

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BISHOP'S STORTFORD. Report to St. Michaels APCM May 24.

There have been three Forum meetings since our last APCM. Individual Christians and members of St. Michaels congregation have participated in and supported the following events and initiatives which took place during the year.

Love Stortford

Holiday Bible Week

Carol Singing in Jackson Square

Company at Christmas

Service for Week of Prayer and Christian Unity

During the past winter warm spaces have been offered in the churches in response to the cost of living and fuel crisis. Support was also offered to the Ukrainian people who have been the guests of local families. More on this topic is detailed in a separate short report.

The Night Shelter opened its doors in December, and provided an essential service to guests in need of a hot meal, shelter and a bed for the night. The latter provision finished at the end of February, although a drop-in facility is now offered on three weekdays, which includes a light lunch, as well as support with negotiating the procedures and formalities needed in order to secure accommodation and other personal issues.

Company at Christmas took place this year at the Methodist venue. It was a joyous occasion. Transport was provided, and guests and volunteers enjoyed a traditional Christmas dinner which was cooked on site, followed by a varied programme of entertainment; a tea with cake and gifts to take home. Those wishing to see a cheery face, together with a delivery of a meal and Christmas fare, were visited at their own homes.

The Food Bank continues to offer a crucial service providing essential provisions by delivery and to walk-in clients. There has been great need this winter when special appeals for donations were sent out. Donations via the supermarkets remain good and an increasing number of people have been helped with rising gas and electricity payments.

During the year church members and have participated in hosting people from Ukraine and *Care4Calais* which supports Refugees and Asylum seekers. More about the former is detailed in an additional report.

The Good Friday Walk of Witness took place this year, but as the police could not assist us we walked quietly along the pavements (handing out palm crosses and prayer cards) from the *URC* to the *Methodists* who offered prayers and refreshments at the close of the event.

Future Projects (At time of writing).

A Week of Prayer beginning with a *Pentecost Breakfast* event is due to take place at The Barnabus Centre on Sat. 18th May, from 10.30-12.30. Associate Members have been invited to have stalls in order to communicate their activities; refreshments and a culminating service will also be offered. There will be prayer themes at tables. Members have been asked to consider possible themes such as Climate Change, Social Justice, Evangelism, Persecution, Ukrainians and Asylum Seekers.

Holiday Bible Week is due to take place on 5th to 9^h August, this year.

To date there is no specific information about a Town Carnival and possible participation by
B.S.C.T.

For myself I would say that CTBS and its associate members play a crucial role in the life of our town, often catering to those in need and/or distress, and supporting issues which are overlooked or not funded by civic authorities. However, the organisation is currently conducting internal exploration as to how we might best reach out to our community and support each other in our endeavours. We are stronger together! All of the churches and associate members have their own website. Churches Together now has a facebook page at <https://facebook.com/Churches Together Bisop's Stortford>. If individuals require further information about any of the above, please contact the undersigned and I will do my best to provide you with further detail.

Margaret Fox. (*St. Michael's and Company at Christmas Rep.* with CTBS)

