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| **The Church of Ledbury** |
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## Ecumenical Ministry

## Project

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| **Church Leader’s Update December 2020** |
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*“I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message… so all of them may be one, Father, just as you
are in me and I am in you… so that the world may
believe that you have sent me” (John 17:20-21)*

The church leaders are aware that the last communication relating to the ecumenical project was earlier this year and we wished to update you on developments that have taken place since.

For those who don’t get out much then we must inform you that there has been a global pandemic since our last newsletter. This has obviously impacted the work of all the churches in the town, not least in the opportunities to develop ecumenical work between us. However, whilst the external face of the work may have been restricted there has been much happening behind the scenes.

The church leaders have been meeting together with Tony throughout this time. We have also met with leaders in the diocese and with an organisation called Futurekraft who work with churches in establishing social action projects. The outcome of these meetings is that we intend to take the missional and ecumenical work of the town and place it under the auspices of a charity.

It will be called LEAF (Locally Encourage All to Flourish) and in essence the charity, headed up by Tony Hodder as the Chief Executive Officer, will be the main instrument through which the churches take the gospel into the community. Whilst we will remain in our church families for pastoral care and fellowship the majority of the missional work of the churches will now come under the organisational umbrella of LEAF effectively making it the outreach arm of the church. We no longer wish to view evangelism as an activity undertaken by single denominations. Instead projects will be established that will then be able to draw on the wealth of ministries, gifts and callings that are to be found in the individuals throughout the local churches. To this end the charity will become a means by which we can maximise the resource we have across the churches in the town.

In the first instance the primary focus of LEAF will be on building on and establishing a raft of Social Action projects. As a charity it will have access to funding streams that we are currently unable to access and this will provide fresh impetus for the work.

It is important, in fact it is vital, to understand that LEAF is not a para-church organisation. Whilst we appreciate that its primary focus will be out in the community it remains the missional arm of the Church of Ledbury and the connection with the local churches must not be diminished in any way. To this end the leaders of each of the churches will become ex-officio trustees and will oversee its work. They will be supported by Anna Nugent (County Ecumenical Officer) and Derek Chezney (Archdeacon of Hereford) and Peter Williamson (business Trustee)” with other business Trustees being considered in future as the need warrants.

The work has been divided into specific strands for development. There is a “Physical Well Being” strand. As well as new initiatives this encompasses elements that we are already seeking to establish in the town such as CAP (Christians Against Poverty) which will begin work in 2021. There is an “Emotional Well-Being” strand and it is hoped that grant funding will allow the churches to provide free professional counselling for those who require it. There are also plans to establish work related to bereavement support. The youth work will seek funding to extend its influence with the teenagers in the town and a strand for children will pull together the work of primary aged children. The scope for further outreach is in truth as broad as our ecumenical imagination. Whilst the church leaders remain the gateway for discerning God’s voice moving forwards it is hoped that many in the churches will seek God as to how we might outreach together in new and innovative ways in taking the gospel into the town of Ledbury.

At the heart of all we do is the foundation of prayer we have built in recent years through the 7/12/7 project. We would encourage every Christian in the town to join the church leaders and those across the denominations in joining as one church to pray and seek God together. It is our contention that everything we do, of any value for the kingdom, will be borne out of these times that we spend together before God.

Finally, we appreciate this is the briefest thumbnail sketch of what is planned and is to be seen simply as a “heads up” for what is coming in the New Year. Further details will follow in due course, but should you wish to know more in the meantime then please feel free to talk to any of the church leaders who can furnish you with more information.

*Adrian, Geoff, Keith, Martyn and Phil
(Leaders in the respective churches in Ledbury)*