



News from 2016

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2016

Churches Together in Shirley and District United Service

Sunday January 24th 2016



To celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, CTiS held a United Service at Freemantle United Reformed Church at 3.30 pm on Sunday January 24th.

The service was hosted by Rev Dr Sarah Hall, the minister at Freemantle United Reformed Church, and followed the theme for this year of being the salt of the earth. After an initial call to worship we sang Praise my Soul the King of Heaven. This was followed by a short introduction from our chairperson, Pastor Shaun Sweeney.

We then had presentations on some of the ways in which the churches in Shirley had been trying to be the salt of the earth in our community over the last year, particularly focusing on the work of the Collective Worship Team and the Repair Café at Freemantle United Reformed Church. Becky Purchase from St James Road Methodist Church described how the Collective Worship Team, which consists of people from several CTiS churches, had been taking assemblies in the local infant and junior schools, and had also organised several events outside school for the children such as the Summer Holiday Club and the Light Party at Halloween. Sarah Hall then explained how the Repair Café helped people sort out problems with

things that were broken or not working properly. She showed how this service was a reflection of the work of Christ who came to repair broken lives.

After singing what might be regarded as the theme song of Churches Together groups, Bind us Together, we were invited to take part in two symbolic actions as a reminder of the theme of the meeting. Rev Dan Clark from Shirley Parish Church invited us to light a candle, and Major Teresa Harris from the Salvation Army to take a small pack of salt, to declare that we were aiming to be light and salt to the earth, as Jesus encouraged us to be.

The meeting concluded with tea and biscuits served by the Freemantle United Reformed Church team. While we enjoyed the refreshments, we were able to visit displays from several of the projects with which CTiS are involved: Southampton City Mission, Communicare, Southampton Sunday Lunch Project, Firgrove, Carers in Southampton and Street Pastors.

Overall it was a great opportunity for us to be together as churches in Shirley and Freemantle, to thank God for his goodness over the past year and commit ourselves together to work again this year to bring his kingdom into our local community.

Churches Together in Shirley 'Space Academy' Holiday Club July 2016

'Welcome to Space Academy, come fly with me and you will see God's wondrous love for everyone, so start your rockets and join the fun!' This was our opening action song every day of the club and it was nice to see the children join in with it more and more as the week continued. Our club took place at St James Rd Methodist Church from Monday 25th July until Friday 29th July from 9.30am – 12.30pm. The team was made up of people from St James Rd Methodist, Shirley Parish, Salvation Army and Shirley Baptist churches.

Each day all the children joined together to prepare to 'take off' in to space, join in with plenty of action songs and to hear the day's Bible story from the book of Daniel in our 'space station'. Inside the space station (the church) we met 'Captain Cosmos' and 'Professor Rocks' (AKA Mary and Pete Hamilton from St James Methodist) who took us through the morning's theme with games and challenges and some wonderful acting on their part!

After this start to the day the children (the 'space cadets') moved in to their age groups with groups meeting in different areas of the building. For two hours the children were kept busy with games, competitions, crafts and other activities related to the day's story, as well as being treated to an amazing feast for their snack each day prepared by the kitchen team. The groups then all came together to meet in the 'space station' again to end each morning. During this time, the children fed back to each other some of the

activities their groups had been involved with and showed the fabulous creations they had been making, as well as to recap over the story and to take part in a prayer time. Each day too one of the team shared how their friendship with Jesus makes a difference in their lives as we looked at the themes of 'standing firm like Daniel did despite what other people are doing', 'trusting in God like Daniel did', 'praying like Daniel did' and 'living like Daniel did' to make a difference.

Thank God for another special week of holiday club: A great time to work together with teams from other churches and to share God's care and power through looking at the story of Daniel with the children over the course of the week. Through the week, so many skills and gifts were seen to be used; from the very technically creative people who made a rocket in the church using the pulpit as a base! To those who took part upfront in our times all together to tell the story for each day and to encourage the children to think through each day's theme, and those who organised and led the activities and games that each of the age groups took part in. The whole team worked very hard through the week; many of the team members gave up a week's annual leave to join in with the club, which was a real blessing to the rest of us to have them there!

It was good to see so many familiar faces from our midweek clubs and Messy Churches etc at the holiday club and it was another way to build links with families in our community. On the last day many of the families came along to our hot dog lunch as we sat out on the grass outside the church, which was a lovely way to end the week.

It would seem that our annual holiday club has become a highlight for both the children who come along and the team of helpers who take part! So as we come back to earth after the fun and busyness of our week in space, we do again thank God for a week of great memories and pray that we can all 'stand like Daniel did, trust like Daniel did, pray like Daniel did and live like Daniel did!'

Report by Jo Snape of Shirley Baptist Church

The Turning

Hundreds of people turn to Christ in Southampton

Over the period Oct 9th to 21st 2016, a team of people largely from local churches went out on the streets of Southampton sharing the good news about Jesus. The response has been amazing, with over 550 people praying a prayer asking Jesus to come into their lives.

Earlier in the year news had been coming of similar things happening in Reading where a team from the Gate Church led by Yinka Oyekan had seen many people coming to Christ on the streets. This led Southampton Christian Network to invite a team from Reading to come to Southampton to train people in their method of sharing the gospel and to go out on the streets themselves.

The pattern for the event was to have training in the morning at Above Bar Church followed by the opportunity to put this into practice alongside people from the Reading team. In the afternoon there was further training in how to follow up those who had made commitments. Each evening there was a celebration at Central Hall, home of New Community Church, who had been very involved in putting on the event.

A total of 307 people were trained in how to share the gospel. The method used was quite prescriptive, often referred to as the 'script', but proved amazingly effective in keeping conversations on track, and leading to hundreds of people praying a prayer of salvation.

Each day the evangelism team went out in groups of two or three into the centre of Southampton. They approached people using the pattern of the 'script' to direct the conversation.



The script involved first introducing oneself by name to the other person and saying "I'd just like to share two things with you, God loves you and has an amazing plan for your life". This set the tone in which the evangelist was able to direct the conversation. The pattern was then to ask a question, share some Bible verses on the need for salvation followed by the offer to pray for them. Many people accepted this offer to have a prayer of blessing prayed on them and their family. Then came the crunch question, "If you would like to receive this free gift (of receiving Jesus as Lord and Saviour) just pray with me ...", which followed on to a prayer of commitment to Christ. Most people were not happy to do this, but over the two weeks, many were.

Those who prayed the prayer were given a card with the offer to give help on their journey with Jesus and a link to the Alpha course website. The person's contact details were taken by the team, so that they could be followed up at a later date, encouraged in their decision and linked up with a local church.

This was an extremely encouraging event and surely gives us motivation to continue sharing the good news boldly. It would be great to see many more people come into God's kingdom. It is also clearly important that we, as churches in Shirley and Southampton, are prepared to welcome these new people making commitments to Christ into our fellowships. We need to

show them love and acceptance and provide good scheme of discipleship, so that they will be able to grow in their faith and become fully part of the local body of Christ.

A very helpful comment on the initiative has been put on the Pioneer website by Billy Kennedy of New Community Church:

pioneer.org.uk/the-lost-art-of-evangelism-reflections

Report by John Fleming, Secretary, Churches Together in Shirley and District

Farewell to Matt and Amy Bianchi



St James by the Park are saying farewell to Matt and Amy Bianchi, who have been the youth leaders in the church for the past seven years. Matt had sensed a calling from God into ministry as a teenager and Amy had been brought up in St James, so when the position of youth leadership in the church became vacant, it seemed a clear leading from God for them to take on this role. Initially Matt was appointed as the youth leader, but as time progressed it became clear that it was very much a joint ministry, and Amy was officially recognized as sharing the role with Matt. When they took over, there were already a number of different youth events happening in the church, and they felt it was important to bring a sense of togetherness to these groups and came up with the name of Buzz as a common part of the names of the different groups.

They felt it was important to develop the work around a clearly defined culture, with key values that were emphasized over and over again, so that the young people clearly understood what they were part of. These included being part of a family, being open with one another, not afraid to ask questions or make mistakes, being Bible focused, and giving time to worship God. They wanted to engender a feeling within the group of the leader and young people not being 'them and us', but being together in an environment where leaders could learn from the young people as well as the young people learning themselves. Special events such as New Wine, Soul Survivor, weekends on the Isle of Wight and Alpha courses were all very useful focal points for the young people, but providing continuity to sustain the progress made at these times with regular events was also very important. In reviewing their time as youth leaders at St James, having a period of 7 years gave them time to implement this culture and see a group of young people right through from age 12 to 18. They were also very grateful for the help provided by volunteers from the church particularly Michael and Rachel Ramsden, who worked very closely with them.

This approach, coupled with Matt and Amy's own passion and gifting, has led to a very successful youth group, which indeed has a great buzz and family feel. Many of the young people have come to faith in Christ and have either been baptized or confirmed, with some going on to take on a year of training in the church as youth interns. The young people have also become a great asset to the church, serving in various activities and with the worship band often leading worship at church meetings.

Matt is now going on to train for the Church of England ministry and he, Amy and their two sons, Noah and Henry, will be moving to Oxford. We thank them for their great contribution to the church in Shirley over their time with us, and wish them God's blessing for the future.

Welcome to Josh Cook



St James by the Park welcomes Josh Cook as their new Youth Worker. Josh grew up in Emmanuel Church in Guildford. He took a year out working with Scripture Union in Perth, Australia before studying history at University of East Anglia. He then returned to Emmanuel as a youth worker, where he gained experience helping with the church's own youth group and in running youth events in a local school. In his spare time he is a great fan of a number of sports. He is now taking up the job of leading the youth work at St James by

the Park and hopes to build on the excellent work done by Matt and Amy Bianchi. He has appreciated the warm welcome he has received in the church so far. We welcome him to this role and pray that God will bless him in it.

Welcome to Rev Kathy Hicken



St Mark's Church recently welcomed Rev Kathy Hicken as their new Priest in Charge and Pioneer. She was licensed by Jonathan Frost, the Bishop of Southampton, on Wednesday 21st September 2016. We trust that God will guide her in this role and bless her time with us in the area.