



Churches Together in Oxfordshire Enabling Group
Minutes of the Meeting held via ZOOM
on Thursday 2nd February 2023

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), Nick St John (Roman Catholic)

Apologies: None

- 1) The Chair welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with prayers based on Candlemas and light.
- 2) The minutes from the September and November meetings were agreed as correct.
- 3) None.
- 4) *Financial matters* – the draft accounts were with the examiner. Expenditure was still down on pre-COVID levels; reserves were down but at £12,000 were still more than we need to carry forward. There were no questions for Chris, who was thanked for his work.

5) *The way forward*

- (a) The Chair and David were discussing remuneration for the CEDO post and how to meet local groups

Jason/David

- (b) Bishop Gavin was willing to host a meeting of the church leaders. The Secretary had circulated his attempt to identify potential invitees to the meeting but quickly ran into the problem of miss-match of denomination size and structures. The Secretary and CEDO were asked to create a list of those whom we could invite to the meeting, keeping in mind Chris' comments regarding our existing contacts, through finance, for the Salvation Army, Quakers and Orthodox church.

David/John

- (c) There was a conversation surrounding the questions "what would be the purpose of the church leaders' meeting? What would persuade them to come?" Some suggestions as to theme were "What can we do together rather than apart?" and an exploration of the Roman Catholic initiative on synodality.

- (d) We needed Bishop Gavin to suggest a suitable date and venue.

Jason/Steve

6) *Local Ecumenical Partnerships*

- (a) Holy Family, Blackbird Leys: It was reported from the Archdeacon that conversations were ongoing.

David

- (b) Christchurch, Thame: Glyn and John had been able to attend the Church Meeting where the new model constitution had been approved unanimously. The church had

the responsibility of sending it to the Charity Commission, after which point it would go to Methodist District Synod and URC Wessex Synod for approval. The church was currently in the pastoral care of the Methodist Superintendent minister but an application had been made for another Methodist presbyter to come in September. It was noted that this was an ageing congregation with reducing numbers, especially URC members. Glyn reported that the URC General Assembly had said that within an LEP all members can be considered as URC members.

John/Glyn

- (c) Trinity, Abingdon (Methodist/URC): the Secretary reported that conversations had taken place involving Rev Clare Downing, URC Wessex Synod moderator, Rev Keith Underhill, Methodist Superintendent of the Wantage and Abingdon Circuit, Rev Ian Griffiths, Methodist minister in Abingdon, and leaders of Trinity. The purpose had been to explore the possibility of a URC minister being available to replace Ian when he leaves in 2024 but, as Glyn has reported previously, this appears very unlikely.

Rev Ian reported to the Secretary that despite Trinity's current constitution stating that CTiO as the sponsoring body should be involved in these conversations, Rev Clare had said that this is no longer the case. It was agreed that David and Jason should follow this up.

Jason/David

- (d) Faringdon United Church (Methodist/URC): the current state of the church was described as "struggling".

David/John/Glyn

- (e) Ladygrove, Didcot (Church of England/Baptist): Steve had met with the church to explore the possibility of Baptist ministry involvement but the church was facing a number of difficult issues including funding.

Steve

- (f) Peachcroft, Abingdon: Steve and David had attended a meeting of the Joint Council, where it had been decided that a Baptist minister was the most likely outcome, and Rev Paul Goodliffe was to be approached to act as interim moderator to help Peachcroft through the appointment process. The Youth worker had also left and so questions were being asked about how the funding could be used. There was also a suggestion that the URC might purchase a manse.

Steve/David

- (g) St Francis, Banbury: David was asked to make contact.

David

- 7) *Oxford Brookes Chaplaincy* – the celebration service was now to be held on 27th April at 4pm.

All

- 8) *Updates from local "Churches Together" groups* – Nick asked how many there were; Chris has a list of those who have contributed financially, but it wasn't clear how many groups had re-started after COVID.

John

- 9) *Arrangements for 2023 Annual General Meeting* – to be held at Emmanuel Church, Bicester, with Revd. Helen Cameron as key note speaker, augmented with two or three ministers local to Bicester to share something of the work of the churches together, particularly within the areas of new housing. Bicester Christian Action to be invited. Refreshments to be served on arrival.

Steve

Meeting to be streamed via YouTube on one of the church's web sites. Projector and screen to be provided if required.

Steve/John

Everyone asked to advertise as widely as possible, John to send out invitations to the current contact list and via the web site.

All

- 10) *Web site, GDPR and updated contact lists* – the web site continues to get a small number of views with a few enquires and requests coming to the Secretary. The work regarding GDPR and updating the contact lists was still outstanding.

John

- 11) *Sharing of news*

(a) Glyn reported that Revd. Clare Downing, Moderator of the URC Wessex Synod, is moving to a similar post in Manchester at the end of March.

(b) Jason reported that Revd. Canon David Tyler was to become the new Archdeacon of Dorchester. He had been "acting" in that position since October 2022 and Associate Archdeacon before that.

- 12) *Any other business*: none.

- 13) *Date of next meeting*:

(a) Thursday, 25th May at 12.30pm via ZOOM

(b) Thursday, 5th October at 12.30pm, Christchurch URC, Henley-on-Thames

- 14) The meeting closed with a sharing of the Grace.