

County Ecumenical Officer Report

Open Meeting – November 2020



Churches Together in Herefordshire looks very different this year but Christians and churches are still talking to each other, working and worshipping together. It has been more difficult to reach out and make contact with Churches Together Groups, churches and projects but as people are getting used to new ways of working, Zoom has had the advantage of reaching corners of the county without leaving my home office. I am grateful to the Standing Committee for their support during this time. AN

Churches Together Groups

- ❖ In the last year, I have attended meetings of Christians Together in Colwall, Orleton and Churches Together in Ross, Ewyas Harold and Bromyard via Zoom. Churches Together in Weobley have also met in person since lockdown. I attended Week of Prayer for Christian Unity services in Ledbury, Colwall, Ewyas Harold and Hereford and gave a short homily at the Week of Prayer Service at the invitation of Christians Together in Bromyard at the beginning of the year. I attended a Candlemas Service organised by Churches Together in Kington. Churches Together in Hereford is planning to publish a book of experiences of God in Covid 19.

Ecumenical Projects / Groups

Church Leaders Together / Herefordshire Churches Houses of Prayer

I have attended Zoom meetings of this group and join the Herefordshire Churches Houses of Prayer regular Monday evening Zoom prayer sessions (some of which have been held jointly with Christians in Ledbury).

I am supporting a potential project with church leaders who are keen to set up online resources for Collective Worship in schools, for this time when churches cannot get into schools in person. I have written to all the CT groups encouraging them to provide information about their current relationship with schools to Andy Goode (Minister at Putson Baptist Church), who is co-ordinating the project.

Challenge Community Church and Putson Baptist Church are working together to set up a Community Money Advice centre, recently licensed and looking for volunteers, in South Wye.

I have also been joining a Prayers for Youth monthly Zoom led by David Morris / Deborah Jackson (new 6th Form chaplain).

Vennture

I have been attending a weekly COVID-19 Response Zoom meeting where Vennture and church leaders have updated each other on their responses to the pandemic. I have been publicising Vennture's need to be supported in prayer as the link workers continue to work with vulnerable families and individuals (including the newly-housed homeless); and their need for more volunteers to be daytime Ambassadors / Street Pastors in Hereford city, and volunteers for their Family Pastors project. The organisation has expanded in response to the pandemic, extending their support for the homeless and newly-housed.

Anti Modern Slavery Network

I have attended a Zoom meeting of this group which discussed among other things, dramatic increases in Foodbank use and the need for medical support for Syrians, settled in Herefordshire and Shropshire, still traumatised after 4 years of complex war traumas.

Thy Kingdom Come / Pentecost

I joined many other of the Church Leaders in a video (produced by the Diocese Communications team) in which we delivered Pentecost prayers as part of an ecumenical service led by Bishop Richard, that was put on Facebook and YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGjW-ByU_GI

Anne Frank Memorial Service

I once again was invited and attended this service (representing both CTiH and Hereford Cathedral), this year via Zoom. The service was organised by the newly formed Three Counties Liberal Jewish Community.

Foodbank Network

I attended a Zoom meeting of this group of Foodbanks from around the county, convened by Chrissie Pepler (Diocesan Church & Society Link Officer); I also attended Hereford Food Bank's AGM via Zoom.

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

I attended a meeting of this Herefordshire Council Committee (and one via Zoom), where the new Chair was elected and the new Herefordshire syllabus for Religious Education approved. It should be noted that I sit on this as a representative of the Free Churches, invited historically by Rev David Meachem before he left as Superintendent. The CTiH Standing Committee asked me to continue in the role but produce a short report after each meeting.

Methodist church

Following a suggestion from Phil Warrey (Methodist Superintendent, Herefordshire S&E Circuit) I helped to set up a Zoom meeting between Bishop Richard Jackson, Phil Warrey, Angie Allport (Deacon at St John's Methodist Church), David Lavender (DEO for Marches Circuit), Rachel Parkinson (Chair – Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury District) and Ian Howarth (Chair – Birmingham District). It was a helpful introductory meeting and the Bishop suggested meeting again in 6 months' time.

One of the issues that came up at the meeting was the potential shrinking of intermediate ecumenism (churches working together at a county / district / diocesan level) and Ian Howarth asked me to write a brief paper to support his discussions in Worcestershire, which I did.

Anglican Diocese of Hereford

Diocesan Secretary /Archdeacon

Richard Shaw and I met with Sam Pratley (Diocesan Secretary) and Rev Derek Chedzey (Archdeacon of Hereford) to discuss ecumenism and ways in which we can have a better impact on the Diocese. We discussed ways in which Rural Deans could be encouraged to invite the County Ecumenical Officer and local church leaders from other denominations as well as Churches Together Groups to licensing services for new incumbents. It was also suggested that we be invited to attend the Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committee occasionally.

New incumbents

I was happy to welcome Rev Rufus Noy on behalf of CTiH at his installation at Leominster Priory as part of the Leominster Team Ministry.

Faith in Action meeting

Bishop Richard Jackson invited church leaders from various Herefordshire churches to a follow up meeting of Bishop Richard Frith's Faith in Action meeting held in 2019 and chaired the meeting via Zoom in July. It was attended by 14 members of non-Anglican churches. Bishop Richard commended the opportunity to meet regularly and share news. The meeting went on to discuss how the church had been responding to Covid 19, with a potential follow up later this year, or early 2021.

Hereford Cathedral

My 5 year term as Lay Canon of Hereford Cathedral ends in February 2021, but the Dean and the Bishop have invited me to extend my term by a further 2 years (allowed by statute), which I have happily accepted.

Churches Together in England

I have attended a national group of CEOs webinar about Twitter and how to get the best use out of the social media platform. I have also attended the first of a series of two CTE Black Lives Matter webinars, during which we were encouraged to think about how we can encourage churches to work together to ensure that race and racism stays on the agenda.

I have also attended Society for Ecumenical Studies Webinars on the topics of 'Communion in the light of Covid', and 'Scripture – a uniting Gift?'. I have met with Chris Densham (Ecumenical Mission Enabler Shropshire) and Robert Mountford (Ecumenical Officer Stoke and Staffordshire and temporary CEO Birmingham) via Zoom.

CTiH

I have completed the **Annual Report 2019-2020** which is now available to provide some accountability and information for our funders.

The **Facebook page** is updated regularly – and more so during current crisis, with prayer, encouragement and practical ideas for Christians to support their communities.

<https://www.facebook.com/churchestogetherinherefordshire> We now have 377 followers. There is now a CTiH **Twitter page** https://twitter.com/in_churches - still in early stages of establishment.

The **newsletter** has 189 people who have requested to be on the mailing list (plus others who are accessing it via Facebook and the website). I have spent some time upgrading the format of the newsletter via MailChimp. The October newsletter was well received in this format and I am able to track who opens it, which links are followed through – as well as receiving several feedback emails positively approving of the new format, but will continue to also produce a pdf version for a number of readers who prefer this.

The **website** www.ctih.org continues to be regularly updated via the 'Upcoming Events' diary (though is quite a bit slimmer at the moment) with online ecumenical events around the county on the calendar and the current monthly newsletter on another page (as well as archived newsletters).

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