

Churches Together Annual Report 2020 -21

A letter from the Chairman

Dear Friends,

It has been another strange year!

Twelve months ago we were considering holding our *AGM* as things began to open again, only to have renewed lockdowns from November through to the Spring. Celebration of Christmas was challenging, with no singing and not all churches being able to open for live services and the new year began with schools closing and *COVID* cases soaring. Hopes however increased with the beginning of the vaccine programme and since April, we have slowly been opening up and returning to some form of routine. *COVID* is very much still with us, but thankfully has been slowed by the vaccine.

In spite of a year of uncertainty, the churches across the district have continued to be very active. Worship has been taking place, both live in a *COVID* safe manner and online through a variety of platforms and fellowship and learning have continued via Zoom, email and in a variety of other ways. There has been a continuing praying presence with prayer breakfast continuing on Zoom and prayer walks being done by the town pastors and at Foxearth. Christians have also continued to provide practical support in our schools through the work of Future Vision and to those in need through Storehouse, Abi's Footprints, No. 72 and a variety of other local initiatives. Once again the annual report makes encouraging reading as we realise how much has been done under such challenging circumstances.

Throughout the pandemic, I have been reminded of the story of Eyam - a Derbyshire village visited by the plague in 1665, who chose to cut themselves off from the surrounding area in order to protect others from the spread of the disease. Two church leaders from very different traditions led the village through this time, working together and putting their differences aside. Between them they co-ordinated food deliveries to the village, organised open air services, visited the sick and even buried the dead. They were a powerful witness to what we as Christian can do when we recognise that our unity in Christ is stronger than matters of church order that divide.

As we look forward to the future then, let's build on the strengths that we share, continuing to support one another in prayer and to share God's work wherever possible. It is a time of change and transition, not just as we recover from the pandemic, but also as we say farewell to several long-serving church leaders and welcome new ministers to the town. In all the change and renewal may we hold fast to God, who is eternal and yet ever new.

Blessings.

Gerry Higginson.

18-30s

We have kept up some momentum despite the lockdown, mainly concentrated on personal contacts with YPs and studying YP initiatives in this area.

We renewed our offer to Crofton House staff of support and activities for residents (currently aged 16-23). Through informal contact with some residents and their friends, we learned more of the needs of some local YPs struggling with personal issues. It reinforced again the urgent need for focussed Christian outreach to these youngsters.

Seeking to learn from others, we attended a meeting of Bridge Church in Ipswich, a plant from St Matthews CofE Ipswich, focussed on YPs. We were impressed by their ambition to bring Christ to that generation. Also encouraging was the launch in September 2021 of River Church, a new Holy Trinity Brompton plant in Ipswich, again focussed on YPs. Most of the 180 -200 at the opening 'service' were 18-30s. The style was appropriate to that age group, once again emphasising the need for 'interconnected congregations' of different styles for different groups, as one community united in Christ.

The CTiS&D '18-30s Advisory group' has not met recently due to Covid and the loss of several members.

Please continue to pray for God's provision for the 'missing generation,' and for our willingness to respond and invest.

Roger Pullan, Coordinator

Abi's Footprints

Sudbury's local Baby Bank run by New Life Church, Great Cornard

The last year has not been without its challenges and we thank God for meeting all our practical and financial needs through gifts, grants and the generosity of many donors who have kept us well stocked with essential items.

A growing number of families find themselves in financial hardship because of the impact of Covid on employment or the rising costs of essentials for their children. In the 12 months from 1st September 2020, we responded to 184 requests from 84 families, needing anything from a bag-full to a car-full of items.

A few highlights of the year:-

- Being able to continue Covid-safe deliveries of a wide range of baby clothes, equipment and consumables to family doorsteps
- Being able at last to welcome local families to 'CloverLink', our new 'hub' in Cornard
- The addition of a storage shed at CloverLink to keep a good stock at this location
- Resuming our monthly 'Oasis' drop-ins for 'Mums, Bumps and Babies' at the Stevenson Centre after a 17-month break
- Building warm relationships with families that often return several times to meet the ever-changing needs of their growing children
- Increasing our scope of provision up to 5 years (instead of 3)
- The joy of receiving unusual donations precisely when needed - like a matching pair of cots for twins!
- Special moments such as providing a 'starter kit' later the same day, for a newly born baby whose mum hadn't realised she was pregnant!

Thank you so much for your interest and prayers

Gill Soper

Agape Café ❤️ Agape Café is re-opened on 7th July at 10.00 in the Terrapin Building at Wells Hall Old School on Head Lane/Well Hall Road

junction. Since starting up again we have been really encouraged by the number of folk coming along - if you've never been give us a try we would love to see you.

We serve hot and cold drinks, cakes, scones, toasted sandwiches and filled rolls - all at very reasonable prices. Our main aim is to provide a venue in Cornard where people can meet together and enjoy one another's company.

As every in ventures like this we could always do with a few more pairs of hands either to bake cakes, or serve on a Wednesday. If you could spare a few hours each month and would like to join us ring me on 01787 319080 or sent me an email peterhalden@hotmail.com

Peter Halden

Christian Aid

Climate chaos is one of the greatest injustices we face and this year's Christian Aid appeal focused on the effects of drought on the world's poorest people.

After last year's house-to-house collection was cancelled because of the pandemic, for 2021, because of ongoing coronavirus concerns and to enable us to reach more people, we used mainly 'delivery only' envelopes. These had the advantage that collectors didn't have to knock on doors to collect the envelopes - instead people were invited to leave their donations at dropping-off points either at the homes of our collectors, a local church or in the town centre. We are very grateful to Peddars and Holland & Barrett for agreeing to be dropping-off points, as well as Number 72 North Street.

The total collected in this way was £2,853.14 and together with £306.25 given online to the Sudbury CA Group e-envelope, came to a total of **£3,159.39**.

Although this amount was less than previous years, it was very encouraging given the circumstances. No doubt a number of people will have given direct to Christian Aid and their contributions won't be included in this figure, but all go towards the work of Christian Aid.

Next year, Christian Aid Week will be **15-21 May 2022**, and we aim to increase the number of streets covered by our volunteers. We hope that by continuing

with the delivery-only option more volunteers will be encouraged to come forward.

Clare Lodge

Christian Muslim Relations

The last event was the meeting in Sudbury market with the Bishop of Dunwich and Imam Ajmal when passers by could ask questions. This was in August 2019 and there have been no events since because of COVID-19.

Subsequent to this Rev Colin Chapman held a meeting of CTiS&D members to discuss the market event. Most of those attending were in favour of future meetings in the market.

I have personally had two recent meetings with the Muslim leaders, Shah and Imam Ajmal. They are very much in favour of continuing the Dialogue and suggested a restaurant meeting followed by a discussion about the Koran and the Bible. This would happen when people felt confident to meet in this way after COVID.

They would also welcome another meeting in the market in the spring or summer. Bishop Mike has also indicated that he would welcome this.

I would appreciate support for these possible events.

Jill Pullan

Communications

Nicki Dixon joined the team four years ago and provided invaluable help with press publicity for CTiS&D events and with running our Facebook page and Twitter account. Unfortunately, she is unable to continue, and we are urgently seeking people who could take on any of these roles.

Early in the pandemic, Ruth Ridge set up Zoom videoconferencing to enable news from churches, and prayers, to be shared; this continues.



The website churchestogetherinsudbury.org.uk carries permanent information about Churches Together in Sudbury & District and individual churches; current and archived news; and an online calendar. We welcome comments on articles: use the form on the *Contact us* page under *Communications*. Please send other suggestions or corrections to me via ctis.news@gmail.com. The site continues to

be popular. The help from those who maintain the website and Google Calendar is invaluable. About 250 people receive weekly emails about local church news; to join them contact me as above. We are most grateful to those who ensure that items from Church News are included in church magazines and weekly notices. Please make Churches Together, the website and the email list known in your own church community.

Malcolm Snow

Community Christmas lunch 2020:

I am pleased to say we were able to provide Christmas lunch despite all the difficulties going on in this period.

We teamed up with the Salvation Army so that we could work across 2 venues to keep everyone safe. It was as ever a very enjoyable day both at the Christopher Centre and the Salvation Army venues. Rachel devised some clever alternative entertainment to replace the usual singing. A thank you to Go Start that once again provided transport for us and to the volunteers that did home deliveries to those unable to attend.

A venue for this year hasn't yet been arranged, but we are hoping to return to the Masonic Hall in North Street.

Teresa Bishop

Eden's

In September of last year (2020) Stuart and Jude had just returned to Eden's and were working on setting things up to be covid safe for the young people to return to Eden's under the current restrictions. Due to further local lockdown and the full lockdown after Christmas we were not able to re-open until April of this year. When we did re-open it was with screens in place, restricted numbers, face masks and all the other safety protocols advised for our types of settings. It was good to have a term where we were at least back open to the young people, but it was somewhat hard going to connect and build back up the relationships with the young people under the current restrictions.

As we had managed to get the building next door (Eden's Community Hub) fully equipped for use during the time of closure, we were really pleased that the Prince's Trust were able to come and make use of the space in September for one of their Team Programmes. The Community Hub has two fairly large meeting rooms, one with comfortable chairs and a coffee table and one with large tables and chairs to sit around them. There is also a small meeting room/counselling room and a kitchen which has tables for messier activities/crafts. It is now an extremely versatile space, and we would love for this building to be used by local community groups and churches. We are using it ourselves for well-being activities on Friday evenings and counselling sessions during the week.

As well as our usual activities we were also able to enjoy a Sunday evening Christian Youth café worship event at Foxearth Meadows Nature Reserve in the early summer and the rain just held off for the few hours we were there. Over the summer Holidays we were able to open for our weekly summer drop-ins with free healthy food provided and it was much easier to engage with the young people since screens were partially removed and face masks were not obligatory. We held a number of Christian Youth Café socials which gave the young people much needed time to socialise and be with each other again without any restrictions.

Numbers have been lower across all our activities, and we hope these will pick up as people feel more confident in coming out again, so we would appreciate your prayers for that and for our relationships to build up again. We would also really appreciate your prayers for more volunteers on Friday evenings as we are struggling to cover all the roles that are needed.

Thank you, the Eden's Team.



Sudbury Fairtrade Group

Sudbury achieved Fairtrade status in the spring of 2013 with the support of the Town Council and other community organisations. John Boardman and a small committee were behind this move. Nicki Dixon became chairman in January 2020 but is now unable to continue.

Restrictions due to Covid have prevented activities for many months. It is hoped to move forward in autumn 2021 with active support from Sue Ayres, Mayor of Sudbury, and Rachel Price, Town Centre Manager.

We are seeking people with a heart to promote Fairtrade in their business, shop, organisation, school, or church. If this is you, please contact info@sudburyfairtrade.org.uk .

Malcolm Snow

Foxearth Nature Reserve

Foxearth Meadows is owned by A Rocha UK (a Christian conservation charity, whose strapline is: "Protecting Nature, Caring for God's Earth"). It is dedicated to providing a wetland habitat for nature to thrive and to be a place of peace and beauty for local people and other visitors.

We have a lovely team of volunteers who help Mark Prina, the reserve manager. For a while the work parties had to stop because of lockdown. Then we got going again with volunteers working in ones and twos at different times of the week. Now we are back to our usual pattern of Fridays from 10.00 am. We work hard, but there are a variety of jobs and we enjoy fun, friendship and fellowship. As one or two have moved away or retired, we'd be very pleased to have new people join.

Our vision is that the reserve is good for nature, good for people and honouring to God. We're delighted that local groups have benefited from meeting at the reserve, including a couple for those with learning disabilities. We haven't yet had schools return to the reserve since lockdown but hope to see that happen next year. We have been able to run a school 'work experience' week as well as have ordinands come for a social context placement.

This summer we were able to re-start our programme of special events and they've gone well. One new event was our 'Church Demo' afternoon, at which a good number of local churches were represented. The aim was to offer help and encouragement for churches to manage their land for nature.

The Psalms often describe how God's creation worships its Creator and we love to see the reserve being used for worship by people too. We hope that our occasional afternoon services will continue to bring people together from many different churches. We're pleased too when individual churches or outreaches come to the reserve. This summer saw Eden's Christian Youth Café come again

and New Life Church hold a Sunday morning service. Sometimes it is through being close to his creation that people find their way to faith in the Creator.

We produce a quarterly e-mail news and prayer letter. We value your prayers and would be pleased to add you to the circulation list. Please just drop me a line.

Andy Jowitt

Future Vision.

Life for Future Vision is still a little bit uncertain. We are longing to get back into schools and hope that will be possible next term.

Over the last year Ian and Liz were able to continue Chaplaincy work at TGS for a lot of the time. Whatever was required they stepped up to do it within the restrictions that all schools were under. Prayer Spaces for Year 7 couldn't happen but we are optimistic that it will be able to in this next school year.

Nicki was able to work with each class in Long Melford and at Nayland Primary and began to work in Hartest. Lots of fun was had but underpinning it all was the message of God's love.

We have changed storage location for Open the Book props and hope to be able to return to Assemblies in the schools very soon.

Future Vision is 20 years old this year. Plans to celebrate had to be put on hold because of Covid but we look forward to celebrating God's goodness and faithfulness to us as soon as possible.

We lost a very faithful supporter for Open The Book in Syd Platt. He is now with the God of the stories he loved to share with the children.

Thank you for your support, your prayers and your giving. We look forward to reporting good things this next year.

Faith Marsden



Kettle and Fish

September and October 2020 saw us looking at possible ways to re-open, only to have that put on hold as we went into lockdown once again in November.

However, as Spring 2021 progressed and it became clear that restrictions would lift, we put those plans into action. We were aware too that St Peter's was due to close at the end of Summer 2021 for their refurbishment and we wanted to make the most of the few weeks available before the work began.

Opening with COVID safe measures was a challenge and we are hugely grateful to all our volunteers old and new who rose to the challenge. We needed to operate with table service and strict hygiene measures, but everyone coped really well and we were delighted to see both regulars and new visitors.

Throughout this time we were also planning for what would happen once St Peter's closed for building work and, after exploring a variety of options, we concluded that a move to Suffolk Road church best fulfilled requirements. At the start of September we moved all our equipment from St Peter's either to Suffolk Road or to St John's Methodist Church for storage and we ran our first session at the new venue on 16th September. We look forward to seeing how this new arrangement will develop.

Thanks go to Andrew and the trustees of Suffolk Road for making us so welcome and to all our volunteers for their hard work and support. Thanks also to those who drop in regularly and keep the place buzzing!

Please do pray for the long term future of Kettle and Fish as we would like to move back into St Peter's once renovations finish, if we can. And if you haven't yet, please drop in and see us one Thursday, you are assured of a warm welcome and delicious cake!

Ruth Ridge and Andrew and Anita Dixey

Number 72 Family and Community Centre

GOD IS FAITHFUL, AND HE WILL STRENGTHEN YOU AND PROTECT YOU
FROM THE EVIL ONE
(2 Thessalonians 3v3 NIV)

Recruiting staff for the Number 72 team has always been challenging. We have seen many people come and go over the 14 years that we have been operating.

This year in the midst of all the issues and opportunities for change that COVID and lockdown has presented, we hit an unexpected low when within a very short space of time we lost 4 staff members for a variety of reasons. We wondered how we could recover from this .

It is often in our lowest and weakest moments that God shows the greatness of His power and plan. After all it is not by our own power, nor by might, but by His

Spirit that God's work is accomplished.

Emerging from this time we became aware of an unusual flow of provision, and sensed that God was doing something wonderful and amazing.

Finding staff who both love the Lord and are well suited to the role can be a bit like finding a needle in a haystack. However in an amazingly short space of time we were able to appoint Jon as a Family and Community Support Worker, and also Nicola in our host receptionist

As a result we have had the privilege of 'standing in the gap' for an increasing number of people, showing the love of Jesus to the lonely, the abused, the grieving, those suffering anxiety and poor mental health, those in debt, and those with family difficulties.

GOD IS FAITHFUL!

We are deeply grateful and amazed at the faithfulness of our God as we continue to do the good works He gives us to do.

STOP PRESS!

Our services are now also available in Church Road Great Cornard. For more information or to book an appointment please call Rob McNeish 07940 482241. Alternatively contact our main office on 01787 310610

Tim Ayrton

Open House 'drop in' and community lunches at The Christopher Centre.

Open House supports some of the most vulnerable members of our community alongside those that would otherwise be isolated (including single older men). It is a safe environment where the guests can chat and share in complete confidence, find help with any problems, whilst enjoying homemade refreshments. Every week we are joined by Emma a member of the Realise Futures. Emma deals with all sorts of issues for those suffering from mental health issues in general and Autism in particular. Working with Realise Futures we are hoping to provide some basic numeracy and literacy courses in the near future. During covid-19 we obtained permission from our MP to keep the Open House group going for 16 of our most at risk guests. This proved to be a lifeline for them as we were their only contacts. We were able to keep a check on their physical as well as mental health, plus provide take away meals to ensure they were eating well.

Teresa Bishop

Prayer Breakfast

I am very aware that you will know that, as a group, we have been unable to meet for some time. We do trust and pray that in the very near future, we will be able to continue our practice, to once again meet on Saturday mornings for breakfast and more importantly at an agreed location.

However, we have continued to meet and fellowship on Zoom, with the assistance and ingenious setup, put in motion by Rev. Ruth Ridge, who we are indebted to for such arrangements. Our numbers have fluctuated but one person commented it was nice to have breakfast and pray without having to leave home!

David Ford.

Samaritan's Purse, Shoebox Appeal

As you well know that due to the covid outbreak prevented the setting up of the usual 'factory' base and as far as I know on my church The Cornard Christian Fellowship forwarded boxes. We manage 101 various boxes and we also gave them our usual donation of £500-00.

I am yet to hear what is to occur this Autumn with regard to the area again supporting Samaritan's Purse 2001.

David Ford

Storehouse

We are so incredibly thankful for God's faithfulness to us as a local ministry. We have been able to remain open throughout all the lockdowns.

So far this year we have received over 37,000 items & fed 1368 adults & 820 children.

In May we opened the Storehouse Café - which runs during our Drop-in sessions. We have experienced Christians running this who are there to offer anyone who is struggling or feels isolated a hot drink, listening ear & the offer of prayer. Anyone in need of this can just turn up, so please keep this in mind for those you support.

Our community continues to generously donate food & toiletries. We use our Facebook page to keep people updated, as we can reach the widest group of the community that way. However, we are aware that many people don't have access to Facebook, so we are asking each church to identify someone to share the information on FB with their members.

Due to our Stores vacancy, we have had to sadly cancel Harvest collections this year, as we don't have capacity to manage this influx of donations. However, we still require donations through our regular collection points to meet demand.

We feel God's favour on us & it's a privilege to serve Him in this way. Please pray for the health & wellbeing of all our staff. Also, that God will direct people to us for help - we know there are many people out there who are struggling but are too ashamed to ask.

Thank you so much for your support & prayers.

Every blessing,

Vicky Leonard

The Sudbury Community Depot:

The past 18 months have been particularly busy for us. During covid-19 there was an increase in domestic violence referrals and teenagers leaving home.

We were able to supply furniture and household goods to those in need (sometimes within hours of families being moved out of violent situations).

We have sadly lost some of our storage space due to changes at St Gregory's (Cheryl very kindly gave us use of the garage). Storage space is one of our biggest problems, along with transport. I must pay tribute to the wonderful Depot volunteers that have worked tirelessly through this difficult time.

Teresa Bishop

Sudbury Town Pastors

This time two years ago we were looking forward and planning for some of the busiest Saturday nights of the year. The bizarre sights of Halloween would soon be followed by Bonfire weekend, Christmas lights switch on, Christmas Eve and finally the celebrations for the New Year.

We weren't without our challenges. A shortage of volunteers meant that it was sometimes difficult to build a team which allowed the patrols to take place. Nevertheless, by early 2020 we had much to thank God for. Five new volunteers had come forward to join the team. Their training had been fast tracked by providing it in house, here in Sudbury, delivered by a well-qualified member of the TP committee. Many years of dedicated service by our Town Pastors had ensured that we enjoyed an excellent reputation in the town and were met with much appreciation from members of the public, as well as the various people working in the night time economy. We had many examples of situations where we had been able to help keep people safe and to show God's love on the streets, as well as the many conversations we had where we could share something about our journey of faith in Christ.

Then in March 2020 the whole world changed. The Lock Down meant that much of the night time economy was temporarily collapsed and the safety of our team became of paramount importance. Along with all the other TP schemes in Suffolk we made the difficult decision to cease our patrols for the immediate future.

Nevertheless we have not been completely inactive. The TP committee has continued to meet, within Covid 19 restrictions, and to consider the way forward. We have also kept regular contact with TP Central, and the leaders of other TP schemes, through on-line "Zoom" meetings. Like many church leadership teams we have made use of this quieter time to really reflect on our work and to prayerfully seek God's will for us. In recent weeks we have conducted a number of prayer walks around the town, both on Saturday night and on a busy Thursday Market day. We remain excited about the future, believing that God will provide us with further, and possibly new, opportunities to reach out to our community with His love. We would value your prayers as we face the many challenges ahead and would particularly ask that you pray that new volunteers would be led to come forward to support the work of the team.

Mark Ulanowski