



**Congregational  
Federation**

Bringing together Independent  
Free Churches for mutual  
support through a vision of  
unity in creative diversity

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# CONNECT

## SOUTH EAST AREA NEWS

“I am The Vine and you are the branches...” John 15:5



I love the daisies in my lawn. Even after the mower has swept over the area they seem to have somehow avoided being chopped – there they are smiling across the green again as if nothing could ever stop them being there, cheeky things! I quite like to think of our churches that way. Whatever sweeps over us, we can overcome, remaining like the daisies, to smile on our communities and provide the hope that Jesus calls us to proclaim and act on. Jesus said: “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (Jn 16:33). In him and by the power of the Holy Spirit we are enabled and equipped to overcome. With him all things are possible. Our part is to choose to believe it and then act in faith. We must keep our eyes on him and not on ourselves for we have the propensity, like sheep, to get ourselves into sticky situations. In following Jesus we know that he has prepared the way ahead. Galatians 5:25 says “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” May this be our watchword for the coming season. Be blessed! Clemy – Church Support Worker



### The May Assembly – Peterborough

This an important event in the life of the Federation. It is the one opportunity in the year for people from all our churches to meet, to worship together, to share fellowship over coffee, lunch and tea, to hear the report of what Council has done over the past year and to help to shape the agenda for the coming year.

#### Friday evening - Fringe event

This will be held at The Cresset, Peterborough, from 7.30pm – 9pm. Margaret Morris and Adrian Wyatt attended a CWM conference about “Church for All” and they will be leading the Fringe this year.

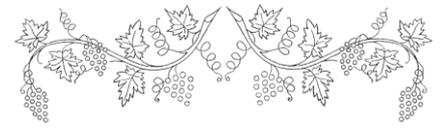
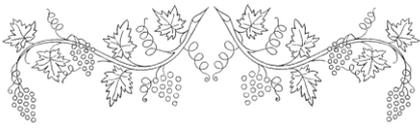
#### Saturday

The Assembly starts at 10.30am and finishes at 4.30pm. Refreshments will be served from 9.30 am and after the business finishes. There will be a variety of stalls to look at during refreshment times. Like many such venues, you are not allowed to consume your own food on the premises. There are local cafes and shops but if you prefer to stay on site and browse the stalls, lunch bags are available. These contain a sandwich, drink, crisps, cake and fruit. They cost £6 and need to be ordered in advance. Please contact the Nottingham office in order to arrange this. To help with planning, please indicate how many people will be coming - including those not buying lunch bags.

#### Saturday evening

Our hosts for this year’s Assembly are the Eastern Area and East Midlands Area. They will be arranging a pub quiz in a local pub on the Saturday night. No need to book, just bring along your team or drop in and make one on the night. A relaxing end to the day.

For more information please go to [www.congregational.org.uk](http://www.congregational.org.uk)



### ***Blessed are the Peace Makers...***

From 12th to 17th May Union Chapel has invited Christian **Peace-making** Teams to stay and collaborate at the Chapel. The week will culminate in a one-day national gathering on Saturday May 16th from 9.45 a.m. to 5 p.m. for connection and conversation between faith inspired activists to learn more from one-another and look to how we can link together for deeper impact. Beginning with a panel discussion, the day will then be given over to all attendees to discuss the issues and questions that people want to talk about. There will be stalls and food available and an Evening Ceilidh at 6 p.m. with an Open Mic for sharing music, poetry and performance.

We are looking to bring in more **youngsters** into the Chapel by launching a sing-a-long aimed at the under 5s. We ran our first session on Sunday 19th April which ended up having over 800 attend! We are starting to have more families attend the church on a regular basis which adds a lovely vibrancy to the Chapel.

May God continue to bless the growth of our congregation at Union Chapel. We send our sincere blessings to all our fellow churches who are earnestly seeking to connect spiritually with the community.



### **The Wimbledon Challenge**



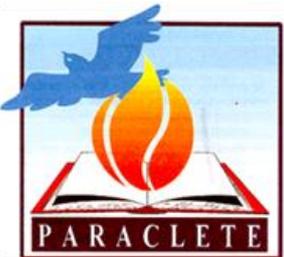
On Sat 23<sup>rd</sup> May we will hold a **Quiz** with food in aid of Christian Aid 7pm all welcome, but do book

On Sat 27<sup>th</sup> June we celebrate 5 years of our under 5's group in the afternoon and then have a **Kenyan presentation** in the evening 7-9pm which will be interactive fun for the whole family.



Our **ongoing challenge** is how do you encourage new people over the doorstep or from one of our social activities to take part in one of our core activities? We have our JAM Sunday's for children but how do you cater for all the needs when you do not have enough children or staff for more than one group? If you have answers to these questions do let us know as we seek to reach out with Jesus' love to our local community. (Nigel, pastor at Wimbled Congregational Church)

### **Invitation from the minister at Southwick**



PCNI invite expressions of interest from any supporters and interested people who would like the opportunity of participating in a mission trip to Zimbabwe in January 2016. The team would stay at the Paraclete Training Centre in Kuwadzana just outside Harare and would be involved in a range of mission opportunities including: children's work, adult teaching and training, visits to churches, work in the secondary school/ Superkids pre-school, evangelism, prayer ministry, visit to Special needs school, practical work etc. The

approximate cost for the 10-12 day visit including flights, board and lodging, transport and local sightseeing visits is approx £1000. There are 12 places available. To express your interest and find out more contact us via PCNI website or e mail the Director: Revd Lynda Hulcoop at [lhulcoop@ntlworld.com](mailto:lhulcoop@ntlworld.com)

## Bedford Pilgrims on a Journey

The new season is now underway, with the Museum having reopened for half-term week on 17 February, with a very positive 46 people, including 11 children, on the first day. There was good attendance at the briefing and training session for Museum stewards on 7 February.



### **Art Competition**

The museum is running a free art competition for children and adults. We are asking you to create a piece of 2D art, inspired by John Bunyan's own famous adventure story *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Like Bunyan's story, we want to see the different stages of a journey moving from bad to good, and some of the adventures on the way. This free competition is open to all, and prizes will be awarded in four groups; aged 3-7, 8-11 and 12-17, and 18+.

## EASTER ACROSS THE SOUTH EAST AREA

### **Heathfield invite passers-by in for refreshments**

On Easter Saturday as a few folk were preparing the church for the Sunday celebration with flowers we opened the doors and invited passers-by to come in for free coffee and cake. This was an opportunity to chat with townfolk and to invite them to come to our service the next day. John Goodway and his wife Avril that partner with our church from Outreach UK joined with us and gave out Christian literature to our visitors. There was opportunity to pray with a lady in our prayer corner and another lady having just moved to the area came to our service the next day.



*Photograph: Passers-by enjoying a time of relaxation over some refreshments served to them at the back of the church.*

### **Old Coulsdon enjoy food and fellowship**

On Good Friday, the Witness Walk began at St Mary's, Old Coulsdon, and processed to OCCC. The weather was drizzly, so the service was held in our church. We all crowded in, for a moving period of prayers, readings and hymns. Our David Jones sang, unaccompanied, "Were you there when we crucified our Lord". Absolutely wonderful. Malcolm's last item was "Do not stand at my grave and weep". Then everyone continued to St. John's church for the final part of the Service, followed by coffee and hot cross buns. Easter Sunday, the usual Sunrise Service – 6.00am – was well attended. Over 40 people arrived for prayers, readings and a hymn to greet Easter Day. The weather was mild, if a little damp. A full breakfast was beautifully cooked by Jane, Jeanette and Evelyn.





## Cranbrook Witness

Good Friday we had an ecumenical Walk of Witness, which visited three churches in the town, starting in the Catholic Church, then to the Congregational, culminating in a service in St. Dunstan's. These photos are of the cross on the wall on the Congregational church.

## Newport, Isle of Wight vision finds fulfillment



Easter Sunday was a very Special day for many reasons for us on the Isle of Wight, the vision God gave to one of our Church Members 6 months ago, finally found fulfilment, as a Cross (as seen within our logo) was erected, after four years since the building was first opened. We are trusting very soon we will have good news of finances being released, so we can finish the project by building the Chapel. We are blessed by many new groups using the building. At our AGM it was announced over 35 groups have used our facility in the past year, including a new group via the NHS helping folk with depression etc. We pray as a Church God will give us wisdom how we minister to all who use our building and that we are able to build better links to see us share the Gospel.

After our Easter Morning Service the fellowship moved outside to sing songs of Worship by the Cross we then shared in a wonderful meal of Easter treats.



## Wimbledon Welcome

At Wimbledon we have had a great Easter with a real community feel to our meal on the Wednesday of Holy week. All ages came. People from different groups which run through the week, many who do not come to Church.



## Islington – Passionately reaching out

For the Good Friday Project this year we showed the classic film 'The Passion of Joan of Arc' with live music score. The film's raw emotional force was enhanced by the beautiful setting and acoustics of the Chapel. The event was a great success with approx. 500 people attendees.

## News from Bethel, Minster, Isle of Sheppey

Our Easter services were well attended – with a short service at Bethel on Good Friday after which we joined the procession of witness to Bunny Bank, the island's own green hill. The open air service on Bunny Bank is always well supported by the Island churches and tends also to draw those who wouldn't normally enter a place of worship. It's a very moving service with processions of Christians carrying crosses from three areas of Sheppey and joining together for an ecumenical service to remember the events of the first Good Friday. Our young people formed part of the band to accompany the singing and one of our deacons read. Easter Sunday service of celebration was again well supported.



### Iden Green Celebrate!

Good Friday our small procession followed the cross till we reached the chapel for worship. And then there was the carnival celebration of Easter: service, the balloons rise and the egg hunt begins. How lovely that all ages can join in the festivity and joy of the resurrection! (see facebook page)



## Beth our youth and children's worker tells us about her experience at the Leadership Conference 2015 Hothorpe Hall, Market Harborough



After a very busy Easter – Federation Friends from all over the country, set off for the beautiful setting of Hothorpe Hall in Market Harborough for the 2015 Leadership conference. I took Daniel, my 6 year old son, and arrived unsure of what I was walking into. What I found was a conference focused on friendship, worship and fellowship; on encouraging good practices within our churches, providing an opportunity for mutual support and encouragement with colleagues ministering in a variety of different

contexts. Daniel was immediately whisked off into his activities while we enjoyed worship – in fact, I hardly saw Daniel the entire time we were there as he was either with his friends, the CF-Xtra gang or his leaders.

On the schedule for the adults was a plethora of worship and fellowship sessions which informed and inspired our thinking throughout our time together. We also enjoyed several 'Lightbulb Moments'. See [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmUkDH8XXquxoB4AKpl7kL4ZeAAfPPuyf](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmUkDH8XXquxoB4AKpl7kL4ZeAAfPPuyf)



The aim of the conference was to find out how to make the scriptural ideals of congregational Christianity work in practice. We listened to what God is doing in our churches. On the Thursday night we were treated to a night of entertainment by the CFXtra Core Team. They presented us with a brilliant Quiz Night – but not your conventional quiz... In amongst all of this worship and discussion we had great times of rest and relaxation (or for me, assignment writing!) All in all it was a fantastic week, one which was filled with fun and learning, worship and fellowship – sign me up for next year!!

