

Churches Together Chairman's Report September 2018.

There is a Chinese curse which reads 'May you live in interesting times.' With regard to Christian witness and the work of the Churches in Sudbury and district, these times certainly are interesting! This year has seen some big changes as Kettle and Fish started out under new leadership and as Eden's look to the possibility of purchasing and redeveloping their property on Gainsborough Street. The activities of many different Christian groups in the town continue to flourish though and as ever the annual report makes very encouraging reading. Our speaker at the January Forum, Revd Lee Batson commended Sudbury for the many ways in which the churches here work alongside each other to bring God's blessings our community.

As Churches Together in Sudbury and District we have continued our quarterly pattern of forum meetings and have heard some excellent updates on work, both locally and further afield. It was both encouraging and challenging to hear how Storehouse is responding to growing local need and 'Homes for Good' gave us food for thought on how churches can welcome and support adoptive and foster families. Forum speakers are very interesting, but unfortunately the meetings are not always as well attended as we would hope. We are looking at ways of making them more attractive and accessible and we would welcome any suggestions.

During the week of prayer for Christian unity we were fortunate enough to welcome Revd Dr David Cornick to speak at our United Service. We also continued the established pattern of lunchtime prayer meetings. Throughout the year we have also hosted Adrian Plass and heard Gavin Calver speak at an inspiring Pentecost Praise service. Next year we plan to host an evening with Jeff Lucas and the Searchlight theatre company. It is good to hear such inspiring speakers as they help to feed our faith and build up the Church for work in the wider community.

Outreach continues in many varied ways across the town, through support and care offered by Storehouse, No.72 and others, fellowship and friendship at Kettle and Fish, youth work through Eden's and Future Vision, outreach through sport in fellowship football and snooker and through supporting charities such as Christian Aid. We have also tried other ways of engaging the local community at Christmas and Easter through a 'spot the nativity figures' activity and leaving 200 wooden crosses sharing the message of Easter around town for people to collect. All of these groups and activities are prayed for regularly at the weekly prayer breakfasts and it is so encouraging to have a time when people from different churches can gather together in prayer.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to find churches to host Prayer Breakfasts, so please do consider whether your church would be able to help with this more often.

It is good to remember that we are part of a world-wide church and in July we were privileged to be able to host a visit from Pastor Peter Yuan, vice-principal of the Chengdu seminary in China. Pastor Peter enjoyed seeing some of the Christian work in Sudbury and surrounding area and we were able to learn from him about the Church in China. It is a link that we hopefully will be able to build on in future.

All of these activities take planning and organisation and none of the work would happen without the commitment and support of Enabling Group members, Church Leaders and the Churches Together Steering Group, all of whom deserve heartfelt thanks for their work. The next year no doubt will hold many challenges, but we face these prayerfully and in hope and expectation, knowing that God will enable His work to be done.

May God continue to richly bless you all!