



Providing pastoral and spiritual support to those who work in or visit Luton Town Centre

March 2014 - Issue number 14

Welcome to our newsletter. Please feel free to print out further copies, or email the electronic version to share with your friends and churches.

Welcome to the Team!

We are delighted to welcome 3 more volunteer Chaplains to our team Diane and Sarah have already joined our Street Teams and are enjoying making friends with those who work in or visit The Mall shopping centre, as well as those out and about in George Street. David will shortly be joining our Town Hall Team where he will be kept busy as the Chaplaincy begins to visit 2 other Council offices in the town centre.



Join the team and join the training

If you are a regular member of a local church and have a heart for people and for Luton, then we'd love to invite you to consider becoming one of our volunteer chaplains. Now is a great time to think about this as we are about to start our Spring 2014 Training Programme. This covers issues such as Listening to others, Dealing with stress and bereavement, Understanding other faiths, and Drug and Alcohol Awareness. The dates are all Saturdays - 8th and 15th March and 5th April—visit our web-site to see the full programme. It's not too late to give us a call and join in!

Wonderful news

Since our last newsletter we have received 4 significant grants—from the South Beds Methodist Circuit, the Joseph Rank Trust, the Wixamtree Trust, and the Mrs B L Robinson Charitable Trust. This is great news and is a result of the growing reputation of LTCC and testimony to all the good work done by our volunteer chaplains as they serve those who work in or visit Luton town centre. We are so grateful to these organisations for their generosity!

In the longer term we really need to sustain the Chaplaincy through the support of local people—specifically the local churches and their members. Every donation—and especially the regular ones—are important to us. Please consider whether you can become one of our regular givers—any amount would be welcome. Regular giving helps us to plan more effectively for the future.

Our HSBC bank account details are

Sort Code: 403032
Account Number: 12307375
Account name: Luton Town Centre Chaplaincy

or you can find a form on our web-site under 'Get involved'.

We also welcome one-off donations and cheques should be made payable to 'Luton Town Centre Chaplaincy'. If you can Gift Aid your donation that's even better!

You can also give via text at Vodafone's 'Just Giving'. Text LTCC11 (and the amount, either £2/£5/£10) to **70070**

or by going on-line to www.localgiving.com/ltcc


Localgiving.com
make a difference in your community

Training costs

In order to maintain our good reputation, and to ensure that our 'clients' receive the best possible service, we run a comprehensive training programme for all of our volunteer chaplains. It costs around £50 to train each chaplain—could you make a contribution towards this?

I met up with 'M' today to catch up on her 'horrendous' situation. She told me that things are so much better now. She asked me to thank everyone for their prayers and support, for the difference this has made in her life.

Court Chaplain

Homeless?

If you are familiar with Luton you will know the large, red brick, nine storey building in Chapel Street—Wesley House—which has been our home since June 2011. We have shared offices happily with Mission Direct and it's been a great location. Only 2 floors have been occupied for some time now, and the building was sold in November last year. The new owner wants to redevelop the building and the current occupiers, including us and Mission Direct will be leaving at the end of April. We are not sure at this stage where we will be, but we will not be homeless as we have already had a couple of offers of accommodation until we can find suitable office space in the town centre. Watch this space for more information—and a new postal address in due course. Our 'phone numbers and email address will remain the same.

HEALING ON THE STREETS

With Christmas and the terrible weather, it's been quite a challenge to encourage Healing on the Street team members to come out on a Saturday afternoon. But even given this, there has only been one occasion when there has been no team available to pray for people. It may be a struggle sometimes to gather a team, but it's never a struggle to have people to pray for—one person recently came into town especially to find the team for prayer!

The Healing on the Streets team will be gathering together on the morning of Saturday 10th May for prayer, worship, training and the opportunity to encourage each other by sharing stories, etc. Give us a call if you are interested in coming along or joining the team.

Christmas past

Christmas 2013 was a busy time—here are just some of the things we got up to

- * The Chaplains and Trustees enjoyed a wonderful evening at the Icon Hotel—good food, good conversations—and meeting what have become good friends!
- * The Prayer Tree in The Mall proved as popular as ever—this year people were asking The Mall staff when it was coming! Shoppers and staff were able to attach their prayers to baubles and then hang them on the tree from the 7th—24th December. The prayers were then taken to St Mary's Church where the prayers were offered to God at the Christmas Eve communion service.
- * The Town Hall Chaplains invited the staff to a Mulled Wine and Mince Pies 'lunch hour'. A good number of staff came along and it was a great opportunity to meet new people. Staff said how good it was to see 'Christmas' in the Town Hall.
- * Michael was invited to stand on the balcony at the Town Hall to pray a blessing over the town at Light up Luton.

Bishop Richard visits Luton



The Anglican Bishop of Bedford, Richard Atkinson asked through the Chaplaincy to visit The Mall and we arranged for him to come on Thursday 12th December 2013. Mark Broadhead, The Mall General Manager, was, as always, very welcoming and over a two hour period he gave us a grand tour of the shopping centre. We met various members of staff, and spoke privately about the challenges in retail, pressures on staff and the relationship between The Mall and the local community. In all, it was a very good visit and much appreciated by Bishop Richard and Mall staff. We finished off by the Christmas Prayer Tree that has become an anticipated event from staff and the general public every year.

At the Depot ...

Michael has been visiting the Luton Borough Council 'Depot' since September. He says ... "The Depot has around 400 people working on and off site, with a wide range of departments such as Waste Collection, Waste Management, Special Needs School Buses, Building Technical Services, Fly Tipping Enforcement, Luton Culture Workshop, repair and maintenance of all vehicles and machinery, and on-site administrative and management staff to support it all. The project is going well—we have had some fantastic conversations, and a mixed response from "this is a really good idea - thanks for coming to see us" to a range of expletives regarding a Chaplain on site and a sense of bemusement! The Depot is a colourful mix of people, cultures, and social backgrounds. It is a great place to work - a place where God clearly wants us to be in order that we see his Kingdom being revealed.

Serving the nation

Last April those interested in Chaplaincy from around the UK attended a conference in Luton to hear about what was happening in other towns, to share stories and challenges, and to explore what sort of support could be provided to existing and 'potential' town chaplaincies. Since then a small group has been meeting to see how a national chaplaincy network could be developed and what support could be provided to those setting up a town chaplaincy. Luton is at the forefront of this exciting initiative which has the 'strap line' 'Growing Chaplaincy to serve the nation'. The project will be known as the Alliance of Town and City Chaplaincies and its first task is to produce a 'manual' to help those developing a new chaplaincy in their town or city.

Connecting

We have recently started collecting more detailed information about the number of people we connect with, and the issues they want to speak to us about. To give you some idea of what's going on 'out there', in January the team at Luton Magistrates' Court had 47 'significant' conversations covering issues such as family and relationships, mental health, work, general 'distress' and faith. We define 'significant' as connections which last more than just a few minutes and which may result in 'signposting' to another agency, praying with them, or accompanying them to court. They also have many other opportunities to chat to people, encouraging them and making relationships which can bear fruit in the future.

"Michael, not trying to be funny, I don't know about these things, but what is prayer?" "Well, prayer is simply a conversation with God".

A conversation with a member of the 'Bin Crew' at the Depot