

Churches Together in Newport Pagnell

Forum/Annual General Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 23 June 2016

Present: Keith Bedford, Lisa Benson, Betty Course, Moira Evans, Rev Nick Evans, Steve Greenfield, Mary Howard, Beth Mackay (Secretary), Rev Nicola Martyn-Beck, Rev Jenny Mills, Geoff Morris, Linda Morris, Kimonie Nicholls, Pat Parker, Gerald Ramsay, Deacon Klaus Reidel (Chair), Hazel Reynolds, Chris Row, Nita Tolley, Paul Tolley (Treasurer), Rev Jack Walker, Jill Walker, Bill Watson, Chris Watson, Neville Watson

1. Opening prayers and welcome

The meeting opened with prayer led by Klaus Reidel and Klaus welcomed Nicola Martyn-Beck, Nick and Moira Evans and Steve Greenfield to their first CTNP Forum.

2. Apologies for absence

None

3. Minutes of the last Forum meeting

The minutes were agreed and the only matter arising, not covered in the agenda, was the required amendment to the CTNP Constitution to allow for one mandatory Forum per year instead of two as currently stated. Any change to the constitution requires agreement from the churches and Beth apologised for not having followed this up with them and said it was something the new Secretary would need to progress once in post.

4. Nominations/election of new officers

Chris Row was nominated by Beth MacKay, seconded by Paul Tolley, and unanimously elected to the post of Secretary to replace Beth who was stepping down after more than eight years in the post. Beth was thanked for her service during this time.

Paul Tolley agreed to continue for another year as Treasurer,

No nominations were received for the office of President so the post remains unfilled.

5. Treasurer's report

Paul Tolley presented his report which showed a credit balance of £1,662.96 of which £1064.75 is being held for the Holiday Club and £340.81 is for the Burkina Faso project. The remaining £257.40 is general CTNP funds. Paul told the Forum that he has requested contributions of £150 from each of the churches to fund our 2016 activities. In addition to this, the churches have been asked to contribute £150 each to cover the cost of hiring an open-topped bus for the carnival (see item 8 below).

Paul also gave an update on the Burkina Faso project and reported that another £250 had been received since he produced his report which brought the total raised to £4,600. Paul said it would be nice to reach our target of £5,000 before the end of December to allow plenty of time for it to reach Christian Aid and for the necessary paperwork to be submitted to the EU by March 2017 for the promised x5 match funding which will increase our £5,000 to £30,000.

Paul said that fundraising ideas and offers of help to plan events to raise the final £400 would be welcomed.

Paul was thanked for his work as Treasurer and for agreeing to continue for another year.

6. Working group reports

Detailed written reports from each of the working groups were circulated prior to the meeting and the following points were noted in discussion.

6.1 Ministers group (see report submitted by Klaus Reidel)

Klaus said he had omitted to mention the Pulpit Exchange in his report. For organisational reasons this took place on Sunday, 7 February rather than during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity as originally intended and demonstrated that all the churches and ministers work well together. It is thought to be a more effective way of reaching the regular members of churches with the message of unity than holding a united service on a Sunday evening.

Jenny Mills spoke about the URC's big challenge to continue to raise awareness and funds for the Mead Centre. The overall cost is approx. £660,000 and it is hoped to raise this by a combination of personal regular giving by standing orders, local fundraising events and appeals to grant-giving trusts and corporations. The next major fundraising event is a Summer Extravaganza on 15 July from 7pm at Christ The Cornerstone and Jenny asked people to advertise this in their churches and to continue to raise awareness of the project.

6.2 Christian Aid group (see report submitted by Pat Parker)

Pat again stressed the need for additional collectors as the shortage this year meant that a lot of roads in the town were not covered and the total house-to-house collection was approx. £700 less than last year.

(See also Treasurer's report for progress update on Burkina Faso fundraising project.)

6.3 Mission group (see report submitted by Hazel Reynolds)

a) Lent groups: Hazel asked for feedback on the 2016 sessions and comments included: good spread of attendance; more at first film than second; enjoyed format; interesting discussions; all those attending seemed to actively participate in discussion; two large groups better than small house-group format; quality of projection was poor in the Methodist Church; difficulty seeing the screen in the Westbury unless in front row and also comfort issues as not much space to move about. It was generally agreed that a similar format would be good for next year but with the URC as the venue. During discussion it was suggested that the sessions might be based on artwork instead of films and possibly include a visit to an art gallery. ***Mission Group to follow up.***

b) Good Friday/Easter: Hazel said that despite a few hiccups on the day, the Good Friday procession and service had been well attended and well received. Most people seemed to prefer the service being in the Parish church although a few had said they missed having it on the High Street. It was generally agreed that the Good Friday service is not a mission activity but is for the church community and that it's important that the churches have a presence in the town on Good Friday even if there are not many non-church people around.

The real mission activity is the 'Love Won' Easter biscuit distribution on Easter Saturday morning on the High Street. This was the second year of doing this and It was agreed that it works well and is worth repeating. Nicola commented that there is something to be said for establishing a tradition rather than changing each year just for the sake of it.

Other comments/suggestions included: putting on a Passion play; enlisting the help of a performing arts college or local drama group. Noted that the Mark Topping production in the Methodist Church a few days before Easter was excellent.

c) Nativity on High Street: It was agreed that this event had been very successful and a model worth repeating. More advertising/awareness raising needed around the town as people didn't seem to know that it was happening until approached on the day. Agreed that Steve and Natasha Wood's performances were excellent and Jenny suggested that Steve is asked to brief other hosts/performers to help get them into character. All volunteers were greatly appreciated and it was particularly good to have some children taking part (sheep at the Methodist church). Agreed that it would be good to have more young people involved next time. Nicola suggested approaching schools/colleges for production/directing help. Thanks to all involved in organising this event and a special thanks to Moira Evans for her creative input,

d) November Songs of Praise: Agreed that this was another popular and successful event although it didn't appear that many people from outside the church community took part despite encouraging people to invite friends and neighbours. Agreed that it is definitely worth doing again this year.

Hazel thanked everyone for their helpful comments and suggestions which will be taken into account by the Mission Group when planning future events and activities.

6.4 Communications group (see report submitted by Neville Watson)

Neville explained that the Communications Group is a forum where representatives from the different churches can cooperate together in developing CTNP's communication strategy and materials – in print and online. His report detailed the variety of materials produced, the communication channels used and the approximate numbers reached. He also included a graph showing the number of unique visitors to the website per month and said that one of the pages with the most visits is the monthly Minister's Letter – both current and archived – which shows that these letters are an important wide-reaching mission opportunity (via Phonebox, Connections and the website). The Holiday Club page is also popular and he suggested putting some more photos of last year's club on the website as people have also been visiting last year's page.

Neville also stressed the importance of using the website not just to advertise events but to **explain** Christianity, why we have services and what it's like to worship in the different churches. He encouraged people to be creative and send him contributions for the website (even if just a paragraph) to help with this. Neville himself has written and published a significant amount of text in the 'About Christianity' pages and has asked the ministers to look at this to make sure that they are happy with it. At the time of the Forum he had not received any comments from them.

Neville asked about the CTNP logo and whether he might be allowed to produce a simplified version that will work better when reduced in size. Members of the Forum agreed that he should go ahead with this as technology has moved on significantly since the original logo was designed.

Klaus thanked Neville for all the work he has done on communications.

6.5 Emergency Help Scheme (see report submitted by Nita Tolley)

Nita stressed the continuing need to recruit more drivers and asked church reps to publicise this in their churches. The more drivers there are, the less often their services will be required.

The EHS is still without a Chair and there had been a suggestion that loosening the connection between the churches and the EHS might encourage non-church volunteers/committee members to take on this role. However, Nita reported that EHS members were not sure about this and there will be no change until they have had a chance to discuss further. Bill Watson said that the EHS was originally set up as a community scheme and there has never been a requirement for members (or Chair) to belong to any of the churches.

7. CTNP Holiday Club

Jack Walker reported that planning for this year's holiday club (15-18 August) is well underway. There are still places available – number of registrations a week before the Forum was 78 which is about half way to the target of 150. Skeleton teams have been set up but additional helpers are needed especially young ones. The club is only running for four days this year due to a clash with Soul Survivor.

8. Carnival

Steve Greenfield outlined plans for CTNP's participation in this year's Carnival which was due to take place two days after the Forum. An open-topped bus had been hired for the procession at a cost of approx £900 and the FA Cup Final was chosen as the 'sporting moment'. The theme for CTNP was Christians United and a gazebo was to be set up on the field afterwards where the work of the churches could be promoted (e.g. the winter night shelter, Hope MK and the Holiday Club). A Christians United leaflet had been produced and 1000 copies printed for distribution during the procession and on the field afterwards. Chocolate footballs were also to be given out. It was hoped that people from all the churches would help with preparation, take part in the procession, and help in the gazebo afterwards. Klaus thanked Steve and the other members of the task group for organising this.

9. Healing events

Nick Evans told the Forum about the healing events he has been leading at St Luke's for those interested in finding out more about healing. So far there have been three meetings which have been well attended and included members from various churches. Nick said that there are lots of ways of coming to God and for some people this happens because of things they have seen e.g. experiences of healing (themselves or others). Nick said he wants to encourage people from all the churches to participate in this healing mission as he does not want it to be seen as 'just an Anglican thing'. The next meeting is on **Monday, 25 July at 7.15pm in St Luke's** and is open to everyone.

10. Any other business

None

11. Date of next Forum

The next Forum was arranged for **Thursday, 22nd June 2017 starting at the earlier time of 7.30pm** at the Methodist Church.

After the formal business, refreshments were served and Jack and Nicola gave informative and entertaining talks on the Baptist and Methodist denominations respectively.

The evening ended with The Grace.