

BANGOR INTER-CHURCHES COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

Report 2016-17

Constitution matters

The Annual General Meeting was held on 12 May 2016. The existing Trustees remain unchanged. The existing Executive members were returned unopposed and 5 new Executive members appointed taking the Executive membership to a total of 12. The meeting agreed that the constitution should be re-examined during the year and any proposed amendments will be taken to the next AGM.

Executive meetings

BICCI Executive comprises Rev Frances Rutledge (Chairman), Mary Braithwaite, Trevor Magee, David McClarin, Helen Sloan, Gwen Patterson, Gavin Fry, Rev Sam Castles, Elizabeth Porter, Joy Ward and Rev David Stanfield, with Irene Armstrong as Secretary.

The executive met on 17 June, the main topics of discussion were:-

- Disability Inclusion Group
- Seniors Support Group
- Safe Zone

In addition a sub-group of the executive met on several occasions between September and January to take forward work on the utilisation of the web-site.

Churchworksnorthdown.com

The site has been given a new look and is visited by over 3,000 unique visitors per month. The sub-group drew up guidelines to inform the content of stories of peoples' spiritual lives and the Executive trawled for people to share such stories. The first of which was posted in October and by end of March 2017, 20 stories had been posted.

A training video will be developed to enable church administration officers to add or amend Directory entries and to share information

BICCI Disability Inclusion Group

In March, about 60 people attended a seminar entitled "Let me In" aimed at the inclusion of all people in church services with particular emphasis on those with learning disability. Feed-back was good and indicated an interest in learning more about managing issues relating to those with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD's).

Ards and North Down Council made an award of £370 towards the cost of a follow up seminar focusing on ASD's. It was held in Kings Church, on Saturday morning 14 November. The main speaker was Shirelle Stewart from the National Autistic Society (N.I.) The seminar looked at ASDs and how we in our churches can get better at including people who are living with these conditions and gave guidance about managing behaviours and becoming better at welcoming people who often feel left out.

Individual churches in Bangor are also encouraging disability inclusion in a variety of ways. In October a seminar in the series entitled "Life is a roller coaster – even for Christians" was held in West Church. This addressed the Church's response to the mental health issues of older people specifically depression and dementia.

This group has continued to be active in raising awareness for inclusion of all peoples in churches. BICCI members were invited to talks on mental health issues in September and October with follow up meetings in February and March under the banner "Journey into Wellness" health issues of older people. BICCI also invited members to consider drawing up a disability policy for churches. This will be taken forward.

Ministries to Seniors Group

This group aims to support churches working to improve provision and ministry to their senior members and to older people in the wider community. BICCI members were invited to two meetings to develop spiritual support in care homes. There is now a list of 31 people from 11 churches who are interested in further developments.

Other meetings of BICCI members

BICCI members were also invited to meetings/events as follows:

- Building meaningful relationships between faith based and business sectors in the community; and
- An International Women's Day exhibition of Art organised by Women's Aid.

Safe Zone

Safe Zone depends on volunteers from various churches who minister to the needs of mainly young people on the streets of Bangor at weekends.

Storehouse North Down

Forty seven churches, individuals and businesses support us with groceries and donations. The Charity could not exist without this support. In the year to 31 January 2017 the Charity issued 1,634 food parcels to the value of £89,240.

The trustees decide on all major new initiatives such as setting up cookery classes and budgeting classes. These have proved successful in helping clients to gain back some self-respect and also to lessen their dependency on foodbanks. A new initiative which has been introduced this year is the facilitation of assembling 'welcome packs' for all new Syrian refugees coming into Northern Ireland through the 'Vulnerable Syrian Refugee Consortium'. Trustees are delighted to be able to facilitate this and to work in partnership with Kiltonga Christian Centre, Bryson (lead organisation), Barnardo's and Extern.

A hot two course lunch is provided free on a Sunday (fortnightly in a local café. 20 -25 people avail of this.

BICCI Christmas dinner on Christmas Day was hosted by Hamilton Road Presbyterian Church, 29 attended and 3 meals were sent out into the community.