

PSALM

TAKING AGEING AND FAITH SERIOUSLY



NEWSLETTER NUMBER 5 - NOV 2019

PSALM has had a busy time over the last few months, and we hope you enjoy reading about our activities and future events.

PSALM Dementia Project

I am sure we all know someone who is affected by Dementia. The impact of dementia on individuals, families and carers can't be underestimated, but what are the local churches in the hearts of our communities doing to support those with dementia and their carers?

Well, that is the question I am setting out to answer in association with PSALM. We have begun a project to identify not only what is already happening in churches across London but also to investigate any gaps which we can help to fill, so that dementia provision in the community isn't only for a select few.

From our own knowledge, we know that there are churches which are already aware that dementia is a concern for their congregation and community but haven't yet begun to make any plans or provision – and they may not know where to start, but we may be able to help.

Also, some may have agreed that this should be part of their mission and ministry but have not made much progress for various reasons. Churches that have begun a project might need some support to develop this, and there are some that have been engaged with dementia support for some time and have examples of good practice which we would like to share as a resource and encouragement to others.

So, having recently begun working to identify where there is provision is and what is happening, It is already becoming clear that there are pockets of good practice, but that far more could be done to allow external organisations such as AGE UK to use church premises to run projects such as Dementia Cafes or Dementia choirs and where we can support churches to provide provision and access resources as part of their pastoral care.

As the project develops, we are hoping to encourage as many churches as possible to do 'one thing' about dementia – or do one more thing if they are already engaged with it.

If you know of any examples of Dementia projects running from churches in your area, then please let me know.

Contact Revd Lizzie Baughen -
lizziebaughen@btinternet.com

NEXT WORKSHOP

Angels: Bringing Great News

A workshop involving discussion and sharing, craft and play reading and poetry

Monday 16 Dec 2019 11am - 3pm
At St Pancras Church House,
1 Lancing St NW1 1NA

Cost £10
(£8 for PSALM members)

To book, please email
psalm@stpancraschurch.org

Ring 020 7388 1461

Or write to PSALM at
St Pancras Church, Euston Road
London NW1 2BA

'BEING OLD BEING BOLD'

In September Lizzie Baughen and myself were delighted to represent PSALM in Sheffield at an ecumenical conference organised by Christians On Ageing. The theme was introduced by David Jolley, a retired consultant and Professor of Old Age Psychiatry in Manchester. Drawing on many years of experience, he set the scene with a reflection on 'Intergenerational Fairness and Provision'.

We also heard Albert Jewell, pastoral director and senior chaplain of Methodist Homes for the Ageing, and Helen McCormack, a Development Worker with Older People from Northallerton. The latter gave us much food for thought, describing her own wide-ranging work under the heading 'Being old: special needs or special contribution?'

All the contributions were inspiring, but for both of us the highlight was listening to Rita and Paul Conley, Salvation Army Officers, who shared their experience of supporting long-term prison inmates. Sadly most prisons are ill equipped to care for elderly and frail prisoners who need extra help. This impressive project tries to build up a sense of community and facilitates more able prisoners in caring for those who are struggling.

It was a great day with space to meet a wide range of people, share our own experience, and find lots of useful resources. Interestingly, most participants were from the North of England, but we were warmly welcomed and encouraged to support the work of the Christian Council on Ageing in other parts of Britain!!

'Being Old, Being Bold' seems a good motto for us all!

Eileen Turner

There is more information on <https://christiansonageing.org.uk/conference-september-2019/>

FAITH, ART AND AGEING

A PSALM Workshop held in August 2019

'There was a lovely atmosphere of peace and calm,' commented one of the participants at this workshop. It was the first workshop held in August as far as we can recall, and a bit of an experiment to see whether there was enough demand for something in the middle of the summer. And yes, there was!

We began by sharing our own experience of art – practical and hands-on at school and beyond, and our reaction to art galleries and exhibitions. The health benefits of art were discussed (many of which are common to other creative activities). Looking at images of older people in pictures made us realise that we see different things in a picture as we draw on our own perspectives and experience. This was followed by a reflection on Rembrandt's painting of the 'Return of the Prodigal Son' and later in the day we looked at the very different style of icons with some clues on how to read them.

Two practical exercises gave us hands- on art experience. In the morning we listened quietly to what was happening around us and then used charcoal on paper to represent what we had heard. Colouring texts and patterns in the afternoon was a highlight for some of those present and

reminded them of how much they had enjoyed this earlier in life; though others admitted that it didn't particularly 'float my boat!'

Did this workshop change the way we think or what we might do? Almost everyone suggested that they would go to an art gallery, pick up a pencil or sit and enjoy the beauty of the world around us.

'What is this life if, full of care, we have no time to stand and stare ...'

IF IT SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE ...

October 2019 Workshop

How do you know if you are being scammed? And what can we do to keep ourselves safe?

With the ease of internet connections and other current means of communication, it is all too easy for unscrupulous people to take advantage of our vulnerabilities. We have all heard of the urgent message from a friend or relation who has been stranded abroad and needs a money transfer, the 'failsafe' investment that turns out to be no such thing or the 'tradesman' offering to fix a problem that doesn't actually exist. But what else do we need to look out for?

The PSALM workshop provided us with information about current scams on the phone, doorstep, post and internet, along with tips to keep ourselves safe and encouragement to look out for other vulnerable people within our circle of family and friends. A couple of case studies showed how easily we can fall for a scam, and discussion included the feelings of embarrassment and shame that this produces, along with loss of self-confidence and actual financial loss. However, this is not the whole story: we also thought about what makes us feel safe and looked at some verses from the Bible that remind us that God is alongside us whatever happens.

Towards the end of our time together, we looked at some 'good news' stories as we reminded ourselves that not everyone is 'out to get us' and thought about the kindness of strangers. For one of our members, that was beautifully illustrated later that same evening:

'Gone 11.30 pm, I was at a bus stop waiting for the next bus home. No-one was around.

A presentable young man came and sat down nearby. First, he said 'Hello,' to which I responded cautiously, then 'What was I doing, where was I going, where had I been?' I answered carefully. He then chatted about the opera I'd seen.

He did not get on the first bus – one that I did not need. The next bus arrived next, so I asked if he was getting that one. 'No,' he said, 'actually I'm not waiting for a bus, but I saw you sitting there and thought I would wait with you to ensure you were safe.'

The kindness of strangers indeed – or entertaining angels unawares.'

(We would be very happy to repeat this workshop in other places. Do contact us if you know a group that would like to book it.)

Future Dates:

16 Dec workshop

24 March 2020. 3 pm PSALM's AGM, followed by refreshments. 4 pm presentation and discussion on supporting people affected by dementia. More information to follow, but note the date now! NB this meeting will be held at St Pancras Church House in Lancing Street and not in the church as in previous year.



Information about workshops in 2020 will be sent with the next mailing.

We were sorry to say goodbye to Libby and Helen who have provided invaluable support with the administration and wish them both well. Sophie Zhang will be joining the PSALM Team and taking on these responsibilities, and we look forward to working with her.



From a PSALM member at a workshop

'It is so good to share experience and stories – it helps to build up confidence.'

If you have received this copy of the newsletter and are not already on our mailing / circulation list, do contact us if you would like to join PSALM or to hear news of our future events and activities.

A Prayer for Winter 2019

God of creation,

We thank you for the beauty of the seasons,
for the colour of autumn days and the crispness of
winter haze.

Through the changing seasons,
as the nights draw in and the colour fades.

We pray that we would draw ever closer to you,
our Lord, our creator and our protector.

Amen.



CONTACT US:

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Taking ageing and faith seriously

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