



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 14 March 2007
at The Hermitage, West Malling, Kent ME19 6HB

Present:-

Mr Michele Cascioli (Hon Treasurer to CTiK); Revd Alex Cheyney (Kent Baptist Association); Revd Geoffrey Collins (URC); Revd Michael Cooke (County Ecumenical Officer); Major Anthony Cotterill (Salvation Army); Revd Tony Cross (South Eastern Baptist Association; Chairman of CT Kent); Revd John Currie (Rochester Diocese); Revd Oliver Harrison (Canterbury Diocese); Bishop John Hine (Southwark Archdiocese); Revd Jeremy Ive (Rochester Diocese); Canon Jean Kerr (Rochester Diocese); Major Sarah Kind (Salvation Army); Revd Guy Laurence (South Eastern Baptist Association); Revd Peter Neatham (Methodist South-East District); Fr Geoffrey Pointer (Southwark Archdiocese); Revd Pauline Sparks (URC).

Apologies were received from:-

Revd Robin Blount (Canterbury Diocese); Bishop Brian Castle (Rochester Diocese); Bishop Graham Cray (Canterbury Diocese); Revd John Hellyer (Methodist); Fr Wilfrid McGreal (Southwark Archdiocese); Revd Bryan Shirley (URC); Michael Staynes (Religious Society of Friends); Revd Nigel Uden (URC); Bishop Stephen Venner (Canterbury Diocese)

1. Opening Prayers

The chairman led prayers based on John 8: 12-20, and on the theme of light and darkness in the world.

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

The Current Membership List (as at 11 March 2007) was available on CT Kent's website. We noted the addition since our last meeting of Revd Norman Tharby (South Eastern Baptist Association); we also learned of the resignation of the Revd Jim Perryman as Ecumenical Officer for Canterbury Diocese.

3. Issues from the Church Leaders' Meetings

(most recent one took place on 10 January 2007; next one is due on 9 May 2007)

3.1. Kent Industrial/Workplace Mission

(a) Note the change of name. (b) There are issues over the future emphasis of KWM.

3.2. Hope 2008 (? Linked with Prayer across Kent)

Members had seen the video produced by Hope 2008 (see www.hope08.com), and its commendation by the presidents of Churches Together in England. Within Kent we may expect the delayed Prayer across Kent to be linked to preparation for Hope 2008.

4. Finance of Churches Together in Kent

Michele Cascioli reported that the year-end accounts for 2006 would soon be completed. Income from Churches Together groups was £932 (c.f. budget £1,500), but encouragingly the letter sent out in late 2006 had already brought in £741 for 2007. Thanks primarily to very low secretarial costs there was a surplus of £483 – but this included £250 from one denomination to offset the previous year's Wellspring loss.

Current balance was ~£5k (usual for early in the financial year). The final accounts would be available by the next Church Leaders' meeting (due 9 May 2007), and the meeting was content that they be approved there.

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

5.1. Latest situation(s) on LEPs

Since most day-to-day issues are discussed at the Denominational Ecumenical Officers' meeting, only late-breaking news was discussed.

Hamstreet: Oliver Harrison had completed a Review; ecumenically, the LEP was working well. Issues concerned financial contributions to the parent denominations – an issue also common to other LEPs in East Kent (e.g. Sturry, which was also considering being moved into Reculver Deanery, and Grove Green.) John Currie and Jeremy Ive informed the meeting that the manner of their LEPs' agreements with denominational treasurers might be of help.

Bridge: The Anglican and Methodist churches have agreed to set up a Sharing Agreement using the Anglican church. Robin Blount has suggested that as a first practical step the churches need to draw up a Statement of Intent.

Birchington: Michael Cooke reported that Canon Bill Clements (Roman Catholic) had asked how Birchington's six churches, which had been developing very good relationships, could now move to a Covenanted Partnership. Michael had forwarded the model documents provided by CTE.

Other Issues:

- Appointments to LEPs are not always made with the ecumenical dimension sufficiently in mind – examples were cited of e.g. Anglican parishes where the private patron was not aware of the recommended consultation that ought to take place (c.f. CT Kent's "Appointments where there is an ecumenical Dimension")
- How many LEPs have a functioning Staffing Consultative Group?
- What happens to LEPs when the usual pattern of alternating ministry is not taking place?

Other LEPs: The meeting proposed that the denominational officers and other representatives from LEPs meet to assess the issues across all LEPs in Kent

*[Post-meeting note: Michel Cooke will attempt to convene this meeting. **Action: Michael**]*

5.2. Matters from other partnerships and local Churches Together Groups

The meeting heard of the withdrawing of the Roman Catholic congregation from Churches Together in Hythe and Saltwood. [Note added after the meeting: Apparently, this may have been because of a local constitution which was non-standard and contained some wording which would be unacceptable to Catholics. Michael would endeavour to find out more.]

5.3. Chaplaincy work (Police, Fire and Rescue, Ambulance) - No update given.

5.4. Training for church involvement in Critical Incident Response

John Cunningham had taken over from Jane Winter the arrangement of the Critical Incident Training Programme. The next 2-day course was due to be held on 25 October 2007 and 14 November 2007.

Michael Cooke had conveyed to John the concerns expressed at our last meeting about seemingly excessive bureaucracy.

John had reported that he was meeting on 26 June with Steve Scully (KCC Emergency Planning Unit) to identify individuals from other faiths and communities in Kent who might be willing to become Chaplains. If Council members knew of such individuals, please let John know soon! **Action: All**

6. Aims and Objectives for Churches Together in Kent

The meeting noted

- (a) Frustrations expressed by Denominational Ecumenical Officers, and
- (b) A discussion paper (distributed, and attached to these minutes) resulting from our previous meeting.

Observations/points made included:

Geoffrey Collins (who has been “a member since 1991, when the Council was the key player”) made the following three observations:-

- Now it seems the Church Leaders’ meeting is the main meeting, with Denominational Ecumenical Officers’ and Council’ meetings “tacked on”
The church leaders are insufficiently present at Council
- Council used to meet morning and afternoon, with a good fellowship break at lunchtime
- We have not had much from CTE to consider

In response it was noted that since 1991 denominational leaders have even greater responsibilities to cover; and in some cases relate to upto 4 County bodies, and attendance at Council is just not possible given leaders’ diaries.

- How committed are Church leaders to Churches Together in Kent?
- Bishops are present increasingly less often; Archdeacons used to be present.
- In a written note Wilfrid McGreal had felt the discussion paper provided some way forward, if denominational leaders could meet together on one occasion with Council.
- How much responsibility do Ecumenical Officers have at Council – so often experience has been that they need to refer back to their denominational structures/leaders
- Tony Cross noted that the Church Leaders’ meeting had continued to develop, and some ‘thorny’; issues had been resolved there which would not have been possible in the Full Council – examples cited included the (non)appointment of the Ashford Missioner, Kent Workplace Ministry, a response to KCC’s draft document “Rural Delivery Framework”, letter to Department of Immigration.
- Lack of representation of newer churches
- How can CT Kent better develop links with local Churches Together groups? Should CT Kent be more involved with local CT groups?
- There are things going on which are pulling LEPs apart (e.g. withdrawal by Methodists of Recognised & Regarded status) – how can we influence such decisions?
- There is a need to clarify what the relationship is between the leaders, ecumenical officers, Council
- Can communications within CT Kent be a substitute for poor communications within individual denominations?
- Much of the agenda of Council is not relevant to my denomination (c.f. LEPs for Catholics)
- The ecumenical agenda has been side-lined –we are often just going through the motions – could we not be more proactive in promoting the ecumenical agenda?
- LEPs are now *Partnerships*, which imply a degree of permanence of a relationship which has not been matched by changes in understanding or practice within the individual participating denominations.
- What have been the tangible outcomes from a Council meeting?
- The idea of a web-blog was proposed, but others warned of the difficulties of moderating such a facility

Michael Cooke, Nigel Uden and Anthony Cotterill would be meeting the following day to propose some positive next steps. If members had other observations, please let one of these three know ASAP! **Action All, then Anthony, Michael and Nigel**

7. Denominational News

URC: (a) Major decisions re whether to set up a London Synod will be taken at National Assembly; (b) Districts will be abolished from July 2007.

Canterbury Diocese: Following the resignation of Jim Perryman as DEO, Bishop Stephen has written to Oliver Harrison and Robin Blount asking for suggestions on the way forward for ecumenical issues within Canterbury Diocese.

8. Other National and Regional News/Issues, including Churches Together in England

8.1. CTE Website

Michael drew attention to CTE's re-vamped website, and the fact that it contains CTE's E-news, which is the successor to the former printed Pilgrim Post.

8.2. County/National Ecumenical Officers' Meeting (22-24 May 2007)

Michael expected to be attending this; please let him know if there issues members would like to ask to him to raise with other County Ecumenical Officers.

8.3 International Meetings

The Kirchentag on-line registration is available in English. Since he is the UK organiser, Robin Blount asks that registrants let him know. The Third European Ecumenical Assembly takes place in Sibiu: the foundation document will be the Charta Ecumenica.

9. To approve the Minutes of the previous Meeting of the Council held on 22 November 2006

These had already been distributed – and were available from www.ctkent.org.uk. They were agreed by the meeting as a correct record, and were signed by the chairman.

10. Other Matters Arising from Minutes of 22 November 2007 – None!

11. Any Other Business, including

11.1. Chairman and Vice-chairman of Churches Together in Kent

The Revd Nigel Uden had agreed to accept nomination as Chairman from summer 2007 (when his current chairmanship of Churches Together in South London comes to a natural end). Major Anthony Cotterill had likewise agreed to accept nomination as Vice-Chairman. Both of these appointments were very warmly welcomed.

At this point Anthony Cotterill took the Chair, and gave a warm expression of the meeting's thanks to Tony Cross who was standing down. Tony's future ministry (training, and in mediation) was noted – see www.harmonyic.org.uk

11.2. Date(s) of Meetings in 2008

Agreed date for 2007 is Wednesday 21 November

Dates were fixed for 2008 as **Wednesday 12th March 2008** (NB not 19th, as previously agreed, and which is in Holy Week); and **Wednesday 19th November 2008**.

12. Closing Prayers

These were led by Anthony Cotterill, and the meeting closed at approximately 12:30 pm.