

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BISHOP'S STORTFORD.

There have been three Forum meetings since our last APCM. Individual Christians and members of St. Michaels congregation have participated in and supported the following events and initiatives which took place during the year:

Company at Christmas took place this year at the Methodist venue. It was, as ever, a joyous occasion. Transport was provided, and guests and volunteers enjoyed a traditional Christmas dinner which was cooked on site, followed by a varied programme of entertainment; a tea with cake and gifts to take home. Those wishing to see a cheery face, together with a delivery of a meal and Christmas fare, were visited at their own homes.

The Food Bank

Essential food and personal essential items continue to be distributed to those in need. During the past winter the need for food was acute, with an increasing number of families needing support during the cold weather.

Warm spaces have been offered in the churches in response to the cost of living and fuel crisis.

The Night Shelter opened its doors in December, and provided an essential service to guests in need of a hot meal, shelter and a bed for the night. The latter provision finished at the beginning of March, although a drop-in facility is now offered on three weekdays, which includes a light lunch, as well as support with negotiating the procedures and formalities needed in order to secure accommodation and deal with other personal issues.

Carol Singing **took place both in Florence Walk** and at The Methodist's Hall at Christmas. Members of St. Michael's church attended each event. The collections was donated to the Night Shelter.

The Good Friday Walk of Witness took place this year. It was preceded by an ecumenical service held this at *The United Reform Church*. Subsequently participants walked quietly along the pavements (handing out palm crosses and prayer cards), progressing from the *URC* to the *Methodists* where prayers were offered followed by drinks and hot cross buns at the close of the event.

A **Pentecost Breakfast** is due to be held at St. James's Thorley. This will consist of breakfast fare, plus stalls offering information and details about the various charities and groups which operate under the CTBS umbrella. A concluding ecumenical service will take place at the end of the morning event. St. James's is also hosting many events and courses now, and in the summer months – details of which can be found on their website,

Holiday Bible Week is due to take place on in August, this year at The Herts and Essex school.

Love Stortford will take place during the week commencing 15th June and will culminate on Carnival Day, 20th June.

For myself I would say that CTBS and its associate members play a crucial role in the life of our town, often catering to those in need and/or distress, and supporting issues which are overlooked or not funded by civic authorities. However, the organisation is now giving time at Forum meetings, for small group discussions on how we might encourage young people to attend both individual churches and community events. The results of these discussions are then reported back to the *Enabling Group*. We are stronger together! All of the churches and associate members have their own website. Churches Together now has a Facebook page at <https://facebook.com/Churches Together Bisop's Stortford>. If individuals require further information about any of the above, please contact the undersigned and I will do my best to provide you with further detail.

Margaret Fox. (*St. Michael's and Company at Christmas Rep. with CTBS*)