

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BISHOP'S STORTFORD. Report to St. Michael's APCM May 2025

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
The Night Shelter
The Contact Centre
The Food Bank
United Service for Christian Unity

Company at Christmas took place this year at the Methodist venue. It was, as ever, 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. However, there are currently issues concerning the provision of transport due to the requirement for volunteer drivers to have a DBS check and also the diverse requirements of guests. Consideration is being given to possible assistance from local taxi services.

The Food Bank

During the past winter warm spaces have been offered in the churches in response to the cost of living and fuel crisis. Support to our Ukrainian residents continues albeit they are now housed and in employment.

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 beginning of March, 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 deal with other personal issues.

The Carol Singing in Jackson Square was a great success this year, led by our own Director of Music and including choristers from our own town and further afield. The collection was donated to the Night Shelter. It continues to offer a crucial service providing essential provisions by delivery and to walk-in clients. There was a greater need than ever during the 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.

The Good Friday Walk of Witness took place this year. It was preceded by an ecumenical service held this year at *St. Michael's*. Subsequently participants walked quietly along the pavements (handing out palm crosses and prayer cards) from the *URC* to the *Methodists* where prayers were offered followed by drinks and hot cross buns at the close of the event.

Holiday Bible Week is due to take place on 4th to 8th August, this year at Herts and Essex.

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 now giving time at Forum meetings, for small group discussions on how we might encourage young people to attend both individual churches and community events. The results of these discussions are then reported back to the *Enabling Group*. 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/ChurchesTogetherBishop'sStortford>. 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*)

