

CGSC Executive Committee:

Chairman Tony Cornfield
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 Executive Sharon Lester
 Executive Simon Dawes

Contact:
The Chairman on 01732 452062
 Or email:
Tony@7oakscommunitychurch.org.uk

Churches Group for Social Concern - Aims:

To encourage the people of the churches in the application of their faith to everyday life in the community.
 To draw the attention of member churches to current local needs and work in partnership with other agencies in an attempt to meet them.
 To assist in thinking about ethical and moral issues, by initiating appropriate study projects and conferences.
 When necessary it will arrange fundraising events.

Future plans and events

Annual Open Meeting
 Thursday 3rd May at 8.00pm
Christian Support for Prisoners and Ex-Offenders
 at Sevenoaks URC, Christ Church, Littlecourt Rd, TN13 2JG

New Volunteer opportunities:

- Supporting "LoavesNfishes"
- Supporting victims of Domestic Abuse
- Housekeeper for Debt Advice

Please pray for:
 Sensitive and supportive involvement in domestic abuse issues going forward.

- for those training to be Advocates in the DAVSS team.
- for the opening of the Refuge in Sevenoaks.
- for meaningful partnerships with other agencies.

Gifts and Donations

Gifts from churches or individuals to support Befrienders, the Child Contact Centre, or resource the organisational and magazine costs should be made payable to:
 Sevenoaks Churches Group for Social Concern, and sent to the Treasurer:

81a Bradbourne Park Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3LQ

Please indicate the intended purpose of the gift, so that it can be appropriately applied.



The Sevenoaks Churches Group for Social Concern Newsletter

Issue 20, Jan 2012

Prisoners & Ex Offenders

How do we feel when challenged about an appropriate Christian response to prisoners and ex-offenders?

What does the bible say? What would Jesus do?

Isaiah 61 v 1, quoted by Jesus in **Luke 4 v 18**, talks about "proclaiming freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners"

Hebrews 13 v 3 says, "Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow-prisoners, and those who are ill-treated as if you yourselves were suffering."

Christians are expected to care for the 'least and the last' members of society. Victims and families affected by crime deserve our utmost compassion, but Christians are challenged to extend compassion to both victims and offenders to heal our broken communities and break the cycle of harm.

What are conditions like in our prisons? What is the likelihood of a prisoner re-offending? Does the prison system effect rehabilitation? How can we help those leaving prison to reintegrate into society? What can we do to help in healing the broken? Are there Christian organisations out there who can point the way, facilitate appropriate actions, lower the bar safely?

We've invited "Prison Fellowship" and "Caring for Ex-Offenders" to discuss some of these questions, suggest ways in which churches and individual



Christians can get involved and give us the benefit of their experience at our **Spring Open Meeting** on **Thursday 3rd May at Christ Church, Littlecourt Rd, Sevenoaks . . . just down from the Station.**

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If you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.
 Isaiah 58:10

West Kent Debt Advice

Sevenoaks Debt Advice Centre, which is supported by Churches in the Sevenoaks area has, since it's inception, been linked with Tonbridge Debt Advice Centre. The work has expanded and there are now centres/surgeries in Tunbridge Wells, Paddock Wood and a second Tonbridge centre at the South end of town. In order to cope with the increase in demand in these difficult times and with the objective of freeing up resources to focus on seeing more clients, a central administration team has been set up linking all the Centres by intranet.



To recognise this all the Centres have adopted the name WEST KENT DEBT ADVICE and a visit to the website www.wkda.org.uk will explain how this works.

The new number to be called by anyone seeking help is **01732 300425**.

Although operating under a new name the Sevenoaks centre continues to be managed and resourced by volunteers from the Sevenoaks area and exists to serve the needs of people in that area who find themselves in financial difficulty.

We are pleased to announce a new leader for the Sevenoaks team - Graham Roper - a member of St Mary's Church Kippington.

A huge thank you to all the advisers for your dedication and hard work.

loavesNfishes

fill a basket, fill a heart

Firstly a huge thank you to those individuals and churches who have committed to support Sevenoaks' new **Food Bank**.

During the course of the year, the numbers of families being helped on a regular basis has increased from 6 or 7 to 20 as the quantities of food being received have increased. Initially it was just families from the N E side of Sevenoaks, who were being helped, but now this has expanded to

include Sundridge and Seal too. It has proved to be enormously helpful when organisations have had special collections of non perishable food which have then been donated to the Food Bank: School Harvest Festivals and other one-off collections. These have provided reserves which can be drawn on, over the following months.

At present 4 churches appear to be using collecting baskets at the end of their Sunday Service to encourage members to donate items from their weekly shop.

Recipients have described the food basket as life changing and liberating.

If you would like to join in, please contact Francein on **07825 321009** Francein says, "We do this because we love children, not wanting them to even know what hunger is!"

Domestic Abuse & Refuge

The new Domestic Abuse Support charity **DAVSS** is responding to the needs of local victims in significant and effective ways: The Helpline **01892 570538** extended from Tunbridge Wells into Sevenoaks District in April 2011. In the first quarter it received 52 calls, 129 in the second quarter and 208 in the third quarter! I think you would agree that these figures speak for themselves.



The team of volunteer advocates has grown to 18 women and men, each of whom underwent 7 weeks of training to equip them for this demanding yet rewarding role. The team's work has been praised by both the police and the judiciary.

If you are able to publicise the existence of this service by displaying leaflets, putting up a small poster at work, or by putting a link to **DAVSS** on a website or Facebook page, we would be extremely grateful.

DAVSS offers free, confidential support by:

- listening without bias or judgement.
- offering advice tailored to the individual's situation.
- suggesting choices that give options.
- offering accompaniment at meetings or attending court.

- helping to identify the risks in individual situations.
- working with the individual to produce a safety plan.

Progress towards the opening of a Women's **Refuge** in Sevenoaks continues. The existing building is undergoing some modernisation and internal redecoration ... the KCC Supporting People contract has been awarded to manage and staff the Refuge ... discussions are ongoing to offer appropriate support from the Christian community.

You will I'm sure understand the need for the Refuge's location to be kept confidential so as to protect the vulnerable women and children who will be arriving here from different locations, in some cases, in fear of their lives.

For additional information, email: tony@7oakscommunitychurch.org.uk

Train to be a Befriender:

Befrienders typically offer an hour or two every week or two to visit somebody in the local community who has been referred by a Health or Social Care professional

Four evenings of training begins on 7th March 2012. Call Margaret on **01883 712576** to enrol.