

## CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BISHOP'S STORTFORD.

### Report to St. Michael's APCM May 23.

There have been three Forum meetings since our last APCM. *Churches Together* is now extremely active; new members have joined and innovations have been made in the activities of associate members. However, some members have not been able to send a representative to the meetings. Two guest members joined us at our meeting in March, from the *New Life Church* and *Bulgarian Fellowship* respectively.

**The following events and initiatives have taken place:** 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.

Carol Singing took place in Jackson Square and the proceeds were donated between *The Contact Centre* and the YWCA.

*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. A drop-in facility was also offered during the day, which included a light lunch, as well as support with negotiating the procedures and formalities needed in order to secure accommodation. Advice and counselling was also offered. This is now ongoing, together with a light lunch on three days a week.

*Company at Christmas* took place this year at the newly refurbished 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 home.

*The Food Bank* continues to offer a crucial service providing essential provisions by delivery and to walk-in clients. The applications for vouchers have doubled in recent months. 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 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 from the URC (which hosted the service), to the *Methodists* who offered prayers and refreshments at the close of the event. Approaches are still being attempted regarding the issue of road closure to enable walking along the street for this event.

**Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.** Unfortunately this event was cancelled this year due to various practical difficulties.

**Future Projects** (At time of writing).

*Holiday Bible Week* is due to take place on 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> August, this year.

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

***Week of Prayer and Pentecost.*** A Brunch Prayer Breakfast is suggested for Sunday May 27<sup>th</sup> from 10.30-12.30. Three churches have been suggested as possible venues. There will be prayer themes at tables. Members have been asked to consider themes as climate change, Social Justice, Evangelism, Persecution, Ukrainians and Asylum Seekers.

For myself I would say that CTBS plays 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. We are stronger together! However, if individuals require 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.