

TRANSFORMING LIVES TOGETHER⁺

Impact report 2016 to 2018

Encouraging

Confident we can try this

Optimistic Empowered

Full of hope

Inspired

After three successful years we asked people for revaluation feedback. We are proud to share these words as the most popular used to describe us.

Key impact



**FILLING
THE GAP**

11

Filling the Gap projects working all over the Diocese and together have fed more than 600 children plus their families



100

Churches have been involved with TLT in the last three years



200

People are involved in volunteering for one of our projects

500

People have attended TLT events in the last three years with many more in workshops at other events supported by TLT



**PLACES OF
WELCOME**

26

Places of Welcome in Chester Diocese and more in preparation

Introduction

The challenge to “Create a movement across the Diocese of Chester” was always going to be a tall order. No matter how we look at setting hearts on fire to support the most vulnerable members of our community to flourish, we had to acknowledge that 1,000 square miles of one of the most diverse areas of the country was going to be a challenge.

We made an early decision to follow a theory of Asset-based Community Development (ABCD) which we believe to be a way of empowering people and communities by starting with what they have rather than what they need. Jesus was passionate about encouraging his followers to recognise their God-given abilities and we have seen some wonderful examples of church communities recognising the unique and wonderful gifts of people whom society has cast aside.

Kath Leigh

Lead Community Builder
(Jan 2016 to April 2019)



Impact and influence

In the three years since the re-launch of TLT in January 2016 we have visited over **90 Anglican churches** and **25 other denominations**, such as Methodists, Baptists, URC, Salvation Army, Vineyard, R.C. and free Evangelical. Many of those visits have simply been to introduce ourselves and to talk about their church and the wider community, but many of them have then gone onto attend events or have taken up suggested projects.

We have run events in a variety of communities all over the Diocese and have been encouraged by the numbers of people attending.

In the last three years well over **500 people** have attended TLT events ranging from **Deanery Marketplaces**, where each church in the area have come together to ‘showcase’ their social action ministries, and **‘Focus on Faith and Dementia’**, an opportunity to understand dementia better and to help churches to respond through to **‘Filling the Gap’** events which have encouraged, inspired and enabled churches to provide fun and food to children and families in the school holidays. (This has proved to be of vital importance, especially in those areas where many families rely on free school meals to supplement their income).



Filling the Gap

We have uncovered a wealth of people who are willing to serve, not only their immediate neighbours but also those who are struggling elsewhere.

The passion for being the hands of Jesus in befriending the lonely, feeding children in school holidays whilst offering them fun experiences and showing concern for the people who are 'suffering in silence' has been overwhelming and heartening.

There are now **11 Filling the Gap projects** working across the Diocese and more in the pipeline for this summer. We have heard some wonderful stories about the impact of this provision and the vital importance it can have to families.



When we visited a project in one of the churches we met a mum who was dropping her children off for the morning. She explained that the opportunity to have a morning to herself, a single parent with three young children was invaluable. The children looked forward to the experiences and to the lunch which they enjoyed. As an aside, as she was leaving, she also said, "I have also learned so much about how to enjoy my kids. Sometimes I stay and help and I have watched how the play leaders manage the children. They never shout, they use distraction with the little ones and keep the older ones busy. I realised that I would feel better if I shouted less and if the kids are occupied they are well-behaved. I'm not sure if the kids have noticed a difference but I have!"

Two young mums attending a Filling the Gap project found that not only did they have a nutritious meal provided for themselves and their children but they also met each other and struck up a friendship which has prevented them from feeling isolated in the village where neither have a network of family or friends. They explained that their children really enjoy the activities on offer, they look forward to socialising with other parents and the church provides them with a lunch which they don't have to budget for.



Places of Welcome

TLT has also introduced the concept of Places of Welcome to the Diocese. This is a national initiative which is growing year on year. Currently, (April 2019) there are **26 churches** within our area who are operating a drop in, with a drink and refreshment and a welcoming team who can chat and help people who need basic information and support. These range from small initiatives serving tea and coffee with beans on toast and the opportunity to use lap-tops and free wifi to a Grade 1 listed church who offer tea, home-made cake and community health walks.

We are delighted to boast one of only two cathedrals in England who are registered as a Place of Welcome. A trend which we hope will grow.

We often hear heart-warming stories from our Places of welcome network, and we are keen to encourage others.



Mike had serious mental health problems and reported a history of drug and alcohol abuse. He began attending one of our Places of welcome as he had nowhere to socialise and reported to have no family or friends in the area. He became a regular attender, started to write poetry and join in with many of the activities on offer at the church. He was overweight and was offered a gym membership through the project. He has lost weight and his self-esteem has risen. He now volunteers at the project and helps others to view life from a more positive angle.





Know Your Church, Know Your Neighbourhood

Many churches struggle with the idea of how to engage their local community and we have delivered the Know Your Church, Know Your Neighbourhood programme to **4 churches** and to a **network of 7 more churches**.

We know that there is a lengthy time commitment to the programme (6 months) but it has proved to be helpful in enabling churches to identify their assets and develop their ideas of who and what they can be to their neighbours.

Looking ahead

We have also been privileged to partner with many other organisations who share our concerns and TLT have supported **12 events**, often delivering workshops and training opportunities. Examples are; both clergy and lay conferences, '**Beyond the Food Parcel**', '**Young People and Mental Health**' and '**Setting God's People Free**'.

For the last three years TLT has pushed the boundaries of what churches believe they can do to engage their community and be significant Ambassadors for Christ. We hope and pray that our mission will continue.

Our greatest challenge moving forward is that of funding. The Church Urban Fund continues to be our main source of funding but, in common with all other Joint Ventures across England, that funding has now been reduced. It is hoped that we may be successful in attracting outside funding to continue our work but as we are now only able to fund one, part-time Community Builder this proves difficult.

We have enjoyed generous patronage from churches across the Diocese which has been really helpful, but we need a more sustainable income stream in order to build and develop on these foundations.

It has been my privilege to work as the Lead Community Builder of TLT for just over three years and as I retire, I urge everyone to join with me in praying for continued blessing for Wendy and the Board of Trustees as they journey on, inspiring and encouraging social action ministry in Chester Diocese.

TOGETHER NETWORK

National movement, Local action

Transforming Lives Together is one of 21 joint ventures in the Together Network, all of them linked by faith and driven by the desire to tackle social inequality across England.

Why not keep in touch by signing up to our newsletter and following us on social media?

TRANSFORMING LIVES TOGETHER

www.tltogether.org.uk



@transforminglivesogether

TLT Together is a charitable company, limited by guarantee and registered in England (Charity No. 1157348. Company No. 08419285)