

FPCT Justice and Peace Group visit to the Penryn Campus of the University of Exeter and Falmouth University, 8 May 2017

16 people from FPCT churches attended the visit to the University of Exeter's Penryn Campus arranged by the Justice and Peace Group. The programme organized for us had been carefully thought out and we were first welcomed with tea, coffee and cakes in a seminar room where we were treated to several interesting presentations on some of the teaching, research and life of the campus, followed by some discussion and then a short tour in two groups of a few of the research laboratories.

Ruth Grimmer, Head of Professional Services and Professor Dave Hosken, Professor of Evolutionary Biology and Dean of Strategic Development, Cornwall, introduced us to the work of the University of Exeter on the Cornwall campuses (i.e. the Medical School departments based in Truro as well as the Penryn Campus), with regard both to undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and to research. Professor Hosken explained that the campus as a whole is about sustainability and therefore is very interdisciplinary, with research into energy creation from manure, waves, solar power, and health research in the environment, such as bacteria in the sea. Similarly, the Camborne School of Mines looks at climate change, the Institute of Cornish Studies seeks to promote a greater knowledge of historical and contemporary Cornwall, the Business School looks at the circular economy, e.g. using insects as food and waste from the farming industry, and now part of the University's Maths department is there relating to engineering problems, so that science, technology, English, Maths and medicine are all interrelated. They are also trying to encourage Cornish schools to get involved with the University. Sadly the departments of Chemistry and Theology had to be abandoned because of a lack of funding, since the reduction in UK government funding. With Brexit the University is monitoring closely the potential funding sources for the future but in the meantime is being very successful in securing grants through the last tranche of EU funding into Cornwall where it has several projects working with local businesses and other education providers in the Duchy. Approximately £490 million went into the Cornish economy over the first 10 years of Falmouth University and University of Exeter being at Penryn. It is now estimated approximately £1m a week goes into the economy of the Duchy.

Dr. Mike Leyshon, Senior Lecturer in Geography, followed this up with a reference to the £8 million grant funding they were receiving from the EU and then described some of the projects they are working on. These include work on the NHS, such as the "Living World" and "Living Well" projects, combatting loneliness, care problems such as bed-blocking, isolation, etc., the "Eden" project on social prescribing – getting doctors to change their approach – and how to involve disaffected young people, by developing their approach to volunteering. This includes the Bicycle project, working in conjunction with BikeWorks in Penryn: young people start by working on a simple engineering project, which provides them with hard and soft skills training, which they are looking to build into apprenticeships with the St. Piran Academy for 2 years, then Truro College. In some cases this can lead to them becoming professional cyclists. They concentrate on global connectedness without losing what it means to make us human, such as small acts of kindness, which is where volunteering comes in, because it makes better communities in which to live. He also said that our throw-away society has to change. Other community projects they are looking at include using the skills of older people – the "Men in sheds" project and the "Repair café" in Falmouth – which also helps to combat the loneliness of some old men in retirement.

Other new projects, described by Professor Frances Wall, Professor of Applied Mineralogy and from 2008-2014 Head of the Camborne School of Mines (CSM), also part of the University of Exeter at Penryn, look at ethical mining, such as the use of new technologies in gold mining to avoid the dangerous use of mercury in a world where most of the miners are small scale, poisoning both themselves and the environment, and the big mines use cyanide in a controlled way. The Impact Project between the UK and South Africa seeks to use a different technology to mine gold and to show that it is possible to start a mine without spending

millions of dollars, although there are now more big mines. When buying jewellery we should think about what we are buying, using Fairtrade gold, where it is easy to identify the source, and the Responsible Jewellery Council, which has a code of conduct, or the Gem Field, which uses responsible sourcing. We should also be aware that many components of smart phones, such as aluminium and steel, need a responsible sourcing agenda. This requires a long term view – 40-50 years – with corporate responsibility and people who can work in mines, which need to be sustainable. The Camborne School of Mines is helping countries, e.g. in Africa, to get it right, with a “switch on/switch off” approach, which is responsive to market forces. They are also looking at ways to do small scale work, with smaller deposits in Europe, such as Project FAME, which has lower start-up costs. The CSM has a high world standing, with links around the world, and over Easter 2018 the 40th International Mining Games will be held at the King Edward Mine at Camborne.

There was then a lively discussion, with questions as to how we can find out what is going on on the campus (local press, community newsletter delivered to houses in Falmouth and Penryn, Café Sci, community conversations, etc.) and get involved with the universities. This led to a description of the student volunteering programme, which includes 18 new student led projects with a social element started in the last 2 years and volunteers have helped locally with the Scouts, with the beach clean, with sports in societies, from which students can acquire skills from volunteering and log hours spent on projects, leading to bronze, silver and gold awards: so far this year 7,000 hours have been logged. Organizations, such as FPCT or individual churches, can register with the “V Team” at FXU (joint for both Falmouth and Exeter Universities on the Penryn Campus). Messy Church might be a suitable recipient of volunteers. June is a good time to set up projects for the new academic year. Projects linking up older and younger people, such as the Penryn Memory Café helped by many students, are good. We were told that in Holland and Sweden rooms in care homes are rented out to students, which led to a suggestion of involving student volunteers in care homes here. The Street Pastors have a link with students and it was also suggested that we should arrange a lunch for FPCT and students to get together.

We were then led on a guided tour to some of the University of Exeter research laboratories, where staff described some of the fascinating research projects they are involved in, often interdisciplinary and always with practical implications for the improvement of the global environment. We finished with a look at the mining museum of the Camborne School of Mines. The whole visit was extremely interesting, giving us an insight into some of the work undertaken by the University and giving us ideas as to how we in the churches might be able to get involved with students on the whole campus. Many thanks to Mary Bradley for arranging this and to those university staff members who gave so freely of their time to inform us.

Sue Mills