

The Bower House

Writing in mid-April 2021 we have just opened our doors to face to face work once again. Working with strict Health and Safety and Risk Assessments we feel we are as safe as we can possibly be.

Currently we have 38 counsellors working with us and about 26 support workers on the team too. Each one plays an essential role in keeping the wheels of our service turning. At a time where we have perhaps some optimism of the year ahead we remain mindful of the work we need to do to ensure that we keep the service as accessible as possible to those who live in Harborough and surrounding areas, that we ensure that professional standards are maintained, we remain financially able to run the service. Most importantly at the heart of what we do is Gods calling to serve and we are guided by prayer for His guidance.

We remain indebted to the support and prayers of Churches Together.

Trish

The Cube

The last year has been difficult for all of us, unable to run things the way we normally would because of the pandemic.

On top of this we have seen a lot of change in personnel at the cube, we have a new Manager, a new part time youth worker and are preparing to appoint a new administrator. These changes, along with the pandemic have given us chance to reset our '5 year plan'.

Finance is still at the forefront for us, and we are putting together a bid to help us deliver our plans over the next five years. We now have hirers starting to come back to The Cube which provide valuable revenue towards continuing our work.

As of Easter we have 2 school referral-based groups running. Aimed at different age groups they are both going to tackle anxiety, transitions, and wellbeing. For the moment they are both limited numbers to allow for social distancing and quality one to one work where appropriate, we have filled the groups for this half term and have other young people on a waiting list.

We have been overwhelmed by the support from parents and teachers who are keen to encourage their young people to attend. And we are delighted to be able to welcome them and get alongside them once again.

Ceriann

Street Pastors

In their hearts humans plan their course but the LORD establishes their steps.
(Proverbs 16:9)

During this past year Market Harborough Street Pastors (MHSP) have certainly had to change the course they thought they were on; and listen to the LORD like so many other organisations and charities.

We were all in lockdown and as there was no night life economy we prayed and stayed at home.

During the summer 2020 we started patrolling again but changed how we did things.

Ascension Trust agreed we could go out in pairs even of same sex; during daylight hours so 2 or 3 of us would go round the parks, meeting people and being visible to people who would never normally see Street Pastors.

Fellowship and prayers were held in our private gardens before going out. Our prayer support (often of speaker phone) continued interceding in their own homes.

Board meetings continued by zoom as well as our 2020 AGM.

After another lockdown patrols started again in mid-April 2021 early evening or afternoons.

We have lost valued members of the street pastor team this year and are left with 11 active street pastors, 3 in training one of which will be active soon and 9 prayer support.

Please promote MHSP within your congregations to see whether anyone has a calling to join us.

Ascension Trust have put on refresher training online and a number of us completed this on 1st May 2021.

We remain fully committed with our LORD's strength & protection to continue "Caring, Listening & Helping" the people we meet.

We thank Churches Together for the support and above all prayers.

Mandy

Homeless & Asking for Help Project

Most of 2020 was very quiet for The Homeless Project. When we were locked down in March, homeless people were put into hostels and hotels and food was supplied by the council - locally that was mostly done by The Foodbank.

During this time we lost our only remaining hot food supplier, as The Trident went out of business.

As things began to open up again we held a meeting to try and work out how we might go forward, as most of the outlets distributing our hot food vouchers were still closed. We agreed that Andy would try and source some new hot food partners and Jane would liaise with the Foodbank for distribution.

Currently we have purchased 12 vouchers from Cod Scallops.

The Foodbank have been holding 6 of these since 23rd February but so far none have been used.

St Nicholas had 4, of which 2 have so far been used,

The Methodists have 1

The Baptists have 1.

We have also purchased 12 Gregs gift cards, and these are distributed as follows

St.Di's – James x 1

St. Nicholas x 2

Methodists x 2 - Andy

Baptists x 2 – Chris

Andy x 5 – still available.

The Council have now set up a Homelessness Community Project and Janet Smith and Liz Mills attended a meeting on 19th January.

Moving forward, our biggest difficulty is identifying and contacting homeless people as the Covid situation makes this kind of communication very difficult. **Jane**

Jubilee Foodbank Report

Jubilee Foodbank has appreciated the generosity, time, donations and prayers of many people, churches and organisations over the last year.

There was another increase in referrals in 2020 of 30% resulting in over 50.000 meals being provided in 2020. Most of these meals were provided to families and individuals in Market Harborough. With the support of VASL and their drivers, food parcels have reached people in Harborough District where no other support was available. We have worked closely with Harborough District Council who provided support and drivers when referral agency buildings had to close. 2021 has started with a high number of referrals but there are some indications of a slow down in demand that we hope will be sustained as restrictions are lifted, people return to work, and children resume their school studies.

We have kept many of the changes made due to Covid and continue to reflect on which changes we will keep as restrictions are lifted. Jubilee Foodbank was set up in 2012 by Market Harborough Congregational Church and is part of the Congregational church. However, in 2021 we are moving towards being a separate charity. This is mainly due to the amount of work and number of changes needed to continue to run and manage the foodbank. Jubilee Foodbank continues to work with many churches and church members in and around Market Harborough and has a Christian calling to love our neighbour. We wish to continue to be affiliated with Churches Together and appreciate your ongoing support.

Please pray for the people who receive food and the ongoing work of Jubilee Foodbank. Pray for the decisions made both at Jubilee Foodbank and those made by people who can make a difference to poverty and people's lives in the UK. **Liz**

Harborough Action for Justice & Peace

It has, of course, not been possible to meet this year, but we have continued to act on-line where possible, and to exchange the information that each member of the group receives.

We made the decision, as many of you will be aware, to invite people to hold the Candlelit Peace Vigil in January in their own homes. This was taken up by many more than have attended the public vigil, and we received messages of thanks for the prayers we offered for folk to use with whatever light they chose.

We have sought to keep up to date with our concerns for all those issues of oppression and injustice that remain on our minds and hearts - Israel/Palestine; Bhopal; Climate and other ecological concerns; Fair trade; and modern slavery – particularly relating locally to Leicester's textile industry.

With regard to the Naseby Square development, planning permission has now sadly been granted, in spite of the acknowledgement of the truth of many of the objections. Only one local counsellor (Peter James) on the planning committee had the honesty to vote against granting permission. The others all decided that the conditions imposed would be "sufficient" to make it ok, even when they accepted that the tenants had been treated very badly! The Liberal Democrats are still trying to make sure that there is an enquiry into all that went on during these last three years, and the possibility of unethical business practices.

We continue to find helpful facts with additional information and reflection on the results of governmental policies (including those specifically relating to the pandemic) from the ecumenical Joint Public Issues Team. <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk>

Issues that have arisen for particular concern during this last year include the Black Lives Matter campaign; 'lockdown debt'; the Domestic Abuse Bill; decrease in International Aid; and the financial results of the pandemic in so many places. We have written to Neil O'Brien and others involved in government; we have written, emailed and lobbied where that was possible; and we have been part of offering financial support, both at home and overseas - particularly to Sierra Leone and of course, we have continued to pray. **Alison**

Communications Officer Report

The national restrictions over the past year have meant that there have been fewer activities to communicate both to the churches and to the local media. However, the *Harborough Mail* continues to be extremely supportive by publishing a weekly "Churches Column" both on line and in print, for which I co-ordinate the rota and when necessary assist contributors (who come from most of the churches and CTH affiliated groups in the town) in drafting their articles. They are always engaging and reflect a variety of approaches that are likely to be of interest to people on and beyond the fringes of the churches and not just church members. They can be accessed via the Mail website www.harboroughmail.co.uk . The local radio station Harborough FM is always supportive too in broadcasting news from us. What has not happened much this year is a circular CTH prayer and news letter around the churches and organisations. Hopefully, as some form of "normality" kicks in, this can be resurrected. I also meet as necessary with the Chair, Vice-chair and Treasurer as part of the CTH Executive Committee. **Derek**

TREASURER'S REPORT

The accounts for the year to 31st March 2020 have been examined and signed by Mrs Katherine Bentley (of E T Peirson and Sons, Accountants).

The carried forward balances are:-

CTH own funds	£3373.13	
Holiday at Home	£1190.47	
Homeless and Asking for Help	£ 484.53	£5048.13

A break-down of Profit or Loss for each section is as follows:

CTH – Income	£ 1605.00	
Less Expenditure	- £ 2101.50	- £496.50
Joint funds Income	£ 250.00	
Less Expenditure	£ 0.00	£ 250.00
Holiday at Home Income	£ 333.00	
Less Expenditure	£ 0.00	£ 333.00
Homeless & Asking for Help – Income	£ 50.00	
Less Expenditure	- £ 120.00	- £ 70.00

An amount of £392 is still being held in the account to reimburse for the hire of the screen along with a credit note for £1260.00 for the Good Friday event.

No adjustment to the individual churches subscriptions is felt necessary for the coming year and the relevant invoices will be sent out during June/July.

Katherine Bentley has kindly offered to examine the accounts again for next year.

Rose

CHAIR'S REPORT

As I look back over the last year, my first as Chair, I recall a year characterised by the necessity to continue to 'think differently' about our modus operandi as churches, as the ongoing restrictions have for the most part curtailed our ability to meet physically. Having said that, the innovative ways of 'doing and being church,' mean that it has never been easier to participate in different worship experiences offered across the town's churches, which I have done and have thoroughly enjoyed!

During the year we enjoyed ecumenical activities, including an online 24/7 prayer room during the days of Thy Kingdom Come last May, a Zoom service for Prisons Week in October and the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January which saw daily online prayer sessions, ended with a united Zoom service on the theme of 'Abiding in Christ'. Our Christian presence and witness, established in print and online through the weekly Churches Column in the Harborough Mail, continues to be well received and appreciated. Our Forum meetings have continued online.

The Ministers' Fellowship has continued to meet online but met in person at St. Hugh's Church in September to mark Fr. Owen's retirement after 19 years in our town. The release of a delightful online 'retirement' interview with Andy Murphy has been made even more poignant in recent days with the subsequent knowledge of the illness and death of our dear friend and brother Fr. Owen on Easter Saturday. In September we welcomed Fr. Christopher O' Connor as parish priest at OLOV Catholic Church.

The generosity of individuals and churches has been evident through the ongoing support for our three charities and a special appeal at Christmas, initiated by Andy Murphy saw an outpouring of love for a local family who came here as part of the government resettlement scheme of Syrian refugees. It is a joy to see how CTH continues to serve the local community in numerous ways and will continue to do so as we tentatively emerge from the ravages of the pandemic.

I am greatly indebted to my fellow Executive officers, Andy Murphy, Rose Williams, and Derek Williams who have again willingly taken on additional tasks, as we are still without an Executive Secretary. Thanks also go to Angela Zemplak our efficient Minute Secretary and to Dave Kennard our webmaster for his technical support over another year.

Janet