



Working together as the Body of Christ

Annual Report 2017

President's Report

This has been a somewhat momentous year! A short while ago we commemorated the 500th Anniversary of Martin Luther attaching his 95 theses to the Church door at Wittenburg, thus starting the process that led to the Reformation. A special and very moving Vespers was held at the Roman Catholic Cathedral on 31st October to which we were all invited.

On September 14th we held our 100th Quarterly Meeting at St. Giles, it also being the 25th Anniversary of Churches Together in Shrewsbury. We had a special Anniversary Cake which was cut by Deacon Fred Beddows from the Cathedral who has been actively involved in bringing the Shrewsbury Churches closer together since the 1960's. Ecumenical activity in the town has been taking place for more than half a century and for this we have to thank God and the many people who have followed the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

As I read and think about the prayer of Jesus reported in St. John's Gospel, 'that we all might be one so that the world will believe..' ecumenical activity is not just a matter of our being nice to each other, a massive improvement on killing each other, but our working out of the mission imperative to reconcile the world to God through Christ.

I also need to express my grateful thanks to Ian Peake, our superb secretary who does so much to keep us informed and on our toes.

May God continue to bless us as we seek to engage in his work.

Grace and peace to you all.

David

Secretary's report

For me the nicest thing about Churches Together is seeing different churches and denominations working together. Doing things that one church could not do on their own, but by cooperating with each other: the impossible suddenly become possible. This has very much been the case over the past 12 months.

I think of the Christmas Adverts that appeared in both the Admag and Shrewsbury Chronicle and the leaflets which were produced listing the numerous Carol and Christmas Services taking place within the town. All the hotels where I dropped off the leaflets very much appreciated them and two hotels asked for more.

I think of the Dance event that took place in the square last December and was very much enjoyed by the pupils of the numerous secondary schools in the town.

I think of Rev Chris Densham appointment as Mission Enabler for the county.

I think of how many of us from all the different churches in the town attended the General Election Hustings at Holy Trinity Meole Brace and on behalf of Churches Together wish to thank Rev Phil Cansdale, Martin Charlesworth and everyone at the Holy Trinity for organising such a great event with so little notice.

And I think in particular of the Churches Together stall at the flower show. A lot of visitors said how nice it was to have a Christian presence at the show and I am delighted to report that it has been agreed that Churches Together will have an even bigger stall next year.

My thanks to all those who helped make these events possible. My thanks to all the speakers at the various meetings throughout the year and to Rev David Jones for all his help and words of wisdom.

Ian Peake, Secretary

Shrewsbury Ark

Since the Shrewsbury Christian Centre Association opened the premises known as The Shrewsbury Ark in March 2008, our headline mission remains the same.

Our vision includes the following key phrases;

- To operate and develop a direct access day centre for the most vulnerable members of our community.
- To provide a safe, welcoming environment.
- To provide immediate, on the spot advice and support.
- To provide breakfast and lunch.
- To create an environment and opportunities and encouragement for clients to get back on their feet and develop self-confidence and self-sufficiency.

Since its inception much has changed at The Shrewsbury Ark. In part, this reflects changes in the economic and social health of our community. It may also be because of a greater expectation placed on charitable organisations to provide services that were more readily available through central and local government.

Those working in The Ark have seen these changes at first hand. At times the rapidly escalating pressures of working in what can be a challenging environment have raised many questions about our capacity to meet these challenges.

It is important that we are proactive and adapt to meet these changes so that we can provide the best possible service with the most effective use of the resources at our disposal.

During the year under review, the Ark has continued to welcome up to 35 individuals each day. Many of these are “regulars” but new clients are referred to us by other local agencies, by the local police and by word of mouth on the street.

Please find below the latest figures recorded in the Manager’s report to Ark Trustees at our meeting on 8th November 2017.

Reporting period 7th October to 3rd November 2017

Outreach Service

| | |
|---|----|
| Total new referrals | 16 |
| Of new referrals, total seen rough sleeping | 7 |
| Unique individuals engaged with this time* | 31 |
| Rough sleepers into accommodation or moved on | 11 |
| Appointments attended with clients (medical, legal, housing etc) | 17 |
| Confirmed rough sleepers at start of period | 15 |
| Confirmed rough sleepers at end of period | 17 |

*Includes those supported while awaiting referral to ongoing support

Day Centre Service

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Average number of visitors per day | 27 |
| Highest day service users | 34 |
| Lowest day service users | 20 |
| Number of unique visitors seen | 85 |

Clients successes against Ark measures

| | |
|---|----|
| Clients receiving support beyond drop-in services | 38 |
| Clients working towards identified objectives and action plans | 25 |
| Increased/sustained engagements with services (health, SRP etc.) | 21 |
| Successfully achieved goals and now using the Ark as visitors | 10 |
| Previous visitors now engaging and working towards goals | 6 |
| Clients currently unwilling/unable to engage positively towards goals | 12 |

During the year the Charity has employed a full-time Manager for the Ark, whilst a Client Support Worker takes most of the day-to-day business of engaging with individual clients. We have many willing and hard-working volunteer staff without whom the Ark would not be able to continue in operation; they provide the first contact with all clients. The year has seen a welcome degree of stability in staffing.

The Outreach Service

In July 2016 the charity received a small grant from Shropshire Council to cover the cost of providing a rapid response service to reports of people sleeping rough anywhere in the Shropshire Council area; this grant is expected to continue until March 2018. A dedicated member of staff, (Outreach Support Worker,) with support from other people so that there is no lone-working, is available to respond early in the mornings before the rough sleepers have packed up and moved on. This service is actively supported by Shropshire Council's Housing Options Team and by West Mercia Police under a co-operative arrangement known as HOST (Housing Outreach Support and Triage) which has made a substantial contribution to supporting those sleeping rough. The Trustees will review the future of the Outreach Service when it is known whether Shropshire Council will extend its contract beyond March 2018: the value of this service to people sleeping rough in the County is undeniable, but we must ensure that the Charity's core business in the Shrewsbury Ark is not prejudiced.

During the last year we have appointed an administrator who is also Clerk to the Trustees.

Reporting/recording

Weekly reports are being provided to Housing Options in line with their requests. This also helps us share among the staff and with partner agencies a timely update of the progress with each rough sleeper.

Every Monday, Ark staff meet after morning drop-in to review the previous week's report and to plan the actions necessary for the week ahead.

Ark Shop

The Ark Charity Shop in Castle Street is proving a real asset and the trustees wish to extend their thanks and appreciation to the Manager, June Howells, and volunteers. Indeed, without the commitment and hard work of over 20 volunteers the charity would not be able to operate, and we are very grateful for all their hard work.

Plans for the Future

The Trustees' review of the Ark's services, to identify what we are doing right and/or where we might improve, was concluded in early 2017 and presented to the membership at our AGM in March 2017. Broadly, the Review concluded that we needed to strive for greater resilience in our capacity to work effectively, and underscored the search that had already started for new premises in which client services could be enhanced; this could perhaps include provision of emergency overnight accommodation if feasible. The Review also concluded that the Ark's opening hours should be reviewed so that dedicated times were set for targeted support and intervention rather than trying to cope with all-comers all the time; this has been implemented and is proving a success.

However, the very evident need to for the Ark to move "house" if we are to enhance our services to our clients has not progressed as fast as we would wish. New premises need to be within easy walking distance of the Town Centre, the Railway Station and the Bus Station; but suitable premises in that area are hard to come by. At the time of writing, one possibility which seems to tick all the boxes is being actively pursued but it remains to be seen whether we shall be at the head of the queue when it becomes available after the present occupants move out. This lack of more rapid progress in enhancing our premises is a cause of much frustration.

The challenges facing us are as numerous and diverse as ever. I would like to thank everyone involved in CTIS for the continued support that makes our work possible, we continue to look for ways of meeting the growing demand as effectively as possible and believe that with your help and support we can continue to provide much need support for those who desperately need it.

Date of SCCA AGM: Wednesday 14th March 2017 6-30 pm for 7pm start.

Location, Shrewsbury Baptist Church (Central), Claremont Street, Shrewsbury. SY1 1QG

Howard Hutchings.

Chair, Shrewsbury Christian Centre Association.

Shrewsbury Ecumenical Green Group. (EGG)

When this group was formed back in 2006, it was felt there was a need for churches to meet and share ideas about this aspect of the churches' calling, mindful of the 5th Mark of Mission, which states, "To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain the life of the earth."

In the early days, many of us were not quite sure what this entailed, and it was very much, seen as an, "add on," to the churches' mission. Today, creation care is very much an aspect of church work and many churches in our town have achieved a great deal and witness to the wider community about how important this is to Christians.

There are many secular groups in the town who are actively involved in environmental issues and the church is always invited to attend and contribute to the debate. Secular and religious groups working together on what is also a social justice issue must be applauded.

Although the group no longer meets, I would always welcome, churches keeping me informed of any events and achievements involving this aspect of their work. I think it is important that we continue to encourage each other, share ideas and invite each other to any events being held. I am often invited to speak about the churches' role in this area and it always gives me a great deal of pride to inform a wider audience of the many practical measures and achievements, of so many of the churches in the town.

Howard Hutchings.

howardevanshutchings@gmail.com

Shrewsbury Youth for Christ

It's been another great year of 'taking good news relevantly' to young people through the work of Shrewsbury Youth for Christ. We are so grateful to many of you who pray for us personally and for those of you who join us at our monthly prayer breakfasts.

We are in the privileged position of now having regular involvement (either weekly, monthly or termly) at four out of five of our local secondary schools as well as the Shrewsbury colleges group. Our activities in these different schools and college vary widely, from mentoring to Christian unions, from sports clubs to drop-ins. In everything we do, we seek to share the good news that young people have immense value, to us, to their communities and to God.

Our work, in summary:

Mary Webb School – Weekly lunch clubs; whole school assemblies at least once a term.

Meole Brace School – Weekly Christian Union

Belvidere School– Weekly Music Mentoring, weekly Trivolle Club, weekly Food Club

The Shrewsbury Academy – Termly lessons for Year 7 students

Shrewsbury Sixth Form College - Weekly Christian Union

One of our newest projects over the last year has been a Good Food Club, run in partnership with Belvidere School and the Shrewsbury Food Hub. Each week we meet with a group of pupils from Belvidere school to cook a meal from food which has been donated by the Food Hub and would have simply been thrown away by local supermarkets. We then eat together which provides a great platform for mentoring.

In July we said farewell to Andy Lowe, who has faithfully served SYFC for 10 years and has now set up a social enterprise, working to combine his gifts in music and his love for local communities. Andy will still be working alongside us on projects such as Music Mentoring, the Gospel Choir and Student Open Mic Nights. In September we were joined by two new team members: Ellie Sutton and Ellie Harper. Ellie Sutton has joined the team as part time Youth Worker and is hoping to specialise in Mental Health awareness and support. Ellie Harper, a previous SYFC volunteer, has joined us as her placement while she studies for a BA in Theology, Mission and Youth Work. Both Ellies are a huge blessing to the work and we thank God for his provision with such great team members.

We are thankful to God for continuing to support and sustain us, especially as we have taken on new staff members. We are, however, always looking for new supporters to come alongside the work – both in finance and prayer. Please do get in touch if you would like to be involved.

Hannah Moore
Centre Director

Café Church

Cafe Church meets on the second Wednesday of each month 7.30pm at The Lion Hotel, usually in one of their lounges. We take it in turns to lead a discussion or give a talk on a relevant topic - examples being: *The Cross, Lent, Pentecost, Walks, Reality* and *Saints*.

We have about six to eight church members who attend but we really wish to encourage some non-church goers to come along to better fulfil our mission of outreach. These will only come if invited, so please contact Hugh O'Donnell (tel 01743 244083) or Don Smith (tel 01743 365202) if you know of anyone who is searching for faith.

Hugh O'Donnell

Crosstalk

We have had another good year with Crosstalk, we would like to thank all contributors. Good to see such a wide range of subjects, it is always nice to be topical, with a nod to current political events and issues of concern in the news, but it is also good to see personal testimony and experiences gained from the many different work places and lifestyles of our participants.

It is also good to see a slightly different focus from all the different churches and denominations represented – we all have something special from our own perspective to add into the Christian community in our area.

Thanks also everyone for being timely and reliable in your contributions – the only small blips we have had have been down to illness/bereavement or the inexplicable non delivery of emails, with all the wonders of modern technology it will never be 100% failsafe.

With that in mind, we would welcome a Crosstalk or two to keep in hand for a stopgap, if anyone would like to write an undated one to be used as and when, that would be fantastic.

Tricia Green

Roofbreakers Group

Roofbreakers – exploring ‘disability ministry and mission’ generally meet up once every three months in a local church to give and receive fellowship and support to / from one another.

This year they have run an Enabling Church course with David Primrose, Director of Transforming Communities, Diocese of Lichfield.

A TASTER SESSION was held in April - for church leaders and others. The AIM: to provide useful, background information and a full Enabling Church course September-November 2017 for Roofbreakers and others. The course finishes on 16th November.

The AIMS of the course:

- Theological understanding of disability
- Awareness of resources available to promote the sharing of ministry with those who experience disabilities and their carers
- Development of a disability-inclusive, locally-based initiative

Following the course Roofbreakers are planning a Roofbreakers Area Network on: 10th OR 17th February, 2018 where there will be an opportunity to SHARE how it has been since the course.

On Monday, 18th December at 6pm Roofbreakers will be having a joint Carol Gathering with Wellspring Apostolic church.

The Roofbreakers Group remain in a developing phase their DRAFT PLAN for 2018 is to:

- Secure specific roles within the group e.g. Treasurer
- Explore a VISION for the group
- Continue to liaise with church communities developing
- Building upon RELATIONSHIPS with church communities and, where possible, identify potential Roofbreakers.

Phil Ramsbotham

Ecumenical Lent Groups

Again this year CTIS ran an ecumenical Lent Course during Lent, following the York Course: “ **Receiving Christ – in 5 different ways**”

- The course ran for 5 weeks during Lent with participants joining one of 5 discussion groups on an afternoon or evening of their choice. Each group had a host and a discussion leader/ facilitator.
- Invitations to take part in the course were sent to every church in Shrewsbury
- The total number of participants (including hosts & leaders) was 41
- By denomination there were: 16 Methodists; 12 Cof E; 9 United Reformed; 4 Roman Catholic
- Participants came from 9 different churches.
- By individual church these were:
 - 10 from Belle Vue Methodist
 - 6 from Bayston Hill Methodist
 - 9 from URC
 - 4 from RC Cathedral
 - 6 from Christchurch C of E
 - 1 from St Chads C of E
 - 1 from St Georges C of E
 - 1 from Holy Spirit C of E
 - 3 from St Giles C of E

In their feedback participants said they enjoyed both the course material and the group discussions and found it interesting, stimulating and helpful. The majority said they would want to do it again and would recommend it to others.

The added value of the course was as always the opportunity to meet with Christians from different denominations and share and learn from differing views and traditions.

A big “thank you” is needed to the group hosts for opening up their homes to a group and especially for the effort’s and commitment of the Group Leaders/Facilitators.

An Ecumenical Lent Course is being planned again for 2018 and details will be available soon

BUT

The 2017 course was only just viable as a minimum of 40 participants are needed to have sufficient groups on different days of the week to accommodate everyone’s availability and to try and achieve some balance between denominations. So please do give serious consideration to taking part in 2018 and encourage others to join you! I am sure you will not regret it!

Andy Carson

