

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BEDFORDSHIRE



TOGETHER



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OCTOBER 2010

From Bishop Richard - Chair of BEC

Good News!

It is with some considerable delight that I'm able to tell you that the Revd Tim Jackson (at present the URC minister in Vicars Cross, Chester) has been appointed as the Ecumenical Church Development Minister for the Wixams.

As you know, a partnership of Baptists, the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, in association with the Roman Catholic Church, has set up this role and after a good selection process involving a tour of the new development, a lunch for representatives of all the churches, and interviews, Tim was invited to take on this exciting task.

He and his wife, Bev, will need our support and prayers over the coming months as they come to live in Wixams and start to build a Christian community from scratch. After consultation with Tim, it has been decided that he will start on 1st February 2011. Please do keep them in your prayers.

And another bit of good news... Andrew Gale started as our County Ecumenical Development Officer on 1st October 2010 and there is to be a service of welcome and commissioning for him at 9.45 am on Wednesday 20th October at St. Andrew's Church, Kimbolton Road, Bedford, MK40 2PF. We are hoping a number of people will be there to welcome and pray with Andrew at the beginning of his ministry.

After what seems to be a long period of gestation for these two posts, it's wonderful to have both of them filled. Do pray that both will bring glory to God in this county.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (A model for ecumenical work)

*I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means
I might save some. 1 Corinthians 9:22*

In the past the best minds and best-intentioned people spoke of an ideal of the nation assimilating new communities entering Britain; the giant melting pot where all the ingredients are stirred together and a new Britishness is born. The great success of this policy is that in 2002 the then foreign secretary Robin Cook said, "Chicken Tikka Massala is now a true British national dish." In fact surveys have reported that it is the most ordered meal in restaurants. For some this vision has worked, my own family is a blend of different ethnic groups producing one family with elements blended from the English and West Indian cultures. However, despite some success it remains clear that even second and third generation communities still retain different characteristics and cultural practices from each other and these differences are resilient and entrenched.

Now the best minds speak of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) our aim is no longer to be colour blind or to produce a new national identity but to treat all equally, while at the same time valuing and treasuring our differences. We aim to include all in employment, in the democratic process and in the building of society but not at the cost of losing diversity. This model seeks to remove barriers that prevent people having an equal voice rather than saying that in order to have an equal voice you must conform to a cultural norm. So for example, today no company would dream of a residential conference if halal food were not on offer, so that a barrier is removed for someone from that faith group experiencing the same opportunity as anyone else.

It seems to me that these two approaches mirror what is happening in the ecumenical movement. For some the ideal has been an assimilation of different traditions, each contributing the best of its practice and teaching into a melting pot that produces one church in a local area and supported by Christians of as many backgrounds as possible. This great melting pot is a visible answer to the prayer of Jesus that, "They may all be one." There are many successful LEPs built on this model and they serve their communities no longer in competition but in comradeship. However, despite the aims of church leaders, many LEPs find that another church, either from a denomination that hasn't signed up to the LEP vision or an independent grouping, does open in their neighbourhood and in some cases with its distinctive worship and teaching attracts larger numbers than the LEP.

The other approach is to value the diversity in the body of Christ, the diversity of worship styles, the diversity of doctrinal emphasis, and the diversity of outreach methods but to seek to be sure that each part of the body is treated with equal respect and is equally included.

This may mean, when planning a united event, the removal of barriers that prevent others from joining with us or the positive inclusion of elements that others hold dear. For example, it may be that the whole service can't be scripted, or that the whole service can't be contemporary worship. It may mean recognising that some leaders are leaders not because of formal training and ordination but because people follow them. Such leaders should not be excluded from planning meetings or made to feel second class by the emphasising of titles, a distinction between Revd and Mr for example. It may be that the way we order planning meetings with formal agendas and minutes may alienate those for whom planning and prayer are the same meeting, where new ideas and ventures for God are revealed in prayer meetings, not a business meeting.

It seems to me that this second route is harder and requires a more studied approach to looking out for the needs of others. It means that we are consciously looking out for those things that would allow our brothers and sister to worship and work with us and looking out for those practices we hold dear that prevent them; truly not looking out for our own needs but the needs of others.

I am also convinced that this is a mission imperative; in order to attract the greatest number of people to the church we need a greater diversity of churches to reach a greater diversity of people. Some will cater for those who find gentle, quiet, reflective times are how they worship best. Others will reach out for those who need the music turned up to 11 and need to jump and dance before the Lord. Some will have an emphasis on sermons which stretch the intellectual powers of the congregation, where the preacher rarely uses one short word when six long ones won't quite convey his meaning as well, the congregation will leave feeling 'well fed' and ready to put into action the words they have heard. In others, the preacher will generate more heat than light but the congregation will leave feeling 'well fed' and ready to put into action the words they have heard.

As with culture, personal taste and make-up can lead to looking down on others; for a long time I couldn't believe that anyone really liked opera music, they only went to be seen, to appear cultured. Others couldn't believe that I really enjoyed folk music; they thought that the five teachers and two social workers enjoying a song about working down the mine were suffering some kind of repressed guilt for leaving our working class roots. I really do enjoy folk music and people really enjoy opera, what we shouldn't do is think of each other as uncultured or uncivilised because we like different things. So too, in the church, it is possible to make judgements about other Christians because the worship or preaching style in their church is not the one most helpful to us. To say things like, "It is all emotionalism;" or on the other hand, "It's just dead tradition;" is to despise the diversity God has created.

We need to hear the voices of all of God's people; we need every one of God's people using every talent, all of their potential, to further the Kingdom. Putting up barriers that prevent this is not only a sin but foolish. A company that fails to promote the best people will hurt the bottom line. In the 1970s, West Bromwich Albion performed at a far higher level than its size merited, because while other clubs only employed white players, West Bromwich had among others, Cyrille Regis, Laurie Cunningham and Brendan Bateson, three black players all of whom should have played for bigger clubs. They produced a higher standard of football than West Bromwich should have been able to produce. If we are to make the maximum impact on this generation, then we too need to yoke all of the talents of all of God's people, we must remove barriers and act inclusively, not only because it is the right thing to do but also because it is the smart thing to do.

God made different kinds of people; we need to reach out to all people, by all methods with a sense of respect for each other, a desire to treat all God's people equally, no denomination is the older brother in these relationships. We value our diversity, no-one should despise or sneer the practises of others. We seek to be inclusive, to include all and remove barriers that prevent some playing their full part.

Andrew Gale (CEDO)



Help those far from home this Christmas with Christian Aid. This year we are focusing on displaced people all around the world from those living in camps on the Thai-Burma border, to Haiti and southern Sudan. Christian Aid is providing vital assistance to people forced from their homes.

Download free Christmas resources for your church and for young people, including our Christmas film, an all age talk and prayers at www.christianaid.org.uk/christmas

For more information please contact: jhall@christian-aid.org

Jessica Hall at the Oxford Regional office: 01865 246 818



From the Treasurer ...

Our Treasurer, Peter Ormerod sends his thanks to Treasurers for sending contributions so promptly in the early part of the year.

Faith Woodland Communities Maulden Woods



The Faith Woodland Communities Project is a unique way for people to relax and enjoy the tranquility of green spaces. In Maulden Woods, Bedfordshire, the Project is transforming an area of woodland provided by the Forestry Commission into a spiritual and educational space with the creation of paths, a meditation area, a labyrinth and works of art.

The project aspires to entertain people across faiths and cultures through family picnic days, guided walks, story-telling & circle dancing sessions and much more. It will seek to engage with schools and community groups to take the Faith Woodland Community ideas back to the local communities. The project will also add value to the RE and science curriculum in the most creative ways possible. In line with the Luton in Harmony campaign, this is another innovative way to bringing people together to enjoy the woods and also developing a 'Friends of the Faith Woodlands' group for the sustainability of the project.

Partners:

The project is lead by Luton Council of Faiths in partnership with Bedford Council of Faiths, Forestry Commission, Greensand TrustGrass-roots programme & Luton Borough Council



For more information and events visit www.lutonfaiths.org
Or contact Luton Council of Faiths on info@lutonfaiths.org
Tel: 01582547866/ 07897203939



Issues in Religion and Medicine

Wednesday evenings in Autumn 2010

- 3 November Abortion Dr Chris Nixon
- 10 November Cosmetic Surgery Dr Stephanie Johnson
- 17 November *To be arranged*

Venue: St Andrew's Church, Kimbolton Road, Bedford, MK40 2PF

Each session: 7.45 pm to 9.15 pm
£5 per session. Tea and coffee provided.



'Where do we go from here?'

Monday 25th October 2010 at 7.30pm
Russell Park Baptist Church Denmark Street Bedford

Guest Speaker: Roy Crowne
National Director of Hope Together

Roy will be sharing stories of the work of Hope Together nationally and how we in Bedford can develop our work here.

There will also be opportunities for you to put your questions to Roy.

All welcome to attend. Free Refreshments.

Further details from any member of the Hope team or visit our website www.hopebeds.org

Becky Coster (Chair)

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Wixams

In the last newsletter we reported on the growth of the development and of plans for the future. There are now around 350 houses and flats occupied and over 80 children in the Lower School.

After all the years of planning, things are now moving and members of the Kempston Hardwick Ecumenical Group (KHEG) have met several of the residents there.

A very successful Barbecue was held on 19 September when, in spite of a chilly wind, over 120 people, including several children, came along to enjoy the free barbecue. We are grateful to Paul Mead who provided the delicious food and to members of the Gadsden Band who entertained us throughout the afternoon.

We had a visit from Ian Pearce of Three Counties Radio (Melting Pot) and Wixams featured on their programme on 26 September.

We now have the good news about the appointment of the Revd Tim Jackson and members of KHEG will support in any way that is required.

From the Secretary ...



Thank you to all who have sent in material for this Newsletter. It is a little later than planned as we were waiting to share the latest news of the appointment for Wixams.

It is also good to know that the Revd Andrew Gale has started his work with us; I am looking forward to working with him.

You are all warmly invited to attend the Commissioning Service at St Andrews Church, Bedford, at 9.45 am on Wednesday 20 October.

Just in case there is any confusion about the date of next year's May Forum, it is on Wednesday 25 May 2011 at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Flitwick.

FEEDBACK is welcomed

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