



Churches Together in St Albans

Convener's Report 2021

2020 was, of course, dominated by the pandemic and subsequent restrictions. Our thoughts and prayers are at this time with all those who have lost loved ones, the sick, our heroic medics, care workers and others as humanity faces this global challenge together. Unity has never been more important.

We adapted to the pandemic by doing all meetings on Zoom, starting with the Spring Forum which was about the challenges and approaches to churches going online. For some going online has been easier as no travel is required. Others have not been able to embrace digital technology so well or at all. We miss them. All of us look forward to face-to-face meetings. Across all the churches there has been an increasing realization that this is a time to grow in holiness, to embrace the digital opportunities and to work together for the common good.

The Good Friday Cross Procession had to go but Unity at the Cross continued online. We worked with Churches Together in Hertfordshire for Thy Kingdom Come, running night prayer via Zoom. We also completed a 24-hour prayer vigil online with participants from various churches around St Albans. In July we ran a Summer Forum on Poverty and Inequality Poverty & Inequality. In July, Ken turned 90 and stepped down from the Enabling Group. Ken has been a tower of strength, wisdom, compassion and common sense. We are incredibly grateful for his help and will remain in touch.

Our September Forum was a call to Pray for the Planet and went well. We have worked with our friends in Hope in Action on sustainability issues and will continue to do so. Our 2021 Autumn Forum will also be about sustainability as it comes just before COP26, the UN Climate Change Conference.

At the start of November, we ran an online Prayer for America. I think our prayers were both necessary and answered. In December, the new lockdown made Carols by the Clock Tower impossible. I cycled my e-bike around 30 churches of St Albans, recording the trip on video. I inserted welcomes from some of the churches. The speeded-up video is on YouTube and can be seen from our website. I hope we can insert more welcomes into the video. It would be great to have a Churches Together cycle round some of the churches when circumstances allow. The Alban Way links St Julian's with City Church, linking in many other churches on the way. Bridle paths and country roads make for a pleasant ride past churches such as St Michael's and St Leonard's.

In January 2021 we held an online Service of Prayer for Christian Unity which went down well. It has been particularly heartening to have such a variety of churches attend events including, for instance, United Reformed, Methodist, Pentecostal, Anglican, Baptist, Independent Evangelical and Roman Catholic.

The Enabling Group met in May, June and October, all via Zoom. It is thanks to them that so much has been achieved despite the difficulties. Especial thanks are due to Joanna our secretary, David our treasurer, Gill for the email bulletins & noticeboard & Prayer rota, Mike for being our Abbey rep, Susan for her input despite all her workload and Pam for her input into forums and her ecumenical ties.

In 2021 we look forward to embracing the challenges of the pandemic whilst hoping for a responsibly timed end to the lock-down. We have an excellent Summer Forum coming up on Justice and Prisons, with a panel including a criminal psychologist, an ex-Prisons Service civil servant, a prison chaplain and a high court judge! We need to get the word out there: network, email, tweet and more. Unity was and is a priority for Jesus: it is a privilege to answer his call together.

Peter Berners-Lee

Convener, Churches Together in St Albans

5th February 2021