

Churches Together Annual Report 2022-23

Chairman's Report

This past year has been interesting as we exited the Covid restrictions and began to meet together again.



We have seen the Forums being fairly well attended, the Prayer Breakfasts getting a lot of support and Open the Book getting back into the Schools. Kettle and Fish has continued at Suffolk Road Church but not with the numbers we used to get at St Peters.

All of these activities rely on people from the churches working together and shows the strength of the unity of the churches. I would like to thank all of those involved for their hard work and dedication as all these activities as this is part of our mission to reach out to people share the love of Jesus with others.

I would also like to thank the Church Representatives who attend the Engagement Group meetings for their help and wisdom as we plan our programme and deal with the nuts and bolts of our legal responsibilities, like accounts, donations and minutes of meetings etc. We have finally re-written the constitution which has been sent out to churches and will hopefully be ratified at the AGM.

I am stepping down as Chair for personal reasons but I must say a big thank you to Ruth Ridge, Gill Phillips and my Vice Chairs and others who have given me excellent support and guidance during my Tenure. I am confident that the unity I have seen during the past year will continue and bring great blessing on the community that we serve.

Tom Burrows

18-30s

It has been a year of readjustment. Our major project, involving various church leaders, would have welcomed Ian Featherstone as an unattached outreach worker to young adults. CTiS&D provided generous funding for a 6 month trial. Sadly, for personal reasons Ian withdrew. We have kept in contact with one of

the local 18-30s he would have worked with, but we need another committed worker.

The Task Group was set up to focus on the faith needs of 18-30s. Reaching out to young adults remains one of the biggest challenges we face. Many of our churches have good projects to engage with young families, but generally we see few 18-30 'outsiders' joining our regular worship.

We work with individual churches when invited, but we also need to work together. Take Edens. Over 25 years ago the vicar of All Saints saw the need for Christian outreach to teens. With local clergy, he launched Sudbury Christian Youth, now the thriving Edens Project. Sometimes we need joint action.

We now urgently need a new team to run the 18-30s Task Group. Please pray for visionary people to take the reins. Could it be you? May God help us to progress at every level. We owe it to that 'missing generation'.

Roger Pullan, Coordinator

Abi's Footprints

2023 has been a challenging but exciting year for Abi's Footprints Baby Bank!

- By 2023 every inch of space in our facility was filled, and volunteers were struggling to cope with cramped spaces, heavy/awkward lifting, and ladders on high racking. So, in May this year, we moved into a much larger warehouse. Within this space, volunteers built a well-insulated 'inner room' fitted with storage for clothing and spaces for refreshments, information, toddler play, small office. Families can readily choose what they need, and our volunteer team has increased from 12 to 20.

- We'd become increasingly aware of families who, in addition to practical provision of clothes and equipment for their young children, need more social/emotional support, such as those fleeing domestic violence, or recruited abroad for work in the care sector. Sara Merritt joined us in August as our part-time Support Worker (7.5 hours a week), to provide additional holistic support for a few families in greatest need.

- 'Footprints Stay & Play', our twice monthly drop-in for mums and babies at the Stevenson Centre, continues to thrive. Running alongside Phoenix Family Hub's outreach baby clinic in Cornard, the partnership works well.

- Recent developments stretched our finances considerably. But our new facilities have made a huge difference. Throughout these last months, our faithful God has provided all that we've needed, and we continue to depend on Him as we seek to shine His light and love into the lives of the families we serve.

Abi's Footprints Baby Bank, New Life Church, Great Cornard
www.abisfootprints.co.uk

Gill Soper

Agape Café

Things have changed dramatically for Agape Café in the last year. The Terrapin Building which we met in has been condemned by Suffolk County Council and is due for demolition and we now meet in the back hall at the Old School which has had some alterations to meet our needs.

Also over the past few months our number of helpers has increased making it much easier for all of us.

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 back hall of 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 Great Cornard where people can meet together and enjoy one another's company.

If you want any more information please do contact me on 01787 319080 or sent me an email peterhalden@hotmail.com

Peter Halden

Christian Aid

Christian Aid Week began on Sunday 14th May 2023 with a united service at All Saints, Sudbury, led by Rev. Andrew Doarks. We had arranged for the regional engagement officer from Christian Aid to speak at the service but he was indisposed and instead we had an inspiring address from local CA volunteer Matt George, to whom our thanks are given for standing in at short notice.

We are also very grateful for the efforts of all the volunteers who help with the huge task of delivering envelopes to most streets in Sudbury and Cornard, as well as Shimpling. I would like particularly to thank the 'depot holders' who recruit people to deliver, and sometimes collect, envelopes and ensure they all have the right number of envelopes for the streets they have been allocated. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of those organisations and people who act as collection points, such as Holland and Barrett, Peddars and No.72 in Sudbury, and the Co-op in Cornard.

The total collected this year was £3,110.24, including donations to our e-envelope of £260 (excluding Gift Aid). This was about the same as 2021, although slightly less than last year's total of £3,652.32. Perhaps this was a reflection of the cost of living crisis that has affected people's budgets this year. Across the country the total raised for Christian Aid Week was over £2.3million.

Next year, Christian Aid Week will be 12-18 May 2024 and we always welcome more volunteers to support the work of Christian Aid around the world.

Clare Lodge

Christian Muslim Relations

The last meeting of the Muslim/Christian Dialogue was held on October 14 2022 in the hall of the Quaker Meeting House. There were at least 30 people present from both communities. The subject was why the Koran and the Bible are important to people of faith. Imam Ajmal chose the subject and spoke about the Koran and the Rev. Andrew Doarks from St Gregory's and All Saint's churches spoke about the Bible. There was then a short discussion.

The Rev Jim Stewart who has recently retired from Tunbridge Wells is now going to lead the project. Jim has considerable experience of discussions with Muslim leaders and hopes to do the same here, and include other members of the Moslem community. I will of course support him.

Jill Pullan

Communications



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, with more than 2,000 visitors each year. The help from those who maintain the website and the Google Calendar is invaluable.

About 260 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. We welcome news and information about activities that are of interest to the wider Christian community. Please make Churches Together, the website and the email list known in your own church family.

We continue the search for a press and social media officer to manage this side of communications. Our Twitter (or X) account is currently dormant and Ruth posts only occasionally on Facebook. An officer with time and expertise to really make these communications work for us is much needed.

Malcolm Snow

ECO CHURCH SUPPORT GROUP

An increasing number of congregations are finding Eco Church a useful tool in the mission of their church. Caring for our planet is, I believe, a part of our Christian calling in itself, but can also be a great opportunity for outreach to our local community.

The writer to the Hebrews exhorts us to meet together and encourage one another (Hebrews 10:25). And this is what we are aiming to do: to share ideas, learn together and pray for each other.

Over the last year we have enjoyed generous hospitality at Great Waldingfield with an inspirational tour of Old School Wood (Branchlines) and a snowdrop walk in the churchyard; we've shared ideas for 'greening' Christmas and for recycling; we've been treated to tea and (lots of) cake before a tour of Maureen Morris' reserve at Monks Eleigh, and we've held an Eco Quiz night with quiz master Robert Fish.

An Eco Church highlight for me was helping Apple Class (special needs) and the Green Team at St Gregory's Primary School enjoy finding and helping nature in All Saints' churchyard, where we built a 'Buggingham Palace'.

Special thanks are owed to Lavenham Natural History Society members who helped several churches conduct plant surveys as part of the 'Churches Count on Nature' project. Five long botanical lists have been submitted!

Please let me know if you'd like to be added to the circulation list for news of future events.

Andy Jowitt

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Eden's

Thank you for your continued support and interest in the ministry of Eden's Project. Without the support of the local churches and local individuals who partner with us to financially support the work we would not be able to continue. Likewise with the volunteers who help us to run our busiest Friday night event - it would not be possible without them.

Our regular weekly activities are after school drop-ins with free food on Tuesdays and Thursdays, a home education drop-in on Wednesdays, Friday evening youth centre night with all areas open and Sunday evening Christian Youth Café sessions (these happen twice a month). During the holidays we swap

some of these activities for holiday drop-ins which provide a safe and warm place for the young people to meet up and receive free food and support.

We are really pleased to continue to offer wellbeing support to the young people at the Wednesday and Friday sessions through our partnership with Natalie Wiggins, a local trained counsellor who is also a Christian and used to attend and volunteer at Eden's when she was younger. This is an extremely valuable partnership and many of the young people are really benefitting from Natalies support.

In activities outside of the youth centre we took a group of the Sunday Christian youth café attendees to the Satellites summer festival for 5 days of Christian teaching and worship - they had a fantastic time! We have also taken a couple of groups to Foxearth Meadows to be inspired by God's creation there and we took a group to London to attend a youth Christian apologetics conference. Please keep us in your prayers as we endeavour to serve the young people of this area by providing safe spaces to meet in; provision of food; wellbeing support; sharing the love of Jesus through the way we serve them; and discipleship and encouragement to those who already walk with Jesus. Please do come along to the United Service at 6:30pm on the 15th October at the Salvation Army to hear more from the young people themselves.

The Eden's Team.



Sudbury Fairtrade Group

To be honest, it has been a difficult time for the FairTrade group. Rather like the Conservative Party, we have had a number of leaders in recent years who have had excellent intentions but who have felt unable to carry on in post beyond a few months. Indeed, since the departure of John Boardman several years ago, the Group has lacked the continuous leadership it needs. The death of Lord Andrew Phillips, so influential in the original establishment of the FairTrade Foundation, was another blow to the Group. His knowledge and energy were inspirational.

Sara Merritt led the group enthusiastically from October 2022, but lack of youthful team members, and her other commitments, led to her resignation in summer 2023.

On the positive side, we had a stall on the Market Hill during FairTrade Fortnight in March, distributing the ubiquitous banana, engaging with passers-by and promoting the concept of fair trade. We were encouraged by support from the local Oxfam and Co-op stores - from which, of course, FairTrade goods can always be obtained.

The Group desperately needs more personnel. Renewal of Sudbury's status as a FairTrade town needs to be implemented. The present membership is not in a position to do this and would warmly welcome anyone to join us who feels able to help. At present, the Town Hall is considering the matter.

It should be stressed that FairTrade is not an exclusively Christian organisation - if you know of folk who are not necessarily church-goers but with an interest in fair trade, please contact the Group via our website.

Malcolm Offord

Foxearth Nature Reserve

Work

Fridays continue to be our regular conservation volunteering days. If you'd enjoy working outdoors close to nature and being part of a friendly team, please join us and find out what we do. Recent Fridays we've been focused on creating access through the meadows for a digger to reach some smaller ponds that need dredging and restoring.

Welcome

We've welcomed a range of groups over the year (local primary school classes, homeschoolers, Eden's Christian Youth Café, FortKnights (Befrienders) Youth Group, teenagers from a Liverpool 'Christian Fellowship School', Brownies, and more) ... as well as individuals and families to our open event for National Meadows Day and our Dragonfly ID Walks. The Bridge Project now brings a minibus-load once a month for an 'out and about day' to learn about nature and

do conservation tasks. It's great to see their pride and pleasure in a job well done.

Worship

The Bible describes *God's* creation worshipping its Creator (e.g. 'The trees of the field shall clap their hands'). We want to help nature worship well. We also invite people to come to the reserve to worship, church congregations and individuals alike. At our May open air service, Bishop Roger (Bishop of Bradwell) was our preacher and at our September service, the Rev. Mike Perry, Chair of Trustees for A Rocha UK. Thanks too to the Rev. Ruth Ridge who led a wonderful Ascension Day prayer walk on behalf of Churches Together. My favourite moment of worship on the reserve this year, however, was a Causeway Fellowship service (for adults with learning disabilities). When our guitarist Helen struck up 'He's got the whole world in His hands' there was an instant rush to join the signers at the front in an impromptu choir.

Witness

We love it when we're asked what we do and why we do it and are able to explain that it is part of our Christian service and part of how we love the Lord our God and love our neighbour. Please do pray for the project. We publish (by email) a quarterly news and prayer letter and I would be delighted to add you to the circulation.

And finally ... Sadly towards the end of this year we will say goodbye to Mark Prina, the reserve manager. Mark retires in December. He has been with the project since its beginnings and we owe him a debt of gratitude. He will be a hard act to follow. Please pray that the right person will be found to fill the post.

Andy Jowitt

Volunteer Community Engagement Officer, Foxearth Meadows, A Rocha UK

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Future Vision.

You will remember last year we were looking for someone to catch the vision of taking Bible Stories, Old and New into our schools over this last year. We were delighted when Ingrid Morelli felt it was right for her to take up the role and she gathered a number of new volunteers to assist her. Unfortunately (for us) Ingrid has now got a new full time job and we are again in the position of needing a new leader. Ingrid has very successfully done the footwork and restored the link with a number of schools for which we are very grateful and we wish her well as she begins a very different role.

God has been so good to us in the past and we firmly believe he has a plan for the future.

Please pray, make the need known and if you feel you might fit this role, please get in touch as soon as possible.

Meanwhile Ian and Liz continue to work hard in TGS, both with students and staff. God is blessing their work and witness. Please pray for strength to maintain their workload and wisdom to know where they need to be and when.

Thank you for your giving and your prayers.

Faith Marsden

Chair of Future Vision

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Kettle and Fish

Thanks to generous hospitality from Suffolk Road Church we have continued to offer a welcoming café serving a wide variety of cakes, filled rolls and other refreshments and to offer fellowship and prayer. We meet most Thursdays, with the exception of the first week each month from 10am-1.30pm. We continue to welcome a good crowd of regulars and the occasional visitor, but we miss the central location that St Peter's provided. We are also unlikely to be able to return to St Peter's when it re-opens as The Bridge will be running its own cafe there. 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.

Due to the increase in food and energy prices we have reluctantly put our own prices up in order to avoid operating at a loss. However with a smaller clientele this is a constant risk. We are also struggling for volunteers, particularly to help with setting up on Tuesday mornings, but also with serving on Thursdays and if we cannot find more helpers we may need to reduce sessions to twice a month. If you would be interested in helping, please contact Andrew, Anita or Ruth.

Please do pray for the work of Kettle and Fish and for guidance as we look to the future. Please also drop in if you are available on Thursdays and encourage other friends to do so too.

Ruth Ridge and Andrew and Anita Dixey

Number 72 Family and Community Centre

As this article is written, we begin the 20th year of Tim and Joy working with families in Sudbury. It is also the 17th year of Number 72 being at our base in North Street.

We are amazed by how the work has grown and changed over this time and are so grateful to God for His many blessings. Across the last school year our Team at Thomas Gainsborough School have handled approx 400 appointments on our weekly visits over the last year. We get excellent feedback from students that we meet with and we count it as a real privilege to be involved in this way.

Our drop-in currently runs for three days per week and features Scrabble Club, Arts and Crafts, and some very tasty Tea Cakes along with a variety of Coffee and Teas. This is all very much appreciated by those who attend and newcomers are always welcome.

We were very sorry to lose our senior debt counsellor back in December due to ill health, however his replacement is doing a great job and the debt work is busier than ever.

Looking at the work as a whole, it is clear that we are being required to do more in terms of support to needy folks but on less income. The effects of higher inflation and increased costs are taking their toll along with a notable reduction in giving amongst some of our supporter base. Sadly this presents us with a situation which is not sustainable and our long term future looks more uncertain now than in past years.

Tim and Joy have experienced some health issues recently and as a result will need to step back from the work in the near future. Lesley Mitchell has bravely offered to lead the work from the New Year but will need a strong Board of Trustees around her to offer her support.

Please join us in seeking God for the future of this work which we believe is still much needed in the Town. If you are able to offer your help or assistance in any way to help meet these needs please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Number 72

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

Our regular Monday lunch attendance continues to grow. We really do have a full house every week.

We have been very lucky with the weather and thus far we have been able to have 2 tables outside for some guests to use. We will struggle as the weather changes to fit everyone in. Unfortunately there are no larger premises available on a weekly basis with kitchen facilities.

As with last year we have seen an increase in elderly guests attending, some for financial reasons but most because they enjoy the company of others. One of our key aims is to help forge stronger communities and encourage friendships, this is certainly happening amongst our older guests who keep in touch through the week. For some of our elderly guests we provide transport (mostly through Felix Taxis) this has also proved to be a good Community link, Felix will contact us if they do not get a response when they go for a pick up, it's an extra pair of eyes.

We are hoping in the next few weeks to start a 'slow cooker course' to explore affordable meals which are nutritious. At the end of the course each attendee will receive a new slow cooker. Funding as always is always in the forefront of our minds. We have been lucky enough to receive funding from Sudbury Municipal charities, The Freemans trust and Suffolk Community Foundation in the last 12 months which has been a blessing as food cost keep rising. We are short of main course cooks and would welcome new volunteers to fill that role.

We have an excellent team of 'pudding cooks' from Bures that deliver wonderful puds every week and our kitchen/front of house team are treasures (washing up for 30 guests is no joke).

Teresa Bishop

Prayer Breakfast

Jesus said, 'Whenever two or three people meet together in my name, I am with them'. That is a promise we strongly adhere to at Prayer Breakfasts. A sense of unity with each other and with Jesus, a sense of concern for ourselves, for our churches, for our town and district, indeed for the whole world pervade our meetings. Typically, there are 15 to 18 of us, from a good range of the town's churches, meeting each Saturday from 8am to 9.30am.

It's a delight to be hosted by many of the churches in the district - not only in Sudbury, but in the villages as well - Glemsford, Great Waldingfield, Lavenham, Little Cornard, Long Melford. All Saints' newly refurbished Church Hall has been a particular asset, as one or two church groups with limited resources for providing breakfast have been able to use the Hall.

Prayer Breakfasts are a place where church affiliation is completely irrelevant - the presence of Jesus through the Holy Spirit inspires our words of intercession as well as our silences and reflections.

We invite a small donation (£1.50 to £2.00) at every meeting, and after covering costs it's a thrill to see that money grow week by week so that we are able to make contributions to various charities dear to the hearts of the members, notably Storehouse, Future Vision, Abi's Footprints and Capital Kids (based in Uganda).

Jesus regularly invited people to eat with him - come and join the party and be blessed!

Malcolm & Judith Offord and Andy Jowitt

Storehouse

This past month, of August, Storehouse Foodbank fed around 300 people, however with the autumn and winter months fast approaching I expect we will be back up to around 400-450 people per month, which is more like our average. We are currently in the process of locating a new premises for all areas of our church, foodbank included. We have an opportunity that has been presented to us, so we are exploring this in great detail, we will update on the outcome in due course.

Finding a new premises for all areas of the church comes at a cost, we are actively seeking grant/donation opportunities to aid us in this process, as once we move our costs will increase significantly.

If you know anyone or any communities/organisations who support what we are doing and wish to contribute towards, please do contact us.

We are extremely grateful for all the support we receive from those who donate, including the surrounding churches too, thank you.

Community Christmas lunch 2022

Once again we had a full house on Christmas day. We usually have residents from Playford Court Elizabeth court and Steeds Meadow Long Melford, we also had some residents from one of the sheltered housing schemes in Lavenham which falls within Babergh's remit.

As usual the wonderful Go Start provided transport for all the local pick ups. Some excellent volunteers ventured further afield collecting guests from Lavenham, Acton and Glemsford. We had around 85 guests and with second and in some cases third helpings we served around 100 lunches

We also did around 20 home deliveries to the housebound.

A very big thank you as always to our Sudbury Freemasons for providing the venue and for the financial support to help fund the event. Waitrose also supported the event once again and various donations from members of the Community. Some of the donations given(with permission) were used to help some of our guests who were struggling with their utility bills.

Mr Colemans team on Sudbury Market came jo trump's again with a very good discount on our meat bill. Angelo Smith's also provided us with an enormous turkey as they do each year. Knowing how difficult a year it had been financially for everyone we consider ourselves very blessed to recieve such support.

After lunch we had a good old sing song, a mixture of carols and Christmas songs. 12 days of Christmas has almost become our theme tune which everyone joins in with gusto.

Once again we had some marvellous volunteers. A smashing day was had by all. We are all looking forward to this year's lunch.

Contact Teresa bishopteresa78@gmail.com or 311558

Sudbury Town Pastors

During the past year, Town Pastors in Sudbury has remained dormant. This is due to a significant change of circumstances, which started during covid. During this time Town Pastors didn't operate, but afterwards, a lack of volunteers made regular patrols impossible. We managed to have one patrol a month for a while after the pandemic, but even this rested solely on one or two people and became unrealistic to sustain.

Coupled with this, the weekend night scene in the town dramatically changed. Night staff we had built up a relationship with over a decade had moved on to other jobs after the pandemic. Furthermore, there were less and less people out on the streets at night, which meant that few night patrols we were able to do became less and less eventful and we had fewer and fewer opportunities to talk to people.

This led us, as a committee and as a wider group of volunteers, to conclude that Town Pastors in Sudbury had naturally come to an end. We spend an afternoon all together in November 2022, thanking God for all he'd done through the project and feeling that the work he had commissioned Town Pastors to do over the years had been completed.

We all left the meeting with a commitment to pray for other opportunities to reach out into our communities. Since that November meeting, many of the volunteers have been able to give time to other projects and initiatives, such as Go Start, and community outreach in their local churches. Members of the committee are now in the process of officially winding down Sudbury Town Pastors, with the help from the wider Town Pastors charity.

We give thanks to God for all that he has accomplished! The many many conversations about Faith in Jesus, all the prayers prayed over the Town by those at the prayer base, and the fact that the streets of Sudbury at the weekend, are calmer and more peaceful.

Thank-you to all who have played a part in this ministry, from those on patrol, those on the prayer base, to those who prayed from home, and throughout the week.

Mark Ulanowski