



**ANNUAL REPORT AND
ACCOUNTS**

2013

Somerset Churches Together is a Registered Charity No. 1133175

www.sctog.org.uk

SOMERSET CHURCHES TOGETHER **ANNUAL REPORT 2013**

Aims and Purposes

Somerset Churches Together seeks to be a visible sign of the Churches commitment to one another, to support local ecumenism, to serve as Sponsoring Body for Local Ecumenical Partnerships and to encourage shared worship, service and evangelism.

Other aims include the facilitation of early ecumenical consultation, the development of good relationships with other faith communities and the support of the churches in their response to the needs of society.

Objectives and Activities

In order to advance the Christian religion for the benefit of the public, Somerset Churches Together seeks to support the common Christian witness of its member churches, to provide ways in which they may consult with one another and work and pray for Christian unity.

In accordance with the requirements of charitable status and with its Constitution, Somerset Churches Together Standing Committee has considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit when planning activities for the year. In particular, it has considered the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion.

County Ecumenical Officer's Report

Support of Local Ecumenism

During the year I attended meetings and events organised by Churches Together groups or Leaders' groups in Bath, Clevedon, Keynsham & Saltford, Martock, Pilton, Shepton Mallet, Somerton, Taunton, Washford & Roadwater, Wellington, Wincanton and Wrington. These included some annual events such as Songs of Praise at Pilton Tithe Barn, The Big Tent holiday club in Wellington and the 'Rock of Ages' service in Burrington Combe. I also met with some individuals and denominational groups around particular issues.

The Monthly Update now goes out to over 180 people and, via them, to hundreds more. Latterly I have made these Updates a little shorter and begun adding an events Diary; both of these are very well received and are also available on the SCT website.

Last year it was decided that the SCT AGM and Winter Forum should be held in a different place each year and that the theme of the Forum should, if possible, reflect something of what was going on ecumenically in that place. Accordingly this year found us in Birchfield Community Church on a housing estate in Yeovil. Attendance was good and included several people who had not before attended any SCT events. We were led by the Revd David Keen of YeovilNET in looking at

Mission to New Estates. There was plenty of participation and people went away with some practical ideas to follow up in their own localities.

Another idea which emerged last year was to organise some more focused gatherings during the year, either regionally or bringing together those from around the county who are dealing with similar issues. The first of these was a 'Mini-Forum' for the Mendip area on 23rd October. Over thirty people representing Churches/Christians Together groups in Frome, Glastonbury, Shepton Mallet, Street and Wells met from late afternoon to mid-evening at the Elim Connect Centre in Wells. The theme was 'Deepening our unity – Strengthening our relationships to one another in Christ'. We worshipped together and used Bible Studies and activities including 'What the World thinks of the Church' and 'What I value in other denominations'. We also enjoyed a delicious supper and four after-dinner 'testimonies'. The consensus was that it had been a very worthwhile experiment and the intention is to try one or two similar gatherings in the coming year.

Away Day

The Standing Committee had its first Away Day for many years on 14th November. We were led by the Revd Chris Dobson who is the Ecumenical and Global Partnership Officer for the Diocese of Bristol. He gave a presentation on forty years of evolving ecumenism in Swindon and spoke of being inspired by a Pentecostal pastor in Uganda who said "We used to see each other as competitors; now we know that we need each other and are working together". He asked whether there was a similar mind-set in SCT which sparked a wide-ranging discussion about our changing role.

Among the points which emerged were:

- The importance of trust, friendship and sacrifice and the need sometimes to change our own culture;
- We are not competitors; we are merely different;
- Key words: encourage, listen, communicate;
- Local ecumenism needs the most attention and service;
- We need to foster local networks;
- The important role of chaplaincy in many spheres;
- There is some urgency because of rapidly changing contexts;
- The model for SCT is an air terminal, not an airline!

The Standing Committee will be seeking ways to put these ideas into practice over the coming months.

Local Ecumenical Partnerships

In 2013 Somerset Churches Together has continued to serve as Sponsoring Body for eight Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs) in Somerset. The Yeovil Town Centre Churches LEP was dissolved early in the year but for all the right reasons; the churches involved had begun to find that the LEP was hindering their involvement with other churches in the town and with activities such as YeovilNET on the wider ecumenical scene.

The LEP in Locking Castle was overseen for most of the year by the Revd. Robert Channon and the local Methodist circuit. A new minister, the Revd. Tom Yacomeni of the Anglican Church, was inducted at a joyful and well-attended service in early September.

Following a very useful gathering for LEPs in June 2012, a second Gathering was held on 8th June this year. Six LEPs were represented from urban, semi-urban and rural areas and each told the story of 'where we are on our pilgrimage'. Sacrifice, adaptability, risk and trust emerged as key words. Among the ideas and concerns raised were:

- A clear need for much greater openness in denominational appointment processes, not only within LEPs but also in benefices, circuits etc which include LEPs.
- Problems over resource sharing; the key is to keep our sense of trust and generosity with each other rather than using the language of entitlement.
- Single-congregation LEPs need guidance about Denominational Returns.
- The annual Visitation Service for Church Wardens should also uphold LEP office holders of other denominations.

We are planning to hold a similar gathering in 2014.

We have prepared a sheet of eight 'reflective questions' for LEPs to use, perhaps in preparation for the annual Gathering. On-going support of LEPs is now mainly done by 'Companions' though Milborne Port prefers not to have one. Two other LEPs do not yet have a Companion but most of them are proving to be very valuable.

Churches and Society

The issue of poverty in our communities has come increasingly to the fore during the year. Organisations such as 'More Than Food' are active in the south west and provide stimulus as well as very useful data. Most of our groups of churches are now active in service to their communities through Foodbanks and/or other initiatives such as Street Pastors, Debt Counselling Services, Job Clubs or Credit Unions. In almost every case, congregations and individual Christians find that working together to serve their communities reduces the significance of denominational differences - service and mission bring unity.

New housing areas continue to spring up along the 'M5 corridor' and elsewhere in the county. In most of these places the churches are seeking ways to be involved both at the planning stage and, more practically, when new residents are moving in. This often involves taking round 'welcome packs', offering friendship and/or advice and seeking to provide activities which meet the needs of the new-comers.

SCT Forum

The first SCT Autumn Forum for three years was held in 2012. Though participants found it valuable, we questioned whether this is the most fruitful way of bringing together people from around the county. We were hoping to put on something in Bath and had earlier chosen 28th September as the date. In a separate development, ideas began to emerge for a Bath Christian Action

Network and I was asked to be involved. Plans were made to launch BathCAN in September 2013 and it was soon decided to make this a joint event with the SCT Forum.

The day conference was entitled 'Civic Engagement' and was every bit as stimulating as we had hoped. Around 110 people from Bath and beyond came together in the Assembly Rooms to engage with the Mayor of Bath, the local MP and Secretary of State in the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Leader of BANES Council, a Police Inspector in the Neighbourhood Team, an Evangelical Alliance Ambassador in the UK and many others. We were encouraged by the huge variety of Christian initiatives across the UK and in our own county which are making a real difference where the cuts are biting deepest and we were challenged anew to bring the love of God into the lives of our own communities in generous and practical ways.

The response to organising an SCT Forum in conjunction with another relevant organisation has been positive so we may try something similar in 2014.

Church Leaders

Somerset Churches Together has continued to provide a meeting place for the Church Leaders in Somerset and enabled its Presidents to meet together twice in 2013. The most significant of these was a stimulating study day in Holy Week at which most of the Church Leaders were present. It was conducted by the Revd. Tom Stuckey, former President of the Methodist conference, in the light of his book on atonement entitled 'The Wrath of God Satisfied?'. He led reflections on the phrase 'a full perfect, sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction' with reference to Romans 3 v.5 and v.24-25.

Mental Health Chaplaincy

2011 saw the coming together of Community and Mental Health Services under the umbrella of Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. One of the last phases of this integration came about in April 2013 when the majority of Community Hospital Chaplains came on to the Partnership's payroll.

Throughout the year the Review of Chaplaincy continued. This exercise was necessary as across both community and mental health in-patient wards numbers were reducing as more people were treated at home. In addition we have become aware that NHS England will be consulting nationally about Chaplaincy requirements in January next year so the situation can best be described as fluid!

Specifically within the Mental Health Sector it is important to place on record the grateful thanks of many - patients, staff, carers and colleagues - to the Revd Ken Coles for his considerable years of service to Somerset Partnership. His retirement was marked with a lunch and a number of presentations in August when we wished him a long and happy retirement.

Please pray for all involved in hospital chaplaincy within Somerset Partnership as plans are formulated to ensure an appropriate level of service for the future.

Christian Aid

Christian Aid has been well supported by churches, groups and individuals throughout Somerset in 2013. We have received £1,075,728.90 from donations and fundraising efforts so thank you to everyone who has made a donation or organised an event. This money is already being spent on emergency work in countries such as the Philippines, Syria and South Sudan. We are also able to support long term development projects through our partner organisations in over 40 countries, helping people lift themselves out of poverty.

2013 was a big year for campaigning in the county too – many people took part in the 'Enough Food for Everyone If' campaign by raising awareness, holding talks, signing postcards and coaches from Bristol, Bath and Taunton travelling to join 45 000 in Hyde Park on 8th June for a rally ahead of the G8. Christian Aid supporters were involved in lobbying MPs, including Tessa Munt, Jeremy Browne, David Heath and Liam Fox at face to face meetings and by letter. This campaign gave us the opportunity to work with supporters from other agencies too, including CAFOD, Tearfund and Oxfam and resulted in the government keeping to its promise to give 0.7% GNI in aid in the March budget, steps being taken towards tax transparency and £4.1bn in new funding for nutrition.

Christian Aid worked with churches and groups throughout Somerset during the year. Some highlights include a 'Children of Gaza: Building a Legacy of Hope' exhibition being displayed in Wells Cathedral with a talk by Bishop Peter in February, before moving on to churches in Bath, Weston-super-Mare and Portishead later in the year. Supporters joined our first South West skydive in May and Somerset abseil in October in North Petherton and both events got local media coverage. We resourced churches with worship and prayer materials, especially during Lent, Christian Aid Week in May, Harvest and Advent and gave numerous sermons. We had stands at New Wine, Spring Harvest, Soul Survivor and Momentum too. Challenges around fundraising, campaigning and recruiting new volunteers remain, but we are delighted with all the support and achievements we have made during 2013. Thank you!

CAFOD

CAFOD Clifton had a very busy 2013 with many local events taking place across the Diocese. Prime amongst them was taking part in the 'Enough Food for Everyone If' campaign linked to the G8 taking place in the UK. Along with other faith aid agencies we organised coaches from Bath and Taunton to the rally in Hyde Park in June to join 45,000 people.

Three Somerset parishes welcomed Fred Uttley who was cycling around the whole of England and Wales to raise money for CAFOD's work in Bangladesh. The Catholic Communities of Somerset have twice rallied together in 2013 for the Emergency appeals for Syria and The Philippines. These special appeals both raised locally tens of thousands of pounds on top of the very generous continued support for CAFOD throughout the year. 2014 is the 25th anniversary of CAFOD opening an office in Clifton Diocese and a series of events will take place, including ones linked to our up-coming campaign on Climate Change.

Hopes for the Future

Last year's Annual Report pointed to the ways in which our ecumenical structures are becoming much more flexible. The way we 'do' ecumenism in Somerset is shifting from organisational to provisional; it is also becoming more 'missional'. The 2012 Forum of Churches Together in England maintained that unity is a part of mission and I discern this to be increasingly true at local level in Churches Together groups and Local Ecumenical Partnerships.

I have already noted the rising number of places where churches are working together to serve their communities through Street Pastors, Food Banks, Credit Unions and many other socially useful initiatives. Undoubtedly these programmes are meeting real needs, especially where statutory provision is inadequate or even lacking altogether. But they are more than just that. They take the Gospel imperative seriously, following the example of Jesus in addressing first the 'felt needs' of each individual or community but not stopping there. The witness they give is incalculable and stories are emerging of people touched by these programmes who begin to understand the Gospel message for the first time. There is much to be explored here and we hope that the missional dimension of poverty-related programmes will be the topic of a forum of some kind in 2014.

Financial Review

The Bath & Wells Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) provides financial and accountancy support services to Somerset Churches Together. Services include the preparation of the annual budget, maintenance of accounting records, preparation of the annual accounts, notification of annual subscriptions to member bodies, payment of salary and expenses to the County Ecumenical Officer (CEO), payment of all supplier invoices and other expenses. The fee for such services from the DBF in 2013 was £500 (2012 - £500).

Mr Nick May was Honorary Treasurer during the year. The Honorary Treasurer's role includes the monitoring of actual income and expenditure versus budget, also the provision of advice to the Standing Committee on any financial issue.

2013 income was £19,797 (2012 - £846) and expenditure was £19,388 (2012 - £17,798) resulting in a surplus for the year of £409 (2012 - deficit £16,952). The budget for the year had assumed a small deficit.

Income increased in the year following the normal collection of subscriptions from member bodies; no subscriptions were collected in 2012. Increased expenditure of 9% year-on-year primarily related to conferences and meetings. Notwithstanding, total expenditure came in under budget due to other savings.

Funds held at 31 December 2013 totalled £26,436 (31 December 2012 - £26,027). Funds held at 31 December 2013 represented 15.8 months' budgeted future expenditure cover. Reserves policy is to hold sufficient funds to cover 12 months' future expenditure.

The 2013 annual accounts have been reviewed by an independent examiner whose signed report is available to members.

Structure, Governance and Management

Membership of the Standing Committee consists of one of the Presidents, serving Denominational Ecumenical Officers or their equivalents for the area covered by Somerset Churches Together, one representative from each of the member Churches which does not have a Denominational Ecumenical Officer, one representative of the Social Responsibility Group of the Diocese of Bath and Wells, three members elected by the Forum and the Honorary Treasurer. Members of Standing Committee are the trustees of the charity. The Standing Committee met five times during the year with an average level of attendance of 83%. The County Ecumenical Officer attends and services meetings of the Standing Committee in a non-voting capacity.

The membership of the Forum consists of the Presidents of Somerset Churches Together, representatives from each of the member churches, Standing Committee, representatives from local Churches Together groups affiliated to Somerset Churches Together, representatives from Local Ecumenical Partnerships sponsored by Somerset Churches Together and representatives from the various Bodies in Association. The Forum met twice during the year. The meetings are open to all churches in the ecumenical area. The January Forum included the Annual General Meeting.

Administrative Information

Somerset Churches Together covers the geographical area of the Anglican Diocese of Bath and Wells. The correspondence address is 3 Champford Mews, Wellington, TA21 8JW and the website address is www.sctog.org.uk.

Somerset Churches Together is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission (Registered Number 1133175).

Standing Committee members who have served from 1 January 2013 until the date this report was approved are:

The Rt Revd Peter Maurice (President until 30th April)
The Revd Ward Jones (President from 1st May)
The Revd Brian Milloy (West of England Baptist Association)
The Revd Elsie Howell (South West Baptist Association until 30th September))
The Revd Peter Mortlock (Bristol Methodist District)
The Revd Ivan Selman (Plymouth and Exeter Methodist District)
The Revd Michael Robertson (Clifton Roman Catholic Diocese)
The Revd Michael Whitfield (United Reformed Church until 30th September)
Ruth Jackson-Gash (Religious Society of Friends)
The Revd Tim Richards (United Reformed Church)
Mrs Emma Kendall (Church of England)
The Revd Angela Steele (United Reformed Church)
Mr David Maggs (Bath and Wells Church of England Diocese)
Mr Nick May (Treasurer)

Forum Members who have served from 1 January 2013 until the date this report was approved are:

Presidents of Somerset Churches Together

The Revd Nigel Coles (West of England Baptist Association)
The Revd Jeremy Brown (South West Baptist Association)
The Rt Revd Peter Price (Bath and Wells Church of England Diocese) until June
The Rt Revd Peter Maurice (Bath and Wells Church of England Diocese)
The Revd A Ward Jones (Bristol Methodist District)
The Revd Peter Pillinger (Plymouth and Exeter Methodist District)
The Rt Revd Declan Lang (Diocese of Clifton)
The Revd David Grosch-Miller (United Reformed Church) until June
The Revd Ruth Whitehead (United Reformed Church) from July
Major Ian Harris (Salvation Army)

Representatives from each of the Member Churches

Margaret Gibbins (Bath and Wells Church of England Diocese)
The Revd Nicholas Maddock (Bath and Wells Church of England Diocese)
The Revd Dr John Emmett (Bristol Methodist District)
Mr David Parkin (Plymouth and Exeter Methodist District)
Mr Tim Horten-Smith (Diocese of Clifton)
The Revd David Brinn (Diocese of Clifton)
The Revd Tim Richards (United Reformed Church)
The Revd Peter Henderson (United Reformed Church)
Zoe Ainsworth-Grigg (Religious Society of Friends)
Fr Seraphim Johnson (Orthodox Church)

Representatives of Local Ecumenical Partnerships sponsored by Somerset Churches Together

The Revd Rachel Borgars (Batheaston Local Ecumenical Partnership)
Susan Dare (Christchurch Clevedon Local Ecumenical Partnership)
Jan Welling (Sandford Local Ecumenical Partnership)

Representatives of Local Churches Together Groups affiliated to Somerset Churches Together

Julia Ratcliffe (Backwell)
Sarah Sheppard (Bath)
Geoff Hudd (Bath – North East)
Revd Frank Fisher (Castle Cary and Ansford)
Kim Anderson (Clevedon)
The Revd Jonathan Morris (Crewkerne)
Helen Wade (Glastonbury)
Mr Chris Lawson (Minehead)
Beryl Fedder (Peasedown St John)
Eleanor Jackson (Radstock)
Adrian Prior-Sankey (Taunton)
Isabel Ward (Wellington)
Gwen Cox (Weston-super-Mare)

The Standing Committee

Representatives of Bodies in Association

Roger Allen (Churches Together in Greater Bristol)
Alistair Beattie (Faithnet.southwest)
The Revd John Bradley (Churches Together in England) until November
Gillian Alexander (Christian Aid)
Fay Wilson-Rudd (Mental Health Chaplaincy)
David Brinn (CAFOD)

**Approved by the Somerset Churches Together Forum on 13th February
2014 and signed on their behalf by the Revd Ward Jones (Chairman
Somerset Churches Together)**