



Together4Bristol / Churches Together in Greater Bristol Highlights and Future Plans (2017 / 2018)

Introduction

This has been a very busy and exciting year for Together4Bristol (T4B), which is the “unity for mission movement” across the Bristol region, where Churches Together in Greater Bristol (CTGB) partners with Evangelical Alliance, Arise!, Bristol Networks website and others (see flyers). Roger Allen is the Enabler of Mission and Unity (ten hours a week), and since August 2016, Eric Aidoo has been Chair.

There is so much happening, that it is impossible to mention it all. Below are some highlights, to give a flavour of what God is doing!

T4B is accountable to eight senior regional Church Leaders or Presidents and facilitates lunches for them twice a year. The Presidents are Bishop Renford Brown (Bristol Black Churches Council), Nigel Coles (Baptist), Majors Ian and Jean Harris (Salvation Army), Jonathan Pye (Methodist), Bishop Mike Hill and now Bishop Lee (Church of England), Bishop Declan Lang (Catholic), Rob Scott-Cook (Celebration) and Ruth Whitehead (URC).

The enabling group of CTGB consists of representatives from the historic denominations as well as from the newer and Black churches:

Apart from Roger, the group consists of Eric Aidoo (Chair, Baptist), Chris Dobson (Diocese of Bristol), Ben Ellis (Salvation Army), Eddy Knasel (Quakers), Carlotta Kromsky (Diocese of Clifton), Stephen Newell (URC), Alan Paginton (Admin), Alison Paginton (Treasurer), Osien Sibanda (RCCof G), Sheena Tranter (Arise!) and Nigel Young (Methodist).

Churches

Churches Together in England has 45 denominations and networks as full members. In Bristol, the newest partners are the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCoG), with others in the pipeline. There have been several Keyboard 2020 lunches, to help collaborate more closely with the black churches.

From Spectrum in 2011 to College Green 2014, there were city-wide gatherings at Pentecost for 1000's. Since 2015, there have been local gatherings, with about 20 Parties in the Park each summer, including the Noise's Family Fun Days, involving about 20 Churches Together (CT) groups (or similar).

Roger connects with CT groups, with help from Malcolm Jones, including occasional lunches for CT group leaders. Missional activities involve many CT groups, and include 25 Foodbanks, 3 Street Pastors & 3 CAP debt advice centres. Many churches, especially Baptists, were also involved in the Turning mission at Easter, which resulted in over 650 first time commitments.

Prayer

Sheena Tranter and Arise Bristol! led the first city-wide gathering at Ashton Gate stadium on the Global Day of Prayer, Pentecost 2012, and then the gatherings at Castle Park (2013) and College Green and All Night Prayer Vigil (2014), with CTGB, under the banner of “Together4Bristol”.

Over the last year or so, Derick Mulubwa has helped Sheena to co-ordinate the prayer networks across the Bristol region. There have been several prayer gatherings, including in different geographical areas and praying for more healing across the region.

There are also regular prayer gatherings for the Whole of Life, such as for the Business, Sport, Family and Media spheres. The Politics and Social Action sphere (Christian Action Bristol, or CAB) had a week of prayer and fasting, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January, 2017. Since January 2017, Silas Crawley has led monthly prayer breakfasts for church leaders, with 100 gathered to be encouraged and challenged by the Mayor of Bristol, Marvin Rees, in July 2017.

Whole of Life

Since 2010, there have been gatherings for Christians in the different spheres of life, facilitated by Evangelical Alliance in the Bristol region. These spheres are Sport, Health, Education, Family, Politics and Social Action (CAB), Arts, Media and Business and Workplace. In 2013, there was a

city-wide “Going Deeper” conference, led by CTGB, at the Colston Hall, including seminars on the different spheres across the Whole of Life.

Over the last year or so, there have been smaller gatherings on Whole of Life (or spheres) issues. For example, Global Aware Bristol, Love Work conferences and the Mayoral Election hustings for hundreds. There have been many smaller gatherings, such as for Healthcare professionals, or those working in Media (with MediaNet).

A major change has been the election of Marvin Rees as Mayor of Bristol. This has opened the door for much greater engagement with the council by the Christian community, led by CAB with Andy Street as chair. CAB facilitates 14 networks of social action, such as Addiction support, Debt Advice, Food Poverty, Homelessness and Housing, Prison Ministry and Ex-offenders, Refugees, Vulnerable / Working Women and others. CAB's new website is: www.christianactionbristol.org.uk CAB is involved with City Office and has occasional gatherings with the Mayor and others in the council. CAB has made several “Offers and Asks” to the Mayor, including Winter Night Shelters, Breakfast clubs and the Churches City Fund, which will be launched soon. There are other Offers in the pipeline. The Christian community is engaging with the City Office, for example, in helping to shape a “One City Plan”. There are also other Offers in the pipeline from other spheres including a Family Offer (parenting and relationship courses) and help with Apprenticeships (Bristol WORKS: www.bristol.works). Also, CTGB partners with a couple of Projects, called Local Friends (social prescribing) and Dementia Awareness in Faith Communities.

Another aspect of CTGB's engagement with Whole of Life issues is its partnership with the Diocese of Bristol and LICC, helping to raise awareness of whole-life missional discipleship through a Learning Hub with eleven churches and a CT group in Yate and Chipping Sodbury.

Together4Bristol (T4B) in general

In November 2014, T4B had its first gathering for about 40 key people: church and prayer leaders and Christian leaders from the Whole (or spheres) of Life.

One of the speakers, Roger Sutton, the co-ordinator of Gather (www.gather.global), said: “This is a move of the Spirit. All over the globe Church and Christian leaders in the cultural spheres are coming together in... unity for mission movements... seeking God in prayer and working together for the social, cultural and spiritual transformation of their cities and towns.”

There have been occasional strategic gatherings since, with the aim of “Transforming Bristol Together”. Communicators (eg website facilitators) from denominations and networks get together for lunch occasionally too.

In October 2017, a group of 17 went from Bristol to Movement Day, a gathering of the 130 “unity for mission movements” across the UK. The Bristol team helped in various seminars and shared in a plenary session about the Whole or Spheres of Life, to encourage others to become more involved in transforming every aspect of life in their towns and cities.

In January, the Together4Bristol website was launched (www.together4bristol.org.uk) along with other resources, such as flyers and a banner stand. See me afterwards if you want to sign up for monthly emails about news and events across the Bristol region.

Plans for 2018

Virtually all the above activities will continue developing in 2018. For example:

Churches

More partners will join Together4Bristol, so we can help “Transform Bristol Together”

Prayer

Mayor Marvin will join the church leaders prayer breakfasts three times a year, to keep working through the challenges he has given to the Christian community, including becoming more of a bridge across the different ethnic communities and between North and South Bristol.

Whole of Life

In early 2018, there will be a strategic gathering to update the Christian community's “Big Vision for a Good Bristol” and the Manifesto written for the Mayoral Election in 2016, as preparation for a gathering for hundreds at City Hall in May 2018, to mark two years since the election of Marvin Rees as Mayor and to see how we can engage even more to be good news for the Bristol region

