now a commercial landlord takes £19,000 a year that would have been given away. The recruiting of new volunteer staff gets harder as more people need to get paid work wherever possible and older people retire.

But the ups are ever more rewarding than the downs and it has been a constant joy to see the blessing the Shop has been given and able to pass on particularly in these financially difficult times for so many.

Our premises continue to offer opportunities and challenges. Maybe you are part of its future or know someone who will be? You would be joining some wonderful people who cannot be thanked enough. I hope that they will know they are valued more than words can repay. Certainly my thanks to them are quite inadequate, but heartfelt.

By Philip Lodge chair of Fourth Dimension until October 2023

Formby Ecumenical Refugee Support Group

The Refugee Support Group is a small ecumenical group comprising members from different churches and the community. It is based at the church hall of St. Peter's church in Formby. It was formed when the thought came to me that to assist those fleeing persecution it was no longer necessary to travel abroad. Asylum seekers in this country were on our doorstep. An invitation was made through St. Peter's parish magazine to form a group. We began by making collections of winter clothing with Elim Pentecostal Church delivering them to Asylum Link Merseyside. The clothes collection has recently been extended to include disused bicycles which are repaired and recycled at Asylum Link.



Bishop John Perumbalath, Anglican Bishop of Liverpool (in black) and Ewan Roberts, Centre Manager (far right) with volunteers in the bicycle repair workshop at Asylum Link Merseyside.

On learning about the problems asylum seekers would have to access our lovely beaches we developed the practice of inviting asylum seekers from Asylum Link Merseyside to Formby for a free vegetarian curry

Formby Ecumenical Refugee Support Group cont.

lunch including tea, coffee, cake and fruit among other items followed by time on Ainsdale beach. *(see image below)*



We called these occasions **Welcome Days**. For the last two years we have run seven of these days through the Spring, Summer and Autumn months. With the assistance of the St. Peter's Scout minibus and donations from St. Peter's church to cover the cost of fuel we are able to welcome a group of asylum seekers on each day. Our aim is to give them a warm welcome, listen to their stories, showing interest in their family photos and play games on the beach – football, frisbee and even cricket have been popular besides paddling and sometimes swimming when it's been warm enough. We also provide table games in the hall: bagatelle, 'four-in-a-row,' dominoes, draughts and chess are all popular. Before departing we give them a bag of toiletries which have been donated by church members especially the Mothers' Union. Our main gift is to show our guests a welcome and judging by the feedback we receive it is greatly appreciated. It is a small thing we do but we receive from them far more than we give. Peter Paine (retired Anglican priest)

Creating Connections—Religion and the Media Event Liverpool



Image credit: RMC

Churches Together in England recommended the Religion Media Centre (RMC) events which were held in 6 English cities. The intention was to raise understanding between religious groups and the media, exploring new stories, breaking down misunderstanding and showcasing the expertise of RE teachers and academics from local universities.

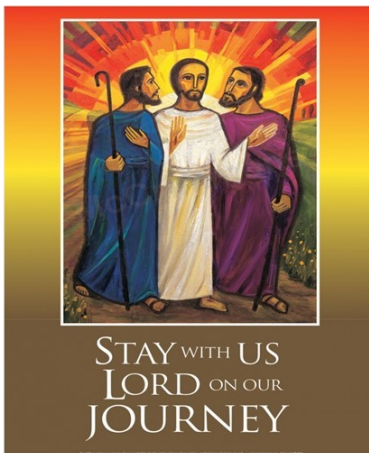
Liverpool was one of 6 cities chosen in 2023 to host this networking opportunity. The event was hosted by the Religion Media Centre, an impartial and independent organisation aiming to increase further cohesion and understanding in society by helping the media report and understand religion and belief. Speakers/ media panel included: Jack Walton from the Liverpool Post, Lucy West, Head of News at ITV Granada, Kate Squire, the BBC's senior editor in the north, Patrick Graham and Liam Thorp from the *Liverpool Echo* and Alison Navarro, director of the newly formed Race Equality Hub at the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. *This* project was generously funded by the Culham St Gabriel's Trust. A full article about the Liverpool event published on the RMC website can be found [here](#).

Ecumenical Journey into Prayer



'Meeting and sharing with people from different backgrounds, traditions and stages in their spiritual journey was enriching'. This is what *Julie* said about being part of 'Journey into Prayer'.

Photo credit: David Frudd (with permission of participants)



In September 2022, fifteen people of different denominations began 'Journey into Prayer' at the Cenacle in Wavertree, Liverpool, to explore various ways of praying and in so doing deepen their relationship with God. They were led by three guides from three different denominations who responded to the needs of individuals and the group as the course progressed. Through that time, as insights, experiences and vulnerabilities were shared, trust was built within the group, within individuals themselves and

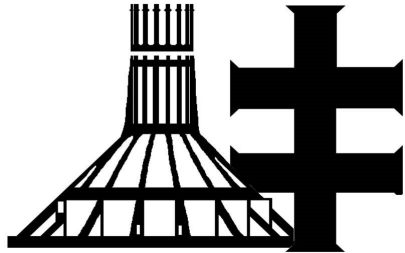
with God. Everyone recognised that they had to step out of their comfort zones but also recognised how much it had helped them grow and develop in their prayer life.

By David Frudd

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Joint Service in Liverpool

Sunday, 28 January 2024, 3pm

A service to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will take place in the Metropolitan Cathedral at 3pm on Sunday January 28.



The preacher is Professor Gerald Pillay, former Vice-Chancellor of Liverpool Hope University, now president of the NGO Initiatives of Change International.

Everyone welcome!

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