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January 2011

From Bishop Richard - Chair of BEC

1st February 2011 is an important date in the ecumenical life of the county as the Reverend Tim Jackson takes up his post as Ecumenical Church Development Minister of Wixams.

As most of you will know, Wixams is a new development just south of Bedford and its first village is under construction and around 350 houses are occupied. The partnership of the Baptists, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and the Church of England in association with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton have worked together to make this appointment possible. Because of the ecumenical nature of the role, BEC will be Tim's 'employer'. We welcome Tim and his wife, Bev, most warmly. A Welcome Service has been arranged for Sunday 6th February at 4pm at Lakeview School, Brooklands Avenue, Wixams. I trust you will pray for them as they start what is a challenging and exciting ministry.

At its last meeting, BEC, under its new constitution, has been reformed and I shall stand down as Chair before its next meeting on 6th April.

I am delighted to say that Monsignor Sean Healy has been elected Chair in my place. I have every confidence that BEC will go from strength to strength under his chairmanship. I know you will give him your support in the same way that you have been supportive of me. I shall continue to take a close interest (especially in the developments at Wixams) though will not be formally a member of the committee.

Kingdom or Empire?

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. Luke 9:1 - 2

Despite having much to be humble about, for years I have battled with pride and ambition. I wanted the biggest church, a great reputation as a preacher, I wanted to achieve great things for God but I wanted people to know what I had done. I wanted to be the preacher on the big stage. Whenever I sing the line from Be Thou my Vision; "Riches I need not, nor man's empty praise," I think that I am OK with the riches part, I've been in ministry for a long time, but I do desire man's empty praise. I don't think that I am the only one that faces this battle and if I am, then please pray for me.

It seems to me that many of our problems with divisions in churches are rooted in pride. We know better than others, our style of worship is right; we feel we should have the big church, the great ministry. We want to build an empire for ourselves, something to mark our ministries and a monument to ourselves. We may clothe it in righteous language, we may pretend that it is all for God's glory but deep down we know that at least part of what motivates us is a desire to build our empire rather than God's Kingdom.

This causes us to see others as rivals not co-workers in the gospel. Instead of being pleased that the church down the road is well resourced and has motivated, zealous, people, we complain that it is not fair. Pride causes us to belittle the achievements of others and to talk up our successes. It means that we can't ask for help when we are going through hard times and it means that we damage the work of the Kingdom.

One of the hardest lessons I learnt in ministry was that I couldn't reach everyone. God was kind and broke this to me quite gently. Just round the corner from my church were some Afghan asylum seekers, they had very little English and were quite isolated.

I couldn't speak their language knew little of their culture and although we tried to show love and compassion it was clear that we didn't have the tools to reach this group. A large church from a nearby city came to reach out to this group; they brought experienced workers and people who spoke the right language. When people were converted they took them to join their church in the city. However, we were able to partner with them, they used our building to hold bible studies and when it came time for baptisms they led our Sunday morning service and baptised those they had worked among.

Reflecting on this experience, I realised that there were other people my church couldn't reach, not everyone could appreciate our informal worship style and, most shockingly, not everyone found my preaching style helpful. If we changed these things then we wouldn't reach those God had already given us. It was then I realised that building my empire could damage the Kingdom, if I insisted that everyone had to join my church and do things my way then there would be some people who wouldn't be able to hear the gospel. If I insisted that my church reached everyone and the church along the road did the same we would duplicate programmes and waste God's money and our people's time. How many small towns and villages would benefit from having one Sunday School, one youth work or one work among older people? Instead of every church trying to do everything, straining our people and resources, wouldn't it be better if we acknowledged that some were better placed to do one work and one another. I was very encouraged to see this joint working and outreach had been the basis for a covenant between London Road Methodist and St Michael and All Angels in Bedford; they are working together to engage in youth work rather than setting up competing groups.

In order to reach the greatest diversity of people we need a greater diversity of churches, but I realise the cost of this. Some will be more successful in human terms than others; some will seem more exciting than others, which is fine if we are in one of those, but what of those which seem less successful? How is it if we are called to reach a less glamorous group? Can we say like John the Baptist, "I must decrease while others increase?"

Are we building the Kingdom or our empires? Part of my role is to encourage churches to work together, to encourage God's people not to see each other as rivals but as fellow labourers. To work for the Kingdom of God, not the empire of personal or denominational success.

Andrew Gale (CEDO)

From Woburn and District CT

We had a wonderful event on Sunday 23 January when four of our churches, 2 Church of England, 1 Methodist and 1 Roman Catholic all cancelled our morning services and held a combined service at St Mary's Catholic Church at 10.30am on Sunday morning. This was to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The theme of the service was the resurrection, which was suitable, as this seemed to be a resurrection for us all.

This was a 'first' for our community and was a joyous occasion with 300 worshippers from all churches mixed together in brotherhood, and with four ministers together at the altar. It seems that we may have attracted more to this service than would normally have come to the combined four churches!

After the service a 'bring and share' lunch resulted in new friendships and lots of fun.

This was a real start in developing a broader sense of belonging to our community and appreciation of the positive differences between our practices.

David Burns

Greenbelt Festival 2011

This year's Greenbelt Festival takes place from Friday 26 to Monday 29 August at Cheltenham Race Course.

- Are you going to Greenbelt this year?
- Would you like to camp together with others from Bedfordshire?

If so, please contact Andrew Gale: 1@andrewgale.me.uk

**Christian Aid Week 2011
We're ALL in it together!**



This year we are inviting Christian Aid Week organisers, church representatives, collectors and anyone else who would like to be involved with Christian Aid Week 2011 to come along to a special event and be inspired.

This will take place at St Andrew's Church, Kimbolton Road, Bedford MK40 2PF

Date: Monday 28 February 2011 Time: 6.30pm - 8.00pm

Special guest speaker: Nick Guttmann, Christian Aid's Head of Humanitarian Division. Nick heads up Christian Aid's humanitarian and disaster risk reduction work. His teams are responsible for Christian Aid's response to emergencies such as the Haiti earthquake in 2010.

Quaker Quest at Bedford Friends Meeting House 5 Lansdowne Road Bedford MK40 2BY

Visitors are welcome to attend each of these meetings which will follow the same programme detail. Meetings preceded by a 'Bring and Share' lunch at 12.10pm with drinks provided. There will be opportunity for discussion following each topic.

Sunday 27 February at 1.00pm A showing of sections of the Quaker Quest DVD on the theme 'Quakers and Worship'

Sunday 13 March at 1.00pm

Topic: 'Quakers, Christianity and the Spiritual Path'

Sunday 27 March at 1.00pm

Topic: 'Quakers and Faith in Action'



c/o St Andrew's Church Centre
Kimbolton Road, Bedford MK40 2PF
Tel 01234 216881 email: standrew.bedford@btconnect.com

The Letters of St Paul

with

**THE VERY REVD DR JEFFREY JOHN
DEAN OF ST ALBANS**

Saturday 26 February 2011

10.00am to 1.00pm

St Andrew's Church, Kimbolton Rd, Bedford MK40 2PF

£15.00 waged £12.00 unwaged

To book, please complete and return the slip below, together with a cheque made out to BELIEF to the above address

Please book me a place on 'The Letters of St Paul'

Name:

Address:

Email:

Telephone:

Annual Forum Wednesday 25 May 2011

This year's Forum will again be held at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Flitwick and we are delighted to report that Bishop Richard will be our Speaker. We are planning to follow the same format as last year, beginning at 6.30pm with a Buffet meal. You will receive more details later.



The event planned for December was cancelled owing to the snowy weather conditions But
The Saltmine Theatre Company is coming to Bedford on

Monday 25 April 2011 with 'Who Moved the Egg?'

Venue: The Salvation Army Congress Hall Commercial Road Bedford MK40 1QS
Time: 6.00pm to 7.30pm

An Easter extravaganza for all the family that entertains and inspires in equal measure. Journey with us as we travel through from the Last Supper all the way to the Ascension - whilst trying to find an answer to that age old question that still foxes people today - who **did** move the egg? This will be the show's third national tour, and it has been very successful with all ages. The show is fast-paced, funny and full of audience interaction - whilst leaving plenty of food for thought.

Tickets: Adults £8 OAP/Students £5 Under 12s £3 Telephone 01234 344544

BEC Committee January 2011

Revd Peter C Protheroe	Baptist (Ecumenical Officer)
Revd Charles Royden	Church of England
Revd Angus McCormick	Congregational Federation
Revd Andrew Hollins	Methodist (Ec. Officer Beds/Herts)
Lynn Ashman	Miracle Church of God
Revd Gloria David	Moravian
Crystal Dickinson	Religious Society of Friends
Mgr Sean Healy	Roman Catholic (Chair 6 April 2011)
Lieut-Col Bob Halliday	Salvation Army
Rt Revd Richard Inwood	Chair (to 5 April 2011)
Revd Keith Brown	URC (Ec. Officer Bedfordshire Thames North Synod)
Jeff Bulled	Lidlington LEP
Alan Dansey	Biggleswade CT
Michael Lawton	Amphill & Flitwick CT
Alan Ledwick	All Bedford Churches CT
Alan Smith	Luton CT
Revd Andrew Gale	CEDO
Jocelyn Harper	Secretary
Peter Ormerod	Treasurer

From the Secretary ...



Thank you to those of you who sent in material for this newsletter. We hope to have future copies on the Churches Together website, a new facility being provided by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. If you look up www.churchestogetherconnect.org later this month, you could find us there!

FEEDBACK is welcomed

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