



CHURCHES TOGETHER IN KENT

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From: Revd Michael Cooke, Secretary to Council, and County Ecumenical Officer for Kent

Minutes of a Meeting of Full Council

held at 10:00 am, on Wednesday 22 November 2006
at The Hermitage, West Malling, Kent ME19 6HB

Present:-

Mr Michele Cascioli (Hon Treasurer to CTiK); Bishop Brian Castle (Rochester Diocese); Revd Alex Cheyney (Kent Baptist Association); Revd Geoffrey Collins (URC); Revd Melvyn Cooke (Methodist); Revd Michael Cooke (County Ecumenical Officer); Revd Malcolm Cooper (Methodist); Tony Cross (Kent Baptist Association; Chairman of CT Kent); Revd John Currie (Rochester Diocese); Revd John Hellyer (Methodist); Bishop John Hine (Southwark Archdiocese); Revd Jeremy Ive (Rochester Diocese); Canon Jean Kerr (Rochester Diocese); Major Sarah Kind (Salvation Army); Revd Guy Laurence (Kent Baptist Association); Revd Ruth Matthews (Kent Baptist Association); Revd Jim Perryman (Canterbury Diocese); Revd Bryan Shirley (URC); Revd Pauline Sparks (URC); Michael Steynes (Religious Society of Friends)

Apologies were received from:-

Revd Robin Blount (Canterbury Diocese); Major Anthony Cotterill (Salvation Army); Bishop Graham Cray (Canterbury Diocese); Fr Wilfrid McGreal (Southwark Archdiocese); Revd Nigel Uden (URC); Bishop Stephen Venner (Canterbury Diocese)

1. Welcome to Visitors/Newcomers , followed by Opening Prayers

The chairman welcomed to their first meeting:-

- **Revd John Hellyer** (First Chair of the new South East District of the Methodist Church)
- **Revd Peter Neatham** (Assistant chair of same South East District – NB Peter had been a member of CT Kent until his retirement in 2001)
- **Revd Pauline Sparks** (Ecumenical Officer for URC for their South East London District within the Southern Province)

We recalled also the death since our last meeting of **Bishop Charles Henderson** KC HS (who had died 10th April 2006): a former long-standing, much loved member of Council; significantly responsible within the Catholic Archdiocese for *inter alia* Christian Unity Commission and Interfaith work). The verse on his death card reads “Like good stewards responsible for all these different graces from God, put yourselves at the service of others” (1 Peter 4:10)

2. Apologies for Absence; and agreeing our Agenda for today

The Current Membership List (as at 9 November 2006) had been distributed as a pink sheet.

3. Finance of Churches Together in Kent

Michele Cascioli reported that although income was down (principally because of lower contributions from Churches Together groups, expenses were even lower (less travel, secretarial and stationery). He was predicting a year-end probable surplus of ~£150 for income over expenditure.

The budget for 2007 had already been agreed (see Minutes of ...), with the larger denominational contributions being £3,481 (smaller denominations therefore each contributing £696).

Reminding the meeting that there would be no increase in contributions from 2006 -> 2007, the treasurer felt that the denominational contributions for 2008 would need to be 4% higher, because he needed to factor in not only an expected 3-4% rise in stipend, but a significantly higher contributions to the County Ecumenical Officer's pension fund. The resulting budget was agreed, is appended to these minutes, and members were asked to notify their denominational treasurers of the contribution figure for 2008 viz. Southwark, Canterbury and Rochester £3,620, and the smaller denominations £724.

Action: All

The treasurer also reminded the meeting that the major contribution made by CT Kent to cover the deficit arising from Wellspring 2005 would also need to be recouped over the next few years - and the church leaders had agreed that this would be in addition to the regular budget.

Discussion included thoughts on how much value local churches feel they get from CT Kent. If, rather like insurance, they usually don't see much value to themselves for most of the time, local Churches Together groups need to be made aware of how CT Kent furthers a common kingdom in other areas. Michael Cooke was asked to include some such thoughts in his forthcoming circular to Churches Together groups some background/explanation on the role of CT Kent.

Action: Michael Cooke

4. Issues from the Church Leaders' Meetings

The most recent was on 13 September 2006, the next is due on 20 December 2006.

4.1. Ashford: Mission Co-ordinator (Revd Simon Ellis is now Missioner in Ebbsfleet)

Lessons learnt included the needs for local support, local management, handling a financial shortfall, ecclesiology, ownership. "Where there are new developments, we are not good at churches working together" Simons's final report would be circulated (appended to these Minutes).

4.2. Prayer across Kent in 2007 (c.f. "Pass the Baton")

The consensus is that this is a good project, although (not least because of Bishop Graham's sickness) it is moving forward very slowly within Kent. Bishop Graham is convening a meeting of those interested in co-ordinating such a county-wide prayer initiative.

4.3. Asylum Destitution (c.f. *correspondence with H M Government/Immigration*)

The issue is what happens to asylum seekers between the refusal of their application for asylum, and the appeal. Tony Cross reported that the church leaders had written to the Department of Immigration & Asylum; a non-too-satisfactory response had been received.

4.4. Casinos in Kent

The issues were the possibilities of major casinos being located in Kent. The church leaders had formulated a careful statement - it had been important not to 'stop fun', but to point out to local authorities that having a casino brings other social issues/consequences. Attention was drawn to the excellent statements from the Methodist Church and the Salvation Army. After representations, proposal for casinos in Canterbury and Dartford had been shelved; it was reported that Gravesham has no policy on casinos.

4.5. Kent Rural Delivery Framework

Bishop Brian reported on the background to this Draft Report, and to the major omissions contained within it. The Church Leaders together, and Church in Society had each made a robust response, and all hoped that the next draft/final document would now recognise the part that churches and the church have in rural matters.

4.6. Children and Young People

on the basis of a limited survey the report "Generation Y" (c.f. successor to Generation 'X') had conclude that there was a major lack of spirituality (as we would understand it) among children and young people; instead their driving forces were looking for oneself and being happy. If this conclusion be further substantiated, it implies there needs to be a major shift in emphasis on how churches approach the majority of young people in society. Members were encouraged to read "Mission-shaped spirituality".

4.7. Hospital Chaplains

Financial pressures have been a driving force for Healthcare Trusts to reassess (reduce) their presumed need to employ hospital chaplains. Pressure has also come for chaplains to be seen as for all faiths; and members were reminded that the humanist society claim to represent 28% of the population.

4.8. Kent Industrial/Workplace Mission

A report will be discussed by church leaders at their meeting on 20 December 2006.

4.9. Hope 2008

This ecumenical initiative was a successor to local initiatives such as Love Liverpool, and Soul in the City. Jean Kerr would ask the distributors why many church leaders in Kent had not yet received the promotional DVD which was now available. Further information would be known through the local co-ordinator (Andrew Wooding Jones, at Ashburnham Place)

Hope 2008 will also be an agenda item at one of the forthcoming meeting of the church leaders (20 December 2006 or 10th January 2007)

5. Other National and Regional News/Issues, including Churches Together in England (CTE)

5.1. CTE Forum (12-14 May 2006)

Melvyn Cooke reported that though this Forum had inspirational moments, there were (As usual) not many practical outcomes – it is not that kind of meeting. One issue for Churches Together in England (and ourselves) is the representation ecumenically of 'non-historical' churches.

5.2. Pilgrim Post

Members were reminded that following the latest issue, CTE will no longer produce Pilgrim Post as we have known it. Instead, from 2007 information will be largely be electronic – for details see the latest issue of Pilgrim Post.

6. LEPs and Informal Local Partnerships, and other joint work

6.1. Latest situation(s) on LEPs

The denominational Ecumenical Officers continue to meet approx 3 times per year to review particular issues; there is a sense that some LEPs are struggling partly though changing balance of denominational representation, partly through support (or changing support) from the denominations themselves. Sheets (green, attached to agendas) summarised the information known to Michael Cooke; corrections were welcomed.

6.2. Matters from other partnerships and local Churches Together Groups

No matters had been received.

6.3. Chaplaincy work (Police, Fire and Rescue, Ambulance)

Bishop Brian reported on a recent letter from Kent's Chief Fire Officer, and his contacting Rural Deans to help volunteers.

6.4. Training for church involvement in Critical Incident Response

Two members had attended the recent course run by Church in Society, but spoke of some frustration that some aspects of the course seemed to be more about jumping through hoops. Such feedback should of course first be directed to Church in Society.

7. Aims and Objectives for Churches Together in Kent

A discussion paper had been pre-circulated, and following further points noted at the meeting would be discussed further by the church leaders at their meeting on 20th December 2006. Amongst point made in discussion were:

- LEPS are the only visible sign of practical unity between the churches
- The inter-church nature of LEPs is not readily recognised by denominations (c.f. finance/subsidies); examples can be seen in the emerging deanery pattern in Canterbury diocese.
- The current support/oversight provision by CT Kent is not working (c.f. the gaps in cover)
- How far is CT Kent able or willing to act as arbiter or broker when there are local difficulties? (Examples could also be cited of the support given recently to the Methodist/URC churches in Thanet and Dover/Deal)
- There is a grey area between CT Kent's responsibility and the leaders' in respect to finance/oversight/accountability for LEPs.
- Some LEPs were conceived and formed by the need for survival – not the strongest reason for their existence
- Some LEPs have been conceived with a vision of added witness in new housing areas; sadly that vision is not always as fully lived out because of institutional factors as a real witness sin their The average church member does not understand what the ecumenical vision is
- CT Kent has no teeth, no recognition, no authority in the matter of LEPs. (There needs to be key changes at the top of denominations, and at local level
- We need to be burdened by catholicity – what we can do/be effectively in a specific local place and yet still be a recognised part of the much greater whole.
- We are in a society which is becoming much more parochial – people don't communicate.
- We need to be counter-culture
- There is a need to do some theology (together)
- How can ecumenical work be more coherent?
- The first need is to look at the ecumenical vision within Kent
- There is much work in progress on a better way of working together ecumenically, and it is too important to be rushed for a quick fix.

8. **Communications**

Updates were always needed to CT Kent's Ecumenical Directory. (The latest November 2006 issue can be downloaded from www.ctkent.org.uk) Though few ecumenical events across Kent are notified to Michael (and there may not be many happening!), the

current list does attempt to cover major meetings and Synods of denominations, so is commended as a source of pointers to personal and church prayer.

9. Denominational News

9.1. Baptists: The **Kent Baptist Association officially closes** at 5pm on 22 December, and thereafter the effective regional association is the South East Baptist Partnership. Tony Cross' successor will be appointed at the end of November 2006

9.2. Methodists: The **new South East District** came into being on 1st September 2006, and is making slow progress about what its future structures need to be; all had been told "You have a clean sheet", but that is not strictly true! For the first 6-8 months the major task will be the essential ones like future stationing of ministers; the District interacts with 5 counties, and thoughts are continuing as to the best ecumenical representation for these.

9.3. Roman Catholic: A consultation document has just been published "**Towards a Vision for the Diocese**", which will be discussed within parishes in Lent 2007; the background is a demographic fall in the number of priests from England/Ireland (though not from overseas), and this has impact for what happens in parishes and indeed for the structure of parishes themselves.

9.4. URC work in progress includes

- (a) **Removing a layer of church government** (specifically removing Districts) so that organisation is less people-hungry; new boundaries are being formed.
- (b) There is a lot of resistance amongst South London Districts and churches to the possibility of a **London Synod** (which would include part of the present Southern Synod);

10. Minutes of the previous Meeting of the Council held on 15th March 2006

These had already been distributed, were agreed by the meeting as a correct record, and were signed by the chairman.

11. Matters (not already noted above) Arising from Minutes of 15th March 2006: None!

12. Any Other Business, including

12.1. Chairman of Churches Together in Kent from 2007

Tony Cross reminded the meeting that his role as a Baptist Regional minister ceases (see 9.1, above); he will continue as CT Kent Chairman until March 2007, by which time a new Chair need to be found/volunteered.

12.2. Date(s) of Future Meetings (subject to Item 7 above!)

Agreed dates for 2007 are **Wednesdays 14 March and 21 November**

One date was set for **2008: Wednesday 19 March**

12.3. BBC Radio Kent

Geoffrey Collins reported from the Religious Advisory Group to BBC Radio Kent; despite representations from the Advisory Group, the BCC had discontinued "Thought for the Day".

12.4. Farewell(s)

Revd Ruth Matthews, for whom this would be her last meeting as a KBA representative, was warmly thanked for all her wisdom and contribution.

13. Closing Prayers

These were led by the chairman; the meeting closed at 1 pm.