

Churches Together England

2018 Forum – I am with you always - Together in God's Mission

Report by Alan Dansey

From Monday September 17 to Wednesday 19 September I was privileged to be in Derbyshire representing Bedfordshire at the Forum. This meant that we were able to utilise a free space at the Forum and show our commitment to CTE.

I was impressed with the organisation and scale of the event. 270 delegates were present; I tried to introduce myself to them all but sorry I may have fallen short! There were a good number of young people and those I spoke to were full of enthusiasm and energy.

I learnt that CTE comprises 47 member churches and 49 intermediate bodies; there was a display of posters and banners from them on the main conference room walls. I am not sure if all were represented but I certainly met people from many of them. It is good to know that all agree with and subscribe to CTE's statement of belief and are committed to working together. I am pleased to report that I did not hear anyone criticise another denomination. There was a great feeling of unity and a keenness to learn from each other.

We heard from our six presidents; the senior leaders of our main denominations. They meet up regularly and seem to know each other well. In conversation they were very open and were not afraid to refer to their own situation and experiences. They all seem to be very aware of current issues worldwide and are determined to work together to respond.

I enjoyed hearing from Archbishop Angaelos, the Orthodox CTE President. He is very down to earth and believes that 'Only by working together can we alleviate the pain suffered by so many'. I look forward to seeing him again at our 2109 Forum.

I enjoyed the diversity and the unity! It was good to learn about different styles of worship. I learnt so much that it is difficult to know what to include in this report and what to leave out.

One of the workshops that I attended was entitled “The presence of Christ in human diversity”. I came away with plenty of ideas about how we can welcome people into our meetings and enjoy what we can learn from them.

I also attended a workshop on prayer and learnt about different approaches to it. Nowadays my prayers are mainly informal and unscripted but I now feel challenged to read books with prayers in. We also discussed the power of praying by meditating on Bible verses.

From a personal point of view I learnt a lot about Churches Together and was inspired! I am not tied to a denomination. I did not meet anyone else there who is not but found everyone keen to learn from others, as indeed I am. I came away feeling motivated and encouraged. I will be following up on some contacts and am keen to continue to work for ecumenism not just in Biggleswade but throughout the County.

I found that we in Bedfordshire have much in common with other counties. However we also have some benefits e.g. a small area with easy transport. Also a willingness to work together that is not true everywhere!

It is a shame that the next forum will not be for three years. Are there any other events that I can attend to meet with representatives and compare notes with other counties and regions? I am keen!

Alan Dansey
October 29 2018