

## **CHURCHES TOGETHER IN HEMEL HEMPSTEAD**

### **TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT & VALEDICTORY 2022**

My annual report this year is very simple in that this year we have incurred only 3 items of expenditure. Please refer to the financial account to view these and to compare with expenditure items from the previous year. Our income is entirely subscription income but we had a donation this year of £50 from Adeyfield Free Church which we gratefully acknowledge. Subscriptions were reduced last year from £50 to £40 per annum (£20 pa each for St Stephen and St Francis, the daughter churches of St Johns) and a membership of 26 churches gives us an annual income of exactly £1000.00. That sum enables the churches in Hemel Hempstead to meet and work together and hopefully gives good value in return.

I have been managing Churches Together finances for 26 years and took over as treasurer from David Richman in 1996. His accounting was excellent, enabling me to model my annual account on his model which has made my annual task very much easier than might otherwise have been the case. It is now my wish to retire, both as treasurer and as a trustee, and from the AGM this year Paul Boggis will take over as treasurer. In recent weeks I have been busy sorting through and organising the various papers that need to be handed over, along with the accounting books, church treasurers' contact details, cheque book etc and some of these papers have triggered memories that now form part of this valedictory.

#### **Hemel Hempstead Christian Council.**

My then parish priest, Father Daniel Higgins, asked me in about 1987 to represent the catholic church of Our Lady Queen of All Creation as the lay ecumenical representative with himself as the ordained representative. Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead was then known as the Hemel Hempstead Christian Council (HHCC) before re-constituting itself in 1994 as Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead (CTHH) with LEGS (Local Ecumenical Groups) that worked at a local community level. The chairman was Derek Strickland and under his chairmanship and later chairmanship of Lesley Pratt I served as HHCC publicity officer and also as treasurer for the Neuisenberg Visit Committee (NVC).

#### **Neuisenberg**

Neuisenberg is a town we are twinned with in Germany and NVC was formed by HHCC to organise church exchange visits once every 4 years. Usually, 20 or so Germans would visit Hemel Hempstead for an extended weekend break with an exchange visit the following year to Neuisenberg by HHCC. They were very popular weekend breaks but costly to organise even though part funded by a grant provided by the Borough Council. They were discontinued sometime in the 1990's.

#### **Pilgrims Way**

The Pilgrims Way was an amazing ecumenical pilgrimage and quite a logistical feat that happened in 1997. That year marked the twin 1400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Saint Columba, who brought the Christian Gospel from Ireland to Iona, and the arrival of Saint Augustine in Canterbury. The pilgrimage from Canterbury (but initially from Rome) arrived at St Albans Abbey on 29<sup>th</sup> May and from there CTHH and Churches Together in St Albans (assisted by the Hemel and St Albans branches of the Knights of St Columba) marshalled the pilgrims along the footpaths via Potters Crouch, Bedmond, Nash Mills, Apsley and Boxmoor where they continued on to Milton Keynes by train, eventually to finish up at Iona. It was a fascinating and historic pilgrimage and although the part we played was small in comparison with the roles of the national and international co-ordinators we had glorious weather and succeeded in getting the pilgrims to the station on time to reach their next destination, Coventry.

#### **Transforming Community & Churches Directory**

In 2003 CTHH held a one-day conference, Transforming Community, at The Hemel Hempstead School aimed at promoting the churches engagement with their local communities. An invitation from the Borough Council to be part of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and to "help shape the life of the local community with others to its well-being" was warmly received by Rev Peter Cotton and Graham

Richardson on behalf of CTHH who arranged the Conference with funding from CTHH. Questions raised at the Conference such as : “What as churches would you like to see happening in the Hemel Hempstead community? What would it take to make it happen? resulted in much reflection and discussion and delegates expressed a desire for better communication between our churches. What followed was the printing and publication of an all-churches directory containing information to enable churches to better engage with one another. The directory was well received by the churches, the local authority and the MP and a public version of the directory was held for sometime in the local library. Sadly, it has now fallen into disuse although a somewhat reduced version is accessible on the CTHH website. My involvement with the directory allowed me to meet personally and on a one-to-one basis most of the Hemel clergy while the difficult office work was admirably handled by Jackie Jackson and Linda Faupel.

### **ROC & Hemel Hempstead Street Pastors/Dacorum Street Pastors**

The engagement the churches had with the local authority and other community associations through the LSP was further developed in 2011 when ROC became a significant part of the CTHH programme. ROC stands for “Redeeming Our Communities” and its aim was to keep partnerships going between churches, police and local authorities so that, “with enthusiasm and mutual respect and a shared common heart and vision, local communities could be transformed”. I attended a 2-day ROC Conference in Newport Pagnell to hear about ROC’s latest developments across the UK and gained lots of practical insight, advice and information to take back to CTHH. Some short while later Graham Richardson and Vaughan Allen founded Hemel Hempstead Street Pastors under licence from Ascension Trust. This initiative, set up as an Urban Trinity initiative involving churches, police and local authority, thrives to this day and has now become Dacorum Street Pastors, having extended its activity to Berkhamsted under the chairmanship of Mike Wallis. For ten years I have served as treasurer for HHSP/DSP and have represented CTHH during that time. I have this month retired as a trustee.

### **Christian Aid**

For over 30 years Jean Garner had been organising Christian Aid in Hemel Hempstead and CTHH collected and accounted for the donations on an annual basis. Sadly, collections for Christian Aid Week stopped in Hemel in 2013 when Jean felt obliged to retire and have not since resumed. An organiser is still being sought.

### **The New Constitution**

In 2011 CTHH acknowledged that the LEGS established under the 1994. constitution were no longer working and that a review of the constitution was now a priority. That review took place under the chairmanship of John Quill who headed “Refreshing the Mission of CTHH” which after months of discussion and forum meetings resulted in a new constitution in 2012.

### **Rambles**

In recent years CTHH have set up a Rambling Group to enjoy rambles together in the beautiful countryside surrounding Hemel Hempstead. These have had some appeal to all denominations but have been curtailed while Covid persists. There are twelve circular satellite walks to the north, south, east and west of Hemel Hempstead.

I shall end by thanking all of you for allowing me to participate in these activities and for serving as your treasurer and I would particularly like to thank my fellow trustees, Austin, Heather, Niki, Joel, Andrew and Paul for tolerating my financial reports which are always the least exciting part of our business agenda.

Good bye and God bless.

Chris Jones

02.05.22