

Annual report 2014

Transforming Norwich



Rev Mark Fairweather-Tall with the Bishop of Norwich at the Transforming Norwich AGM.

Chairman's report

By Mark Fairweather-Tall, chair, Transforming Norwich



In his letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul posed a simple but profound question: "Is Christ divided?" He has been informed that there are quarrels amongst the Christians who are arguing about whose teaching they should follow: Paul, Apollos, Cephas or Christ.

It is likely that each group placed a different emphasis on various aspects of belief with the resulting disagreements about the 'correct' way. Paul seeks to make it clear that unity is important and that this springs from the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Transforming Norwich is centred upon the belief that the church is a better representation of Christ when we are united. Unity doesn't mean that we have to agree on every single aspect of theology and 'do' church in exactly the same way - that

is uniformity. The beauty of God's creation is seen in diversity and the church is a wonderful expression of this. We can celebrate our differences as long as we come together to declare that Jesus is Lord and Saviour. The importance of his life, death and resurrection far outweighs anything else.

I have been encouraged over the last year by the number of conversations I have had with church leaders who share a desire to see increasing unity throughout the city. In practical terms this might be expressed through praying together, working with each other in social action or seeking to reach out with the gospel. Transforming Norwich has sought to encourage each of these, working in particular with Unite, Celebrate Norwich & Norfolk, Norwich Foodbank and Network

Norwich & Norfolk. You can read more about their work in the rest of the Annual Report.

Over the last year we have provided opportunities for leaders to meet together for lunch alongside the opportunity to listen to a guest speaker: Jeff Lucas, Peter Brierley and Russ Parker have tackled very different issues to stimulate our thinking. I have found these occasions to be a great way to meet people, share with one another and be encouraged as we serve God together in this city.

In John 17, we read Jesus' prayer that those who believe in him "may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." v21 (ESV)

As we look to the year ahead, our desire is to continue to encourage unity for the sake of the gospel. I am grateful for the many throughout the city who are contributing to this in many different ways as together we seek to glorify our God.

Events: headlines, vi

US pastor tells Norwich leaders to hold vision

Norwich Christian leaders were encouraged not to settle for second best in their ministries, while balancing vision with reality, by US church leader Jeff Lucas at a Transforming Norwich leaders' lunch on May 16, 2013.

■ International Christian communicator, broadcaster and author, Jeff Lucas, is a Brit who is part of the pastoral team at the 10,000-strong Timberline Church at Fort Collins in Colorado.

Speaking to church and Christian ministry leaders from across Norfolk at a Transforming Norwich lunch at the Norwich Family Life Church in Norwich on May 16, Jeff was very frank.

"Sometimes I don't want a purpose-driven life or to make poverty history or stop the traffic or reach the bloke next door. Sometimes I just want to live," said Jeff.

"Fellow leaders, don't just survive," he urged, "don't go into maintenance mode, don't stop taking the risks, don't be addicted to the consensus, don't take the easy way out. Mere survival is never ever going to satisfy you."

Jeff said that the Timberline church really started to grow when a stripper named Nicky turned up, read the whole New Testament in three days and got baptised. 18 of her colleagues turned up for the baptism in their fluorescent outfits and that day the church turned into one where broken people ministered grace to fellow broken people.

Jeff, who was formerly part of the Spring Harvest leadership team and holds positions with high profile Christian magazines and



Jeff Lucas speaking in Norwich.

child poverty charity Compassion, ended on a positive, while realistic, note.

"As passionate people we need to balance idealism, vision and purpose with a realistic understanding of what we are dealing with in our churches, which is humanity," he said.

Transforming Norwich chairman, Rev Mark Fairweather-Tall, said: "I believe time together

like this has the potential to be really significant for the city of Norwich. There are many great churches and Christian organisations which have the same call to be a light for the gospel among our communities. In meeting together we can build stronger relationships, encourage one another and share ideas which will benefit the Kingdom."

Norwich leaders hear about healing history

Well-known Christian speaker and writer, the Rev Dr Russ Parker, was at the Norwich Family Life Church on March 18, 2014, to speak to members of Transforming Norwich about "Healing Wounded History". Biddy Collyer reports.

■ The past director of the Acorn Christian Healing Foundation held his audience of around 25 church and Christian organisation leaders completely as he spoke of the importance of finding out the stories that shape our communities and churches.

Using the Bible extensively as his reference point, he emphasised how vital it is that the facts behind the back story are established through careful listening, quoting how Jesus, on coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration to find the disciples unsuccessfully trying to heal a young boy, turns to the father and asks "How long has he



Russ Parker in Norwich.

been like this?"

His foundational scripture was God speaking to Solomon before the dedication of the temple (2 Chron 7). The main points being that the place of ministry, in this case

the temple, was to be fit for purpose. Secondly, the importance of the location of that place of ministry, and to ask what stories shape the living communities of which each church is a part.

He invited his audience to look at what was happening currently and then find the core dynamic behind it. Then taking the Lord's Prayer, he pointed out its' corporate nature where we ask God to "Forgive us our sins".

His final point, before the break, was to highlight the difference between representational confession and repentance, citing Moses, Nehemiah, Ezra and Daniel, all of whom confessed the collective sins of their people group.

In the final session, using the letters to the churches in Revelation 3, he said that it was important that churches celebrated all that was good in their communities before turning their attention to what in their behaviour may be threatening the good.

sion and healing

Truth behind 'Godless' Norwich headlines

Special demographic factors help explain why Norwich was accorded the "Most Godless" tag in the 2011 Census, but churches cannot turn a blind eye to declining attendance rates country-wide, statistical expert Dr Peter Brierley told city church leaders on November 7.

■ Addressing a meeting of church and Christian leaders, organized by Transforming Norwich, Peter was tasked with unpacking why Norwich had been given the "Most Godless" tag and also to look to the church's response.

Norwich's No Religion percentage of 42%, against a national average of 27%, can partly be explained because of the large percentage of young people in the city, many of them overseas students at the UEA. A higher percentage of Chinese and mixed ethnicity people also boost the no religion figures, explained Peter.

At the same time, Norwich still has 45% of people who said that they are Christians (59% for England), higher than a number of other urban locations across the country. But this Norwich figure has declined from 60% in 2001. The numbers of other religions including Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs have each grown by up to 300%, although from small initial numbers.

Meanwhile, figures from the England Church Census give numbers attending church in Norwich as an estimated 5.6% of the population in 2012 (7,300 people), explained Peter, which compares favourable with Norfolk's 4.3% and the all England average of 5.7%. But it also represents a halving of the figure from 1989 of 11.6%.

"Numbers of Christians have declined simply because so many older Christians are dying," said Peter. "Deaths outnumber conversions nationally by 4 to 1."

A changing understanding of what it means to be a Christian has also had an effect on Census figures, said Peter. Christians have been broken down into Moral Christians - who live by Christian ethics, Faithful Christians - who attend church and read the Bible, Cradle Christians - who were baptised and brought up as Christians and Ethnic Christians -



Peter Brierley speaking in Norwich.

who say they are Christian because they are British.

Norwich has seen a decline in churchgoers, especially among those under 15 and those aged 45-64. The number of believers in their twenties has held up remarkably well, said Peter, as have those aged 65 and over. A decreasing proportion of the total churchgoers are young people (one in seven under 20 years of age).

"Thinking strategically about the clear importance of incorporating younger people and those with young families into the life of existing churches is a critical and formidable challenge," said Peter. "The average age of a churchgoer in 1989 in Norwich was 43 and in 2012 it was 52. What does this say about the image of the church?"

Peter went on to look at figures for different denominations in Norfolk. The Roman Catholics have declined by two-thirds and Methodists by three-fifths. The Independent churches have declined by the least (12%).

In terms of churchmanship, since 1989, Evangelicals and Charismatics have shown increased numbers while Catholics (including Anglo-Catholics) have

shown the biggest decrease.

The final figures Peter used were for numbers of churches in Norfolk, drawn from the UK Church Statistics. From 1989 to estimated figures for 2020 the total number of churches will decline from 1,154 to 995. The predicted figures show large decreases in Catholic, Baptist and Methodist churches, all of which more than halve. Meanwhile Independent churches, New, Smaller Denominations and especially Pentecostal (a 200% increase from 10 to 30) all show sizeable increases.

Some of the questions which church leaders need to address, said Peter, are: "what are the best ways of reaching and keeping young people; how can more students be reached; how can family life be strengthened in terms of discipleship and transmission of the faith; and in what ways can older people be enabled to effectively evangelism among their peers."

"Of crucial importance for leaders of Norwich churches," said Peter, "is to know the trends and find time to plan strategically forwards not only in our own denominations but for the city as a whole."

■ reports by: www.networknorfolk.co.uk

Transforming Norwich



Prayer for Revival binds together

Prayer for Revival has now held over 30 monthly meetings in venues across Norfolk including Fakenham, Carleton Rode, Gt Yarmouth, Norwich and Stalham. Pastor Phil Thorne reports.

■ The monthly prayer events, which include worship, and a band made up of musicians and singers from across the churches, has been bringing together pastors and churches of numerous denominations to pray for the region, the authorities and institutions, for every minister and church to be blessed and for revival since January 2010. Relationships have been forged as we have prayed in unity.

One notable meeting took place in January 2014, where two dozen Norwich and Norfolk pastors publicly declared their spiritual unity with a symbolic binding together of sticks at a Prayer for Revival event.

The symbolic act took place at Norwich Family Life Church and was based on a prophetic word taken from Ezekiel 37. Organiser, pastor Phil Thorne, said: "Ezekiel's vision and prophecy applies uniquely to Israel, but there are certain prophetic principles we draw from it that we can apply to us across Norwich and Norfolk today. I believe this is the era to collectively shape our future with our words and connect with God's plan."

"The call is for church leaders in this new era to step up beyond a theologically understood 'unity of the Spirit' into a theologically maintained 'unity of the Spirit,' the kind that fulfils Psalm 133's commanded blessing - life forevermore. The journey we, as the church in Norwich and the region, have been on has over the last 20 years been very beneficial, but with so much talk of unity and togetherness across the nation, we have a great opportunity to see even greater things across this whole area. We could, through the momentum of this prophetic action, see established a spiritual undergirding framework for those greater things."

The 24 sticks were bound together as pastors stood shoulder-to-shoulder in agreement with the declaration of: Kingdom thinking and



Above and top, the binding of the sticks act takes place in Norwich.

speaking: choosing to honour one another: speaking well of one another: praying for each other: standing together as brothers and sisters.

Churches, whose pastors added sticks, were: City Church Wymondham; Call to Prayer, Norwich; City Church Norwich; Wroxham Rd Methodist; Norwich, Sprowston CofE Parish Norwich; Christ Embassy, Norwich; Liberty Church Frettenham; Liberty Church Bungay; NFLC, Norwich; Victory Villages Church, North Elmham; Radical Church, Norwich; Rivers of Life, Norwich; Burn, Norwich; Cornerstone Church, Norwich; The Way, Hunstanton; NCBC, Norwich; Firerunners, Norwich; St Stephens CofE; Norwich, Mulbarton CofE; Tas Valley Team CofE; Bowthorpe Church, Norwich; Gateway Vineyard, Norwich; Fakenham Baptist

Community Church; Salvation Army Norwich Citadel.

Other churches can add their 'stick' to the bundle at any public meeting with a prayer of blessing and a declaration of intent.

Daniel Holland, pastor of The Way Christian Fellowship, Hunstanton, said: "There was a wonderful sense of the love of God and hearts drawn together."

Craig Deal, leader of Gateway Vineyard, Norwich, said, "We are told that Jesus is returning for His Bride not brides, in His eyes there is one Church, all different, all doing different things and all sent to reach different people. The Church isn't in competition with each other, we are all part of one church under Jesus. The churches of Norwich and Norfolk made a commitment to honour and bless one another. All different, all with their own vision but together we all make up the Church that Jesus calls His Bride."

Rev Nigel Fox, pastor of Wroxham Road Methodist, said: "The simple yet expressive action of binding together of sticks for each church said so much. Prayers were offered to bless churches represented, as well as churches not represented, that they may be a blessing in all our communities. That has to be a good thing."

Mark Fairweather-Tall, pastor of Norwich Central Baptist Church, said:

"There is blessing in the diversity of our churches in the city, yet this is greatly enriched when we recognise our unity through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. The act of binding together sticks representing different churches is a visual statement of intent - that many across the region desire our unity to be displayed ever more strongly in the year ahead."

Pastor Trevor Pimlott of Norwich family Life Church, said: "It was a great night. I believe history was made in our city with so many of our beloved pastors and leaders in our city and county as we stood together to demonstrate with the sticks our pledge to honour, love and support each other. I am so blessed to be part of it."

For more information, please email admin@citychurch.co.uk.
www.citychurch.co.uk/prayerforrevival



Scenes from last year's Celebrate Norwich & Norfolk event.

Praise for Celebrate as thousands visit festival

Several thousand people visited the Celebrate Norwich & Norfolk festival in Norwich city centre from June 7-9, 2013, which was praised by exhibitors, organisers and local dignitaries.

■ Bishop of Lynn, Rt Rev Jonathan Meyrick, opened the event by telling an audience of over 100 that: "We should rejoice in being a Christian church family, we should rejoice in our faith and we should rejoice in the call to unity which should be at the centre of our faith."

Celebrate was visited by both Norwich Lord Mayor, Cllr Keith Driver, and Norwich North MP Chloe Smith, who said: "The exhibition showed the drive and dedication

which Christian charities and organisations commit to our city and its people. I was glad to visit and meet constituents who work so hard for Norwich and Norfolk."

Celebrate project director, John Betts, said: "The growth and development of Celebrate this year was a great encouragement. A diverse range of people and organisations, both national and local, have perceived the opportunity which Celebrate offers for them to showcase their ministry. More organisations than ever participated this year and events took place in more venues than previously. My prayer is that over time we shall spread out across the city and county."

"Bringing so many churches, organisations, and Christian people together into the public arena is very

important at a time when, on the one hand we are needed for the work we do but on the other hand the values we stand for are increasingly undervalued and are being undermined.

"Celebrate demonstrates that Christian unity is not a problem for the people of God when we come together outside of ecclesiastical structures. We all love the Lord and find it easy to work together for the sake of the kingdom of God. Ecumenism works when we come together to serve the Lord and minister to the needy," said John. "We are moving forward in our understanding of where God is leading His church."

The date for Celebrate Norwich and Norfolk 2014 is June 13 - 15. www.celebratenorfolk.co.uk

■ reports by: www.networknorfolk.co.uk

Website is communications hub

Network Norwich & Norfolk is a portal website and communications hub which was launched over eight years ago to help improve communication and connections for the Christian community in and around Norwich and Norfolk. Publisher Keith Morris reports.

■ Over the past 12 months, more than 100,000 different people have visited the website, viewing between them over 380,000 pages. We send out a twice-weekly e-news bulletin to around 2,800 people.

A core team of four content editors are based across Norfolk providing a news, events, information and website service for literally hundreds of churches, Christian organizations, charities and social action organizations based in the county. We also have dozens of regular volunteer content contributors.

We have developed successful partnerships producing websites, news stories and e-newsletters with, among others: Transforming Norwich, Norwich Central Churches Together, Norwich FGBMFI, Norfolk Street Partnership, Norwich Christian Resource Centre, Celebrate Norwich & Norfolk, Norwich Foodbank, Norfolk Christian Football League, Good News for Norwich & Norfolk, Good Work, Call to Prayer, Dreams & Visions and More Than Food.

In the last year, we have expanded our services across the different regions of

Norfolk with dedicated sections for South, North, Mid, East and West Norfolk as well as Norwich.

Stories we have first written and published on the site have subsequently been reproduced in the EDP, Evening News, Radio Norfolk, and on the local BBC, Anglia and now Mustard TV.

In a wider context, publisher Keith Morris has been able to support and work with sister sites in Ipswich, Great Yarmouth, Peterborough, Leeds, Bristol and the Scottish

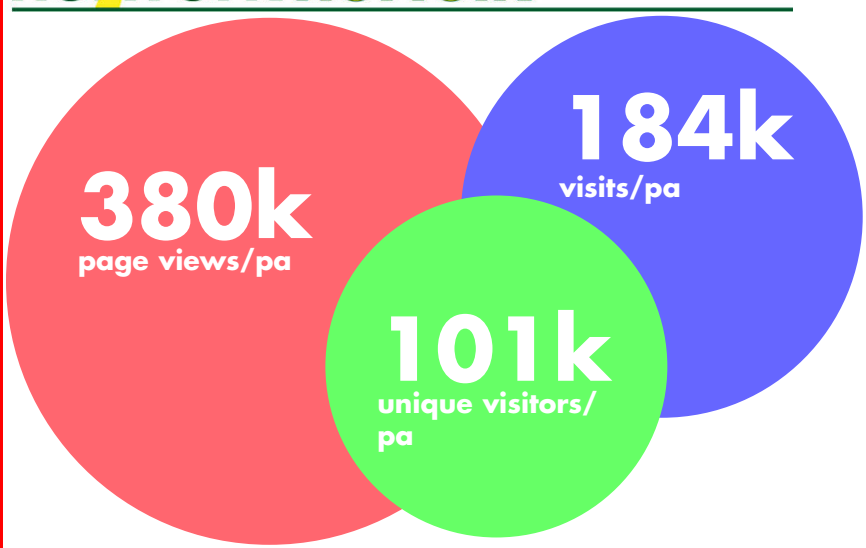
Highlands.

We would be delighted to talk with you about how we can help you promote your Christian activities to a wider audience.

Find out more at: www.networknorfolk.co.uk or contact keith.morris@networknorwich.co.uk

Visits: 184,139
Pageviews: 380,105
Unique Visitors: 100,681

network norfolk



Norfolk Christians unite in prayer

As Christians in more than 220 nations around the world met for the 2013 Global Day of Prayer, hundreds of many regional churches united for prayer at Norwich Cathedral on Pentecost Sunday (May 19).



■ Welcoming the united congregation back to the Cathedral after three years - the event has been held at other venues in recent years - the Dean of Norwich, the Very Rev Graham Smith said: "This is your Cathedral . . . it belongs to us all."

In a keynote address, guest speaker Stuart Bell, senior leader of New Life Church, Lincoln, spoke of the "beautiful diversity among the people of God - and the importance of unity which is a work of the Holy Spirit in our lives."

Stuart is also leader of the Ground Level network of 100 churches in the UK.

The ministerial team behind the united

Cathedral event were "Unite East Anglia", part of the Transforming Norwich network. Worship was led by musicians and singers from Fountain of Life Church at Ashill.

Emphasising the spiritual oneness among God's people, Pastor Paddy Venner (of Eternity, Norwich) said: "There is really only one church in this city, with many different 'expressions' and locations."

As a South African, Paddy also recalled attending the first-ever global prayer event with 55,000 people at a sports stadium in Capetown, South Africa, in 2001 - an initiative that grew into the global prayer

movement across 220 nations - "praying globally, gathering locally, with one voice."

To encourage Norfolk Christians, Pastor Trevor Pimlott of Norwich Family Life Church recalled a comment by the US-based Christian leader Jeff Lucas from the state of Colorado, who spoke in Norwich recently. Asked Jeff what lessons the church in the US might have for us in the UK? Jeff replied: "What we need is to do bring American believers to Norwich to see what God is doing right here!"

Pictured above: the gathering at Norwich Cathedral.

Church pop-ups in Norwich to give support to Foodbank

Transforming Norwich



Over 150 people gathered outside the Forum in the centre of Norwich on April 18, 2014, at a ten-minute Pop-Up Church event to mark Good Friday, raise awareness of Norwich Foodbank and give the opportunity to donate items of food.

Foodbank supporters, people from a number of local churches and passers-by joined in singing Amazing Grace and said a communal prayer before dispersing. Meanwhile, dozens of items of food were placed in ten or so baskets at the foot of a wooden cross.

Norwich Foodbank project manager, Grant Habershon, said: "Local people are in crisis throughout the year and we need gifts of food all year round. As a Christian organization we want give people love and hope. And that is basically the message of Easter, that God loves mankind and gives them hope. So it is great for us to be associated with an event like this."

Mark Fairweather-Tall, chairman of churches group Transforming Norwich, which helped to organize the Pop-Up Church, said: "On Good Friday we remember the death of Jesus for us on the cross. Today's event is the church on the streets marking Good Friday and showing God's love for the world by helping to provide food for those who do not have any."



reports by: www.networknorfolk.co.uk



**Transforming
Norwich**

Making Norwich a Fine Community

Income and Expenditure account 15.4.13 to 31.3.14

	INCOME	EXPENDITURE	
BANK AND CASH BALANCES b/d			
Barclays Current Account			2943.91
Standard Life 10-day Notice Account			1212.82
Petty Cash			0
TOTAL			£4,156.73
INCOME			
Subscriptions	1625.00		
Donations	50.00		
Leaders' lunches	70.00		
Interest on 10 day account	8.89		
TOTAL	1753.89		
EXPENDITURE			
Speakers fees and expenses		742.50	
Leaders' lunches		215.42	
Banner map of Norwich		132.08	
Unite		500.00	
Celebrate		1300.00	
Network Norwich		700.00	
TOTAL		£3,590	
LESS EXPENDITURE OVER INCOME			£1,836.11
TOTAL RESOURCES			£2,320.62
REPRESENTED BY:			
BANK AND CASH BALANCES c/f			
Barclays Current Account			1598.91
Standard Life 10-day Notice Account			721.71
Petty Cash			0
TOTAL RESOURCES			£2,320.62

Norwich Central Churches Together

By Rev Janet Wyer, chair of NCCT

As is customary NCCT met formally on three occasions in 2013 in February, June and September. There were also a number of fellowship lunches throughout the year that provided the opportunity for sharing information and meeting together on a more informal basis.

The February meeting was the AGM and the new officers for the year were elected:

Chair: The Revd John Fenn [Chapel Field Road Methodist Church]

Vice chair: The Revd Janet Wyer [The Church of St Peter Mancroft]

Secretary: Mrs Margaret Smith [Norwich Central Baptist Church]

Treasurer: Mr Andrew Maxey [St John's Church, Timberhill]

There are currently 19 city centre churches that send representatives to NCCT meetings

2013 started in dramatic style when the January Annual Joint Service had to be cancelled because of heavy snowfall. However, the Week of

Prayer and the Chain of Prayer in Norwich Anglican Cathedral were unaffected by the inclement weather and both were well supported by the member churches.

The Lenten study groups in March were also well supported with a good number of churches hosting the two main courses that were funded by NCCT: The York Course "Glimpses of God - Hope for today's world" and the Church Urban Fund Course "Blinded - Are our eyes shut to England's poor?"

On Good Friday, NCCT services and events included: the Free Church Service at NCBC at 10.30am, the annual Walk of Witness to the Anglican Cathedral from Chapel Field Road Methodist Church at 5pm and the Ecumenical Service of Evening Prayer that began at 6pm. The preacher at this service was The Revd Graham Thompson who is President of Methodist Conference.

The second and third meetings of the year saw a good and encouraging rise in attendance from the member churches and various issues of common interest were raised.

The Forum held on Sunday October 13 at Norwich Central Baptist Church, after a picnic lunch, was the Bible study 'Reclaiming Philipians for today's church', prepared by Rev E Whalley, President of the Baptist Union. The Forum was viewed very positively by those who attended but could perhaps have been better supported.

To round the year off, we met together on December 19 outside the Forum to sing carols and be a jolly Christian presence in the city amid the Christmas shoppers, we had a great time raised £70 for St Martins Housing Trust.

As can be seen, NCCT is a much needed forum for the city centre churches to meet together to discuss common issues, share and distribute information, and provides the means to plan and host united worship and prayer.

NCCT is growing in strength and witness and my heartfelt thanks goes to all those who are working hard so that this continues. All in all 2013 was great year for NCCT - we look forward to 2014.

Transforming Norwich