

CTH FULL REPORT

BOWER HOUSE

In response to Government guidelines the Bower House suspended its service at the start of lockdown. We had been monitoring the situation and had decided the week previous to close and this gave us a week to prepare clients of the closure and to take important steps to ensure that all those waiting to be seen were aware of the closure. All those waiting received a letter explaining the situation and a phone call followed. At the time of lockdown we had a waiting list of 70 people. This was the highest number on our waiting list for several years.

During lockdown the service co-coordinators have been working from home and the administrator has been coming in to the Bower House and during this time we have established policies and procedures to work on-line should counsellors wish to work in this way. We have also set up phone lines for emotional support, this service is available to anyone on Monday Wednesday and Friday 9 till 4pm and Thursdays 2 till 8pm and is available to anyone to use. We have a team of 18 trained volunteers who are manning the phones at the Bower House; we are keeping safe distances and have a routine of cleaning and disinfecting.

The third service we are launching is a text a prayer service. This idea came in response to our recent away day which was based on prayer. Again, this is for anyone to use, a text is sent with a request for prayer and this text is forwarded to a team of Bower House volunteers to pray for that situation. We will keep you posted when we launch this service with more details of how it works.

We are keeping in touch with the Bower House volunteer team of 100 with regular newsletters and phone calls and our website is updated regularly with signposting details and the helpline service.

We do not know when our face to face work will resume but we pray that we will be guided by God to ensure we will continue to offer emotional support to the Market Harborough community.

Trish and Philippa

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER REPORT

A major exercise over the past year has been the development and deployment of a new logo, which was designed by Debbie Cortese, a local designer from St Peter and St Paul Church Great Bowden. It has met with widespread approval. We would like member churches and organisations to include the logo somewhere on their own literature and websites to further indicate our togetherness.

The local media have continued to be supportive and both the *Harborough Mail* and Harborough FM make use in some way of most of the reports and notices that we send them. This helps to keep church life and activities before the wider public. Indeed, during the corona virus lockdown, the *Mail* requested CTH to co-ordinate articles (of a general nature) from the churches, and leaders from all our member churches were scheduled to take part.

We have also produced a prayer letter occasionally so that we can all support each other's mission and ministry. Our webmaster Dave Kennard has been very helpful in adapting the site to include the new logo and in posting the updates and fresh news stories promptly – we're extremely grateful to him.

Derek Williams

CUBE REPORT

- I, Charlotte, started in August and I've very much enjoyed getting to know the town and its people but mostly I've loved meeting the young people, they're the highlight of any week. I have been able to recruit and train many new volunteers who have caught the vision of The Cube and been huge assets. I've done training in Digital Fundraising and Trauma Informed Youth Work making sure we're up to date in current practice. We've successfully been awarded funding, been interviewed for Harborough Mail and Harborough FM, attended county wide networking sessions, made really beneficial links with all kinds of people and given assemblies at Welland Park.
- The new office and meeting room project have been completed and I almost can't remember life without them, they've transformed the use of the space and increased the quality of the work we can deliver.
- A Wednesday group targeting school years 7,8 and 9 launched in January and has 37 young people on the books and a pause on sign ups due to large numbers. It was going very well pre lockdown and has a team of 8 running those sessions, this group moved online during Covid.
- Our Sunday evening group for young people are Christians or interested in faith continues to grow. With thanks to committed volunteers we have taken this group online in the current season.
- Julie Dunne from HCC has been a wonderful Administrator for us, she's just completed her first year with us and has transformed the way we run. Bringing us up to date, streamlining procedures and
- We continue hiring the space to regular and one off hirers generating revenue and forming partnerships.
- There continues to be a large need for Counselling and a lack of counsellors. We are looking to expand the project in January 2021 and are currently waiting for funding to make this possible.
- We are looking to take on another member of staff to assist me with the Youth Work, this recruitment is on pause at present owing to Covid but we're looking to recruit someone in the Autumn to meet the need for more groups.
- We have built positive relationships with families and are growing relationships with schools too. Our aim is to continue to build those relationships, helping schools to meet the needs that they have. We're working with Church leaders to support year 6 in their transition to Secondary School.
- We are grateful for the hirers we have and the Friends of The Cube who give regularly to support our work. Their continued generosity enables us to continue. The demand for youth work is great and the finances current restrict growth, we are applying for funding to enable this growth and would very much appreciate your prayers for funding for the future.

Charlotte Cooper

HOMELESS & ASKING FOR HELP

It has been a very mixed year for this project. After having to draw in our horns a lot because the service was being over used and abused, we had more or less got ourselves on to an even keel with only The Foodbank and Street Pastors issuing vouchers and The Foodbank providing ready made bags of food to organisations that were able to hold them, we had the further problem of St Mary's Chippy withdrawing from the scheme and then Trident closing for refurbishment. That has meant that we have not had much going on for a while. The Trident then re opened and we started rolling again (16 vouchers used) and then we were hit by the lockdown!

The situation at the moment is that homeless people are being housed by the council and all food requirements are being handled by the Foodbank through the council hub. It is working quite efficiently and there are certainly a number of homeless people being served by this system.

Jane White

HARBOROUGH ACTION FOR JUSTICE & PEACE

The Group continues to meet 3 or 4 times a year, with Janet Smith chairing our meetings.

We have continued to encourage people to fight the poverty caused by so-called austerity we have found the ecumenical Joint Public Issues Team continues to provide helpful facts, information and reflection on the results of current policies The Team also offers ongoing discussion documents and updates at <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk> . Of course, the situation since Covid 19 has made it clear that Universal Credit was never the right way forward, and the Government has turned back to a greater understanding of poverty, and the importance of the NHS.

The Candlelit Peace Vigil in January was very well attended, and enabled conversations with people passing. It continues to be an important part of our witness.

We have welcomed the Syrian refugee family and many people have been involved in helping them to settle. We are grateful for the partnership with South Leicestershire Community Sponsorship, and for the offers of help. The integration of the children into the school and pre-school had gone well before closures and we were able to link the new family with the other Syrian family already settled here. However, it is harder to stay in touch at the moment. - we are using phone contact in the main.

Israel/Palestine; Bhopal; Climate and other ecological concerns; Fair trade; and modern slavery; are all examples of ongoing work as we seek to work together with other groups to fight areas of injustice both locally and across our world. The success of the Plastics Pledge has led to further meetings and we delight in the hard work being done by that group. We also continue to be concerned about the children of UK citizens currently stuck in Syrian and other refugee camps – and for all in the camps during this pandemic.

New Work/Events

The possible redevelopment in Naseby Square is still a major concern. Planning permission has been sought, with frequent amendments after numerous objections, and yet there still seems to be a determination to continue with the work. We do not know if the current situation will cause any delay, or if there will be an attempt to conduct the planning meeting on line.

We are pleased to celebrate the opening of the Eco-Village on St. Mary's Road, and trust people are using this if or when they are able to shop.

In relation to modern slavery, we received helpful information about increasing exploitation in the East Midlands, particularly in relation to the warehousing industry. The Gangland and Labour Abuse Agency is deeply concerned.

Alison Tomlin

JUBILEE FOODBANK REPORT

The Jubilee Foodbank team is incredibly grateful for the donations and enduring support of Harborough's community and organisations in this challenging time. Because of the large donations at Harvest and Christmas, the food has been available. HDC reassigned staff have enabled us to continue to provide food to people in need by providing drivers. During the lockdown, referrals have significantly increased. Alongside people in financial need, we are supporting a new group of people who are unable to get help elsewhere: some people who are older and some people unable to leave their homes.

Many of our volunteers have needed to go into isolation for their own, or their family's protection. We have an interim store team and new volunteers. Due to social distancing, many tasks are happening outside of office hours. The management committee members have taken on additional roles to cope with the increase in need.

Looking ahead, the foodbank is considering its own 'exit' strategy. Your prayers are welcome: particularly to guide our decisions in the coming weeks. Let our decisions mean that we can continue to help others in food crisis where needed. However, an end to food poverty in the UK would be the ideal outcome by breaking the cycle of poverty and crisis.

Liz Mills

STREET PASTOR'S REPORT

From April 2019 to end of March 2020, we patrolled **43** times cancelling three times because of the bad weather and due to ill health and not having the required amount of Street Pastors available. We continued to patrol from 7.30 pm on Fridays and 10.00 pm on Saturdays and Bank Holiday Sundays, up to the point where the government regulations prevented group activities.

Statistics for 2019/20:

Hours of patrols by Street Pastors - 505
Hours of Prayer Support - 126
Contact with people - 732
Pairs of flip flops handed out - 22
Bottles of water handed out- 11
Space blanket used - 12
First Aid given - 2
Supporting vulnerable - 10
Anti Social behaviour - 5
Glass (broken), glass & bottles removed – 332

We were financially supported by kind donations from Churches; Collecting Boxes; Gift Aid; Rotary SwiMarathon and Individual Donations. Additionally we hosted a very successful Coffee Morning. However, due to the extended period of lockdown, the donations from the collecting boxes has dried up and will have a serious impact on our end of year finances (details of which are not available at the time of this report).

Thanks to all our supporters but particularly CTH and the individual churches who have been very generous this year in ensuring the Initiative continues to be viable and active; and who remember our volunteers and the people we meet and help in their prayers.

- We continue to maintain a good working relationship with the District Council and the Police
- We continue to seek regular donations and funding to ensure the stability of our finances
- We constantly strive to show the face of Jesus on the streets of our town
- We were particularly blessed to be able to join with other Christians at our Prayer Morning

NB: We have lost volunteers since the last report, so are looking for new people to consider becoming either a member of the Prayer Support Team but particularly to train as a Street Pastor as we are struggling to cover all evenings. Please contact me at marketharborough@streetpastors.org.uk or 07504 221 696 for more information.

Stephen Morse

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Accounts are with the examiner so the report is to follow shortly.

Rose Williams

CTH CHAIR'S REPORT

The girl in the old music-hall song found herself on a train to Crewe when she really wanted to go to Birmingham instead. Thanks to Covid-19, we are also ending our CTH year quite differently from anything we could have imagined.

The most difficult decision of the year was to cancel our much anticipated Good Friday event. Of course the decision was in the end overtaken by a strict national lock-down, but we did not know that at the time.

I should like to pay tribute here to the outstanding work of many people, especially Abby Baird-Smith, Lizzie Chadwick and Christopher Brown, in conceiving and planning for this event. We were also greatly encouraged by the financial commitment made by all our churches. Our prayer is that all this inspiration and dedication will bear fruit in due season. We have committed ourselves to Good Friday 2021 by securing and paying for a screen.

I should also like to thank Andy Murphy and David Nixon at the Methodist Church for their fleetness of foot in arranging a most successful hustings for the General Election in December. As I look back over the last year I feel my role has been mainly in discerning and delivering the role of Churches Together in relation to its member churches, associated charities and interested individuals. I have sought to deal courteously and efficiently with a number of tricky matters and give support where appropriate. It was a special joy for me personally to host the United Service at the Congregational Church in January.

We have been low on officers through the year, being still without an Executive Secretary. So I am greatly indebted to Janet Smith, Rose Williams and Derek Williams who have again willingly taken on extra tasks, as well as to Angela Zemlak our efficient Minute Secretary.

Finally I'd like to thank all members of the CTH Forum for their commitment and many kindnesses through the year and to Dave Kennard our webmaster for his invaluable support.

Stephen Haward