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Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Churches Together in Oxfordshire held via ZOOM on 9th September 2020

Those present: Revd. Jason St John Nicolle (Chair); Revd. John Anderson (Acting Secretary); Chris Robins (Treasurer); David Hare (CEDO); Rt. Rev. Colin Fletcher, Bishop of Dorchester; Revd. David Llewellyn (Regional Minister, Southern Counties Baptist Association); Geoff Hale and Hubert Allen (Churches Together in Marston & Northway)

Apologies were received from: Rt. Rev. Stephen Croft, Bishop of Oxford; Revd. Helen Cameron (Chair, Northampton Methodist District); Revd. Clare Downing (Moderator of the URC Wessex Synod); Revd. Romily Micklem and Alison Orr (Christchurch LEP, Thame); Deacon Selina Nisbett (Trinity LEP, Abingdon); Revd. Michael Lakey (St Mary's Chalgrove); Revd. Kate Harford (University Chaplain and Pastoral Care Lead, Oxford Brookes University)

1. The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome and a prayer.
2. The Chair thanked those present for attending especially Bishop Colin and, in his absence, paid tribute to Rev. Martin Wellings for his contribution over a number of years.
3. The Minutes of the last AGM had been circulated and were accepted by those present.
4. **The Treasurer's report – Chris Robins**
 - 4.1. The Treasurer had circulated his report, the 2019 accounts and the budget for next year. As this year had been unusual Chris was not certain how the accounts will finish. The travel costs were down but the CEDO has had to have a new computer. The proposed budget for 2021 was based on the same basis as a 'normal' year.
 - 4.2. The Treasurer proposed the accounts for 2019 and the budget for 2021. This was seconded by Revd. David Llewellyn, and carried unanimously.
 - 4.3. The Chair thanked Chris Robins for all his hard work.
5. **County Officer's Report – David Hare**
 - 5.1. The CEDO's report had been circulated prior to the meeting. David was thanked for his report and work.
 - 5.2. John Anderson asked about progress on the review of Oxford Brookes University chaplaincy. David said that the appropriate University board was to review the report on 8th October and it was hoped to make the review public after that.

6. Election of Officers

6.1. The following were elected:

- Revd. Jason St John Nicolle – Chair;
- Revd. David Llewellyn - Vice-Chair;
- Revd. John Anderson - Secretary;
- Chris Robins – Treasurer.

6.2. David Llewellyn was thanked for his willingness to take over the role vacated by Revd. Martin Wellings.

7. Key note speaker- Rt. Revd. Colin Fletcher

7.1. Bishop Colin offered reflections on his time in ministry, particularly as the Bishop of Dorchester before his “proper retirement in November”.

- Technology has changed things, with the pace of adaptation being extraordinary.
- We will not go back to where we were, either in the short or medium term. There was rich ecumenism in villages which might be lost
- There has been a drop in the amount of commuting, especially during the pandemic. The hope was that this meant more time at home with family and local communities including churches.
- Physical communities still matter. Lock down had highlighted the importance of place and support within the community e.g. food banks and local support groups.
- We have missed each other, physical presence matters, concerns over growing mental health issues. How do we nurture an incarnational faith?
- How do we support our ministers?
- Forty-five years ago ecumenical meetings between traditions were tentative. Things had improved but there was still a huge way to travel. There was encouragement at local level, but there were difficulties at higher levels.
- Bishop Colin had returned to a study of Paul; he noted that for Paul Christian unity was not an option, unlike today when it feels as though it is.
- The future presents huge challenges, including climate change, in which the ecumenical movement can have a voice and an impact.

7.2. A ‘question and answer’ session followed, during which there was much appreciation of Bishop Colin’s reflection and his ministry. His concerns over exhausted ministers was echoed. “How can church leaders support them more effectively?”

8. The Chair thanked Bishop Colin for his reflection and for his ministry of encouragement.

9. Bishop Colin closed the meeting with thanks to Jason for chairing the meeting, a reading from Isaiah 52 and a prayer by St Birinus (circa 600-650 AD), the first Bishop of Dorchester.