

CTiO Oxfordshire AGM

held at Emmanuel Church, Bicester

March 13th 2023

1 Welcome, opening devotions – Chair

Jason led us in the prayer from the Book of Common Prayer for Ash Wednesday. Twelve attending plus some on-line. Nine apologies.

2 Apologies

From John Anderson our secretary, smitten by the after-effects of Covid.

Plus Bishop Gavin Collins, Bishop of Dorchester; Venerable Jonathan Chaffey, Archdeacon of Oxford; Rev Clare Downing, Moderator URC Wessex Synod; Rev. Miriam Moul (Oxford Methodist Circuit and Chaplain to Oxford Brookes University); Hugh Brooman (Banbury Churches Together); Fiona Gow (Secretary, Banbury URC); Rev Kevin Beer (CTWA); Rev Toby Wright, Team Rector, Benefice of Witney.

The Chair may wish to note that Rev Clare Downing is leaving Wessex this month for more northerly pastures; and that Hugh Brooman is unable to attend because he will be in hospital recovering from surgery.

3 Minutes of last AGM (attached)

Approved!

4 Treasurer's report (attached)

Our expenses are down a long way, so we have held subscription rates steady and hope to lower it a little again this year. The accounts were approved, with thanks.

5 County Officer's report – David Hare (attached)

Circulated before the meeting. David's report was welcomed.

6 Election of officers

- Chair – Rev Jason Nicolle
- Treasurer – Chris Robins
- Secretary – Rev John Anderson

All re-elected **with acclaim!**

7 How to address the challenges of new housing – Rev Steve Barber

and other Bicester church leaders (Helen and James)

The video of the whole meeting can be found here, with the “New housing” challenge addressed from 6:20 onwards. Below are some notes I was able to make which may not be totally accurate.

Four main estates are built around Bicester, some 14,000 new houses. Over 12 years the churches have worked out how to partner in reaching these new communities, without replication of effort. Collaboration is a key theme.

- Kingsmere – Baptists taking the lead, but then pulled back to
- Eco-town. 6,000 houses in total. Emmanuel, CofE.
- Craven Hill

A guiding principle in working together has **Kingdom first not denomination**. Relationships are foundational, and the Weekly ministers’ breakfast has been crucial in forming and sustaining relationships and at times offering mutual support. The churches have set up a charity for church work together. “Bicester Christian Action.

7.1 James spoke about Bicester Christian Action.

This is an independent charity aiming to tackle poverty and alienation. **It was a response to issues prompted by projects undertaken which didn’t quite fit “normal ecclesiastical structures.”** It has considerable Community backing as well as the churches. Alleviating poverty, opportunities for companionship and inclusion, helping to build community.

Examples of their work: . Food Bank, Street Pastors, Refugee support, Hope in action, Parenting courses, Open Doors cafe.

The response from the community has been very positive, including local government. It’s all about “helping people move from dependency to being actors in their own lives. ”

7.2 Helen re Grange Hill

New housing not in itself a challenge, our response may be. New housing developments represent an investment and a growth opportunity.

8 Keynote address – “Carrying nothing but the world - church as humble, relevant and loving” -

Rev'd Canon Helen D. Cameron (see below) (I have simply noted a few central points from Helen's address.) Helen explained the “Free churches group” of which she is Moderator. . 29 denominations. A voice for smaller denominations. She made mention of the Protestant Dissenting Deputies!

If ecumenism is not just a special interest, that will be because relationships matter. Alongside stories from her travels she quoted John 15:

12 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

Can friendship, ours for Jesus and for each other, bear the weight we put on it? As a mode of doing ecumenism? Helen clearly believe that it can, and that friendships at the national and local level are of the greatest importance in our ecumenical endeavours. “If intermediate level structures are crumbling, let ‘em crumble!!”

Never mind orthodoxy, what matters is orthopraxy. How would it be if our churches were known not so much for their differences in belief , but more for their shared focus on loving action.

9 Questions and conversations about Helen's talks.

Jason quotes John 15

14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants,[a] for the servant[b] does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. 17 These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

10 Any other business

Nada, niente, zilch.

11 Closing devotion – Chair

No objections were raised to finishing early!

Further details for Emmanuel Church in Bicester can be found at The Enabling Group of CTO is:

- Chair & Church of England – Rev Jason Nicolle

- Baptist – Rev Steve Barber
- Development Officer – David Hare
- Treasurer – Chris Robins
- Secretary & Methodist – Rev John Anderson
- URC – Rev Glyn Millington
- Roman Catholic – Father Nick St. John

Rev'd Canon Helen D Cameron is Chair of the Northampton Methodist District. Helen is also Moderator of the Free Churches Group of Churches Together in England and one of the six Presidents of Churches Together in England. Helen has previously served on the staff of Queen's Foundation in Birmingham and as Assistant Secretary of the Methodist Conference.