



Churches Together South Tyneside Newsletter No.1 (Sept 24)

Happy at Home D-day celebrations

June 6th 2024 saw the 80th anniversary of D-day. Throughout June we had D-day themed hubs to remember the fallen and honour those who helped change our history and liberate Europe. Our new Mayor and Mayoress joined us at Boldon and thoroughly enjoyed our celebrations. We had 1940's quiz, singalongs, 40's food and many people dressed in 40's clothes or red, white and blue! For our beneficiaries who are housebound or couldn't make it to the hubs due to illness, we delivered gift bags with treats to make them feel part of the events. One such beneficiary was himself involved in Operation Overlord and is in a minority of D-day survivors still alive today at 101years old! 160 people take part in our 5 'Happy Hubs' every month.



"Thank you all for the opportunity to celebrate with new friends and old. It's so important for those who feel isolated for whatever reason to know that there are people who are willing to give them time and support. As a volunteer and a senior, I benefit just as much as the ladies I visit." (Happy at Home Volunteer)

Nurturing Dementia

The monthly Dementia Engagement and Empowerment Project (DEEP) was launched at St Gregory's Church in March. DEEP is a network of groups of people with dementia across the UK. DEEP brings the network of individual groups together to share experiences, learn from and support each other. The DEEP group is facilitated by Maria Scurfield (the Nurturing Dementia project lead) and a Health Psychologist from the local mental health Trust. We currently have 5 group members who have chosen to call the group the WAVE (We Are Valued Equally) Dementia Club. The group support each other by sharing their experiences and are passionate about making their community more dementia friendly. They are currently focussing on the lack of public toilet facilities in South Shields. The group welcomes new members.

Celebrating St Bede, our local celebrity

At Revd Lesley Jones' invitation, in May CTST led an ecumenical celebration of St Bede's life at St Paul's, Jarrow. Bede was born 1350 years ago and lived his whole life in our locality as a monk. The most learned person of his time, he survived a pandemic which wiped out almost the whole Jarrow monastery and local population. He calculated the first tide-tables, is called the 'Father of English History', and popularised the terms BC and AD. A local celebrity worth celebrating – even on a very rainy evening!



Revd Jason Wratten, Audrey Tennet (CTST Chair), Maj Stephen Slade, Paul Southgate

Household Support Fund

To help with the Cost of Living crisis, CTST is one of the organisations invited by the Council to help distribute vouchers to those most in need in our community. Since the scheme began in June 2023 we have been able to help 120 people, awarding £150 to each. CTST work with MAST (Money Advice South Tyneside) to deliver this much needed support to South Tyneside residents.

Key to Life Foodbank

This is a partnership between CTST and Key Community. This year, up to May, Key to Life supported 3043 people with food, distributing 1556 family packs and emergency parcels. The numbers of families applying for support is rising and the Foodbank expects more as summer progresses. Key to Life was delighted to be nominated for a 'Love South Tyneside' award! Thanks to everyone for your generosity in these hard times.

CTST hosts hustings at Living Waters for candidates in General Election

Fantastic atmosphere and a great sharing of concerns with the three parliamentary candidates able to attend CTST's "Question Time" for the South Shields Constituency on 27th June. Thanks to Emma Lewell Buck (Labour), Jonathan Aibi (Liberal Democrat) and David Francis (Green) for their passionate and positive responses – 39 responses between them - given in a friendly and respectful way. Thanks to Rev Lesley Jones for chairing the process with humour and panache. We had an almost full hall at Living Waters' Church and are delighted so many attended. Our great thanks to Pastor Sam for the warm welcome and managing all the technology too!



Reflecting Together Project – Loneliness and isolation experienced by older people in South Tyneside



Dr Stefanie Conradt, a Fellow of the William Leech Research Fund, is undertaking a 12-month research project with CTST. Working together with CTST's members, trustees, staff and volunteers, Stefanie is researching how loneliness and isolation is experienced by the community's older members. By reflecting together on what is offered by the beneficiaries and local churches, we hope to create a more connected and supportive environment, as well as new ways of engagement for CTST.

Flying visit to Al Azhar Mosque

Following recent riots in the region, CTST wrote messages of support to our local mosques who were feeling vulnerable and anxious. We followed up by visiting the Al Azhar Mosque just as Friday prayers were ending and were greeted warmly. We assured them that local churches were offering prayers and wanted to support them. They would like us to come back and visit. Here is a photo taken by Bernadette Askins, showing Margaret Gregg from STARCH and Mim Ritson, leader of Happy at Home, with their hosts.



CTST also chairs the **South Tyneside Faiths Forum**. We meet every 2 months in different venues – usually churches or other places of worship. We have welcomed members of different faiths, including Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim. Anyone who is interested in building relationships with other faiths is welcome to join. Our most recent meeting in September took place at the Thai Buddhist Temple in Hebburn where our host was Kom, a young Buddhist monk. He showed us round the beautiful Temple, generously shared refreshments and explained his faith. The visit will live long in our memories.

CTST is the Church reaching out with social action to make life better for the community. Volunteers are always welcome. For more information, contact Bernadette@churchestogethersouthtyneside.org