

Churches Together in the Merseyside Region

Ecumenical NewsBrief 2026



Welcome to our 2026 edition

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News from the World Council of Churches (WCC)



WCC Annual Review available

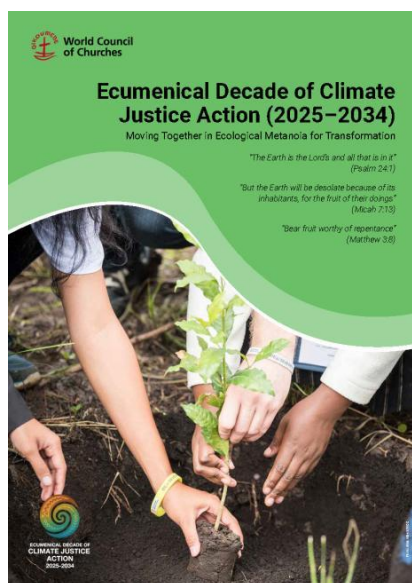
The Review is entitled *“Pursuing Peace Together”* and it records many of the WCC’s activities undertaken in 2024 and continuing into 2025. Here is the [link](#) to access the Review. The World Council of Churches is involved in many dialogues, offers a variety of courses and resources, etc. Please see below for a resource about Climate Justice.



©Marcelo Schneider/WCC

The Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action (2025–2035)

The Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action (2025–2035) is an invitation from the World Council of Churches and ecumenical partners worldwide to a pilgrimage of repentance,



renewal and action to confront the climate emergency with courage, hope, and love.

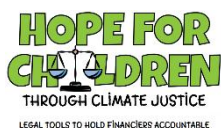
Why This Decade?

The climate crisis is not only an environmental emergency – it is a spiritual and moral crisis.

In the brochure entitled Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action (see image to the left for cover page) churches and faith communities are being called to lead by repenting of complicity and reclaiming their vocation as caretakers of God’s creation. It can be downloaded [here](#)

©WCC

WCC publishes resource on legal tools for climate justice



The newly published resource "Hope for Children Through Climate Justice" provides churches and communities with essential legal tools designed to hold financial actors accountable for their role in perpetuating the climate crisis.



This publication was developed by the Churches’ Commitments to Children programme of the World Council of Churches (WCC). [Read more](#)

Use this QR code if you’d like to download the publication.



A better option than bashing the media



Communication is a deeply spiritual thing. We often fail to treat it that way. For more information, here you can find the link to download the WCC's [communication strategy](#).

A blog by Bruce Barron about communication can be found by following [this link](#). Photo: Mike DuBose/WCC

New resource guides civil society on developing a rights-based framework for the digital age



© Gregoire de Fombelle/WCC

The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) published “Taking a Progressive and Decolonial Approach to Digital Ecosystems,” a resource that aims to guide civil society in developing a rights-based, democratic framework for the digital age. It was developed ahead of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20) High-Level Event in Geneva in July 2025.

[Read more](#)

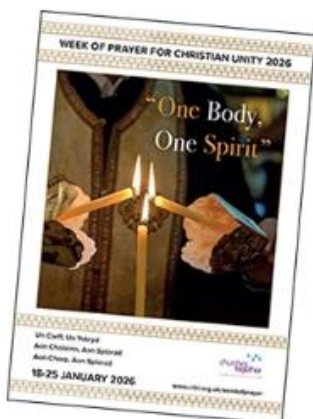
To further explore some of the work of the World Council of Churches, please **follow this link**

News from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2026, 18th - 25th January 2026

Resources



Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) offer resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. For 2026, the prayers and reflections for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity have been prepared by the faithful of the Armenian Apostolic Church, along with their brothers and sisters of the Armenian Catholic and Evangelical Churches. The theme for the week is: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling” (Ephesians 4:4). To access resources, please follow this [link](#). ©CTBI

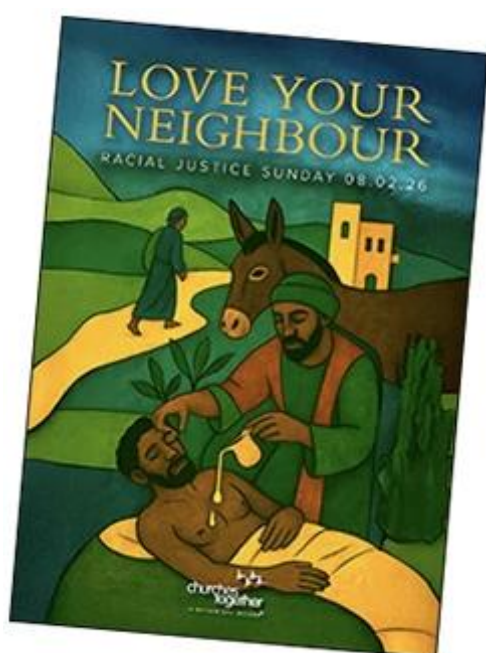
Share details of your event

Please share details of your events during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on CTBI’s [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity wall](#) – simply add the #wpcuwall hashtag to your X(Twitter) post.

For further news and events at CTBI please follow this [link](#)

Racial Justice Sunday 8th February 2026

‘Love Your Neighbour’



Racial Justice Sunday has been observed since 1995.

It currently takes place annually on the second Sunday of February, providing a very useful focus for many churches.

Racial Justice Sunday is about highlighting those biblical principles that foment unity, cohesion and engagement.

Resources for Racial Justice Sunday 2026 are available [here](#). This year’s theme is ‘Love Your Neighbour’.

©CTBI

News from Churches Together in England (CTE)



New CTE President Rev Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson, Free Churches Group



Rev Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson was appointed in April 2025 as Free Churches Group CTE President. Her appointment began when she took up her term in office as Moderator of the Free Churches Group. To find out more about this please follow this [link](#) to the CTE website.

©CTE

Outgoing CTE President: Cardinal Vincent Nichols



Cardinal Vincent Nichols stepped down as Archbishop of Westminster. He is the current Churches Together in England President representing the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. To read a personal reflection on Cardinal Nichols and ecumenism please follow this [link](#)

©CTE

Cardinal Vincent will be succeeded by Rt Rev Richard Moth, who is currently the Bishop of Arundel and Brighton. Bishop Richard will be installed at Westminster Cathedral on Saturday, 14th February 2026. You can find out more about the new Archbishop elect by following this [link](#).

Current Staff at CTE

CTE staff come from a wide variety of church traditions and backgrounds. They are based across the country and work in a very flexible manner, enabling a broad spectrum of work areas to be



covered.

Pictured is the current team at Churches Together in England: from left to right: Sarah Ball, Senior Communications and Media Manager; Bishop Mike Royal, General Secretary; Doral Hayes, Principal Officer for Ecumenical Development and Relations; Lorraine Shannon, Operations Manager; Rev Dr Ben Aldous, Principal Officer for Mission and Evangelism; Ben Cross, Head of Operations; Shermara Fletcher, Principal Officer for Pentecostal, Charismatic and Multi-cultural Relations.

©CTE

CTE Forum 17th – 19th March 2025

One But Not the Same - Celebrating Diversity - Living with Difference

CTE Forum takes place every three years and is [organised by group of 11 people](#) three of whom are from the above pictured CTE staff team.

The impressions of three local participants who try to convey something of this extraordinary event have been captured below the first and continued below the second picture:



©CTE

“I’ve never attended a CTE Forum before, so it was with an air of trepidation that I began the journey to The Hayes, and a wonderful welcome awaited us.

But what would it look like to be in a space full of such a diverse group of faithful people. What I found was a richness of knowledge and a breadth of experience being shared and that was more than just in the seats of those eagerly listening.

The panel of speakers was hugely varied, and we were treated to thoughts on everything from our ‘synodality’ and our understanding of ‘The priesthood of all believers’. I consciously use the word ‘our’ because regardless of the denomination of the individual who was leading the discussion it felt an inclusive space to share and to learn from each other.

As we continued to explore the theme of ‘one but not the same’ we were encouraged by Dr Debbie Lewer’s ‘Ways of Seeing: Art and Difference’, an insightful and thought-provoking way of exploring our faith.

The programme throughout our time together was dispersed with new experiences should you choose to explore them, from the Charismatic, to the Orthodox and Quaker way of worshipping. Whilst small group workshops offered thoughts on Forest Church, preventing spiritual abuse, living with diversity on the issues of human sexuality, and the current Israel-Palestine conflict.

As well as a number of opportunities to hear from excellent speakers, there was also opportunity to meet with people from our region and wider country to share experiences and to network.

If I arrived with an air trepidation, I left with a sense of hope, to hear and see God’s good people united in difference and living out the theme of one but not the same.”

Rev Debbie Wilkinson Associate Minister Birkenhead Priory Parish, Wirral Waters Mission lead



Some of the Merseyside Participants at Forum 2025 are pictured above

From left to right: Asish Verghese - Carmel MarThoma Church, Liverpool -Youth & Children's Ministry Team Leader, CTMR Young Adults' group; Alex Fisher - Faith Development Worker; Rev Debbie Wilkinson - Associate Minister Birkenhead Priory Parish, Wirral Waters Mission lead Wirral CVS; Revd Tim Meadows – Wavertree St Stephens and Allerton URC; Yvonne Campbell – Congregational Federation; Rev Cynthia Dowdle; Ann and Steve Atherton – Member Church Representatives, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales; Ultan Russell - Ecumenical Officer & Chair of Liverpool RC Archdiocesan Dialogue and Unity Commission; Elisabeth Hachmoeller - CTMR Ecumenical Coordinator

"I have to say I found Forum very interesting and encouraging. I found the sessions on AI, the 1st Ecumenical Council and Racial Justice and reparations, particularly powerful. I also got a great deal out of the workshops, I attended 'Living with diversity' and 'Accessible Church'. I did find those too short though and suspect I am not alone in that. The variety of Worship was good, and I took a couple of hymns/worship songs back with me to use in the churches I serve. Dr Deborah Lewer and Poetess Jess were a couple of other highlights although I cannot say I understood all the Art or what was seen in some of it - challenging! ... I am looking forward to sharing some of what I experienced with the churches I serve and personally reflecting further on much of it."

Rev Murray George Ministering to the churches of Mersey Synod South Cheshire Pastorate of the URC

"I thoroughly enjoyed it, it was highly stimulating with excellent speakers, the worship (especially the Pentecostal & Young Ecumenists) was invigorating, and please can I go again next time?" Major Gareth Dickens Commanding Officer Winsford Corps & Denominational Ecumenical Officer for Cheshire



At CTE Forum Market Stall © CTE

Please also follow this [link](#) for a summary of the event by CTE.

Bill Snelson Young Ecumenists Fund

Grants from the Bill Snelson Fund allow young adults to experience ecumenism abroad. That experience can be study, pilgrimage, volunteering or any activity that promotes church unity.

*News about the Young Ecumenists Snelson Fund grants awarded for **Spring 2025** can be found [here](#) and the details for the First Snelson Fund grants of **2026** can be found following this [link](#).*

And here is the [link](#) to a list of awardees in 2023, 2024 and 2025.

Charities & Networks in Association with Churches Together in England

Focolare Summer Gathering - Mariapolis - 23 - 26 July 2026

Harper Adams University, Newport, Shropshire



After two very successful Mariapolis events at Harper Adam University, it will be held in the same place from the 23rd – 26th July 2026. Building on the events in previous years, friends old and new are welcome to an experience of gospel life together.

With activities for all ages and open to everyone, including families, the Mariapolis provides a space to grow in faith together, through reflection, connection and fun! Full board, self-catering and camping are available.

To read about Mariapolis 2025 please following this [link](#).

More information can be obtained nearer the time by visiting the Focolare website at www.focolare.org/gb

Ecumenical Officers

National, County and Denominational Ecumenical Officers in England are in place to encourage, assist and resource Christian unity in a particular area or network. A key part of their work is to connect, encourage and communicate.

National Ecumenical Officers (NEOs)

National Ecumenical Officers help their own church tradition to work with other churches. [National Ecumenical Officers](#) (NEOs) are key to the support of local ecumenism (churches working together locally).

They are appointed by a number of CTE's national [Member Churches](#) to have responsibility for ecumenical relationships – helping their own church tradition to work ecumenically, and representing their church in national ecumenical settings. In smaller church denominations someone (often the General Secretary) will have ecumenical relations as part of a wider role.

[Access the NEO contact directory](#)

Northern County Ecumenical Officers (NCEOs)

NCEOs continue their tri-annual meetings for mutual support, networking and exchange of ideas. There have been some changes in the Northern Ecumenical Officers team in 2025.



Here the team is pictured at their last meeting at Wardley Hall after a tour of the Laudato Si eco garden.

From left to right: Elisabeth Hachmoeller - Ecumenical Co-ordinator Merseyside & Contact person for Cheshire, Jo Phillips - Community Social Action Team (North) and Modern Slavery Project Lead CT Cumbria, Alan Kenedy - Ecumenical Facilitator for Greater Manchester Churches Together; Sarah Ducker-- Gardener & Wellbeing Coordinator at Laudato Si' Centre, Wardley Hall; Darren Holland --URC Ecumenical Officer NW Synod; Anton Muller - CEO Lancashire; Peter Colwell - Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

Thy Kingdom Come: 14th - 24th May 2026

Thy Kingdom Come (TKC) is a global ecumenical prayer movement that invites Christians around



the world to pray from Ascension to Pentecost for more people to come to know Jesus.

Since it began in May 2016, TKC has grown from a dream of possibility into a movement which unites more than a million Christians in prayer, in nearly 90% of countries worldwide, across 85 different

denominations and traditions - so that friends and family, neighbours and colleagues might

come to faith in Jesus Christ. Every person, household and church are encouraged to pray during the 11 days in their own way. It is hoped that those who have not yet heard the Good News of Jesus Christ and His love for the world, will hear it for themselves and respond and follow Him. Specifically, each and every Christian across the globe is invited to pray that God's Spirit might work in the lives of five people who have not responded with their 'Yes' to God's call. Whether anyone has joined in 'Thy Kingdom Come' before or not, everyone is invited to take part & join in.

Please use this [link](#) to watch 'Thy Kingdom Come Over The Years 10th Anniversary'.

Online workshop to inspire and equip for Thy Kingdom Come 2026 22nd January 2026

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Thy Kingdom Come and Churches Together in England will host two online joint workshops to help inspire and equip churches to consider how they might take part in Thy Kingdom Come 2026.



The session will explore different ways churches can pray and collaborate together, from across traditions and denominations, and will also provide plenty of space for participants to share best practice and gather new ideas.

The interactive workshops will be facilitated by Revd Canon Jean Kerr (Thy Kingdom Come) and Doral Hayes (Churches Together in England).

Whether anyone is taking part in Thy Kingdom Come for the first time or has been involved for several years, all are invited to come and be inspired.

There will be two sessions (the same session repeated) taking place on Thursday January 22nd.

Register for one of the workshops on the link below.

[Register Here - 11am - 12pm](#); or

[Register Here - 7pm - 8pm](#)

News from Merseyside

CTMR Church Leaders' Group



Our Regional Church Leaders' take it in turns to chair their quarterly meetings and to prepare a short time of prayer at the beginning of each meeting which takes place in their homes, if possible. They truly appreciate and support one another. One of them said that this group helped to ground them when they were new in their role. They also share personal news or news around the denominations and perhaps discover that others have tried things they wish to do and can link up for some expert advice or just encourage each other when things seem a bit difficult.

After a particularly moving meeting when they had to say goodbye to someone in the group who was retiring, one Church Leaders said how much they valued the support of this group and the concern they have for one another. They described the meetings a foretaste of the heavenly banquet.

They also meet up for a retreat day to make sure that they have more time for encounter and dialogue knowing that good relationships form the basis of their group.

In 2025 CTMR Church Leaders met four times and continued to give direction to the work of CTMR. Together they host an annual Civic Reception, a lunch for local MPs and the annual Pentecost/ 2 Cathedrals Event. In 2025 they hosted a novel event during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (see pages 12/13) and the Faith in the City commemoration events. (see pages 13 - 16)

Changes to the CTMR Church Leaders group



In 2025 Archbishop Malcolm McMahon retired but remains resident in Liverpool. His support for CTMR was immense and enormously appreciated. Thank you, Archbishop Malcolm!



He passed on the baton to Archbishop John Sherrington. A big welcome to Merseyside, Archbishop John!



On his retirement Major David Taylor also passed on the baton. He handed it to



....Major Ian Mountford. A warm welcome to Major Ian!!



We also have a new interim Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, Rt Rev Ruth Worsley. A very warm welcome also to Bishop Ruth!

Church Leaders Retreat

As mentioned above, once a year Church Leaders enjoy a retreat day together and share a meal.



This allows them to deepen their friendships and to reflect on their faith together.

Photo in 2025 from l to r: Revd Caroline Ainger, Mission Area Lead and Deputy Chair for Liverpool Plus Methodist District; Rt Rev Julie Conalty, Anglican Bishop of Birkenhead, Diocese of Chester; Rt Rev Ruth Worsley, Interim Anglican Bishop of Liverpool; Rt Rev Tom Neylon - Auxiliary Bishop, RC Archdiocese of Liverpool; The Revd Dr James N. Tebbutt |Chair of North West Methodist District; Major Ian Mountford, District Commander, Salvation Army North West & Isle of Man Division

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025 Event

Listening to the Voices of Young People

Over many years CTMR celebrated the Week of prayer for Christian Unity by holding an Ecumenical Service for people in Merseyside linked to the official service prepared by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and based on what the World Council of Churches prepares every year. Over the past two years Merseyside Church Leaders have used the material in a different way and also focused on an event for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity where they have invited denominational representatives to reflect on an area of concern.

In 2025 as part of the programme, everyone attending was invited to share when they had first



made a commitment to God. Each person said they had come to faith below the age of 26. This brought into even sharper focus the question “Where is the future church when we seem to have so few people under the age of 26 in the vast majority of congregations?”

Picture: The introductory session in 2025

The main presentations were made by three young adults. They had 10 minutes each and ended their presentation by each asking the group to respond to a challenging question: Salvation Army Youth Worker, Alice Tonks, asked, “What are you prepared to sacrifice for the sake of engaging the under 26 generation?” and Children’s Worker in the Methodist Church, Mike Sutcliffe, asked “How can we help people under 26 to know that Jesus is their firm foundation?”



The final question came from, Esther Walters, an intern in the Baptist Church. She asked: “What is the biggest barrier in the Church you see to engage with people under 26?”

These questions were discussed in small groups and then fed back in a plenary session.

CTMR Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Event 2025 group photo

Rebecca Hooton, Huyton Deanery Schools and Youth Worker, gave the following feedback: “To be able to network, share stories and pray for one another and for the work we do, and others do

with young people I am thankful. I really hope that another gathering like this can take place again to continue these important discussions, opportunities to network and share stories and most importantly to pray for one another and for our young people.”

Asish Varghese, Youth and Children’s Ministry Team Leader at Carmel MarThoma Church, Liverpool, added: “Overall, I left the event feeling encouraged and uplifted. Spending the day together and listening to insightful inputs, sharing stories, and connecting with others, was a reminder of the strength that comes from unity in diversity. It was a beautiful reminder of the power of prayer, dialogue, and mutual respect in our journey toward greater Christian unity.”

This year’s event will be about how Churches help engaging with immigrant groups. Therefore, the day will be based around interculturalism and unity and a group from different denominations and ethnic backgrounds have worked on the programme.

CTMR Church Leaders invite local MPs

It has been a long tradition for CTMR Church Leaders to invite Merseyside MPs for lunch each year. Here is what one of our Church Leaders, Phil Jump, says about the meeting in March 2025:



“Our regular meetings with local MP’s provide an important informal arena in which to discuss issues of mutual concern but also to express our appreciation on behalf of the wider community for the service that our parliamentary representatives offer. We appreciate their investment of time and the mutual respect that these meetings are able to maintain. We encourage Christians of every

tradition to take seriously the words of St Paul and “pray . . . for all those in authority” [2 Tim 2:1-2]”

MPs & Church Leaders lunch time meeting in March 2025

CTMR & Together Liverpool collaborate to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of ‘Faith in the City Report’ in 2025

Commemoration Events

Founders Celebration

A special Founders’ Celebration was held at Liverpool Cathedral in May 2025 to honour the social justice pioneers whose work shaped the influential 1985 *Faith in the City* report. The event paid tribute to key



individuals who contributed to the landmark report 40 years ago and have since dedicated their lives to social justice – advocating for the most vulnerable and championing community transformation for decades. Please follow this [link](#) to find out more.

Micah Lectures

The Micah Lecture in the Summer of 2025 focused on a critique of the original document and whether it achieved its intended outcomes. Jenny Sinclair discussed how the Church should respond to modern poverty by shifting from simple charity to deeper solidarity, using Catholic Social Teaching to encourage justice, community, and prophetic action, rather than just compassion. *Download a pdf of this talk [here](#) and listen to a recording [here](#)*

Social Action Network Conference

A Social Action Network Conference in July 2025 created space for collaborative conversations with social justice activists to foster deeper partnerships and work towards realising some of the outcomes of Faith in the City. It was co-hosted by Together Liverpool and the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The theme was "Building Stronger Communities," and it featured sessions on topics such as the legacy of the "Faith in the City" report, "Near Neighbours," and how faith groups can respond to issues like county lines.

Podcasts



A podcast (2 episodes) was produced to highlight the enduring impact of the 1985 report and to share the hopes for commemorating this significant occasion. Here is the [link](#) to the podcasts.

Image: Pixabay

Launch of Manifesto of Hope



In November 2025 CTMR with Together Liverpool hosted exponents from Civic Society, the world of Health, representatives from Universities, the Charity Sector, etc. It was a gathering where faith communities, their leaders and civic leaders reflected on the impact that the Church has made since Faith in the City was launched 40 years ago. ©Rob Battersby

This event was attended by about 100 invited guests. A manifesto was launched which was signed by CTMR Church Leaders and LCR Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram. Many people had been invited to take part in a survey, and the responses were incorporated into the manifesto. This manifesto is available [here](#).



Rev Dr Tani Omideyi, Senior Leader of Love & Joy Ministries and Rep. for Evangelicals signing the Manifesto ©Rob Battersby



Some of CTMR Church Leaders present from left to right:
 Rev Caroline Ainger, Liverpool Mission Area Lead of the North West England Methodist District
 Rev. Dr Tani Omideyi, Senior Leader of Love & Joy Ministries and Rep. for Evangelicals
 Steve Rotheram, Metro Mayor of Liverpool City Region
 Revd Geoff Felton, Moderator of Mersey Synod of the United Reformed Church
 Bishop Thomas Neylon Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Liverpool
 Rev Phil Jump, Chair of Churches Together and Regional Minister for the North West Baptist Association
 The Rt Revd Julie Conalty, Bishop of Birkenhead

©Rob Battersby

From right to left:

Rev Dr Tani Omideyi, Senior Leader of Love & Joy Ministries and Rep. for Evangelicals
 Rev Geoff Felton, Moderator of Mersey Synod of the United Reformed Church
 Rev Phil Jump, Chair of Churches Together and Regional Minister for the North West Baptist Association
 Rt Rev Tom Neylon, Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Liverpool
 The Rt Rev Ruth Worsley, Interim Bishop of Liverpool
 The Rt Rev Julie Conalty, Bishop of Birkenhead
 Rev Caroline Ainger, Liverpool Mission Area Lead of the North West England Methodist District

©Rob Battersby

Follow up

There are dates in the diary to explore how to follow up events during the anniversary year, and we will be in touch with more information soon.

CTMR Civic Reception



A Civic Reception for Leaders of the Borough Councils and Mayors within the Merseyside Region normally takes place every year and is hosted by CTMR Church Leaders. It is an opportunity for Mayors and Leaders of the Council to network among themselves and with the Church Leaders. In June 2025 Civic Leaders met at the Metropolitan

Cathedral. They were very interested in finding out about the 40th Anniversary of the Faith in the City commemoration and subsequently took part in it in as much as they were able to.

Photo above: Civic Reception 2025 at the Metropolitan Cathedral

CTMR Management Council

The Management group is responsible for ensuring that the charity sets budgets, produces accounts and annual reports, provides governance and compliance oversight to the Church Leaders group. It monitors the working of the charity so that it is safe, legal and appropriate. It ensures that standing responsibilities are met, such as emergency planning, the support of LEPs and good practice in the employment of staff. They continue to meet four times a year.

Liverpool Cologne Partnership



Churches Together in the Merseyside Region (CTMR) are still reviewing the way forward for the Liverpool Cologne-Link group.

The link between the Cathedral Choirs of the two cities continued and the exchange will continue in 2026. A visit to Cologne took place in September.

Cologne Visit September 2025

by The Very Revd Dr Sue Jones, Dean of Liverpool

“Monsignor Tony O’Brien, (Dean of Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral) and I were invited to Cologne to our ecumenical link diocese in September.

There was a packed programme with some wonderful hospitality from Rainer and Eva-Maria Will and Reimund and Marlene Witte and Robert Kleine the Dean of Cologne.

On the first evening we joined the congregation of Cologne Cathedral for the opening service of the Three Kings Pilgrimage; where heaven and earth meet. Heaven and earth did meet as we processed around the Cathedral and paid homage to the shrine of the three kings. A beautiful and thought-provoking service.

After the service Billy Tanner's "ladder to heaven", was installed at the Domforum for six months to mark the 30th anniversary of the Domforum.

The ladder will be illuminated on the Domplatte.

On the following day, we went to an ecumenical service in Cologne Cathedral with the premiere of the commissioned composition to mark 1700 years of the Nicene Creed, followed by a Nicene Soiree in the Cathedral Forum.

We also went on a prayer walk for peace (see a picture from the prayer walk below) around the city on the



Saturday morning. This was profoundly moving as we saw how devastated the city was after the war and how the city has dedicated spaces within its boundaries to remember the atrocities of war.

The ecumenical relationships are strong and it was good to share for a short time with our brothers and sisters in the ecumenical journey of peace.”

Denominational Ecumenical Officers (DEOs)

Denominational Ecumenical Officers from Merseyside continue to meet three or four times a year, sometimes face to face sometimes on zoom. They have continued to link up with Cheshire DEOs. They support and update each other which enables working together more closely.



Andrew Edwards
Church of England



David Goodwin
Methodist



Ian Smith
United Reformed Church



Ultan Russell
Roman Catholic

The Baptist and Salvation Army positions are vacant at present. To get in touch with your DEO, please follow this [link](#) or contact the [Ecumenical Co-ordinator](#).

Churches Together in the Merseyside Region Communications Officers

CTMR Communications Officers met with Bishop Julie Conalty in February and discovered that together they have a wide set of skills. They agreed to meet again for an ‘in house’ training event

in May 2025 where they agreed to ecumenically roll out some training for people in our churches to enhance media skills and to help us make Churches more accessible to our wider communities.



Some of the Comms Officers at their meeting in May 2025.

Sharing the Message: Faith, Storytelling and Creativity

Come Alive at CTMR Training Day

On Monday 6th October 2025, 20 participants from a range of denominations gathered at the Margaret Clitherow Centre in Liverpool for the CTMR Communications Training Day, “Communicating Faith Creatively.” The day brought together church leaders, communications volunteers, and anyone with a passion for faith-based storytelling, offering a rich mix of theology, creativity, and hands-on learning. Facilitated by Revd Phil Jump (Regional Minister for the Northwest Baptist Association), Clare Coombes (United Reformed Church Mersey Synod), and Stephen Freeman (Diocese of Chester) (standing up and waving in picture below) the sessions



provided both inspiration and practical skills to help churches communicate their message with clarity, confidence, and creativity.

Session Highlights

Session 1: Commissioned to Communicate

Led by Phil Jump, this opening session explored the theological foundations of communication within a faith context. Participants reflected on the role of storytelling, message integrity, and how sharing the Gospel begins with authentic connection.

Session 2: Storytelling and Social Media

Clare Coombes guided attendees through the art of digital storytelling, offering practical advice on crafting authentic messages for platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter). Through case studies and discussion, participants picked up valuable tips on tone, timing, and creative tools.

Session 3: Practical Video Production

In a lively, hands-on workshop, Stephen Freeman introduced participants to video production basics; from planning and storyboarding to filming and editing using smartphones and low-cost tools. Working in small groups, attendees practised creating short video clips and shared their work for feedback.

What Participants Said

Attendees particularly enjoyed meeting others, sharing ideas, and working collaboratively. Many appreciated the balance of theology and practice, the interactive nature of the sessions, and the chance to explore new ways to connect with younger audiences.

When asked what they found most useful, responses included:

- “Tips on storytelling and video making.”
- “Learning how to make videos and being creative.”
- “Practical learning and real examples.”
- “Gaining confidence in communications.”

Participants described the day as “*a great day*” and “*really useful*,” with 100% saying they would like more training in the future, particularly sessions focused on social media opportunities.

Suggestions for improvement included more time for practical sessions, extended discussions, and further exploration of GDPR, permissions and copyright for photos and videos.

Looking Ahead

The enthusiasm and feedback from this event show just how valuable communications training is for churches today. CTMR look forward to offering more opportunities in the future to help faith communities share their stories in creative and meaningful ways.

If you missed this session, keep an eye out for future training events. They're a fantastic way to grow your skills, connect with others, and bring fresh energy to your church communications.

By Claire Coombes

Churches Together in the Northwest Safeguarding Group

The ecumenical safeguarding group widened the range of the meeting to reflect the large area they cover between them as it is well beyond the Merseyside region. To reflect this, they call themselves 'Churches Together in the Northwest Safeguarding Group'. The Northwest Churches Safeguarding Leads will meet again soon.



© Photo: Cheryl Holt from Pixabay (pixabay.com)

Many Churches in our various areas...



.....pray for their local churches of different denominations on a rota basis. Why not include a prayer in your services for the local Churches in your area.

© Image: pixabay: rambo 182

CTMR Social Justice Group



Representatives from the denominations who work in the field of social justice also keep in dialogue with each other. They meet three times a year and try and identify overlaps and gaps. From the friendly encounters of the Social Justice Group a suggestion to CTMR Church Leaders emerged to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Faith in the City Report.

Please see above.

Image above: Introductory meeting of new members of current group.

Please Tell Us



We are aware that there will have been countless local ecumenical events throughout the year. We would love to hear from you about any ecumenical initiative at this time.

© Image: pixabay: (pixabay.com)

Pentecost Two Cathedrals Events 2026 & 2025



Pentecost 2026

Sunday 24th May 2026, 3-5pm

Please mark this date in your diaries.

The theme for Pentecost Celebrations 2026 is 'Many Voices - One Faith' and the celebrations will be based on the [Manifesto of Hope](#). Please see p 13 for more information about the Manifesto.

Pentecost 2025 Pilgrims of Hope



On Pentecost Sunday a joyful celebration march of Pentecost took place journeying together between Liverpool Cathedral and

the Metropolitan Cathedral. This symbolic walk started at Liverpool Cathedral and united communities in faith, reflection and joy. It brought together Christians from

across the city and beyond. It was linked to the Jubilee theme of Hope, to Pope Francis' call to mark 2025 as a Jubilee Year and to be "Pilgrims of Hope." It was a call to journey with renewed faith, seeking forgiveness and God's mercy amidst global struggles like war, poverty, and climate crisis, emphasizing hope as an active force for good, justice, and peace and the stalls below were linked to this theme. Celebrations began with a short act of worship at Liverpool Cathedral.



The march to the Metropolitan Cathedral was led along Hope Street by the Salvation Army band and beckoned by Melling Baptist Choir to gather on the piazza of the Metropolitan Cathedral....

On the piazza, pilgrims heard the story of Pentecost told in an unusual and very moving way.

After the blessing people visited stalls linked to the Jubilee themes and the children enjoyed the giant family games.



Service at Anglican Cathedral



Leaving the Anglican Cathedral



Salvation Army band leading....



the march along Hope Street to the Metropolitan Cathedral



Participants beckoned by Melling Baptist Choir...



to the gathering on the piazza



Images above and on the page below: pilgrims visiting the stalls and having fun



All Pentecost images © David Stanley

Working together more and more?

Ready to commit? LEPs and more....

You have a vision for working with other Christians on a new or existing venture, sharing your



insights, resources, creativity and prayer. It may be an idea at the planning stage, or an existing venture that has changed. Sooner or later those things that may begin with an informal understanding will benefit from a clearer expression of your commitments. Pitch it right and it will go smoothly. You will be in a good position to

recall, review, renew, change direction if need be, or even end well.

Photo: Andrew Edwards



At what point do you need to put something on paper? What would be appropriate for you? What will strengthen your partnership at this stage? Who do you need to talk to? Are there others doing something like this? Churches Together in England have created '[A Flexible Framework for local Unity in Mission](#)' which helps with questions like

this. Its Toolkit can help you develop the right agreement for your venture.

Photo: front cover of 'A Flexible Framework for local Unity in Mission' document

There are fifteen LEPs (Local Ecumenical Partnerships) worshipping congregations in our region.

They have a formal written agreement affecting the ministry, congregational life, buildings and/or mission projects of more than one denomination, with authorization by the appropriate

denominational authorities and the registration of the agreement with CTMR. More information about LEPs can be found by following this [link](#) to the CTMR website.

LEPs open up opportunities for sharing resources and mission initiatives – they also throw up their own questions and challenges. We're here to offer advice, or point in the direction of others who can.

Please feel free to contact Andrew Edwards, LEP Co-ordinator for CTMR, by calling: 07515 287013 or by emailing him at: andrew.edwards@liverpool.anglican.org

By Andrew Edwards

Liverpool Seafarers Centre



With a history dating back to the 19th century, the Liverpool Seafarers Centre was officially established on 1st October 2008, as a result of the merger between the Anglican Mersey Mission to Seafarers and the Catholic Apostleship of the Sea (Liverpool). As well as working with other Christian denominations they continue to strengthen their partnerships with local Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh communities.

Liverpool Seafarers' Champion Honoured with British Empire Medal

John Wilson, Chief Executive of Liverpool Seafarers Centre (LSC), has been awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) in recognition of his services to seafarers' welfare. The award highlights Mr. Wilson's commitment and contributions to improving the lives of those who arrive at the port of Liverpool.

John says: "This recognition belongs to the entire team at Liverpool Seafarers Centre – our dedicated staff members and invaluable volunteers. Without their tireless efforts, our service



provision simply would not exist." He received his British Empire Medal on Thursday 22nd May 2025 at the Rackets Club, Liverpool. The award was presented by Mark Blundell, Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside.

Photo from Left to Right: Billy Hui, High sheriff of Merseyside; Peter Woods, Deputy Lieutenant; Mark Blundell, Lord Lieutenant; John Wilson, BEM CEO Liverpool Seafarers Centre; Hannah McMichael; Sally Wilson; Councillor Jane Burns, Mayor of Sefton; Marlene Amoo, Deputy Lieutenant

To find out more about the work of the Seafarer's Centre, please visit their [website](#).

Support for Asylum Seekers (SAS)



CTMR/SAS have continued to support Partner Agencies and here are two reports:

Asylum Link Merseyside (ALM)

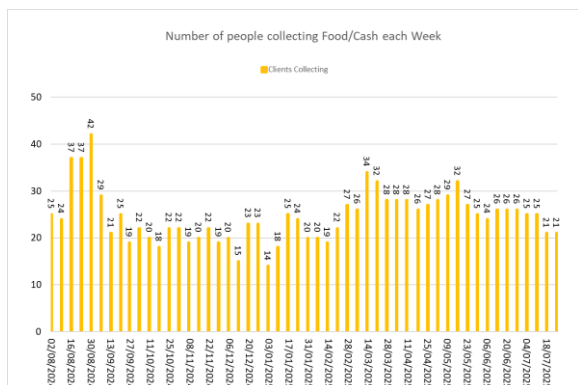
The phrase, “another hard year” is starting to feel thoroughly worn out. The changes we had to put in place to counter the far-right protests for increased security, the serious illness faced by a key member of staff, and the large numbers through the building for all the agencies working here, have placed a heavy strain on people working at the centre. Even with the reduced opening times of Monday to Thursday with appointments only on Fridays, it has been very difficult.

Although the statistics show the numbers exiting the Home Office with leave to remain have increased since last year, recently we have experienced a slight decrease, month to month, as the Asylum grant rate drops and/or people move onto the Lower Tribunal waiting list. ...

Numbers of recognised Refugees through our Centre are still high. Of the organisations at ALM the largest direct impact of this falls on the Merseyside Refugee Support Network who assist Refugees to move-on, but places greater indirect demand on ALM’s services like the Kitchen, Wellbeing and ESOL spaces.

The number of people who benefitted from the grant received by SAS

- Food store 144 people accessed the Food Store (1209 weekly parcels distributed).
- Housing 12 people were housed through the period in ALM accommodation with several others given temporary accommodation in hotels/hostels.
- Kitchen Well over 2000 people accessed the free meals throughout the year.



The use of the Food Store is steady but with the same turnover of clients accessing it. Some refused clients have been coming for years but the majority stay on a few months until they find another solution. Often, we think, people choose between a cash job and the food store.

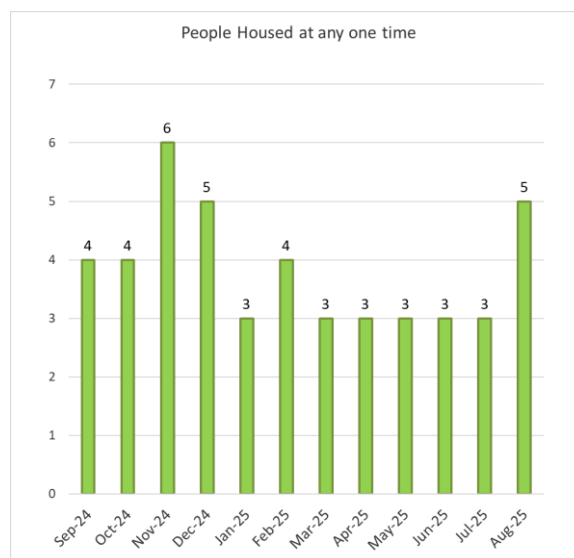
The Food distributed weekly through the food store is supplemented by what our kitchen produces Monday to Thursday and each day over 200 lunches are given out at the centre.

During the Far-Right phase in 2024 we were lucky to have the use of the UCU Trades Union Building in Oxford Street for distribution of cash and that was an immense help. You can instantly see from the graph above with the spike in August, how much more people prefer cash to food.

Housing - Destitution

There has been a fall in the number of refused and destitute asylum seekers during the past year. We think this is primarily due to the increased grant rate for initial decisions and peoples progress to the Tribunal Court, which is itself backed up providing at least some sort of buffer between the refused and destitution.

Many appeals have been lodged but without representatives available and this will be a real problem for people as their claim progresses.



The one remaining house we have is for Female Refugees and as described above, there have not been the Asylum refusals to justify keeping this. In the short term, we have assisted the Merseyside Refugee Support Network, who work alongside us in the St Anne's Centre, with clients receiving Leave to Remain but having no immediate housing. They may be able to run the house temporarily.

Also easing pressure on housing is the success rate of support applications by the Casework Team. We also have a small pot of funding where we can put someone in a hotel for a short period while assessing their situation. However, the stark reality is that with only one house for women, and far more males presenting as homeless, the point has arrived where we have to make a choice how the house is used. With the reduction in funding through Churches Together, the house has become too difficult to run, and we are exploring ways to hand it on.



Our overtures with Riverside Housing on asset transfer came to nothing and we discovered recently that the houses we had been discussing had been taken back into local authority control. In terms of male housing, when the last men's house closed, it has meant that we became reliant on tents and sleeping bags as a last resort (picture to your left from March 2025). We, as does everyone else, use the Refugees at Home Hosting Services and the Sisters

Hostel in Seel Street for male housing. MRSN have also had to resort to sleeping bags and tents when there is no other option.

We supplement this with short stays in hotels where appropriate, especially if it is unclear what circumstances the person is in. This has also been true for MRSN and the refugee clients they help, but it is a poor substitute for a house and the more stable platform that it provides. A recent development is the Jesuit Refugee Service, taking an office at ALM, as they work at setting up their own hosting service on Merseyside.

The Housing shortage in Liverpool remains chronic. It has never been as bad, and organisations like Vauxhall Law Centre are being inundated with requests for help.

During the past year it has become evident that local authority housing assessments were never done properly and the frequent use of Pre-Action Protocol letters has been necessary to trigger a response. As a result of pressure from local NGOs, mainstream Housing Services have been forced to engage with the sector. It has at times felt like a very combative process.

A GP practice has been incredibly helpful, providing the medical evidence needed to show vulnerabilities, which helps get people back on the priority housing list. Even so, many new refugees have faced nights on the street at a time when they should have been celebrating. It still seems at odds with reality, that a country with the sixth largest economy on the planet, struggles with things like this.

How much money has ALM received from SAS

During the period from September 2024 to August 2025 we have received £13,824 from SAS/CTMR.

How the money got used

The Funds have been used predominantly for the costs of housing but have also contributed to the food store and the salary of the Destitution Manager.

General Case Study single adult male, Vietnam

This man presented to ALM as homeless and had been on the streets for approximately two years. The Home Office had withdrawn his claim when he absconded from HO accommodation after being manipulated into this by other residents. His approach to life came across as very naive and accepting.

We provided him with a sleeping pod, sleeping bag, clothes and food. He was able to use the facilities at the centre Monday to Friday but remained in the environs of the Centre at the

weekend accessing water etc when the church next door was open. During this period some of his belongings were stolen when he left them unattended.

We also provided him with over the counter medication for his haemorrhoids. We applied to change his reporting requirements (which were for Manchester, where he was unable to travel to due to having no support.)

Following schedule 10 and then Section 4 applications, his claim was reinstated and he was provided with additional support from our further subs team.

After receiving notice of the acceptance of asylum support, further work was required to expedite the delivery and activation of his ASPEN Card.

He continues to attend the centre daily and has made new friends. He attends the weekly allotment sessions and has one-to-one music therapy sessions with the Nordoff & Robbins therapist attending each Wednesday.

By Ewan Roberts in September 2025

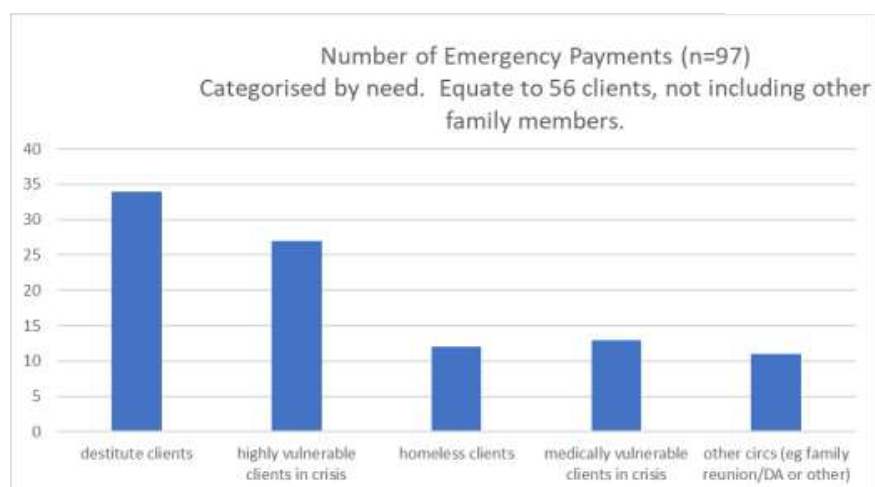
Merseyside Refugee Support Network

Overview

Clients supported - In total, 56 individuals (representing either singles, couples or family units) benefited from the emergency support from the grant, via 97 payments.



How we used the funding



Total spend £ 5,048.12

Overall average (of 56 clients) £ 90.15

Destitute clients – these are clients who have presented as not having any shelter or food for basic food/essentials. Some also having no recourse to public funds.

Highly vulnerable clients in crisis – clients who have additional factors impacting on their situation e.g. mental health; elderly clients in pension age (where there are long delays in pension credit applications/payment); clients where housing status remains uncertain.

Homeless Clients – clients who are waiting in the system for accommodation, may have some money but not enough for emergency hostel placement.

Medically vulnerable clients in crisis – clients who are struggling to manage health issues alongside housing or benefit delays – but statutory decisions are slow and putting them at risk of further ill health.

Other crisis factors - change of circumstances often leave people in distress and crisis as benefits of our housing security circumstances have changed dramatically. Family reunion often leads to long delays in benefits being organised due to change of circumstances; family arriving with unsuitable clothing for weather conditions; baby arrivals; family or relationship breakups and or concern over domestic abuse also throws up emergencies which statutory systems can take days or weeks to respond to.

Context

At time of writing, MRSN offered 350+ client drop-in sessions in the month of September 2025 alone, which does not include other casework appointments.

As previously reported, since August 2023 we have seen the terrible impact of the Home Office clearing the asylum “backlog”. In this current reporting year period, we also had to deal with the roll out of the government’s e-visa system and its related issues. (E-visas have replaced the old biometric ID cards which clients formerly used to prove entitlement to benefits etc. The issues with the roll out have also added to demand for help – problems either with e-visas not working properly or being incorrect. On top of this, not all government departments were ready for the change and this has caused long delays with child benefit in particular. Moreover, banks are not accepting the e-visas without supporting letters which has also required work to support these issues, as clients present. Bank accounts are needed to receive benefits, so all the activities and support needs and inextricably linked.

The data above shows how we have managed emergency support funds over the project period from September 2024-August 2025. We have delineated categories as to how the funds have been used.

As noted above, the majority of SAS funds have been used to help refugee clients in an emergency or other destitute situation over the past year. Sometimes we offer emergency funds for food/toiletries when new refugees are destitute in the gap between leaving the asylum system on grant of leave to remain and the first payment for universal credit benefits, or paying for a night or two in a bunk room hostel – when no other housing options are open to them. In recent months we have had an increase in clients with no recourse to public funds.

Parts of the city region work more effectively than others, but none of the local authorities pay for any of the move-on work in the refugee and asylum support sector directly, so we continue to seek funds and fundraise to increase our capacity to meet the needs of clients as they present. As last year, we also had to provide tents and sleeping bags on occasion. It always feels like a last resort – but often it is the only “solution” where a client is not considered to be in “priority need” with council housing services.

Once again, we wish to thank SAS/CTMR for the continued support in our work.

By Seána Roberts in September 2025

Holiday at Home

Holiday at Home 2025 for older adults - CT in Formby, Altcar and Hightown

Formby Befriending scheme was working with CT Formby, Altcar and Hightown to prepare a



programme for ‘Holiday at Home 2025 for older adults’ who are no longer able to enjoy the holidays they once had. It was a selection of social events and leisure activities offered in collaboration with local churches, community groups, businesses and individuals. Some 22 events were listed in the impressive booklet, pictured to the left.

The programme offered a selection of social event and leisure activities, as well as transport to local Services on a Sunday. It included a visit to a Heritage Centre, a Carvery Roast Lunch, a Singalong / Cuppa / Cake & Chat, a Fish and Chips Lunch with Music, Chair Based Exercises, Paper Crafts, Music from ‘Folk Routes’ & Refreshments, Board Games and Toasted Teacakes, etc

Holiday at Home feels like an inspirational initiative something that others might like to try too...!

Dialogue between Faith Communities

Altcourse Multi-Faith Event May 2025

Here is an extract from a thank you letter to all who attended or showed interest in the Multi Faith Event in Altcourse Prison in 2025.

Dear all,

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for attending our recent faith event and helping to make it such a meaningful and enjoyable occasion.



A special thank you goes to those who actively contributed to raising awareness about the vital need to support individuals leaving prison — helping them reintegrate into their communities and restore their dignity. Your efforts are truly appreciated.

We were delighted to welcome over 110 attendees from a diverse range of faith organisations, charitable groups, and public sector bodies. It was a pleasure to witness the vibrant networking and shared commitment to this important cause.

We've already received very positive feedback and several requests to hold a third event — ideally in a more community-friendly location with ample parking 😊. Given that we've now outgrown the prison venue, such a move would also ease pressure on prison resources. I've also suggested the possibility of greater support from, and potentially even co-hosting by, our partner organisations.

I'd love to hear your thoughts and feedback on this idea.

I'd also like to thank those of you who expressed interest but were unable to attend. Your support still means a great deal to us... .

Finally, if you or someone you know would be interested in supporting or mentoring individuals as part of our new initiative in the Merseyside area— *New Vision Community Chaplaincy* — we would be thrilled to hear from you.

Kind regards

Rev Brian Greenhalgh, Chaplaincy Manager, HMP Altcourse

Merseyside Interfaith Meeting



Leaders of the Christian Churches met with leaders of other faiths in Merseyside recently at the November meeting of the Faith Leaders' Network. I have been convening the Group since it was established in 2018. Previous interreligious dialogue had been undertaken by representatives of different faiths, but my hope was that a new group would be a place where leaders could meet and talk. At our November meeting we heard presentations on a number of topics, including community chaplaincy for those leaving prisons, and we were joined by the new Lord-Lieutenant of Merseyside. We also discussed topics which were of common concern, including the impact of the changing political climate in the UK. The meeting took place at Liverpool Hope University, and we were joined by the Vice Chancellor, who spoke about the work of the University. This was the last meeting which I convened and I hand over the baton to the new Rector of Liverpool, Fr Philip Anderson. If you want to discuss any interfaith matters then please contact him at rector@livpc.co.uk.

Dr Crispin Pailing

Wirral Activities

Having reviewed the impact of over 100 faith organisations on communities across Wirral through the successful Cinnamon Social Action audit it became clear that there was a need to look more closely at the sufficiency of youth provision within the borough.

A new collaboration initiative has therefore been formed between Together Wirral Churches Forum, Wirral CVS, Wirral Council, Wirral Youth Alliance and Shaftesbury Youth Club which will review youth provision across each of the faith, voluntary and statutory sectors.

Alex Fisher, Together Wirral Churches Asset Based Community Development Project Coordinator, is now firmly established in his new role as Faith Development Worker within Wirral CVS. Through WCVS Alex has established a monthly faith forum for Wirral faith groups to

discuss topics that are important to Wirral communities. So far, the faith forum has Covered Asylum and Refugees, Winter Preparedness and volunteering with community engagement and youth work sessions on the horizon. To compliment these session WCVS is also offering Faith funding readiness workshops and is supporting with the development of a programme to support faith leaders to take on community representative roles. There is also a vast array of other great programmes that are open to all that support with governance, policy, operations, networking and finance. These are providing valuable advice and resources to our local churches.



A Wirral Step Up Fund provided £15,000 investments to organisations to deliver Gamechanger outcomes in the Wirral Health and Wellbeing Strategy. And aligns with the Wirral Plan, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and neighbourhood priorities.

Out of only twenty successful applicants in the funds first round enabled 'Wallasey Churches Community Asset Project' to help 'Wallasey Christians Against Poverty' respond to fuel poverty concerns and another saw a successful Street Angels initiative begin in Birkenhead by 'Hitch Communities' a local charity inspired by Psalm 10 verse 18 'to serve the fatherless and the oppressed so that man may do no more harm'.



The Well, a non-traditional Anglican worshipping community, located in the new Wirral Waters development in Birkenhead expresses faith and discipleship in a non-traditional format, welcoming those who are searching or looking to reconnect with their faith.

Relationships have grown between The Well and neighbours at Birkenhead's Redbridge Quay and East Float.

Being open and hospitable across different days and times has had a positive impact on lowering anti-social behaviour and has welcomed the 'stranger', the dog walker, the young adults and those seeking a new home within the development. "

The worshipping community has grown from meeting once a week on a Wednesday, to several regular activities including a Tuesday night Bible study, Lego church for families, 'Breathe'-a reflective space for pastoral prayer and contemplative worship, and Creative space-a monthly space to meet with God using creative means such as painting, poetry, clay and music.

Rev Debbie Wilkinson the Wells Community Missioner has partnered with Wirral Met College- beginning a chaplaincy programme and a morning drop in lunch has fostered good relationships with the young adults from the Wirral Waters college campus every Thursday.

By Phil Dickson and Alex Fisher

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