



Churches Together in Oxfordshire Enabling Group
Minutes of the Meeting held via ZOOM
on Friday 26th May 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)

Apologies: None

- 1) The Chair welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with prayer.
- 2) The minutes from the February meeting were agreed as correct. Minute 6(c) – David had researched the current understanding of the role of the County body at National level. The sponsoring body was no longer responsible for reviews; this was down to denominations, but CTiO could offer reviews. Thanks offered to David for this research.
- 3) None.
- 4) *Financial matters* – Chris reported that requests for subscriptions had gone out, and to date two thirds had been received. There were no questions for Chris, who was thanked for his work.
- 5) *The way forward*
 - (a) Bishop Gavin had proposed lunch on Tuesday 26th September 2023 for the meeting of the church leaders. The initial thought was to re-convene the group as it was a few years ago. Members to send to Jason the names of potential invitees, especially looking to include those groups not represented on the enabling group. Leaders to be asked how they perceive what the purpose of the leader's group meeting to be. *Jason to circulate the invitation list when complete.*

All/Jason
 - (b) Jason and David to meet with local groups – no further progress.

Jason/David
 - (c) *(David left the meeting temporarily.)* The Chair and David's conversation to discuss remuneration for the CEDO post was yet to take place.

Jason/David
- 6) *Local Ecumenical Partnerships*
 - (a) Holy Family, Blackbird Leys: It was reported from the Archdeacon's office that conversations were ongoing.

David
 - (b) Christchurch, Thame: A minor change had been made to the third document, "Local Practice". The three documents would be submitted to URC Wessex Synod and Northampton Methodist Synod before being sent to the Charity Commission.

John/Glyn

- (c) Trinity, Abingdon (Methodist/URC): John and Glyn had attended a church meeting at Trinity where discussion centred around the nature of future presbyteral ministry, the current financial position and a possible joining with All Saints Methodist Church, Abingdon. A similar meeting was to be held at All Saints; a possible merger would obviously affect the nature of the LEP. The Secretary reported that the results of the Trinity church meeting was that they would seek a Methodist minister when Rev. Ian Griffiths moves on.

John/Glyn

- (d) Faringdon United Church (Methodist/URC): Jason had met Rev. Fred Ireland at the installation for a new vicar in Faringdon.

David/John/Glyn

- (e) Ladygrove, Didcot (Church of England/Baptist): David was to be involved in a Staff Consulting Group which was to be set up. It may cease to be an LEP which would have implications for the Baptists within the congregation. Jason said that the diocese was reviewing the allocation of ministry within “greater Didcot”.

David/Steve

John thought that it would be worth exploring the possibility of linking with Didcot Methodist Church. He would e-mail Rev. Keith Underhill, Superintendent of the Wantage and Abingdon Circuit.

John

- (f) Peachcroft, Abingdon: They are now without a minister. The URC would provide a manse as the previous incumbent lived in her own home. They were considering advertising for a full-time minister, which would be more attractive for a Baptist, though the church are to advertise across all denominations and “none”. Steve clarified the position of the Baptist Union and non-accredited ministers, in that a waiver could be applied for.

Steve/David

- (g) St Francis, Banbury: David had written but had not had a response.

David

- 7) *Oxford Brookes Chaplaincy* – David had attended the celebration service that marked the end of the LEP chaplaincy.

- 8) *Updates from local “Churches Together” groups* – either by direct contact or via Methodist colleagues, the Secretary had been able to update the state of play for our local groups, post-COVID. This was now reflected on the “CT Groups” page on our web site. It was much better than anticipated though there appears to be a trend for groups to abandon the formal, constituted “churches/Christians together in ...” model and move towards a more informal gathering, via Facebook or e-mail. Wallingford is such an example. This may have an impact on our future finances. John was thanked for his research and work on the web site.

- 9) *Annual General Meetings*

- (a) *Review of 2023 meeting in Bicester* – it was thought that the venue and format of the evening worked well; Rev Helen Cameron spoke very movingly from her recent personal

experience. Thanks were offered to Steve and his family for their help with the arrangements and especially the technical aspect of streaming the meeting on YouTube. (To date the video recording has been watched 28 times). It was unfortunate that so few people were able to attend.

- (b) *2024 meeting – Provisional date of Monday 4th March* had been discussed, and shared with Bishop Gavin who was keen to get a date in his diary. A venue in the west of the county, such as Witney, was suggested; John to find and book.

John

It was suggested that the church leaders be formed into a panel and discuss a topic such as “churches serving the community”. This could be discussed at the Church Leaders’ Meeting in September.

Jason/Steve

- 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 ongoing.

John

11) *Sharing of news*

- (a) David reported that Doral Hayes had taken over Jenny Bond’s role as Principal Officer for Ecumenical Development and Relations within CTE.
- (b) John reported that Rev Helen Cameron, Chair of the Netherhampton Methodist District would “sit down” (retire) in September 2024, and would, subject to Conference’s approval in June, be replaced by Rev. Sonia Hicks. She is currently serving as Superintendent of the Wembley Methodist Circuit and the Chair of the Methodist Council. She was President of the Conference in 2021-22.
- (c) John reported that Rev. Peter Powers, Superintendent of the Oxford Methodist Circuit, was leaving in September and would be replaced by Rev. Miriam Moul, who is currently part-time chaplain at Oxford Brookes. Miriam will leave her chaplaincy role and ministry in Cowley Road and take pastoral charge at Wesley Memorial Methodist Church. The Circuit are exploring the possibility of the chaplaincy position being replaced by a lay person.

- 12) *Any other business* - Jason shared a recent experience where an invited speaker had been unable to fulfil their commitment due to their safeguarding training not being up to date, which was a salient reminder to us all.

13) *Date of next meeting:*

- (a) **Thursday, 5th October at 12.30pm, Christchurch URC, Henley-on-Thames. Glyn would provide lunch, meeting to finish by 2.00pm**
- (b) Provisional – Tuesday 6th February 2024 (Ash Wednesday is 14th February) via ZOOM

- 14) Closing prayers were offered by Steve.