



March 2020

Pilgrim Post

Churches Together in Dorset Newsletter

Churches Together Survey

Thank you to all those who responded to the recent Churches Together Survey. Your responses have helped the Executive to look at how we work and what we can do better.

News

Coronavirus

Events

Opportunities

Churches Together
In England

Churches Together
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Ireland

Resources

Most people said that they related to a local ecumenical group in their own locality and found this Newsletter helpful in keeping in touch with wider issues. Just over half of respondents had not heard of the Executive Group, or that I chaired it! However, most people felt that such a group should continue to offer events not being offered elsewhere and to act as a convenor to bring together the leaders of CT groups across the County. We have arranged the first one of these gatherings for later in the year.

The denominational leaders were felt to be significant in bringing a United Christian response to local issues, and to be involved in the life of Dorset via attendance at County events, and contact with other community, business and sector leaders in both the BCP and Dorset Council areas.

At our Annual Meeting later in the year I shall be stepping down as Chair of Churches Together in Dorset, to make way for a representative from one of the other denominations. I shall remain, however, as the only denominational leader living in Dorset, and therefore will continue to act as a voice for ecumenism across the County and link with the other denominational leaders and offer support across all the churches.

*+Karen
Bishop of Sherborne*

News



Covid - 19

A Worship

Despite having to close their doors during lockdown, the churches in Dorset have kept worship going, turning to a whole range of technology to keep renewing hope and spreading a message of hope and God's love.

Those with **Facebook** accounts or **YouTube** can tune into a range of services ; there have been services and prayer meetings live-streamed via the Zoom Meeting app across the churches. Revd Pauline Crispin, minister at Wimborne Methodist Church, has prepared a Sunday Service to be used at home. At the Radipole churches of St Aldhelm's and St Anne's, Team Rector Tim Clarke and his wife Cherry are producing an e-mail bulletin every 2 days, with a reading, short reflection and prayer. Longfleet Baptist Church in Poole has been exploring new ways of being "church without walls" and has a "Scattered Church" page with online reflections and videos.

Those who are uncomfortable with social media haven't been forgotten. Both Emmanuel and St Mary's C of E Churches in Weymouth have a contact list of people who they call by phone and, where appropriate, receive deliveries of printed material, and the Weymouth branch of the Association of Christian Writers (ACW) is seeking ways it can use the talents of its members to produce words of inspiration and comfort to the community.

In what different ways have you continued to be church in the face of the Covid-19 Crisis? Contact Katja, County Ecumenical Officer, Churches Together in Dorset, to share your story, contact details at the end of this Newsletter.

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

BCP Council and local community groups have joined forces to launch a **Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole** coordinated community response, **'Together We Can,'** to help and support vulnerable people during the coronavirus outbreak.



Supported by **Dorset Community Action Network** - a charity that already offers support to over 2,500 voluntary and community groups across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole - the community response will work through existing local neighbourhood structures, voluntary groups, and local councillors to ensure all three towns have access to support, advice, and practical help.

People wanting to get involved in the community response are being encouraged to sign up by visiting: bpcouncil.gov.uk/TogetherWeCan

Church Involvement

With **'community hubs'** being created in each area to support the most vulnerable with food and medicines, **Faithworks Wessex** and **Jonathan Martin** are facilitating a process by which **local churches** who have the capacity to form a cluster or linked group in each ward or locality of BCP might help the crisis, with 2 church leaders from each group acting as link persons and communicating information from the statutory authorities.

Faithworks will follow up denomination/key group leads, keep up two-way communication between the churches and the Council and give a weekly briefing to leads.

Early actions will include **food bank support**, with local churches in each area ensuring that the food bank has all the food and healthy volunteers that it needs. Many food banks are desperate for supplies and financial support at the moment. People can donate money to the local food bank, or donate items by dropping them outside at designated places at donation points.

Early actions will also include **local good neighbour schemes** and **bereavement support** – that is, assisting funeral directors to coroners, ministers to celebrants, crematorium staff to Registrars as well as supporting the bereaved, as restrictions and changes to funeral services during this period take place.

Many churches now have the technology to run a service on-line on a Sunday. **Making on-line worship services widely known** is another task. Faithworks will seek to collate all of the services on to a shared website and could also publish agreed prayer lines. HopeFM have a weekly Sunday slot from 12-1pm that churches are encouraged to take up; they are also able to broadcast any audio files of prayer or Bible study resources (Rev Simon Bartlett, from Rosebery Park Baptist Church, will be on the Hope FM Breakfast Show at 8.10am on Tuesday, 31st March).

The **"Together we Can"** document outlines good practice for working locally. Additional advice will be coming from BCP with regard to **shopping** for neighbours (including advice on handling money) and **cooking** for

neighbours (one cooking for one – not for large groups etc.). For more information on the above, please email Faithworks Wessex on hello@faithworkswessex.org.uk or Jonathan on jpmlmartin@gmail.com

Dorset Council

The Ven Penny Sayer, Archdeacon of Sherborne, is in daily contact with Dorset County Council. **The Dorset County Council** web-site is being frequently updated with all the latest local information and should be your first port of call if you need help or advice.



Dorset Council has been working closely with partners in the voluntary and community sector to provide support to communities during this time. Over 600 people have volunteered with the **Volunteer Centre Dorset (VCD)** and been placed with organisations and groups that need help. Dorset Council has been working with community pharmacies and VCD to help deliver medicines to people who are self-isolating. Tens of highway vehicles have been deployed to help deliver medicines to people in need. Volunteers are very welcome to help vulnerable people receive medication and food, and you can sign up yourself or your group on the Volunteer Centre Dorset web-site who are coordinating volunteers throughout the county.

Archdeacon Penny emphasises how it is best to link in with the Council rather than set up individual groups : Volunteer Centre Dorset have put in place protocols to keep both volunteers and vulnerable people safe when interacting. These include DBS checks, safe distancing protocols, and advice on hygiene. You can volunteer your help and support [here](#) or register your community group [here](#)

The Council is very anxious that vulnerable groups are protected. There are already strong links with the Gypsy and Traveller Community, and with those working with people with addictions. If you are aware of any other vulnerable groups who need special help please e-mail adsherborne@salisbury.anglican.org with details.

Although caravan parks are now closed to visitors, the County Council is aware that for some people the mobile home is their primary residence at this time. Arrangements are being made to make sure that these people have a safe place to park-up.

From 30th March, a new **Dorset Council helpline** will be operative for people who are in need of **help with home IT** during this time. Digital advisors - volunteers mostly made up of retired IT professionals - will be on duty to receive calls to help support the public with queries relating to eConsult for online GP appointments, Skype to keep in contact with the family, broadband queries, accessing e-books, e-magazines and TV channels, emailing, using Google applications and Microsoft Office 365, online safety and security, online shopping, using smartphones and social media – including video conferencing – and virtual assistants like Alexa, software issues, support to work from home, and accessing online resources to help children learn.

The hotline [01305 221048](tel:01305221048) is open Mondays to Fridays, from 10 am to 12 noon. Please advertise this to those who you think may be in need of this extra support.



Help and Kindness is part of the county-wide team that is responding to Coronavirus Covid-19 in Dorset, working to promote and share the guidance and support services that are available. Find out more [here](#)

Age UK North, South and West Dorset are taking 200 calls per day from isolated people who need help with getting food shopping and other supplies. Age UK continue to provide support through their Good Neighbours scheme. This includes small maintenance jobs, eg changing light bulbs, and access to trades people for larger jobs. Search **Age UK Dorset** for a local group, email enquiries@ageuknswd.org.uk or call [01305 269444](tel:01305269444) to offer or ask for support.



The Evangelical Alliance has long been engaged in pressing for **gambling policy that protects the most vulnerable** and this looks like being a key policy area over the next few years. Find out more [here](#)

More Funding to Help Rough Sleepers

During this pandemic, moves have been made to house rough sleepers, in Dorset and nationally, providing them with a 'safe harbour' during the public health emergency.

Looking forwards, Dorset Council has been awarded nearly £500,000 of government funding to help tackle rough sleeping in the county. The grant follows a bid by Dorset Council's Housing Team, The Lantern, Julian House, The Bus Shelter and Citizens Advice.

Clr Graham Carr-Jones, Portfolio holder for Housing at Dorset Council, said: "The funding will continue our existing partnership work and provides an important opportunity to extend this work across the rural areas of Dorset." Helen Bedser, Chief Executive of Julian House, said the increased funding would enable the work to be broadened out to address the less visible aspects of homelessness, as in rural communities, adding that getting someone off the streets is just the start of their pathway away from homelessness, and how tailored support when they move into accommodation helps to ensure that they do not end up returning to the streets.

Foodbanks have been developing across Dorset, as in the rest of the UK, taking into account the wider picture and offering additional services onsite, such as debt advice and cookery lessons. In Bournemouth, Poole, Blandford, Wimborne, Southbourne and Christchurch, Faithworks has been working with the churches and other organisations to make this happen. Although these services have had to stop for the meanwhile, due to the coronavirus and subsequent government lockdown, it is a model which will be further developed in the future.

BCP : Read about BCP's Homelessness Strategy [here](#)

Events

Thousands light a #candleofhope in the darkness

Tens of thousands of Christians across Britain united to pray as part of the **National Day of Prayer and Action** at 7pm on **Mothering Sunday, 22nd March 2020**.

Amid the **coronavirus pandemic** sweeping the globe, candles were lit in thousands of homes across Britain at 7pm, symbolising the light of Christ shining into the darkness. **Even those living in 'social isolation' were able to unite in this act of prayer, standing together in solidarity and faith at this time of global crisis.**



Find out more about this ongoing initiative under 'Churches Together in England' section in this Newsletter.

Churches Together In England

Church Services Stop – Prayer Continues

All churches have had to cease from meeting in person for their normal services and other gatherings. Churches are closed, even for private or solitary prayer, as well as for worship and liturgy. Read the measures [here](#). Churches Together in England is monitoring the advice and directions being given by Member Churches. Read more [here](#)

Sunday #PrayersOfHope for Covid19 Pandemic

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.' John 1:5

Following the call to prayer last Sunday, Churches Together in England, and as our nation faces the unprecedented challenge of the coronavirus pandemic, Churches Together in England (CTE) is encouraging Christians across our nations to continue uniting in prayer, praying **#PrayersOfHope** in their homes at **7.00 pm each Sunday evening**.



CTE has prepared a candle poster for those who would like to place a permanent symbol in their front windows of Christ's light shining in the darkness. This poster has been made available due to awareness of the potential fire risk posed by lighting live candles, particularly on windowsills. CTE are keen to avoid adding any pressure to our emergency service personnel, particularly at this difficult time. The poster is available by visiting www.cte.org.uk/prayersofhope
You can read a short article on the response to the Day of Prayer and Action [here](#).

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

Church called to sing hymns on Easter Sunday



Easter Sunday 2020 will be an Easter Sunday like no other before it : we cannot sing the great Easter hymns inside our churches

At 10am on Easter Sunday 12 April 2020, as Part of '**Sing Resurrection**', all who want to celebrate the resurrection are called to go outside and sing '*Jesus Christ is Risen Today*' and '*Thine be the Glory*' at the top of their voices - in the garden, in the street, like an Italian on a balcony, on a permitted daily walk in their local park, by the sea or by a lake...all the while keeping a safe spatial distance!

These two hymns are probably the best loved Easter hymns known by the largest number of people. They are cheerful, confident and joyful acclamations of resurrection and will be uplifting for other people to hear on Easter morning.

Please share 'Sing Resurrection' with as many people as possible by social media, email and phone. Let's share it globally too and see if Sing Resurrection can happen at 10am in 24 time zones around the world! Invite friends and neighbours in advance to listen out for Sing Resurrection or to join in themselves. If you are planning a live streaming service, why not also include these hymns at 10am, so that your viewers can step outside and sing at the same time? Find out more and download a flier [here](#)

Resources

The **Tragedy and Congregations Project** may be of help to church leaders during this challenging period. The purpose of the project is to resource churches to respond in a healthy way to the impact of tragedies, local and global, through training ordinands in good practice, careful reflection, and personal resilience. How can congregations be helped to respond with integrity, courage and compassion to tragedies? How can tragic events be related to the narratives of Christian Scripture and doctrine – in preaching, prayer and worship, and in discussion groups – in ways that allow honest exploration of feelings and searching theological reflection on the nature of God? <https://tragedyandcongregations.org.uk/>

Independent Age – Advice and Support for Older Age

In line with government regulations on coronavirus, the organisation's helpline is temporarily closed. However, the website offers some good advice on how to help protect older people from scams. Read more [here](#)



The work of **PACE** (*Programme for Applied Christian Education*) continues. The Christian schools work charity established in 1994, which partners with local churches in Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch to provide excellent learning opportunities in schools so that every student can ask their biggest questions, explore the Christian faith and investigate the life and claims of Jesus.

have started to produce videos for both primary (assemblies) and secondary (RE lessons).

The first of the video lessons for secondary age - Introduction to Christianity – can be found [here](#)

Andy Mason's brilliant assembly for the run-up to Easter, 'A Fresh Start', can be found [here](#)

PACE will be adding new videos each week [here](#).

Please feel free to share these with anyone who you think may find them useful. For further information, contact Chrissi Pegg, The PACE Trust www.pacetrust.org.uk [07375 672098](tel:07375672098)

Anyone concerned about a rough sleeper should report it via StreetLink: streetlink.org.uk

The East Dorset Christians Against Poverty (CAP) has reopened its helpline for new clients. Its free face-to-face Debt Help Service helps those who are vulnerable and on low incomes, offering an extra level of care to those that need it most. Tel : [0800 328 0006](tel:08003280006).



STIRtoACTION

In response to the Covid-19 crisis, **Stir To Action**, which works towards building a new economy based on democratic ownership through workshop programmes, strategic economic development, and a quarterly magazine, is relaunching their New Economy Programme as a webinar series from April – July 2020. Find out more [here](#)

'Growing Compassionate Communities' (GCC)

The GCC (launched in 2018) works towards the inclusiveness of diverse groups and peoples who are vulnerable and on the margins of the community, in both urban and rural areas, providing support to help them to engage and reintegrate, as well as empowering communities to grow as compassionate and promoting sustainability. The GCC works from a model which promotes listening, connection, engagement and conversation with those communities. Find out how it might help you or how you, your church or group might get involved by reading more [here](#) The GCC also has a [Facebook](#) page.

Neighbourhood Planning in a Climate Emergency

The latest edition of the Centre for Sustainable Energy's guidebook 'Neighbourhood planning in a climate emergency' is now available [here](#), an update to the previous 'Low Carbon Neighbourhood Planning' guidebook.

Dorset Council Climate Emergency webpage : learn about ways that have been suggested as to how Dorset Council can tackle climate change [here](#)

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A Locked Church

Ah, my dear Lord, the church is
locked
but let my heart be open to your
presence :
there let us make, you and I,
your Easter garden ;
plant it with flowers,
and let the heavy stone be rolled
away.
Pray for me, as I do for you.

(Alan Amos)

