

## Churches Together Annual Report 2021-22

### **A letter from the Chairman**

It feels like this year we have begun to move back to some level of normality as we learn to live with COVID. Gradually things have begun to open up and we have been able to move from online to in person worship, as well as seeking to take on many of the activities that stopped so suddenly in March 2020.

Throughout the turmoil of the past two years many of us have continued to meet to pray online and that constant praying presence has been key. It is wonderful now to be able to meet for prayer breakfasts face to face and to include those with no computer access. Please do offer to host a breakfast if you are able.

Kettle and Fish have also resumed a regular service, now in their new venue at Suffolk Road. Please do support them if you can, either by dropping in for refreshments and chat or volunteering. This is valuable outreach work for Churches Together and not only supplies a service to the local community, but also enables Churches Together to support other Christian initiatives across the town.

Foxearth Meadows remained open for business throughout the pandemic and provides a valuable space for people to engage with creation and learn more about the Creator. We are all increasingly aware of how wonderful and fragile the environment is and it is great to see the growth in the number of eco-churches in the area. If you want to find out more, then keep an eye out for the planned eco-church support meetings.

With the cost of living crisis worsening and all of us tightening our belts this winter, the work of Storehouse continues to be vital in Sudbury and District. This is supplemented by the new 'Still good to eat' shop at St Andrew's. We are blessed not only by their work, but also by Abi's Footprints, the Community Depot, Community lunches and No. 72, all offering support and guidance in different ways.

Work with young people continues to be an important aspect of Christian life in the area. Eden's are once again open for business and are providing support for homeschoolers as well as their regular activities, there are some exciting developments with 18-30s ministry and this summer saw the first joint churches holiday club run for a week in August. Future Vision was another organisation that continued to work in the pandemic with the chaplains at TGS remaining available throughout, however now that schools are allowing visitors again, volunteers are needed to build up the work with 'Open the book', if you are able to offer time to do this, it is very rewarding.

God's work continues, adapting to the changing times and contexts and I have been heartened, during my time as chairman of CTISD, by the way that Christians in

Sudbury change and adapt together, supporting each other in prayer and fellowship and joining in worship and service. We may not always agree on everything, but we are aware that what unites us - One Lord, one faith, one baptism - is far greater than what divides. Now more than ever that unity in diversity is needed as we respond together to the challenges that face us. My time as chairman has been a blessing and, as I step down, I pray that the new chair will feel as enriched as I have by sharing with so many wonderful brothers and sisters in the work of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Blessings.

Gerry Higginson

### **18-30s**

Our 2020-21 Report asked for continued prayer for God's provision for the 'missing generation', and for our willingness to respond and invest. We know that churches have responded in various ways but there is still much to be done.

A recent encouragement: a former drug addict, now wonderfully converted and healed in Christ, has offered to help reach out to some of the young adults in the area. 6 local church leaders/CTIS&D officers spent an evening with him after he had enjoyed an hour listening to some local lads about their needs, and the Enabling Group has encouraged further exploration of this ministry. It will be for the Forum to endorse it, and assist in raising necessary funding.

Meanwhile we have continued to visit churches and projects where ministry to young adults is flourishing - eg The Forge in Debenham, and River Church in Ipswich (now just 1 year old, having already seen a number of young folk commit to Christ.)

Please continue to pray for us to welcome and nurture the 18-30s generation.

*Roger Pullan, Coordinator*

### **Abi's Footprints**

During the last year, we and the families we support have at last been able to use CloverLink (our Cornard 'hub') on a regular basis. Most families now have the opportunity, if they wish, to come and choose for themselves many of the practical essentials they need for their babies and young children. It also provides space and valuable opportunities for our volunteers to offer a listening ear in a relaxed and friendly environment, and gain a greater understanding of each family's concerns, worries and anxieties. As always, even just listening and kindness can have a profound effect in a desperate situation. Recently a young mum wrote '... thank you so much for the package (nappies and baby toiletries) and the (supermarket) voucher, it made me cry'.

In September 2022 we were also pleased to begin a new Stay and Play 'drop in' for Mums, Bumps and Babies twice monthly on Thursdays, alongside the Well Baby clinic run by the Sudbury Area 'Phoenix Children's Centre' at the Stevenson Centre.

During the 12 months up to August 2022 we responded to almost 200 requests from 84 different families, 51 of which were new to us during that period. We anticipate increasing pressure on our human, financial and practical resources but are confident that our heavenly Father will continue to provide from His endless resources - enabling us to meet the growing challenges in these difficult times. If you or anyone you know is struggling to provide essentials such as clothing, bedding, equipment etc. for a baby or young child, please message us on Facebook (preferably) or find further details on [www.abisfootprints.co.uk](http://www.abisfootprints.co.uk)

**Gill Soper**

*Agape Café* 

Since reopening in July 2021 Agape Café has very much stabilised its client base and we remain 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 are open every Wednesday, from 10.00 until 13.00 in the Terrapin building at the Old School, Great Cornard (on the corner of Head lane and Wells Hall Road)

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.

We are very short of helpers at present and if anyone reading this could help us even only one Wednesday a month we would be delighted to welcome them.

We could also do with people to bake cakes.

If you could spare a few hours each month, or bake us some cakes, please contact me on 01787 319080 or sent me an email [peterhalden@hotmail.com](mailto:peterhalden@hotmail.com)

Peter Halden

### **Christian Aid**

The total collected this year was £3,652.32. In addition, online donations to the Sudbury CA Group e-envelope were £225.00, making a total of £3,877.32 (excluding Gift Aid). This was an increase on last year's total of £3,138.14. Some people will have

been prompted to give direct to Christian Aid but there is currently no way to quantify those donations. The Sudbury CA Group were pleased to welcome Richard Blyth of the Chadbrook Benefice of Holy Trinity, Alpheton and Shimpling, who had asked to join forces with Sudbury. Their contribution to the total was £531.21.

Last year because of the pandemic we used only delivery-only envelopes, which meant that more could be delivered as volunteers did not have to visit houses twice or knock on doors. The majority of volunteers continued to use them this year, and most streets in the Sudbury area received an envelope. We are very grateful to Peddars and Holland & Barrett for agreeing to be dropping-off points, as well as Number 72 North Street.

Some volunteers returned to using the original envelopes as they preferred to go back and collect the envelopes they had delivered, having established a rapport over previous years with many of the residents and there is no doubt that the personal touch encourages people to give when they might not otherwise.

Christian Aid Week began with a service at Great Waldingfield on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May led by Rev. Faith Marsden, with Andy Jowitt preaching, and we thank them for an inspiring start. We would also like to thank all the people who were involved.

Next year, Christian Aid Week will be 14-20 May 2023 and we always welcome more volunteers to support the work of Christian Aid around the world.

Clare Lodge

### **Christian Muslim Relations**

We haven't met since 1999 because of Covid, although I have kept up with Muslim friends including the Imam. I took him to Thomas Gainsborough School to give advice about a new Muslim pupil. He spoke to an RE class about Islam.

We are planning a meeting on October 14 in the Quaker Meeting House at 2 pm. The Rector of St. Gregory's, Andrew Doarks, will speak briefly about what the Bible means to him, and Imam Ajmal will speak about what the Koran means to him. The talks will last for about 8 minutes and then there will be an open discussion. The meeting will end by 3.15. There will be refreshments when people arrive. We invite all who wish to come, and we look forward to any contribution to the discussion.

Jill Pullan

### **Communications**

Early in the pandemic, Ruth Ridge set up Zoom videoconferencing to enable news from churches, and prayers, to be shared; this continued until May 2022.

The website [churchestogetherinsudbury.org.uk](http://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](mailto: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.

We are still seeking people who could help with press publicity for CTiS&D events and with running our Facebook page and Twitter account.

Malcolm Snow

### Eden's

We have continued with our regular After-School Drop-ins, Friday night Youth Session, Sunday evening Christian Youth Café and Holiday drop-in sessions. At the drop-ins we continue to provide free food for the young people, which is becoming increasingly important in this cost of living crisis. We have secured funding to continue the wellbeing support within our Friday night sessions and Counselling for 18-25 year olds, this continues to be a well used service. Friday evenings are still very popular but we are struggling to get the volunteers needed to run this session. We continue to ask for your prayers that more people would be willing to volunteer to serve the young people in our community - it is so important that they have a safe place to socialise after a hard week at school.

This year we have also added an additional provision of a Drop-in for the Home Education community. We were approached by a Home Education parent who said that there is very little opportunity for their children to socialise with other young people in the same situation. So we have secured funding to run this on a weekly basis, with the Wellbeing support, in conjunction with Natalie Wiggins (who already runs our wellbeing support on Friday evenings). The Home Ed group had a session at Foxearth meadows earlier in the summer when they took part in pond dipping and games and had a tour of the reserve. It was great to work with the team at arocha on this and on another visit with the Christian Youth Café.

This summer we took a group of the Christian Youth Café young people to a new Christian festival called Satellites. We camped for 5 days and enjoyed a varied programme of worship talks and seminars. The young people had a fantastic time and met with God in a way many of them had not experienced before.

Without the support of the local churches and individual donors we would not be able to offer most of the activities we currently provide as grants only fund specific parts. So, thank you for your prayers and support.

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.

More recently, restrictions due to Covid prevented activities for many months.

The group resumed meetings in autumn 2021 with Sue Ayres as chairman. She hosted a Coffee Morning and Awareness Day in the Town Hall during Fairtrade Fortnight in February 2022, with the aim of providing information about Fairtrade. We are most grateful to those who helped to prepare for that event and assisted on the day. Oxfam staff continue to give their support and they had a brilliant window display.

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](mailto:info@sudburyfairtrade.org.uk).

Malcolm Snow

## **Foxearth Nature Reserve**

A couple of highlights first of all. On Sunday, 8 May we held our first open air service of the year. Some 80 people came, from different places and different churches, and enjoyed an inspirational time of worship and a powerful sermon by Andy Atkins, the CEO of A Rocha UK.

On 1 September a BBC crew came with Aled Jones to film at the reserve. By the time of the AGM the edition filmed mainly at Holy Trinity, Long Melford (on the hottest evening of the year) will have been broadcast and we'll know what came through the final edit.

Other churches have used the Meadows for interactive worship (4 o'clock Community from Chadbrook benefice and New Life Church) and Ruth Ridge led an Ascensiontide

prayer walk for Churches Together. Eden's Youth Café and Causeway Fellowship worshipped when they visited in their own particular style.

The reserve is a place of worship. In a sense we join with nature in worshipping our Creator. We want it to be a place where many can find peace and joy and be inspired to care for nature.

A wide range of people and groups have come to the Meadows, from young people with learning disabilities to Ukrainian refugees.

We are pleased that thanks to a generous donation we've been able to install a well-surfaced path from the car park into the reserve. We've improved other paths and want to continue to improve accessibility.

There are opportunities to learn about wildlife. Dragonfly ID walks and Moth Nights have proved popular, and National Meadows Day too. Take-up by schools has been slow post- Covid, but we're pleased that one school brought the whole staff after school to plan curriculum visits for all classes and we've also done some significant work with homeschoolers.

In April a Christian school from Liverpool made a three-day visit to the reserve their mission project for this year. We've also been blessed by three trainee vicars doing a placement with us and by Ruth Ridge spending time with us as part of her sabbatical.

Eco Church is a growing movement. Well over 5,000 churches are registered. It can be challenging to keep this as part of our mission agenda, but it can also be an exciting outreach strategy. This year we started an outreach at the Green Sunday market. For health reasons I'm setting this aside till I'm 'renewed', hopefully by next spring. We also came up with the idea of an Eco Church support group to help and encourage each other with ideas, resources and prayer. This was launched recently when 19 people came to Great Waldingfield church and Mark Prina led a workshop on mowing regimes in churchyards.

If you'd like to find out more about this (open) group or about the reserve, or if you'd like to join the happy band of volunteers who are so vital to the project, we'd love to hear from you.

Andy Jowitt

Volunteer Community Engagement Officer, Foxearth Meadows, A Rocha UK

Tel. 01787 464010

E-mail: [andy.jowitt@arocha.org](mailto:andy.jowitt@arocha.org)

## **Future Vision.**

Future Vision trustees and friends came together for six lunchtimes to pray at the end of the summer. We had a great time but still we are looking for someone to catch the vision of taking Bible Stories, Old and New into our schools over this next term.

God has been so good to us in the past and we firmly believe he has a plan for the future. Currently Gt Waldingfield, Acton, Bures and Tudor schools will be having a team whenever possible. We have some offers of volunteers, the schools want us, but we need a leader.

Please pray, make the need known and if that is you, please get in touch as soon as possible. 01787 312002 or [femarsden@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:femarsden@hotmail.co.uk)

Please thank God and pray for the continuing amazing work at TGS led by Ian and Liz. God is at work!

Thank you for your giving and your prayers.

Faith Marsden



**Kettle and Fish**

Last September saw us move from St Peter's to Suffolk Road Church, at least for the period of building works at St Peter's. The move went well and there are many benefits to the new venue including warmth, toilets on site and the ability to fix regular dates. We thank Suffolk Road Church for their welcome and hospitality.

Sadly, however, we are now further from the town centre and footfall is therefore significantly less. We are blessed with a good crowd of regular visitors and the occasional shopper from Aldi, but we do not see the same trade as we did in the market square. This is a concern, partly from the perspective of outreach, but also for income, as Kettle and Fish is the main source of funding for Churches Together and is what enables us to run the Dorcas Fund and to support other Christian groups in the town.

We continue to serve a wide variety of cakes, filled rolls and other refreshments and to offer fellowship and prayer. We have also begun to host outside organisations from time to time. Please do pop in and support us if you are able. We are also in need of more volunteers to help with setting up on Wednesday afternoons and serving on Thursdays. If you would be interested, please contact Andrew, Anita or Ruth.

Ruth Ridge and Andrew and Anita Dixey

## **Number 72 Family and Community Centre**

It has been an exciting start to the month at Number 72. We have recruited some new staff and are excited about where God may be leading our work. We are hoping to branch out into Great Cornard, particularly supporting young families and the local primary schools. It is still very early days so we ask for your prayers to help us listen to God's direction and where he may be leading us.

Every Monday we run a Ukrainian Support Group where people can just turn up with or without their host. The group is designed to enable newly arrived refugee's and their hosts to get support in navigating the system and getting help with anything they need help with. It is also a safe space for them to be able to socialise with other local Ukrainians and speak their own language. We have linked up with Suffolk Refugee Support who are visiting and have supported us to provide practical support.

Our regular drop in continues to run and is open to anyone and everyone. We are building relationships with people in the local community and will chat with them, offer support and signposting, pray and even play scrabble.

During the summer the Number 72 team took 10 young people away on a sailing barge for an all expenses paid trip. It was wonderful to see some of the young people really grow in confidence and to receive positive feedback from the parents to say how much their children had enjoyed the experience.

Hannah Kemp

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

The Monday morning 'drop in' and the community lunches are both very busy. There is a real buzz of happy chatter every Monday along with the problems that need solutions. We have a real mixed bag of folk attending which makes for a very interesting and some times challenging few hours.

With the cost of living rises, more than ever members of our community are finding it difficult to manage.

Alongside the financial poverty is the isolation this brings. We have seen an example of this with an older lady that has recently started to come to both the 'drop in' and the lunch. Her husband has dementia, his needs are such that he has gone into residential care. The cost of this is taking the lion share of the household income leaving very little for the lady to live on. She has been thrilled to find a place she can come and socialise with others without having to worry about the cost. She has made friends with some of our other elderly guests so she now doesn't feel so alone.

Special Support

Emma from Realise futures continues to join us every week to offer specific support for those suffering from mental health issues in general and Autism in particular. We feel very blessed to have her with us, like all Charities Realise Futures are having to keep their costs down, so we feel very privileged that they continue to allow Emma to join us and offer this support for those that need it.

#### Finance and Volunteers

We are just keeping our head above water financially, but we are feeling the pinch of the ever rising cost of ingredients for our cakes and lunches. Judith from the new community shop in St Andrews has given us first grabs if they have any fresh ingredients left (which thus far they haven't, which is great as it shows fresh ingredients are being used by those using the Community Shop.) Volunteer wise we are struggling to find both cooks and kitchen/serving volunteers. We have gaps in our rota which we would dearly like to fill. It only means a once a month commitment.

Anyone wanting further information re volunteering contact Teresa :

01787 311558 email [bishopteresa78@gmail.com](mailto:bishopteresa78@gmail.com)

Teresa Bishop

#### Prayer Breakfast

After Ruth Ridge and Andy Dixey did a wonderful job of keeping 'prayer breakfasts' going through lockdowns via Zoom, we re-started actual breakfasts at the beginning of May. David Ford, to whom we owe a debt of thanks, passed on the baton to Malcolm & Judith Offord and Andy Jowitt. We still enjoy (and groan at) David's funnies.

Thanks are also owed to all the churches which have been willing to host the breakfasts. At the time of writing we are approaching the end of the first rota and are tying up the final details of the next (October through to the beginning of February). Numbers have varied between 12 and 20, usually nearer the latter.

Prayer Breakfasts begin with a relaxed half-hour of friendship and food (8.00 - 8.30 am). We then continue the fellowship with a time of prayer, often led by the host church with brief worship and reflection, and mention of prayer needs. We pray for our town, our churches and outreach, our communities and our world.

We see these times as a power house of Churches Together: building friendships and supporting each other and our mission together with prayer. Please do join us when you can and please do your best to make people in your church aware of the breakfasts and that they are welcome.

*Malcolm & Judith Offord and Andy Jowitt*

## **Storehouse**

Storehouse continues to provide short-term emergency support to people locally who cannot afford basic food and toiletries. We also aim to signpost people to local agencies that can help address their underlying financial/social difficulties so that they can get out of food poverty.

It is a joy to work with other local Christian charities ensuring that local people get more than just food. The Salvation Army continue their School Uniform Swap, Community Depot provide household goods, Abi's Footprints is a Baby Bank, Community Kitchen provide a free cooked meal and the newly founded Still Good to Eat provide fresh produce. I often wonder what our neighbourhoods would look like without the compassion and hard work of the local Christian community?

Storehouse like all the other charities wouldn't be able to continue their good work without the support of all the local churches. So, we thank you for your practical and financial donations. We also thank God for His amazing faithfulness in what has been another turbulent year.

To date we have been blessed with over 43,000 donated items, which has allowed us to feed over 1,400 adults and 1,200 children.

The coming winter is going to be financially challenging for all of us, but more so for those who are already struggling to keep the lights on. However, we know God is full of compassion and His faithfulness never ends. May be this is an opportunity for our church buildings to become 'warm spaces' where people can gather - keep warm, find community and who knows even the amazing transformative love of our Father!

Vicky Leonard

## **Community Christmas lunch 2021**

It was lovely to have everyone under one roof again for the 2021 Christmas lunch. We are so grateful for the hospitality shown to us by the Sudbury Freemasons that allowed us to use their splendid Hall and kitchen facilities. We served over 100 lunches between those eating in house and the home deliveries to the housebound.

We had a wonderful team of volunteers to take out our home deliveries to Sudbury, Long Melford, Glemsford, Acton and Lavenham.

Once again the kind volunteers from Go Start provided transport to and from the lunch. We are deeply grateful to them for giving up this time to us on Christmas day and for the support we have received from them over the past 18 years of the Christmas lunches.

We were again blessed to receive donations of goods and monies from local businesses:

Sudbury Waitrose  
Angelo Smith's Jewellers

Mr Coleman Sudbury Market Butcher

And further donations from members of the Community and various Freemason Lodges.

Due to the overwhelming generosity of all those that donated we were able to make up hampers for the families that attended to see them through Boxing day to the New Year.

As usual we had a lively sing song after lunch led by members of The Christopher Centre Community Singers. This is the time I like to pop my head out of the kitchen, all cooking done, and see the joy and happiness on the faces of those round the tables joining in with the singing. It never fails to make me feel truly blessed to be part of such a joyous Christmas day.

This coming year we will be back at The Masonic Hall. We will be looking for volunteers to help with front of house service, transport of meals to the housebound and pudding makers.

Contact Teresa [bishopteresa78@gmail.com](mailto:bishopteresa78@gmail.com) or 311558

### **The Sudbury Community Depot:**

The Community Depot continues to be extremely busy. We have deliveries booked up weeks in advance for larger items of furniture going out to those that need it.

Our wonderful team of volunteer drivers and drivers mates work flat out with deliveries and collections. We are so blessed to have such a dedicated team.

We have changed our day and time for small household items being delivered to or collected from our base at The Christopher Centre. This takes some of the pressure off Angie our goods manager and means she can focus solely on the larger deliveries and collections.

As with the Monday Open House group we are seeing a much wider range of people needing the service we provide including more elderly people .

Once again during the summer hols we provided families with 'utility hampers' of washing powder, loo rolls etc to ease the burden on the family housekeeping budget.

Financially :

We are only just ticking over. Our fund-raising options have been somewhat limited since Joanne moved to Norfolk as she was the only driver in the team, meaning we could only do our cake, bakes and preserve stall once a month in Sudbury, missing out on the larger venues further afield.

Vegan suppers have been cancelled for the rest of this year due to Teresa needing a rest after health problems.

Storage:

We are as ever desperately in need of more storage space. We are constantly having to turn down good quality donations due to lack of space. This can be very frustrating . It was a real blow to loose the St Gregory's garage due to Cheryl's retirement. We have gained half a barn at Newton and a couple of garages from Babergh, but we no longer have any storage close at hand for emergencies.

Volunteers :

We are looking for volunteers to help in the Depot on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, to help sort and stack stock.

Depot days and times:

Drop offs or collection of small household items :

Mondays 10 a.m. to 1.45. This is by appointment only.

Deliveries and collections of larger furniture items Tuesday and Thursday mornings 10 a.m. to 12.30.

For further information contact Teresa or Angie

Email [sudburycommunitydepot@gmail.com](mailto:sudburycommunitydepot@gmail.com) or [bishopteresa78@gmail.com](mailto:bishopteresa78@gmail.com)

Or tel: 07462108708. You can also find us on FB and Twitter.

Teresa Bishop

### **Sudbury Town Pastors**

Limited patrols have been happening over the summer (about 1 a month), with a skeleton crew of people on the prayer base and out on the streets. Our plan is to get together within the next few weeks to pray and discuss what the future holds for us. We'd appreciate your prayers at the AGM, for guidance and inspiration. Many thanks, and God bless.

Mark Ulanowski