

GATHER ARTS

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GATHER ARTS

Gathering, encouraging, envisioning and equipping Christians in the arts

Last month at the GATHERNORTH conference we launched Gather Arts, bringing together 40 people involved in the arts from across the North of England to get to know one another, share stories, and to begin to re-imagine how our churches and our towns and cities could look and be if we worked together creatively and missionally for the transformation of our places.



GATHER ARTS stream more than 40 creative people gathering together.



GATHERNORTH over 220 Christian leaders from across the North of England gathering together.

We looked at GATHER's wider vision based on a passage from Jeremiah 29 that says

'I say to you seek the peace and the prosperity of the city to which I have called you, this is your country now, they are your people, and if their lives flourish and prosper because you have embraced them, you too will grow and increase.'

GatherNorth was a conversation on how the church can play its part in the transforming of our cities and towns. It is about extending our walls and living out our faith within the wider world, building relationships with others, serving our communities and having compassion for our places and those who inhabit them. As Christian creatives, we too are called to be a faithful presence in our places of work, our homes and our communities. This means that we are called to be Shalom, to generate truth, goodness and beauty, faith, hope and love in every place we find ourselves, not just within the confines of the church but within our communities, our city centres, our marketplaces, our schools, our hospitals, our workplaces, and in our case, our museums and galleries, our theatres and music halls or wherever it is we, as creatives, find ourselves serving.

Over the next few weeks on our website we will be adding some resources, talks, discussions around the themes we discussed in our time together, with podcasts, videos and reading lists to help you get more involved in using the arts to make an impact in your community. So spread the word, come and engage with us, share your stories, consider beginning a Gather Arts community in your town/city and together lets make our churches, our homes and our communities places of beauty where creativity and the arts flourish, where partnerships and conversations with cultural institutions are established and excellence is valued.

YOUR STORIES: Easter expressions of creativity



Bad news stories given new meaning on Good Friday

Christians from across **Stoke-on-Trent** united together to support a creative Christian witness project during Holy Week. Bad news stories from the region's newspaper, the Sentinel, were used to cover an eleven foot high cross which was then the focus point for daily walks through each of the city's six towns. At lunchtime in each venue local Christians met together for short acts of united worship. The Sentinel Cross then remained throughout the rest of the day for people to visit, reflect upon and to cover with flowers.

Lloyd Cooke, chief executive of Saltbox, was involved in helping to organise the initiative and said: "It was wonderful to see the way in which the Sentinel Cross captured people's imaginations. It became a focus for uniting Christians to worship and witness together. Importantly, it also became an inspiring way for local people to connect with the Easter message of death and resurrection as they were invited to cover the bad news stories with flowers to represent hope and rebirth."

The project was the idea Church Army Captain, Frank McGregor, who is the Parish Creative

Missioner for the Hanley CoE Team ministry in Stoke-on-Trent. Throughout his ministry, Frank has used his artistic talents in both church and community to share the good news of Jesus Christ in creative ways. Frank's role involves art, drama, music, mural painting, making mosaics, weekly arts & craft groups, Messy Church as well as community events. He aims to use his creativity to surprise, entertain and challenge as he lives out the bible verse that impressed him when he first became a Christian in 1981: "Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come. All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also" (2 Cor 5:17)



An Easter Arts Trail

Loughborough Churches Partnership held a week long arts trail across their town during Holy Week to make an impact on their community by erecting large exhibits outside eight churches around the centre of town to communicate the importance of the Easter story. They produced a Lent Reading Plan that could be used by individuals or groups choosing gospel readings from the Easter week story and comments and prayers were provided by 40 different Christians across the town. A song called 'The Power of the Cross' was sung in many churches across the town in the lead up to Easter. Some of the eight churches also focused teaching on the circumstances surrounding their exhibit.

On Easter Sunday morning, the art trail came to a climax with a united 30-minute service in the Market Place.

A guide, with a map of the town showed the location of each exhibit with a page explaining each of them, over 2000 guides were distributed.

On the Saturdays at either end of Easter week and for the Thursday between them, they hosted a stall in Loughborough Market giving out guides, children's leaflets, Easter eggs and answering questions about the trail and the Easter story, encouraging people to do the

tour. About 70 people were involved in serving on the stall and several churches were involved.

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