

Minutes of the Open Forum Thursday December 7th at 7.30pm
At St Gregory's Church, Sudbury.

The Forum was attended by 20 people from 8 churches.

1. Welcome & Opening Worship - Revd Cheryl Collins

Cheryl opened with a reflection on Isaiah 11:1-2 and some Advent intercessions. She also spoke about new projects at St Gregory's: Four at 4, a teatime service for baptism families and 'Blue Christmas' on 21st December. The sleep out in the church porch has raised over £1500 for the Church Urban Fund including donations from people with no connection with the church thanks to publicity in Suffolk Free Press. Cheryl spoke about her hopes of setting up a churches night shelter in Sudbury and of arranging a regular meeting for those who are bereaved. She also spoke about setting up a music therapy group for children and young people 'Making Music, Changing Lives'.

2. Apologies: Gill Phillips, Jolann Prigg, Andrew Dixey, Roger Pullan, Pat Ford

3. Revd John Boardman - The Fairtrade foundation and meeting the suppliers in Sri Lanka

Ann and John travelled to Sri Lanka with Traidcraft visiting the people who supply some of the goods found in the Traidcraft catalogue, a 'holiday with a difference'. They went in Jan-Feb 2016. Sri Lanka is predominantly Buddhist with a small Christian minority. The trip included an elephant safari and an opportunity to see some of the conservation projects.

The main business of the trip involved meeting suppliers of fair trade goods including a cotton factory at Selyn. The cotton is grown in India and comes to Sri Lanka raw. It is then dyed, spun and woven. The dying process is hot work, but all of the effluent from the process is reused, making it more environmentally friendly. Once the fabric is produced it is made up into different items which are marketed worldwide.

John and Ann also visited a spice factory and tasted the wares! They visited one of the fair trade tea estates at Thotulegala and were taught how to pick tea. It takes 45kg of tea leaves to make 1kg of dried tea. They met fair trade representatives who spoke positively about their working relationship with the company.

John and Ann visited 'Gospel House' where fair trade toys are made and saw many of the toys that are sold by Traidcraft, again they met many of the reps who spoke of the benefits of being a fair trade worker.

Coconuts are used in many different ways in Sri Lanka and fair trade coconut milk and coir compost are both available.

When we buy fair trade there is a small amount of premium which is given to the local fair trade representatives to use to enrich the community, providing healthcare, education or leisure facilities.

Sudbury has a fair trade group (of which John is chairman) and they have a guide to the town showing where fair trade goods can be brought. There are concerns however about Sainsbury's suppliers as their tea no longer bears the fair trade mark. John has a letter for the manager of Sudbury Sainsbury's raising these concerns. A number of other companies are also marketing their own 'fairly traded' products, but these don't provide the same amount of premium or choice for the workers.

John also spoke about concerns of how Brexit might affect fair trade laws and conditions. He encouraged people to lobby and ask questions regarding the renegotiation of trade agreements and linked this with the Advent message of justice given by John the Baptist.

4. Minutes of Forum held on 27th September 2017

Signed as a correct record.

5. Matters arising from those Minutes

None

6. Treasurer's Report

Peter mentioned briefly a thank you letter received from the Grenfell Tower appeal, also a letter of thanks from Eden's following the united service. Sam Duquemin has sent a letter of thanks and a newsletter that Ruth is summarizing. Peter also mentioned that church contributions are now due.

7. Chairman's Business

- a. Ratification of appointment of officers for Kettle and Fish
Ruth Ridge: Chairperson, Andrew and Anita Dixey Managers
- b. Posada and Christmas cards
Christmas cards are on sale, proceeds to Future Vision. Over £100 profit has been made so far. Volunteers are needed to help with the final event of the 'RAMble' on 23rd December. We need people to help with refreshments, welcoming and as actors in a short play. Anyone interested should contact Ruth Ridge.
- c. Final service at Sudbury URC 7th January 2018 at 3pm
Please do attend if you can.
- d. Eden's update
Regarding the future of the building, the will has been found and Eden's are likely to be offered first refusal on the building at 75% of market value.

8. News and updates

Week of prayer for Christian Unity services, details on Church News. Please do publicise the service on 21st January at which David Cornick, Secretary for Churches Together in England, will be speaking.

9. Your views

- a. Peter Halden spoke briefly about an invitation made to Adrian Plass to speak in Sudbury on 24th April 2018 and about the Pentecost Praise service on 20th May when Gavin Calver will be speaking.
- b. Malcolm Snow highlighted diary dates, particularly the next forum.
- c. Volunteers are urgently needed to help with refreshments at the Christmas Tree festival on Saturday and Sunday.
- d. We need more churches to step in to host prayer breakfasts in Jan- March

10. Any Other Business

- a. Cheryl requested that someone else take on organizing the light up a life service and liaising with the hospice.
- b. Ken had received a note of thanks from the hospice for the service on Sunday.
- c. There is an Advent course running at St John's on Wednesdays 10am at St John's.

11. Closing Prayer

12. Date of next meeting: Monday 15th January 2018 at Suffolk Road, 7 for 7.30pm