

Churches Together in Harborough

AGM REPORTS

BOWER HOUSE - Jadz Bower

The work at the Bower House continues with the undramatic solidity of an established service. Our focus remains to provide a quality experience for each client which holds at its heart a compassion and care that reflects God's love in a practical human way, from the first warm welcome by a support worker to the dedicated professional commitment of a counsellor.

This year we have delivered over three thousand counselling hours and received 293 new clients. The stories behind the numbers encompass struggle, brokenness and pain. They reflect the range of issues that people may experience in their lives, relationship difficulties, anxiety, depression, abuse, stress, health deterioration and often profound loss. They also represent hours of work by our counsellors who bring their knowledge, experience and humanity into each encounter. The outcome is often life changing, building resilience and new hope.

We continue to work in partnership with The Cube and appreciate the expertise with young people that we can draw on.

Our team of counsellors is regularly enriched by new counsellors or students on placement but we still need more, especially experienced counsellors, to meet the demand. Several members of the team have gone on to work in schools or in new practices where they continue to use the skills they learned and the values they absorbed at The Bower House.

New counsellors and new support workers are always needed. If there are any lurking in the churches please send them our way.

A review of how the Bower House is managed is being undertaken. With eighty volunteers involved in the meeting the activity noted above, it is a complex operation and we need to ensure our resources are used efficiently and effectively for the benefit of clients

Finance is a constant challenge. We are continuing to aim for a base of regular individual giving as well as fund raising activities. The generosity of our local churches and Christian community is deeply appreciated and without it the work could not continue.

The support of Churches Together in Harborough is deeply valued.

Prayer undergirds the work and provides the safe base from which we operate.

- Please continue to pray for us. A prayer group meets every Wednesday at 9.00 at The Bower House – all are welcome.
- Please encourage potential support workers or counsellors to make contact.
- Do bring fund raising skills and ideas or support events we put on.
- Please look out for our training courses and encourage anyone interested to attend.
- A new bereavement support group is planned, details will be distributed shortly.

THE CUBE

Our vision is to see the young people of Market Harborough thriving in their communities.

The Cube Cafe - One year on from the formal opening of the Cube Youth and Community Centre, the Friday evening CUBE Drop In continues to be at the heart of the work of HYACT.

GodCube - We have been consulting with local young people and churches regarding provision for young Christians. Our research highlighted the need for: (a) Youth sessions for 13-18 year olds from the local churches, b) A young adult's discipleship group for ages 18 – 25.

Working with Young Leaders - Developing young people to participate in the running and organisation of CUBE projects has always been part of our youth work ethos. The Youth Panel provide consultation and representation, enabling us to stay relevant and appropriate to young people. Young people are involved in the Rock-on-the-Rec planning and the CUBE Drop In leaders help in the smooth running of the club.

Esteem - The Esteem Team continue to deliver lessons on self-esteem, relationships and sexual health to over 700 Students across Market Harborough and district.

CUBE@RSA - runs in partnership with the mentoring department at Robert Smyth Academy. We utilise a classroom to provide games, music, snacks and conversation for young people who seek out a safe space at lunchtime. As a result of conversations we now include sharing our food together to encourage healthy eating.

GirICUBE - sessions provide a relaxed space for young women to socialise with friends and build positive relationships with youth workers and volunteers. Workshops include art, healthy relationships, cooking and gardening.

The Cube Youth & Community Centre - This work is always challenging and I continue to encounter new challenges despite working with young people for 11 years. No two weeks are the same and I am humbled by and occasionally heartbroken at the things young people share with us and need help with. My knowledge of other local agencies working with young people has improved and I have a good grasp of when to refer a young person for more support from a more appropriate service.' Gary Brown

HYACT depends on grants, individual donations and volunteers giving their time to take an active role in its work.

Friends - In October 2012 we set up the 'Friends of the CUBE' scheme, and were very close to our target of £7,000 in 2014. We are looking to increase the regular giving by individuals, so if you feel able to help by giving a small amount each month (and if you pay tax to gift aid your donation) then please contact Gary

Our 'Friends' of the Cube offer financial support and we currently have five specific volunteer jobs:

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED - The **YOUTH SUPPORT WORKER** role(s) will be between 2 and 10 hours a week dependent on the role you undertake and the number of sessions you are involved in.

The **CARETAKER** role is expected to be about 3 hours a week and involves assisting with opening and closing the building for lettings and general maintenance to enable the HYACT staff to look after The CUBE Youth and Community Centre.

The **GARDENER** role is expected to be about 2 hours a week and involves assisting the HYACT staff in looking after The CUBE Youth & Community Centre grounds so that they can be safely used for the charity's work.

The **ADMINISTRATOR** role is expected to be about 3 hours a week and involves assisting the HYACT staff in looking after the lettings of The CUBE Youth and Community Centre and other administrative processes.

The **FUNDRAISER** role is expected to be about 3 hours a week and involves assisting the HYACT staff in fundraising for the charity, applying for grants and reporting to the grant bodies.

If you would like more information on any of these volunteer jobs then please contact Jenny Lyon at the address / email below. As a volunteer you will be accountable to and supported by the HYACT staff. You will be expected to participate in an induction programme and be DBS approved. The hours will be flexible and could be once a month or once a fortnight by agreement. Youth Worker & Volunteer Co-ordinator, Jenny Lyon 07546 514333 jenny@thecubeyouth.org.uk

HELP - If you can help with your skills, time or funding or would like more information or a CUBE cube (to save any loose change). 07740 266020 gary@thecubeyouth.org.uk

STREET PASTORS REPORT - Phillip Jones

During 2014, given enough volunteers, we continued to go out every weekend but have changed the hours to reflect the current state of the night time economy: Earlier on Fridays from 7.30 pm (to include visits to The Cube); later on Saturdays from 10.00 pm + new shifts on two Bank Holiday Sundays from 10.00 pm.

Following on from giving talks during Welland Park Academy assemblies in 2013, we have assisted in Year 9 RE class lessons during 2014 on the topic of the Good Samaritan, morals and how we as Street Pastors are practical examples of God's love. This year, 2015, we have given talks during assemblies at Kibworth High School and Robert Smyth Academy. Around 1800 pupils across all three schools have heard about our work in the last year!

Talks given in 15 churches in MH and surrounding villages by several different volunteers during the last 18 months have resulted in eight people currently undergoing training.

Street Pastors		In Training	Prayer Support
Total	18	8	11
Men	7	3	7
Women	11	5	4

During 2014:

Hours of patrols by Street Pastors	588.5	Hours of Prayer Support	258
Pairs of flip flops handed out	55	Bottles of water handed out	26
Space blanket used	1	First Aid given	9
Calming aggressive	15	Supporting vulnerable	9
Anti Social behaviour	6	Alcohol / Drug impaired	19

Income during 2014 included:

Donations from CTH	£1,548.74	Collecting Boxes (pubs and hotels)	£534.62
Donations from Enigma Cafe	£96.00	Late Night Shopping, Carnival and Talk to WI	£155.00
Rotary SwiMarathon	£400.00	Coffee Mornings & Waitrose Bag Pack	£640.30
Donations from Trainees / Churches	£425.00	Individual donations (including gift aid)	£570.00
plus donations of lollipops!			

During 2014 expenditure included:

License Fee (15% of donations paid to AT)	£400.00	Insurance	£120.00
Refreshments	£24.68	Phones	£129.90
Torches	£19.98	Training event refreshments	£66.65
Training event expenses	£130.90	Coffee morning hire of venue	£68.00
plus Administrator salary			

- * We are planning to introduce ID cards for all Street Pastors as per the new policy of the Ascension Trust
⤴ We expect to lose at least three SPs in next few months, so ongoing recruitment of new Street Pastors is high on our agenda

- * We are also hoping to recruit new members to the Prayer Support Team
- * Philip is stepping down from the Board after six years as Chair, so we are prayerfully considering who will take on this very important role
- * We will continue to maintain a good working relationship with the District Council and the Police
 - ↑ We will continue to seek funding to ensure the stability of our finances

We come from:

St Dionysius Church / St Peter and St Paul Church, Great Bowden / MH Congregational Church
MH Baptist Church / MH Methodist Church / MH Community Church / Lutterworth Community
Church / Leicester Area Quaker Meeting / Harborough Evangelical Church

People in training include representatives from:

St Hugh's Church / Our Lady of Victories Catholic Church / St Wilfrid's Church, Kibworth /
Fleckney Baptist Church / All Saints Church, Dingley

HOLIDAY AT HOME PROJECT - Brian Kennard

Once again we were able to arrange in August 2014 a week of activities aimed at older members of the community, and a Winter special day in January.

For the Summer week, there were workshops on painting, handbell ringing, clay modelling, creative writing and many more, plus talks on Harborough in Bloom, An India experience, a Quiz and the ever-popular Singalong.

There were also opportunities for time to socialise over coffee and biscuits and lunch together. Our day out was to Ferry Meadows Country park and Peterborough. Numbers were slightly down this year, partly because we had only minimal publicity outside of the churches.

Plans have started for 2015, but if we are to run a full programme, new team members and modest financial grants from Churches or other sources are urgently needed. As long as such help is forthcoming, the event will take place from 10th to 14th August, with a day out proposed to Burghley House and Stamford.

Finally, if the project is to continue into 2016, a replacement coordinator will also be needed.

Our next planning meeting will be on Wednesday 13th may, at the Methodist Church centre"

JUBILEE FOODBANK - Jane White

2014 was quite a difficult year for the food bank. We knew from the start that Keith would be leaving, and there was a lot of preparation at the beginning of the year to ensure that the committee would be able to handle the change smoothly. We were unable to find an administrator who could take over most of the work that Keith did, so the jobs were shared out! Thankfully we have, just in the last few weeks, welcomed 2 ladies who will now do the bulk of our day to day administration.

Food and cash donations continue to come in steadily, and we are easily able to finance the Fruits voucher scheme and the provision of fresh bread and baby food when needed. We have also used some cash to buy a second small freezer for the bread storage, and more racking to keep the balcony tidy. Our other really useful purchase has been a sturdy trolley for taking the donations left in the office up to the balcony in the lift. This has been much appreciated by the stacking and sorting team, who had been struggling with the weight of food to be shifted.

The following statistics refer to the calendar year 2014:

Total referrals 255 of which average 5 per week Total clients 689 Adults 394 Under 18s 295

This represents a total of 6201 meals. We also gave out 45 boxes of groceries under the school scheme.

Two new initiatives have emerged this year. The first is the school scheme, where we have distributed boxes of basic groceries to needy families via head teachers. This is mainly aimed at free school meals children who have no alternative benefit during the school holidays. The second is the introduction of a second type of referral, aimed at people with a long term food poverty problem rather than a crisis. Both of these initiatives have been in response to the changing needs highlighted by the referral form information.

Our biggest need at the moment is for active volunteers. The work can be quite physically demanding and although we have a large team for shelf stacking and sorting and we get plenty of offers to help, we are always short of front line volunteers. These people really need to be able to drive and lift and carry quite heavy bags of groceries. Following an article in The Harborough Mail and the stall on Good Friday, we have held another successful training afternoon and have hopefully got a couple more volunteers gearing up to start. It will always be a need though, as we would really like to have 2 volunteers available each day and at the moment we still have the odd day which is not covered at all.

Generally speaking it has been a hard, but worthwhile year and we are moving forward with a lot of enthusiasm and commitment.

Matthew 25:35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink.

JUSTICE & PEACE (including Credit Union) - Alison Tomlin

The Group meets at least quarterly and has a very varied attendance ~ most of our members being involved in a number of activities! During this year we said farewell to our Chair of many years, Donald Clinton-Smith, and expressed our gratitude for all he had contributed to the work and to our community. Our new Chair is Maureen Douglas, who has also enabled us to link up with the National Justice and Peace Network.

Our work for The Bhopal Medical Appeal (relating to the disaster when toxic gas leaked from the Union Carbide factory in 1984 where people are still chronically sick and dying; babies are still born dead and deformed or diseased and disabled; the whole area is still a toxic waste) continues. The film about their work and the current situation was shown in November, and fundraising continues as well.

Our concern regarding poverty in our community is still frequently focused on issues relating to the suffering caused by the Government's policy with regard to benefits of various kinds. We have given out over 50 copies of Time to Rethink Benefit Sanctions (published by the Joint Public Issues Team of some of our churches) and more can be made available for those who are interested.

The Candlelit Peace Vigil in January is still a popular event, and we have plans for renewing the publicity around it, and the leaflets we give out. It was much appreciated this year in particular because of the timing coinciding with events in France.

We have worked against the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership issues, with the danger of allowing multi-national corporations power to fight government policies simply for the sake of their profits.

We have also sought to encourage toilet twinning, particularly in those areas where the lack of indoor sanitation means women are at risk of rape on each night-time visit.

CHILD LABOUR AND RELATED ISSUES

We are kept up to date with all the global issues relating to children; female genital mutilation; sexual violence; trafficking and modern slavery; and abduction and abuse. We have also been concerned to work against the appalling treatment of garment workers. There has been considerable work relating to the ethical policies of local retailers and their supply chains.

Our thanks go to Janet Smith for this information and for reminding us of possible action in these areas, as well as of local events.

CLOCKWISE CREDIT UNION

This work continues with the office now in the Methodist Church and still needs more volunteers, so it is important to express thanks to all the current helpers.

FAIRTRADE TOWN

There has been an enormous amount of work around these issues in our town, including a number of events. We have also continued to support both the Food Forum and the Foodbank.

PUBLICITY OFFICER'S REPORT - Jeff Bonser

My task is to obtain media coverage for Churches Together events and activities. I produce news releases which go to the Harborough Mail, HFM, Leicester Mercury and BBC Radio Leicester.

Media coverage in 2014 included:

Justice and Peace Group Candlelit Vigil / Lent Lunchtime Services / Good Friday Art Trail / Christian Aid Roadshow / New Chairman appointed / Pentecost at The Cube / Harborough by the Sea / The organisations associated with Churches Together also obtain media coverage.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - Rev'd James Shakespeare

There is much to celebrate about the combined witness of Churches Together in Harborough (CTH) over the past year, 2014-2015, since our last AGM, and it has been a privilege for me to serve my first year as Chairman, ably supported by Maureen Douglas as Vice Chair and our Standing Committee (Rose Williams, Secretary, Sue Macdonald, Treasurer, Jeff Bonser, Publicity Officer).

Inheriting a strong organisation from the last Chairman, John Pearse, with agreement of the Standing Committee I set out with four particular aims: to continue to be more prayerful & build strong ecumenical relationships, to continue to service the vulnerable of our town (through our CTH social agencies), and to be discerning of our time and energies (in order to do a few things and do them well, rather than the risk of overload). In line with this I have also changed the structure of our Forum meetings, spreading out our reports over the year (so that each meeting enables a more in depth exposure of each agency), restricting outside speakers, and shortening meetings.

One of the significant new developments this year has been closer working with Harborough District Council, CTH being invited to contribute more fully to life in the 'Town Square'. In an age when Christian participation in public life is often shrinking, it is good to be in a town that is bucking this trend, largely on account of the respect in which our Churches are held and due to the good relationships that have been built up over many years. In the summer we were invited to participate in the 'Harborough by the Sea' event in August, and this was fulfilled by the Baptist Church providing worship and children's activities on the Sunday, creating a special families' event. The next part of this development happened in December, when we were invited to be part of a vote for the town's favourite Christmas Carol, with a presence at the Town Christmas Lights switch-on, together with a Carol Service at the Baptist Church broadcast on HFM. This was followed by involvement in the new look Town Christmas Faire. More recently we were invited to plan an enhanced Good Friday event in the Town Square, with stalls and activities alongside our usual Good Friday outdoor service. All have been well received, although there is an associated question about our capacity to plan such events, in an already busy annual schedule.

Otherwise we have organised the usual series of special ecumenical events during the past year. These have included a Pentecost Praise event: in 2014 this was staged by the CUBE and was a highly successful act of witness at Symmington's Recreation Ground, doubling up with the public launch of the impressive new CUBE Youth Centre. In the summer the Methodist Church, under CTH, staged the annual 'Holiday at Home' initiative, which was well received. More on this follows below. The New Year, 2015, has also been busy. The first major set of events, following the Peace Vigil, was for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This year, alongside the combined Sunday Service (at the Baptist Church), we had a short service each week day at a different Town Centre Church, with a theme for special prayer (the major local agencies' work). During Lent ecumenical house groups were facilitated and valued this year, using the York Course, and each Friday services and a lunch were held at the Catholic Church, attended by a large number of people. The Good Friday event, indicated above, also including an outdoor Christian Aid lunch (provided by the Congregational Church), as well as CTH agency stalls, a prayer tend and children's activity tent. Plans are presently in place for Christian Aid Week, with a new electronic system of administration in place.

This year we have had detailed report-style presentation from The Bower House, the Clockwise Credit Union and Street Pastors, among others. An important review of 'Holiday at Home' has been taking place, in view of concerns re numbers involved in its leadership and future viability. We very much hope and pray, after a series of Church visits, that new people are coming forward to share in its oversight and planning. Lastly we are about to launch a new booklet about the work of Churches Together in Harborough (generously supported by James Briggs), and have also contributed an advert to the new Town Guide.

I would like to pay tribute to our Standing Committee and Forum members, as well as to all those who work so hard to enable the good work of Street Pastors, the Bower House, the CUBE, the Jubilee Foodbank, Holiday at Home scheme, Clockwise Credit Union and Justice & Peace Group. But above all we exist to support all of our local Christian Churches, to build friendship, fellowship, and joint witness to the love of God – revealed in Jesus Christ, and incarnated in loving service of our local communities. To God be the Glory!