

Churches' Regional Commission

Review of 2009 - 2010

Chair of CRC's Board looks back over successful year

With a general election in the offing the CRC, along with other regional organisations, is currently uncertain about future developments in our region. Will we see the demise of regionalisation and regional bodies disappear? How will the faith sector, along with the wider voluntary and community sector, be affected by cuts to funding? What role could be envisaged for the Churches in the "Big Society"? What new challenges would these present for us in terms of health and social care, employment, community resilience and the rest? It seems clear to me that the role of our Churches and therefore of the CRC will be ever more crucial in any new scenario and we must be geared up for the challenge.



Chair: Vince Robinson OBE

CRC's main objective is to promote social action by churches and, increasingly, faiths working together. In 2009/10, as you will read below, we have continued to develop and strengthen our links with all local authorities in the region and sought to help them to engage more effectively with faith communities and *vice versa*. Arising from this, we are developing a network of 'Faith Link Officers' in every authority. We have also succeeded in bringing other faiths together with our churches to address social action. Much of the work carried out by churches arguably happens 'beneath the radar' but we are currently developing an intelligence base that will enhance everyone's awareness of the immense contribution made by churches to the social, economic and cultural life of our region and beyond. We have built platforms for churches to express together their voice on matters of mutual concern such as the regeneration of our democracy, their local neighbourhoods, on the recession, the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees, community safety, community cohesion, homelessness, health, equalities, the environment and many others. These require us to build good relationships not only with our Churches but with statutory bodies and government, with the wider voluntary and community sector, and with funders, and we are delighted with the progress we continue to make.

Thank you for the honour of allowing me to be your Chairman. May God bless you all.

Vincent Robinson OBE

Welcoming the new..

We were delighted to welcome three new people to the Board and Council of CRC in 2009. The Rt Rev Seamus Cunningham, the new Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle, took his seat on the CRC Council alongside all the other Church leaders in our region. Peter Sweeney joined the CRC Board as Hon. Treasurer and Gerry Kennedy joined in his capacity as the new Chair of Tees Valley Ministry. Bob Finch also joined CRC as Policy Officer .



CRC Council gather for business (from left to right):
Gerry Kennedy, Terri Leach, Rt Rev Terence Drainey, Alan Coultas, Rt Revd Martin Wharton, Revd Rowena Francis, Peter Sweeney, Rev Ruth Gee, The Ven Geoff Miller, Paul Southgate, Revd Keith Phipps, Bernadette Askins

Refugees and asylum seekers

CRC feels a real urgency in the North East for a more informed, balanced and positive public debate around asylum issues. We campaign for the right of asylum seekers to work and support themselves. With 'Citizens for Sanctuary', CRC brings asylum seeker issues to the UK Border Agency. In late 2009 CRC joined the North of England Refugee Service, the Regional Refugee Forum, the NE Strategic Migration Partnership and the Northern TUC in meeting MPs and organising two events in Newcastle in support of asylum seekers. See <http://northeastchurches.org.uk/blog/viewpost.php?postid=198>



Housing and Homelessness

CRC chairs Housing Action North East (HANE) to raise awareness of homelessness issues in the region. With Shelter, HANE hosted a regional conference on how regeneration impacts on social housing and cohesion. Find our conference report with recommendations on <http://www.northeastchurches.org.uk/theme.php?catid=28>.

Community Development and Social Action

With Church Action on Poverty, CRC organised a conference on the different ways churches develop their communities. The challenge for CRC and for church-based community development is to reflect on, and learn from, the experience gained from standing alongside people in marginalised communities and playing an active role in projects such as the *Faith In Our Community* initiative.

Faith in Our Community is an ecumenical partnership assisting churches in six localities: Stockton (2), Pallion, Shildon, Hetton and Houghton-le-Spring, each of which employs and trains a community development worker to help address local needs such as wellbeing, environment, families and older people. These churches gather to reflect on good community development, how it relates to their faith, how to generate social capital and develop funding strategies.

Incarnate is another ecumenical partnership to support Christians who care for the poor. Alongside other partners, CRC helped *Incarnate* to host a 3-day conference called "Intimacy with Jesus and Intimacy with the Poor".



Industry and Commerce

Tees Valley Ministry (TVM)

TVM is CRC's subsidiary charity and an excellent example of ecumenical activity serving industry in Tees Valley and South West Durham. 12 chaplains are deployed to bring the Christian faith to bear in industrial, commercial, and community settings.

Northumbrian Industrial Mission (NIM)

NIM, with 46 chaplains, serves the north of our region as TVM serves the south. Chaired by CRC, NIM's five-year plan "The Way Forward" has been successfully completed and "The New Way Forward" is being prepared. Our severely damaged economy will have a devastating impact upon the lives and work of many people in the North East, making the work of NIM and TVM more pressing than ever.

NIM produced a Briefing Paper which captured the perspectives of key players in the regional economy, but what gives this briefing paper its unique weight and quality is the ears-to-the-ground perspective of their Chaplains who minister to workplaces ranging from Newcastle Airport to Nissan, Fire & Rescue to Asda Stores, Tyne Tees TV Centre to the MetroCentre, Town Centres to Call Centres, steelworks to chemical works and Power Stations.

CRC convened a new forum called North East Workplace Engagement (NEWE). Comprising NIM, TVM, Newcastle City Centre Chaplaincy, 'After Sunday' and CRC. NEWE also seeks the support of other regional sector ministries such as police, hospital, prison, and seafarers' chaplaincies in being a vehicle for sharing intelligence, common concerns and supporting each other.

Inter Faith Relations



The NERFN, comprising the region's inter faith organisations, supports and promotes inter faith activity in the North East. For example, together with CRC, it designed and delivers training programmes for all the local authorities in the region. This was highlighted in a recent Local Government Association (LGA) report which went out to a national audience. During November 2009 the first ever National Inter Faith Week took place when NERFN and its members organised visits, events, meals, music, talks, displays and a host of other projects to raise awareness of inter faith activity in the region.

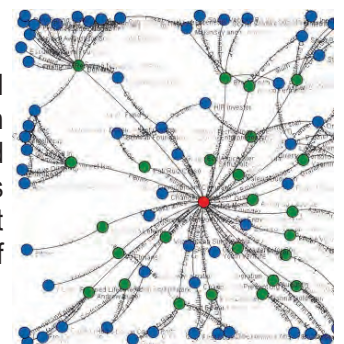
Another landmark was the Tees Valley Inter Faith Stakeholder Event which was held at Stockton during National Inter Faith Week. This brought together faith communities, 5 local councils, other public sector bodies and voluntary organisations to explore the key question 'What is the most appropriate infrastructure to support and encourage inter faith activity in the Tees Valley?' 90 delegates supported the development of structures to encourage interfaith activity in the Tees Valley, that are interactive, share information and knowledge, and that promote better understanding. The report can be found on www.nerfn.org, www.northeastchurches.org and websites of the 5 participating Councils. A similar event for the North of the region was held in Newcastle Civic Centre in May 2010. The report is being prepared.

CRC also chairs the County Durham Faiths Network which was honoured with a Mayoral reception in the Town Hall and took part in a civic service in Durham Cathedral to mark the inauguration of the new Unitary Authority, Durham County Council.

Gathering Intelligence

In 2009 we began an important Faiths Survey with our partners NERFN to build up a picture of faith communities in the North East and their contribution to developing 'social capital' in the region. The Survey will provide data to help us better to understand and promote the scope, nature, condition, value and significance of the Faith sector. It is vital to maintain and develop our evidence base to inform ecumenical strategy and research, and we expect to leave our faith communities with an enhanced sense of their capacities and resources.

At the same time, the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is encouraging local government and other public bodies critically to review the engagement they have with faith communities, so CRC and its partners were invited to undertake scoping studies in Redcar & Cleveland and in Northumberland. We mapped faith organisations and networks in order to ascertain their levels of activity, their interests and concerns; assessed their engagement with civic structures and the extent to which faith groups could provide a faith perspective in relation to the councils' strategies. Reports of these studies are now available.



Social Capital

Durham County Council invited CRC to be its partner in delivering a project called “Social Capital, Empowerment and Connectedness” in 2010. We worked with faith communities, schools, local authority officers and elected members, to promote the role of faith in developing social capital, increasing civic engagement and enhancing community cohesion. The project is funded by the North East Empowerment Partnership (NEEP).

We were also awarded a grant in 2010 by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust to identify and assess the drivers of community resilience in 2 contrasting areas of Tyneside, and in particular what role faith groups play in generating this resilience. When bad things happen to a community, how do faith groups help the community to bounce back? Watch this space...

Website improved and relaunched

Visit www.northeastchurches.org.uk to experience our upgraded website. Selected themes cover a range of social action activities and there is also a resource library containing our reports. The site now operates on a blogging system whereby people can leave comments on posts and enter into dialogue on topics of interest.



Thanks to Funders

Much less would have been achieved in the service of our region without the support of our funders and we thank the Government Office in the North East, Community Development Foundation, the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Church Urban Fund, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Community Foundation for Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, the Ministry of Justice, and the North East Empowerment Partnership for funding our work and we particularly thank all of the church denominations in the region that have, without exception, unstintingly given us core funding and essential support financially and in many other ways.

Churches' Regional Commission

Financial Activities for the period

1 January 2009—31 December 2009

Incoming Resources	2009	2008
Grants received	158,131	92,732
Contributions	54,796	54,140
Other Income	39,081	33811
Total income	252,008	180,683
Outgoing Resources		
Direct charitable expenditure	207,368	161,245
Management & Administration	19,841	18,388
Total outgoing resources	227,209	179,633
Net Incoming / (Outgoing)		
Profit/loss with adjustments	25,672	-2,158
Opening Balance <i>brought forward</i>	119,401	121,559
Closing Balance <i>carried forward</i>	145,073	119,401

Contact details

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North East Christian Churches Together

Who we are

North East Christian Churches Together (NECCT) is simply the Churches working together in our Region.

In many of our cities, towns and villages the local churches work together in a number of different ways. Some have formal structures and others simply get together for worship and prayer. A number have projects to work in the community, with young people or parents or wherever there is need.

It is NECCT's role to support all these groups in whatever they do. Some of this support is financial through the NECCT's Mission Fund, and some is through the regional events. Advice is always available from the Ecumenical Officers to assist in working together.

Contact Secretary Susan Atkinson, 6 Moor Terrace, Hartlepool, TS24 0PS. Tel 01429 428558 e-mail susan.atkinson20@ntlworld.com

Healing

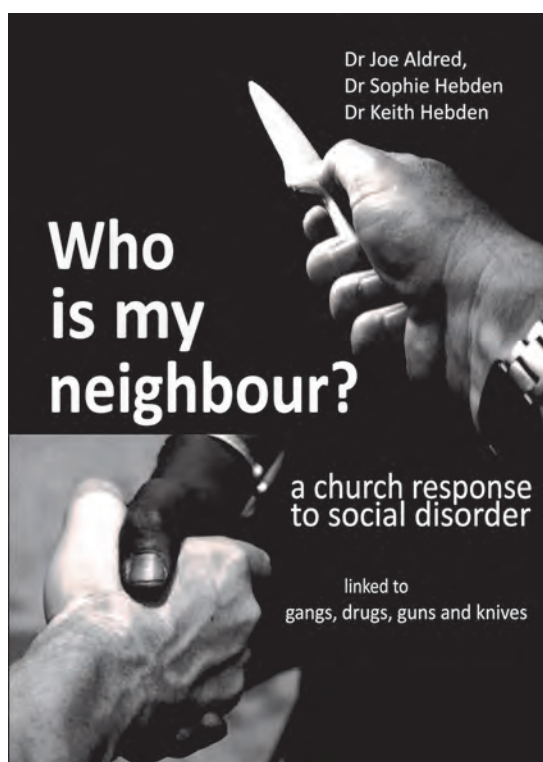
2009 saw the reforming of the Healing Group with the event 'Time to Heal'. Healing continues to be an integral part of Christian Ministry across many traditions. The group aims to provide opportunities for prayer and healing together. Contact Rowena Francis Tel. 0191 285 6994 e-mail moderator@urc-northsynod.org



Making links - Churches KEY Project which works with homeless young people linked with CAFOD visitor from Brazil who had experienced homelessness, they found that the reasons for becoming homeless were shared.

Who is my neighbour?

In 2009 we hosted the regional launch of the national report 'Who is my neighbour', which was the Churches' response to knife crime and violence on the street. Available to download [http://www.cte.org.uk/Groups/43010/Churches Together in/Resources Shop/Publications/Publications.aspx](http://www.cte.org.uk/Groups/43010/Churches%20Together%20in/Resources%20Shop/Publications/Publications.aspx)



Mission Fund

In the last two years twelve grants have been made to local church groups to help with their work.

These are very diverse, ranging in area from Northumberland to Hartlepool and Stockton, and from a regional training event to art and gardening in Shildon. We have supported a performance of 'Rock' at Blyth and a 'Bumps and Babies' group at Stockton. We have assisted with the costs of a publicity leaflet for South Shields Churches and will be assisting Hartlepool with their pastoral and mission tent at the Tall Ships event in August 2010.

Increasingly projects have related to social action and working together with people of other faiths.

To apply or for further information contact Bernadette Askins. Tel 0191 536 7627, e-mail: bernadette.askins@talktalk.net

