



Report of the Chair of the Bedfordshire Ecumenical Committee (BEC) to the Forum held on 1st May 2018

First, to repeat my earlier thanks for coming along tonight. It is encouraging to see so many people, and to see the attendance at the Forum increasing. We had a good turnout in Luton last year, with an excellent keynote address by Chris Curtis of *Youthscape*. This evening we look forward to what Luke Lerner has to share with us about his work as a pioneer minister – something which transcends the boundaries of church. As the publicity poster put it – ‘It’s Church, but not as you know it’

You didn’t receive a printed report from me in advance of this evening, and you haven’t been given a printed report from me this evening. A major reason for this is that there would be considerable overlap with the printed report which you do have – the review of the past year and statement of future plans, which (providing we approve it later in our meeting) will accompany the submission of our annual accounts to the Charity Commission.

So, since last year’s Forum, it has been another challenging year for Bedfordshire Ecumenical Committee OR Churches Together in Bedfordshire as the charity has now been renamed – WE ARE TRYING TO GET USED TO USING THE CORRECT LOGO!

Thank you to members of the Committee who have served over the past year, especially to Monsignor Sean Healy who has been my fellow Trustee.

Additional thanks to Sean for agreeing to ‘hold the fort’ as interim Chair of the Committee during my ministerial sabbatical, which begins on 8th May and ends on 18th August.

I am pleased to report that, as of last week’s Committee meeting, we have now appointed another Trustee, Alan Dansey.

Alan is also our webmaster, and we thank him for that work.

Thank you, also, to Stephanie for all the administrative support work she has done for CTBeds.

Thanks, also, to Lucky Chidumba, who is in her first year as CTBeds Treasurer.....(Lucky here?!)

In mentioning Lucky, I also want to express thanks to her predecessor as Treasurer, Peter Hammond, who died on 28th March. Peter’s funeral is this coming Thursday, 3rd May, and I will be representing CTBeds at the 2.30pm Thanksgiving Service.

I need to comment on a few specific things in my report:

1. County Ecumenical Development Officer (CEDO)
Anita Nancollas resigned in January 2018;
Express (and minute) thanks to Anita for her work as CEDO;
Voucher sent as TY gift, which Anita has acknowledged;
Anita also sent a Mass Card – explain, if necessary – and is praying for the Forum this evening.

The CTBeds Committee, which met last week, is reflecting on the way forward with the CEDO role. A small group has met to look at the Job Description and Person Specification. We are taking this carefully, not least because of the ongoing financial implications of employing a successor to Anita – especially in light of some of the other financial challenges which CTBeds is facing.

There is another CTBeds meeting in July, which will move forward with this.

One legacy from Anita = *Let us pray* Prayer Card

2. Financial challenge presented by need to resolve the pension deficits, and also settlement of outstanding unpaid invoices (which we have only recently been made aware of) relating to the use of Lakeview Hall for Wixams Church activities.
3. The AGM also needs to be aware that the Independent Examiner raised some questions with regard to reconciling various aspects of the 2016 accounts. We are still working on these, and the information (especially copies of bank statements) we have at long last acquired from HSBC in recent days will help to resolve this. However, this does mean that CTBeds is currently in breach of its responsibilities for submission to the Charity Commission. Please be assured that action is being taken to resolve this.
4. Letters requesting payment of 2018 annual subscriptions by contributing denominations, Churches Together groups and Local Ecumenical Partnerships would normally have gone out in January. These will be sent out over the next few weeks, with the subscription levels proposed to be the same as for last year (i.e. sliding scale depending on size of congregations/membership).
5. On a more positive note, we hope that Churches Together groups and LEPs feel more in touch with CTBeds, due to regular emails from Stephanie and also information on the website. Thank you to those who send items for inclusion, especially news and photos of your events – this Good News is very much appreciated,
6. Also hope that Churches Together groups and LEPs have appreciated receiving Easter greetings from CTBeds.
7. Still proposed that the CTBeds Committee meetings will move around the county. As well as meeting at various churches in Luton and Bedford, we have been hosted by Churches Together in Harlington and Churches Together in Dunstable – in both places we received a short presentation about their ecumenical vision, work and concerns. Offers to host future Committee meetings around the county would be very welcome.
8. Finally, we are very pleased to have already secured our Keynote Speaker for the CTBeds 2019 Forum, which will be held on the evening of Thursday 9th May – venue to be advised. The Keynote Speaker will be Archbishop Angaelos, Archbishop of the London Diocese of the Coptic Orthodox Church.....

At last year's Forum I concluded my report..... A few weeks ago we received the shocking news of our brother and sister Christians from the Coptic Orthodox Church being attacked and murdered in Egypt. As we continue to pray for them, and for all persecuted Christians around the world, we are acutely aware of how necessary the message and work of unity is. This applies within and between our Christian churches, but also increasingly in our relationships with other faith communities. This isn't just an international concern, but it is a high priority for Christians and churches in some parts of Bedfordshire.

Although our concern here this evening is with the life of Churches Together in Bedfordshire, we must remember that we are part of a much larger family of Christians throughout the world, many of whom are facing significant challenges which we hardly dare to think about.

Please pray for them, and for CTBeds as we move forward in these challenging times, placing our faith in God, seeking the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as brothers and sisters within the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev. Andrew Hollins