Changing Landscapes

Welcome to the first ‘occasional’ newsletter highlighting ecumenical and interfaith matters.

The Salvation Army’s international mission statement describes us as ‘an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church’. Salvationists have always valued their relationships with Christians in other churches and welcomed the opportunity to worship, work and witness together.

The ecumenical landscape has changed over recent years as newer churches and networks have joined Churches Together Groups and brought a fresh impetus to the unity movement. At the same time there has been less emphasis on formal, structural unity and more emphasis on doing mission together.

The Army landscape has changed recently. As part of these changes a new style of mission development plan (MDP) for corps and centres is being introduced. Our hope is that as mission development discussions take place in local settings, the question ‘how can we do mission with other Christians?’ will be a key one.

The interfaith landscape has also changed as our communities have become more and more diverse. Intercultural dialogue and mission will also need to feature in corps and centre mission planning.

We hope that Ecumenical and Interfaith News and Views will be a useful resource for all who are seeking to serve the mission of God through The Salvation Army in the UK and Ireland today.

Jonathan Roberts, Lieut-Colonel
Territorial Ecumenical Officer

Murray Churches Partnership

In September the East Kilbride Corps (West Scotland Division) entered a partnership with the Church of Scotland, Scottish Episcopal Church and United Reformed Church in the Murray area of the town. The Murray Churches Partnership is a new form of local covenant based on an Australian model in which each church can enter at a level of commitment that is appropriate for it.

The Partnership was signed by Captain Joanna Baker and the ministers of the other three churches at a service in the local recreation ground.

Cumbria Covenant Partnership

Major Drew McCombe (DC, North West England & North Wales Division), together with the Anglican Bishop of Carlisle, the Chair of Cumbria Methodist District and the President of the Cumbria Area of the United Reformed Church signed A Declaration of Covenant Partnership between the four churches in a service at Carlisle Cathedral on Advent Sunday.

The partner churches intend to look for opportunities for joint mission initiatives, to work together to equip and share ministry, and to develop strategies to optimise the use of church buildings for the benefit of communities throughout the county.

One example of joint working is the God for All initiative which includes the creation of ‘mission communities’ – networks of support, encouragement and growth. Major McCombe said: ‘The vision of God for All, that by 2020 every person in Cumbria of all ages and backgrounds will have had an opportunity to discover more of God and God’s purpose for their life, is inspiring and challenging. The Covenant enables us to work together for that purpose.’
What are we doing?

During the past two years Major Samuel Edgar (Territorial Ecumenical Support Officer) has visited every division to build up a picture of ecumenical engagement across the territory. He discovered a wide range of activities in which The Salvation Army is involved:

- Divisional leaders and/or their representatives are members of church leaders’ groups and Churches Together Groups.
- Many Salvationists are involved in local Churches Together Groups and take part in events such as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the World Day of Prayer, Lent Bible Studies and regular united services.
- Salvationists are also involved in a range of mission activities with other Christians, including chaplaincies (e.g. airports, hospitals, emergency services, prisons, shopping centres), children’s work, food banks, homeless projects, and street pastors.

GATHER is a network of more than 120 new unity movements across the country. Most are informal and started with relationships between a few church leaders. Their focus is missional, their foundation is prayer and friendship, and their methodology is to do with the transformation of communities through interaction with local authorities and government.

Captain Catherine Smith (Camberwell Corps, South London Division) writes about her work with one of these groups, Love Southwark, on the GATHER website: www.gather.global/project/renewing-our-passion-for-evangelism-love-southwark/.

We’d be interested to hear if other corps are involved in any similar groups.

Inter Faith Week 2016

The eighth annual Inter Faith Week drew to a close on Sunday 20 November. The Inter Faith Network for the UK takes the lead on the Week. Its Co-Chairs, Bishop Richard Atkinson and Jatinder Singh Birdi, said: ‘The 500+ events that have taken place around the UK have sent a powerful signal about people of different faiths and beliefs working together for the good of our shared society and about the importance of positive inter faith relations. The Week has also highlighted the enormous contribution that those of all faith and belief communities make – in most cases through volunteering – to their local communities.’

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2017

Intercultural Mission Conference
13-15 January
Kings Park Conference Centre, Northampton
Registration forms available from special.events@salvationarmy.org.uk

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
18-25 January
The theme is Crossing Barriers. The website has resources to order or download. ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer

Lent Course 2017
Returning Home: Christian Faith in Encounter with Other Faiths. The course explores how Christian faith has been deepened and enriched by encounters with people of different religions. More details at ctbi.org.uk/lent-course-2017/

Thy Kingdom Come 2017
Praying Together at Pentecost for mission and evangelism. Following the success of the Church of England’s 2016 initiative, all the denominations are invited to be involved in 2017. Find out more at thykingdom.co.uk/

The Territorial Ecumenical Unit exists to....

- **Encourage** and assist Salvationists as they share in worship, fellowship, evangelism and service ecumenically
- **Support** ecumenical and interfaith networks in their task of furthering the unity of the Church and engaging with people of other faiths
- **Advise** territorial leadership on ecumenical and interfaith issues

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