

Churches Together Annual Report 2023-24

Chairman's report 2024

This past 12 months has been an interesting time of redevelopment for Churches Together in Sudbury & District.

We have seen our meetings fairly well attended, with representatives from most churches coming along, but there is always room for more!

We are indebted to Andrew Dixey and his team who run Kettle and Fish at Suffolk Road church most Thursdays providing a place where you can meet up with friends and enjoy their company as well as excellent snacks.

Our prayer breakfasts continue on Saturday mornings to be a weekly focus of prayer, and fellowship over food, for our churches and community.

We give thanks for Eleanor Ridge and the many years she has devoted to producing our "Time to pray" leaflet - we need a new editor for this valuable prayer guide.

We have said goodbye to Tim and Joy, founders of No72 and wish them health and happiness in their retirement. We pray for Lesley and Claire as they take over the leadership of the team there.

The highlight of the year was undoubtedly the St Peterstide service in St Peters church attended by around 180 people and a wonderful tribute to a grand building and our loving God who helped open the doors for us to hold this event. Thanks particularly to Revd Andrew Doarks for his role in this service.

Thanks must go to Peter Heard who, after many years, has decided that the time has come to relinquish the post of treasurer.

I have decided for a variety of reasons not to stand for re-election this year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Gill Phillips, Ruth Ridge and the vice chairs for their support.

I have often said that Churches Together can achieve much more than individual churches can on their own and I look forward to witnessing that in the years to come.

Peter Halden

Abi's Footprints Baby Bank

In the past year we have received 275 requests for resources for children aged 0-5. Our rough estimate is that we have impacted over 1,000 people directly and indirectly, the latter including older siblings, grandparents etc.

One objective of moving to a larger storage unit last year and building a "lounge" there was that we could get to know some of the people we serve better. Roughly 40 families have taken up the invitation to come and choose the resources best suited for them. Even those who haven't stayed for a cuppa and chat have enjoyed the greater sense of dignity and self-worth compared to accepting a package chosen by us and delivered to their doorstep.

We employ one day a week a family support worker who offers a listening ear and more to those whose needs go beyond the resources they request. Those who have taken this up have valued the support offered, but several families we expected to use this service have declined, sometimes at very short notice. We suspect that for some this is a symptom of a more chaotic life than we had realised.

Our mother/carer and baby group, 'Stay & Play', continues to go from strength to strength. Since Easter we have added a sensory room and from September we have gone from fortnightly to weekly in term time. We run on Thursday mornings at the Stevenson Centre at the same time as the Well Baby Clinic.

Gill Soper, who has been a dynamo in moving Abi's Footprints from meeting one request per fortnight to one every working day has decided it is time to move on and spend more time with her husband, Richard. We thank Gill for all she has done and wish her every joy from the other ministries she continues to be involved in.

Andrew Mackie

Agape Cafe 

Agape Cafe continues to run on Wednesdays from 10.00 until 13.00 in the back hall of the Old School on Head Lane in Great Cornard.

We serve a variety of hot drinks and sandwiches, toasted if required, and a selection of home made cakes all at very reasonable prices.

We welcome anyone who wants to come in and have a chat either with their friends or with one of us who are serving the food.

Why not pop in and give us a try - there is ample free parking too which is a bonus.

Any queries please contact me peterhalden@hotmail.com

Christian Aid

Christian Aid this week ran from 12 to 18 May and began with the United Christian Aid service at Holy Trinity, Long Melford, led by Rev. Matthew Lawson. The speaker was Revd Richard Stainer, World Development Adviser for the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, who told us about his visit to projects in Ethiopia.

This year 58 collectors delivered envelopes to the majority of streets in Sudbury, as well as Shimpling, but there was no collection in Great Cornard, or Long Melford. Although we still call them collectors, in fact most of our volunteers do not collect these days but we use 'delivery-only' envelopes with details of where people can drop off their contribution. These include people's houses, and in town Holland & Barrett, Peddars and Number 72.

The count took place on 28th May and the total collected, including late envelopes, was £2,441.49. This does not include Gift Aid. By way of comparison last year's total was £2,850.24.

In addition online donations through the Sudbury group E-envelope totalled £512.50, including Gift Aid. Last year this raised £290. The total number of donations was 9, including one generous donor who gave £250. It is not possible to see details of donors unless they choose to leave a public comment.

We got back 338 envelopes compared with 367 last year. The average amount raised per collector increased from £39 to £41, but this does not include the town centre dropping off points or online donations.

The amount raised through the envelopes declines each year, so there may come a time when it is not worth the effort, and we may have to consider other ways

of supporting CAW and publicising the on-line option, which by contrast grows in popularity.

Clare Lodge

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 about 3,000 visitors each year. The help from those who maintain the website and the Google Calendar is invaluable.

About 275 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.

A year ago, we welcomed to the team an experienced retired journalist, Matt George, to help CTiS&D publicise activities and events in social, printed and broadcast media. He is willing to help member churches in a similar way. Matt has also been involved with Ruth for redesigning and revamping the CTiS 'Here for You Seven Days a Week' leaflet listing member churches and linked organisations. Ruth compiled a second leaflet showing the many weekly "drop-in" opportunities available locally.

Malcolm Snow

Eden's

We have had another busy academic year serving the local community through the Youth Centre based in Gainsborough Street through our regular activities and the bedrock of all that we do is to show the love of God to the young people we interact with.

This year we have continued with all our usual activities during the week of after school drop-ins, a weekly meet-up for Home Educated young people, a safe place to hang out with friends on a Friday evening, a twice monthly meeting for young Christians and those interested in finding out more, and holiday drop-ins.

We are continuing to provide free food at our after-school and holiday drop-ins as we have quite a high percentage of young people attending who are on free school meals, so we are pleased to be able to help provide for this need within our community. We also did our twice-yearly dinner nights where we provide a two course sit down meal for the young people and then have the opportunity to tell them all about the love of God.

We also ran an 'Understanding Teenagers' Course again this summer which is for parents of teenagers, to support them and provide helpful advice, tips and information as they navigate the often tricky teenage years.

We took a group from the Sunday evening Christian Youth café group to the Satellites summer camp again this summer, which they all really enjoyed and were encouraged in their faith during that week.

Thank you very much for your continued interest and support of Eden's Project - we really are so grateful and could not continue with this work without all the support and prayers we receive from this wonderful Christian community.

The Eden's Team



Sudbury Fairtrade Group

Sadly this group no longer meets regularly as more members are urgently needed. However CTISD has been seeking to keep fair trade on the local agenda, particularly as the town is due to renew its status as a fair trade town.

In January Revd Richard Stainer from Suffolk Fairtrade spoke at a forum meeting and encouraged us to get involved in the renewal of status and to that end members from Churches Together wrote to councillors and addressed the town meeting to encourage support for the renewal. The town council have since approved the application for renewal in principle, but a team is needed to complete the application and continue to raise the profile of Fair Trade in the

town. We hope to hold a fair trade fair and fashion show, but this can only be done with a committed team of volunteers to help with the planning and organisation.

Please encourage your churches to make sure their Fair Trade status is up to date and please reflect whether fair trade is an issue you would be willing to help promote in the town. If anyone is interested in joining a fair trade planning group, please contact Ruth Ridge.

Ruth Ridge, on behalf of CTISD

Foxearth Nature Reserve

I write this after a busy week on the reserve. On Tuesday we hosted a 'Walking for Wellness' group for a tour. On Wednesday we introduced a group of 30 students from Westmont College, California to our work on the reserve and some theology behind it. Thursday was our monthly 'out and about day' with students from The Bridge Project, who completed a conservation task and then enjoyed bark rubbing and a walk. Then in the evening FortKnights (a fortnightly club for young adults with learning disabilities) enjoyed a nature walk, games and picnic round the firebowl with marshmallows to toast. Friday was our regular weekly conservation volunteering day. As well as a long list of practical tasks there is work to be done to collect data on water levels and water quality and butterfly and dragonfly numbers.

Not every week is as busy, but this gives a flavour of what we're about. Of course the reserve is open to individuals to visit at any time, but we also have opportunities to introduce different groups to the wonders of the natural world and our God-given responsibility to care for it. We work hard to be as inclusive as we can for people with particular needs. And we want to celebrate our wonderful volunteers who make the hard work enjoyable with their willingness and good humour (and we always get to relax over coffee and lunch breaks). We've been delighted to welcome several newcomers to the team and encourage others to give it a try.

This has been a significant year in that last Christmas we said our goodbyes to Mark Prina who pioneered the role of Manager for the reserve and built up the work from scratch. We have a lot to be grateful for and were sad to say farewell, but wished him well for his retirement. The good news is that in January we were able to welcome Sarah Leedham. We are delighted that she has made her home happily in Sudbury and that the manager post is now full-time. Sarah's introduction to the reserve and the area wasn't easy as road blocks and floods thwarted her first attempts to visit, but early setbacks were overcome and she has thrived in getting to grips with the role and has helped us thrive as a team.

One encouragement this year has been a growth in interest for educational visits. As well as a three-day visit by Year 10 students from a Liverpool school, we've had successful days on the reserve for three local primary schools over the summer.

Among the various open events we hold, highlights include the Prayer Walk led on Ascension Day by the Rev. Ruth Ridge. 30 attended, and we had around 70 for our first Open Air Service of the year in June. We are delighted to host individual church groups. New Life Church and Wild Church (Holy Trinity, Long Melford) used the reserve for creative times of worship this summer. At the time of writing we're busy preparing for our next Open Air Service (22 September) at which we look forward to Professor James Pearce-Higgins as our preacher. We rejoice in joining with all God's creatures in worship and giving glory to the Creator himself.

Andy Jowitt

Future Vision

Good News! After some difficult times post covid and personnel wise we are very happy to be back in schools with Open the Book under the new leadership of Arabella McKessar. She picked up the reins at the beginning of the summer term and is establishing the teams in St Gregory's, Long Melford, Hartest, Glemsford, Tudor Road and Bures. We have teams of new volunteers with DBS

certificates enthusiastic to get started or in some cases get back into schools. We thank God for each of them and their commitment to sharing the Bible stories with hundreds of children each week. Our prayer is that the message though it may lay dormant for a while will be a seed that grows into faith in the years ahead.

We are also very grateful to Ruth who has kept the work going in Acton and Gt Waldingfield consistently for a number of years and is received with excitement by the children.

Arabella is looking to expand the number of schools visited and if you or anyone you know would like to be involved in this amazing work please do contact us.

Meanwhile the Chaplaincy involving Ian and Liz still continues to exhibit the love of Jesus to both staff and students at Thomas Gainsborough. They run after school clubs, student mentoring, drop in sessions with tea and doughnuts for staff alongside arranging trips, taking lessons, helping on trips, being a delivery person for lost property etc. It's a servant ministry and we thank God for their willingness to humbly serve.

Anamcara is one of the highlights of their year. Year 7 have the opportunity in a safe space to think about God and ask the big questions about life. It is hugely beneficial on many levels and opens their eyes to the possibility of faith in an extraordinary God.

Thank you for your prayers, support and presence. Please continue to hold this work in your prayers and in your giving. We are blessed to be a small part of God's work here.

Faith Marsden

Kettle & Fish



Kettle and Fish

Kettle and Fish needs you!

We continue to meet most Thursdays (although not the first in the month) from 10am-1.30pm at Suffolk Road Church and we offer a wide selection of homemade cakes and scones, filled rolls and soup in the winter. We are supported by a group of committed volunteers and regular customers and are delighted to open our doors to offer warmth, fellowship and prayer on request to those who visit.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our volunteers for their support and Suffolk Road Church for their generous hospitality.

We need you because:

1. We need more customers. Kettle and Fish offers a unique welcome to those who come in and support for those in need, but we are also a working café. Without customers we would be unable to keep our doors open, so please consider popping in on a Thursday or perhaps arrange to meet friends at Kettle and Fish. We welcome church groups too!
2. We need more volunteers - many hands make light work. We need volunteers to help prepare and serve food on Thursdays and we are in particular need of volunteers to help set up and to pack up and move tables at the end of each session. If you would be interested in joining our team, please contact Andy, Anita or Ruth for more information.

We look forward to seeing you at Kettle and Fish soon.

Andrew and Anita Dixey and Ruth Ridge

Number 72 Family and Community Centre

We have had a good year here at 72 with lots of changes.

We had an amazing answer to prayer with 3 new trustees, 1 volunteer and an assistant manager joining the team.

Tim and Joy also retired after 20 years(17 of those being in the building on North Street) heading up the work at 72. We celebrated this wonderful achievement with 2 days of open invitation for people to come along and wish them well and enjoy a cream tea. Both days were very well attended with people past and present coming in. Many shared stories of how they had been helped and supported by Tim and Joy and it was a real testimony to all the love and care they have shared with people over the years.

The Drop in has continued to be busy with our regular clients and some new faces. Our Wednesday morning craft group have created some wonderful work. The 1-1 support has been very busy with a wide range of help and support needed. We have been attending as many multi agency meetings as possible to share resources and have a clearer idea where to sign post people with specific needs.

The schoolwork continues to grow with a weekly presence at TGS and a new adventure starting this term at OSA. We also continue to go into primary schools on request to work 1-1 with students.

We have major work needed on the roof at the back of the building which were planned for the summer holidays.

Unfortunately, we are still waiting planning permission, and may need to relocate the Drop in at some point.

We continue to pray for God wisdom, guidance, and provision in all that we do.

Lesley Mitchell

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

Both the 'drop in' and the Community lunches have been well attended over the past 12 months. Those attending are from a wide social and age span of the Community, our youngest guest being in his early 20s and our oldest in her 90s. We have a good team of volunteers for the morning 'drop in', but we struggle with volunteers for the lunch time shift. We are expecting the number of guests to increase further during the colder weather this year (particularly the elderly) with the loss of the winter fuel payment and those facing benefit changes.

Realise Futures are still with us every Monday. Following on from last year's successful slow cooker course, we have had two further courses this year of a more academic nature. This first was 'Level 1 Mental Health' and the current course is 'Level 1 Confidence and Well Being' Alongside working with Realise Futures on Mondays, these courses offer one day a week at West Suffolk College. I am pleased to report that 4 of our guests passed the Level 1 Mental Health course with flying colours and we have high hopes of them doing the

same with the current course. Not only is this building the individuals self worth, but their goal is to be able to come off their benefits and use their qualifications to find employment.

We have sadly seen an increase in rough sleepers and sofa surfing during this current year. As usual changes in the financial support available always hits the most vulnerable more than anyone else.

Financially we are struggling. With food prices continuing to rise weekly and the number of guests increasing, it is hard to keep our heads above water. Also the cost of transporting our elderly guests by taxi has increased. We find this particularly difficult during Bank holidays as the cost doubles.

Please pray for our financial situation.

Blessings Teresa Bishop

Prayer Breakfast

'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man [understand 'person'] availeth much,' so says the AV, or as The Message has it, 'The prayer of a person living right with God is something powerful to be reckoned with.' And that's what we attempt to achieve by God's grace each Saturday morning from 8am to 9.30am. We may be few in number - averaging about 14 of us - it may be an early start - but the fellowship, the breakfast, the authenticity of the prayers all contribute to an hour and a half extremely well spent. A really blessed time - and as we leave the various venues we come away with a sense of having brought many needs, needs of our churches, our communities, our country and the world before God. We are grateful to the churches who continue to host us and provide an excellent breakfast. It's always a real challenge to Andy Jowitt to fill in the weekly slots on the calendar - more hosts and more sessions in individual churches would be very welcome.

This year has been saddened by the death of two regular members - Janet Stenner, with her charm and evangelistic determination and John Clark, with his gentle contributions and fascinating anecdotes from his missionary years. Our prayers continue to be with Brian and Norma. We've also had to say goodbye to

David Ford, whose health prevents him from attending meetings, but who is still very much in our thoughts.

There's always room around the breakfast tables - so you would be welcome to join us.

Malcolm & Judith Offord and Andy Jowitt

Storehouse

Storehouse continues to support our local people who find themselves in short term crisis situations, via our referral only system.

Over the past 3 months we have fed 650 people (mixture of adults and children), providing them food, hygiene, cleaning and baby items such as nappies/wipes.

We feel blessed to be able to support those who find themselves in need and we are so grateful for the support we receive from our local community through donations.

Storehouse is currently seeking grants/funding to continue our work, it would be wonderful if those who can help us would get in touch to discuss our needs to support those who require our services.

Blessings to you all.

Storehouse Foodbank

Storehouse Foodbank Address:

Suite 1 & 2

Sudbury Business Centre

Milner Road

Chilton Industrial Centre

CO10 2XG

07973 710905

Community Christmas lunch 2023

As ever we had a very busy Christmas day. The Hall looked spectacular in all its Christmas finery as did the tables awaiting the guests to arrive.

Cathy and I were in the kitchen 6.30 a.m. getting the turkeys in the ovens and making a start on the very long to do list for the day

The veg prep team started about 7-30a.m tackling the mounds of veggies that would be needed to feed 80 guests in house and 25 home deliveries to the housebound.

As ever we had a splendid day. The Christopher Singer came along to start the Carol singing after lunch. Our guests eagerly joined in . Some guests took to the stage and did Solo performances.

Go Start once again provided us with transport for those unable to get to us under their own steam. We also had some super transport volunteers that collected folk from further a field.

The volunteers were wonderful ,looking after the guests and making sure no one was left out.

Another set of volunteers delivered all the lunches to the housebound.

We had a wonderful meat donation from Lavenham Butchers (they have said they would like to help again this year)

Waitrose also came up trumps again, supplying us with almost everything we needed, other than the meat and vegetables.

And of course a huge thank you must go to our local Freemasons. Not only providing the venue, but also supporting the event financially.

It is so humbling every year to see the Community pull together to make this a really special day for those that would otherwise be alone or in need.

We are now all looking forward to Christmas 2024.

Teresa Bishop