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supporting the workplace, caring for people

Welcome to the Christmas edition of the CIGB newsletter! We have articles looking at banking, chaplaincy on the High Street and a lovely seasonal story about carrots. Christmas is a time of year when we think about giving, so may I draw your attention to the article on page 2 which outlines ways to support what we hope you see as the important work of CIGB financially. Like all charities, we like and appreciate the clink of coins, but we love (and need) that gentle rustling of cheques!

Christmas Tension



Graham and Pat Wigley offer some thoughts about retail chaplaincy on Kings Heath High Street

Workplace Chaplains face the tension between Christian belief and society's practice every day. Christmas on the High Street heightens this. Many retailers rely on boosted December income to sustain them through the lean months of winter, and of August. Present economic uncertainty and unemployment fears have highlighted the importance and raised hopefulness for good Christmas trading. Christians are called to avoid consumerism,

Scripture instructs us (Jeremiah 29 v 7) to work and pray for the good and prosperity of the cities. Addressed to God's people living in an idolatrous society, it's still very relevant today. With this appeal we can do no other than wish the traders in Kings Heath a good and prosperous Christmas and, as we meet and celebrate with them, that they may know the peace and security the Christ of Christmas came to bring.

At the stable door



At Bethlehem, God physically entered the messiness of human existence allowing both the poor shepherds and the rich kings to find a space to be accepted and perhaps to be altered. In November, the St Paul's Institute published a piece of research which showed some of the ethical ambiguity among financial services personnel in the City. They said that pay & bonus was their key motivator but also said that some of them were paid too much and teachers too little. They thought corporate responsibility and ethics to be important. Yet they supported deregulation despite believing it had contributed to declining ethical standards. City workers are not alone in their ethical ambiguity about money and economic activity. We all feel it.

One thing the church can do is offer spaces into which people can safely come to explore that ambiguity, to engage in conversation rather than blaming from a distance. An October meeting with Bishop David Urquhart, academics and 'activists' considered how the Banking Commission's final recommendations impacted on our concerns about how the banking sector relates to and serves the wider society. A further meeting is planned and CIGB is in discussion with St Pauls Institute about a London event in the New Year. Meanwhile, local churches are finding ways to provide spaces for local people through job clubs, food banks and other projects.

So CIGB hopes to provide echoes of the stable – a space of acceptance, understanding & challenge.



Enjoying local business' celebration of the opening of a new village square in Kings Heath

recognising that we must measure possessions alongside Kingdom values of justice and needs of the poor. But we are also People of Celebration and The Light. Christmas affords an ideal opportunity to be living witnesses to this.

When we commenced Retail Chaplaincy we visited shops but, as time passed, and we got to know the staff, our workplace visits are now to people, friends, some whose names and lives we know something of, and others less so. We have shared with them joys and sorrows; people who God loves and we love too.



Cautionary Tale

There is the story of a pastor who got up one Sunday and announced to his congregation: "I have good news and bad news. The good news is: we have enough money to pay for our new building program. The bad news is: it's still out there in your pockets." ★

Carrots!



Ann Polson and Helene Horan of the Solihull Town Centre Chaplaincy share a heartwarming experience.

One exciting aspect of Chaplaincy in a local Sainsbury's supermarket happened unexpectedly *three days* before Christmas last year. During our chaplaincy visit, a member of staff dashed up to us and asked if we knew of any charity that might be able to use a large quantity of edible carrots and onions which would otherwise be thrown away - but needed to be collected *immediately*.

At first we couldn't think of anyone, but suddenly the phone number of a friend came to mind - The Chairman of a Christian Drop-In centre which provides free refreshments, including homemade soup, to impoverished Asylum Seekers who have often travelled long distances from all parts of the Midlands to attend compulsory registration at the Immigration Office in Solihull.

There followed a string of successful phone calls to speak to the cooks at the Drop-In centre who, much to our amazement, were at home during that busy week! The store manager, who 'just happened' to be standing by the carrots when we looked for him, gave his consent to the donation. Then, exactly 30 minutes after the initial approach to us, someone from the Drop-In centre arrived with their car, coming through some very busy, slow-moving traffic! They received a wonderful Christmas donation of vegetables for use in the Drop-In Centre.

We were overwhelmed by the speed at which it all happened!!

After Christmas a formal agreement was made between Sainsbury's and the Asylum Seekers' Drop-In Centre, 'Solihull Welcome'. Since then they have received donations of unsold fruit and vegetables each week.



What an answer to prayer! We, as Chaplains, had been praying about the good food which was thrown away. The Drop-in centre were concerned about their financial situation and the impoverished people they were supporting.

God answered both prayers in an amazing way!

Grateful thanks go to the store manager of Sainsbury's in Solihull who so kindly helped to authorise the donations, the staff who prepare the food for collection and to Sainsbury's for their policy in supporting local charities.



Christmas is a time for giving ...



As a registered charity CIGB relies almost entirely on the generosity of others to support our work.

Would you consider making a donation?

You can donate to CIGB in several different ways: in the traditional way by writing a cheque, by direct transfer from your account to that of CIGB, and in a very 21st Century way, from your mobile phone!

To give text CIGBI and the amount you want to donate to 70070.

Texts are charged at your mobile phone operator's normal rate. The charity will receive 100% of your donation

There isn't room here to give you details of all the ways you can give, so please go to www.cigb.org.uk/donations where you will find all the information you need.

If you are a UK taxpayer, you can increase the value of your donation by 25% at no extra cost to yourself by completing a Gift Aid declaration form. There is one to download on the website, but if you phone the number below, we can post one to you.

DON'T FORGET ...

Send us your news, your stories, your pictures, your quotable quotes and your jokes and stay in touch:

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LAST WORD

★ *May the spirit of Christmas bring you peace,
The gladness of Christmas give you hope,
The warmth of Christmas grant you love.*