



Churches Together in Oxfordshire Enabling Group
Minutes of the Meeting held via ZOOM
on Thursday 29th September 2022

Those present: Jason St. John Nicolle (Chair, Church of England), David Hare (County Ecumenical Officer), Chris Robins (Treasurer), John Anderson (Secretary, Methodist), Steve Barber (Baptist), Glyn Millington (URC)

Apologies: None

- 1) The Chair welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with prayer, using the collect for the Feast of St Michael and All Angels, from the 1928 version of the Book of Common Prayer.
- 2) The minutes from the February and April meetings were agreed as correct.
- 3) The Chair reported that Bishop Gavin had agreed to become President of Churches Together in Oxfordshire. He had asked that a free churches co-President be found and Rev. Steve Barber agreed to take on this role, albeit in a holding capacity. Both appointments were agreed, as was the proposal that the appointments be reviewed and renewed every three years.
- 4) Chris reported that the finances were in a generally good state, as expenditure was not yet at pre-COVID levels. Most denominational contributions had been received, two were being followed up, one very small one may be waived. This was agreed. It was also agreed that local group contributions would be waived again. The budget for next year would be circulated later and Chris asked if this could be agreed via e-mail. Chris would write to local groups to explain the actions that had been agreed.

Chris

The Chair thanked Chris for his work on the finances.

5) *Local Ecumenical Partnerships*

- (a) Holy Family, Blackbird Leys: No news had been received by anyone. John had hoped to lead worship there over the summer but this had not happened. CEDO offered to contact the Archdeacon of Oxford.

David

- (b) Christchurch, Thame: Rev. Romily Micklem had resigned and Rev. Richard Atkinson, Superintendent of the Aylesbury Methodist Circuit had taken over pastoral charge. Subject to stationing there would be a Methodist minister appointed from September 2023. The Secretary had taken over the finalisation of a new constitution.

John

- (c) Oxford Brookes Chaplaincy: in view of the lack of a Church Leaders' meeting, this group agreed that the Chaplaincy would no longer be considered an LEP. Chaplaincy work continues in the multi-faith environment and the CEDO is still working with the Lead Chaplain.

- (d) Trinity, Abingdon (Methodist/URC): the Secretary reported that Trinity was working through some significant financial issues, and that the Wantage and Abingdon Circuit was reviewing its commitment to two Methodist Churches in Abingdon plus a connection to the Peachcroft LEP.
- (e) Faringdon United Church (Methodist/URC): the CEDO had spoken to Rev. Fred Ireland, the Methodist minister, who appeared quite down. People who offered significant leadership had either died or were about to move away. The question regarding the amount of URC involvement in the church was raised but not answered. It was suggested that David, Glyn and John liaise with Fred over what support could be offered.

David/John/Glyn

- (f) Ladygrove, Didcot (Church of England/Baptist): It was reported that Rev. Hugh Boorman is retiring soon and that there was little Baptist input into the LEP. There was a conversation regarding potential ecumenical input into the work amongst the considerable amount of new housing in the area.

- (g) Peachcroft, Abingdon: the CEDO to follow up the potential of a review

David

- 6) Dates for the AGM were suggested as 8th, 13th or 21st March 2023. Venue to be either Bicester, ZOOM or hybrid. Rev Helen Cameron to be approached for her availability and preference.

John

- 7) The Secretary reported that the web site was getting a small amount of use. The work regarding GDPR and updated contact lists was still outstanding and it was suggested this might be combined with the Treasurer's letter.

John/Chris

- 8) Update from January meeting on the way forward: it had not been possible to organise the roadshow. It was proposed to have a time together for reflection on Friday 18th November, followed by lunch. Chris was asked to check the availability of Kidlington Baptist Church.

Chris

- 9) Support for refugees: John had met with Ukrainian refugees in Wantage and knew that "Host Abingdon", originally created for Syrians, had been revived for Ukrainians. He wondered whether there was a role for CtIO to act as an agent for connecting disparate groups together. It was suggested that 'Christian Concern for One World' may be involved in this work. Steve also mentioned 'Asylum Welcome' in Bicester.

- 10) Support for churches offering "warm spaces" and food banks: a conversation about how churches could be supported in this. Liaison with local Councils was recommended; the Warm Welcome Campaign was suggested; the work of Community Grocery was commended. Steve reported that Southern Counties Baptist Association was offering £500 to support churches offering warm spaces.

- 11) Sharing of news: the imminent retirement of Jenny Bond from the staff of Churches Together in England was noted. When asked what her role had been during her many years of service the Chair suggested “chief herder of ecumenical cats”!
- 12) Any other business: none.
- 13) *Date of next meeting:*
 - (a) Friday 18th November, 10.00 at Kidlington Baptist, followed by lunch (to be confirmed)
 - (b) Thursday, 2nd February 2023 via ZOOM
- 14) The meeting closed with a time of shared silence, followed by the Grace.