

Churches Together in Oxfordshire Enabling Group
Minutes of the Meeting
held, via ZOOM, on Thursday 8th February 2024

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), John Parry (Salvation Army); Doral Hayes (CTE, part-time)

Apologies: None

1. The Chair opened the meeting with prayer and then welcomed everyone, especially Major John Parry who was with us for the first time and Doral Hayes from CTE. Brief introductions were offered by everyone present.
2. *Conversation on the way forward for CtiO*
 - 2.1. Doral began the conversation by outlining the current state of intermediate bodies across CTE. There was a huge variety of activity across the country, from none to very active. There was more activity where there was a wider spectrum of denominations involved. Fresh energy came from the non-traditional churches, mainly from within the charismatic or Pentecostal forms of church, and where there was a particular focus on mission. In seeking a way forward we could be asking “what can we do differently”? Her advice was to not be afraid to try something new, and not be afraid of failure.
 - 2.2. Steve - “How do we enable involvement with the other ‘non-traditional’ churches?” Doral reminded us that those in leadership positions often had secular day time employment. The ‘new’ churches had often been formed out of exclusion and therefore a personal invitation was better than an anonymous e-mail. She also reminded us that if the church or church group was on the CTE web site then this implies a willingness to be involved in ecumenism. They were often not ‘new’ having been around for decades!
 - 2.3. Jason - “What is the role of the county body?” Doral suggested it was to be a support of and a conduit from the national body to local churches; to fly the ecumenical flag; to share good stories, particularly as ecumenism is missional in nature.
 - 2.4. John believed that there was a gap in the provision made by the Flexible Framework, as it related to those churches that had adopted an ‘Ecumenical Welcome’.
 - 2.5. In closing, Doral offered a word of encouragement, recognising that the ecumenical space was not a clear space to navigate at the moment. She observed that when we work ecumenically we are changed by the process.
 - 2.6. Prayers of blessing were offered by Jason, Doral and David; Doral then left the meeting.
3. John was thanked for the minutes from the October meeting which were agreed as correct. Conversations continued regarding CEDO remuneration.

4. *Financial matters* – The annual accounts and associated documents had been circulated and would be presented to the AGM. There were no questions, so Chris was thanked for his work as Treasurer. John Parry promised to chase the Salvation Army subscription.

John P

5. *Church Leaders' meeting*

An invitation has been sent to the new Moderator of the Wessex URC Synod, Revd. Dr. Michael Hopkins, but as he will not be in post until March he was unable to attend. He would, however, look forward to working with us in the future. A similarly warm apology had been received from Archbishop Bernard Longley.

Steve and Bishop Gavin would be asked to create a program for the meeting; Steve welcomed input from those present!

Steve/+Gavin

6. *Annual General Meeting, 2024 meeting*

John had booked High Street Methodist Church, Witney for the evening of Monday 4th March and Dr. Martin Reeves, Chief Executive of Oxfordshire County Council had accepted our invitation to be our key note speaker. John had also taken the liberty of inviting members of the Witney Town Chaplaincy team to speak about their work. Everyone was asked to publicise the meeting.

All

John was working with the administrator of the church with regard to the availability of the coffee bar and streaming or recording the meeting. Steve offered his apologies as he is unable to attend meeting.

John A

7. *Local Ecumenical Partnerships*

- (a) *Church of the Holy Family, Blackbird Leys (Church of England/Baptist/Methodist/URC, [MoravianLutheran](#))*– Nothing further to report **David**
- (b) *Christchurch, Thame (Methodist/URC)*: John still waiting for a signed copy of the new Constitution **John A/Glyn**
- (c) *Trinity, Abingdon (Methodist/URC)*: Farewell service for Rev Ian Griffiths is to be held at Trinity on Sunday 21st July at 3.00pm. The welcome service for Rev Georgina Bondzi-Simpson is to be held at All Saints Methodist Church, Abingdon, on Sunday 31st August at 3.00pm. **John A/Glyn**
- (d) *Ladygrove, Didcot (Church of England/Baptist)*: An advert had gone out for a new minister. Was there a possibility of a Baptist minister within a “house for duty” post? **Steve/David**
- (e) *Faringdon United Church (Methodist/URC)*: Nothing further to report **David/John A/Glyn**
- (f) *Peachcroft, Abingdon (Church of England/Baptist/Methodist/URC)*: A Baptist minister had been for a “preach with a view” service and a decision would be made soon. **Steve/David**

(g) *St Francis, Banbury (Church of England, Methodist, URC, Roman Catholic):* Nothing further to report. **David**

8. *Updates from local "Churches Together" groups*

Steve reported that there was no formal "churches together" group in Bicester, and that some relationships had become strained over LGBT issues. "What do we lay aside in ecumenical relationships?" The Secretary was asked to locate a copy of the foundational document for 'the Church in Abingdon'.

John A

9. *Web site, GDPR and updated contact lists*

Nothing to report

John A

10. *Sharing of news and any other business*

None

11. *Dates of next Enabling Group and Church Leaders meetings:*

(a) Wednesday, 24th April 2024 at Kidlington Baptist Church. **Chris had made a booking, but not for our normal room, and at 12.45pm**

(b) Wednesday, 2nd October 2024 via ZOOM

(c) Provisional Church Leaders' meeting 6th November 2024

12. Steve closed the meeting in prayer.