

LANCASHIRE DISTRICT NEWS 4

PARTNERSHIP WORKS WITH ASYLUM SEEKERS

Many churches are involved in supporting asylum seekers and refugees. In Darwen, Lancashire, an ecumenical group of churches are engaged with helping. The concern of one church member at the number of asylum seekers hanging around the Post Office on benefit day, led to her speaking to her Methodist Minister. The conversation led to the establishment of a drop-in centre in the United Reformed Church, one of the partnership churches, the distress of an Iranian mother and daughter alerted others to the problem. The family, who had been persecuted for their Christian faith whilst in Iran, had been given leave to remain in Britain. The father had, though, become stranded in Turkey whilst fleeing separately from Iran. The problem they faced, and the difficulties they experienced in getting help, led to the political involvement of the church. Eventually the family were reunited and given permission to remain in Britain. Seeing the need, the churches got together and worked at obtaining grants to employ two workers. Their task is to support families and to run two drop in centres; one within the Darwen Churches' Partnership and another within the Blackburn Circuit. Both workers are sponsored by Churches Together in Blackburn with Darwen.

Asylum Seekers— Something you can do!

If you would like to offer some support to Asylum Seekers with regard to the proposals to reintroduce the voucher system you could write to your local MP. Contact Derek Estill if you would like a suggested letter either emailing or sending to you.

Revd Joe Warren - died on 10th January in hospital. He was 85. His funeral was held at Garstang URC on 16th January, next door to the residential home which had been Joe's home for the past 4 years. A native of Ashton under Lyne, Joe was born of a firmly Congregationalist family, one of twelve brothers. Joe's ministries included Totham (Essex,) the Pendle Group and finally the East Lancs. Group, from which he retired to Garstang with his wife Olive in 1985. Joe is remembered with deep affection and gratitude as a modest and dedicated pastor, preacher, and supportive colleague and "Father in God" to younger ministers, enlivened by a quietly mischievous sense of humour.

Revd Douglas Galloway Stewart— minister and former moderator of this synod, died on 17th January. He grew up in Moss Side, attending Chorlton Rd Congregational Church. In 1938 he began training at Lancashire Independent College. In 1942, he was ordained and inducted to Hatherlow, four years later moving to Soresby Street, Chesterfield. He married Jeanne in 1946. They had three children. In 1955, they moved to St Annes and in 1970, the Lancashire Congregational Union appointed him as Secretary and Moderator. He led the churches into the URC and served this synod as its first Moderator. His retirement in 1981 to Chapel Stile, was marred by Jeanne's death, but then God blessed him with happiness again with Chris. At the Thanksgiving Service, Revd Tony Burnham said, "The churches of this Synod, give thanks for a good man, a caring pastor and a faithful servant of our Lord Jesus Christ."

POULTON URC— For nearly nine years, the members of Poulton URC, a large Victorian church building have been working towards an upgrading and restructuring of deteriorating premises. Radical action was needed. Eventually the congregation moved out of the church building to worship in the church hall which, ironically, was the original church building!

After many years of plans, ideas, changes to plans and setbacks we are nearly there! Final plans are about to be submitted to sell the Victorian building to a developer who will convert it into flats; the money from this will then finance the majority of a much needed upgrade to the church hall. It comes at a vital time. The church hall is now deteriorating rapidly and the heating system has failed. Worship is now taking place in the back hall with the help of electric heaters. This has focused minds to a vote to move out into the Carleton Memorial Hall.

Throughout, the congregation have remained committed and faithful. Decisions have not been taken lightly nor without sadness but the church is looking forward to new challenges and new opportunities. It will be a year in exile with a return to a grandly revitalised building with the facilities needed to serve the community. If you are visiting Poulton give us a call; but remember to look for the Memorial Hall in Moorfield Ave, Carleton. Please pray with us for the successful end to such a long struggle.