

Lancashire CEO Annual Report 2010 – 11

Administering the running of CTL

A major focus of my first year in post was the restructuring and simplification of CTL as an organisation. 2010 – 11 has been a time of consolidating and working with the model described in 'A Way Forward for CTL' (available on website resources page). There seems to be general consensus that this model is working well.

I continue to draw up the agenda for and facilitate the Church Leaders' meetings, the meetings of the Enabling Group (formerly the Executive), and the Denominational Officers' Group, which also serves as the County Sponsoring Body for LEPs. I also plan and organise the annual AGM and Forum.

I continue to maintain contact with our network of Churches Together groups and LEPs through an email newsletter, which goes around every 6 – 8 weeks or so. This email news also goes to an increasing range of other contacts outside of the 'formal' CTL structures, including the communications officers or their equivalents for each of our partner denominations where I have been able to ascertain such a contact. I continue to maintain and administer the website, and have made some first steps into creating CTL Facebook events and contacts!

I continue to attend / address local CT groups when invited to do so, and to act as a sounding board / consultant where there are particular issues to be addressed.

Strengthening Ecumenical Working in different areas of Church Life

1. Training

I attend meetings of the NNW Regional Training Partnership, and through that am building up contact with those involved in ministerial / discipleship training across the region, and encouraging them to share news and resources with each other.

I have formed a link with local charity 'A Company of Speakers', whose Director is involved in local ecumenism in Lytham, and sits with me on the Lancaster Diocesan Commission for Christian Unity. This charity brings a range of outstanding speakers to the county to take part in programmes of school enrichment days, and is very happy to 'lend' them to CTL while they are here! I have therefore facilitated 2 events with Prof Keith Ward – A Temple Lecture in Blackburn Cathedral (Nov 2010) and an ecumenical training day attended by around 100 preachers in Fulwood (March 2011). I have brought together A Company of Speakers, the Faith Centre in Burnley and the Ecumenical Chaplaincy at Lancaster University to plan 2 evenings in June 2011 with Dr David Cook exploring faith responses to ethical issues

arising from advances in medical technology. We hope these events will be a meeting ground for faith, academic and medical communities.

I have worked both alone and in partnership with Nick Moxon, the Methodist evangelism enabler, to lead training events on Mission-focussed ecumenism. I also worked with Nick to bring together an ecumenical team to lead a day conference on Mission to Older People which was attended by over 100 delegates, largely but not exclusively Anglicans and Methodists.

2. 'Big society' engagement

I have encouraged the Church Leaders both to look at making a united response to the 'Big Society' gauntlet that has been thrown down by the government, and to unite in voicing their concerns about the effect of government cuts on the most vulnerable in society.

I attended The Big Society Day organised by Ed Saville, and have worked with Ed to network those concerned in these areas from different denominations for smaller events – eg the CUF local days.

3. Celebration

Following CTL's Celebration Praise events in May 2010, Nick Moxon and I worked in partnership with BBC Radio Lancashire's Joe Wilson to organise Lancashire Sings Christmas on 21st Dec 2010. The Blackburn Salvation Army Band and Bp Geoff worked with Joe and a live audience at the Radio Theatre in Blackburn to be the 'hub' of an interactive Carol Service, which 73 local groups took out into community venues in their own locations. This has undoubtedly been the most enjoyable and positive event of the year from my perspective! The feedback from local groups as to its value in building connections in their own communities has been most encouraging, as has the enthusiasm of BBC Radio Lancashire to do it again! December 22nd 2011 is now in the diary.

4. Fresh expressions

I was invited to a meeting in July 2010 of Carlisle and Lancashire Church Leaders, 'permission givers' and practitioners of Fresh Expressions to look at the way forward for Fresh Expressions in the NNW, including the possibility of forming a FEAST (Fresh Expressions Area Strategy Team.) I was tasked at that meeting to take forward conversations about how a FEAST might be constituted.

Lack of clarity as to where responsibility for the development of Fresh Expressions actually lies has meant that this has not been an easy process. However, the upcoming visit of the Fresh Expressions National Team to Lancashire, and the planning for the conference Mission Shaped Lancashire in July 2011, has enabled partners from the URC, Methodist and Anglican Churches to come together, and excellent working relationships are now being established. The planning of workshops has enabled us to bring 'specialists' from different denominations to work together in creative ways, and the planning team could potentially become the core around which a

FEAST for Lancashire might be built. Given the complexity of each denomination's structures, however, we will be looking to the Church Leaders for a strong steer on the membership and brief of a Lancashire FEAST.

Working with Denominational bodies

Roman Catholic – I sit on Lancaster Diocese's Commission for Christian Unity, and Faith and Justice Commission. I am working with Fr Steve Pearson on the CCU's mapping exercise for Catholic involvement in local ecumenism, and I am part of the planning group for the F&JC's year of Celebration of Creation. I maintain contact with Salford Diocese's Department for Evangelisation.

Anglican – I am a member of Diocesan Synod and Bp's Council, and am part of the Bishop of Burnley's Task Force looking at future staffing and structures.

Methodist – I attend District Synods and the District Policy Committee

URC – I attend the NW Synod meeting

I would be delighted to form closer connections with CTL's other partner denominations.

Contributing to the Ecumenical life of the Region

I have recently been invited to join the management group for the Churches' Officer for the NW, and have attended my first meeting. With the post currently under review, this feels like an important regional commitment to have undertaken at this time.

I look to the NW group of County Ecumenical Officers for mutual support and encouragement, and this year took responsibility with them for the planning and delivery of the National Consultation for CEOs in May 2011 at Loyola Hall.

While I try not to stray into the area of Interfaith, I have built up a good relationship with The Burnley Faith Centre. I gave a homily there at this year's Advent Service, and am currently working with them to promote an evening with Dr David Cook (see 'Training' above). I have also been invited by my friend Anjum Anwar – Blackburn Cathedral's Dialogue Development Officer – to be part of a NW Christian and Muslim Women's Forum.

Supporting the work of the FE Chaplain

I meet regularly with CTL's coordinating FE Chaplain for mutual support, and in May 2011 facilitated with her a meeting between representatives of Churches together in Burnley and Burnley College to negotiate arrangements for the appointment of a new chaplain. I am about to set up a similar meeting to look at the appointment of a new Chaplain for Preston College.

Working with Local Ecumenical Partnerships

I invited our Denominational Officers to join the May meeting of the Church Leaders' group in 2010, to discuss the current state of our LEPs, and our future strategy regarding their formation and maintenance. This has remained the most challenging, time consuming and difficult area of my own work over the past year, with a number of particular situations in our Single Congregation LEPs requiring urgent attention.

- Crises in various LEPs have revealed a lack of clarity about the mutual obligations between our LEPs and their Parent Denominations as regards **staffing and finance**. Our standard constitutions make no detailed provision for the complex financial arrangements necessary for an LEP's security. We have negotiated proposals for the resolution of the immediate crises, which are waiting to have ratified. The bigger issues that have been flushed up as to our policy as a county will require persistent and painstaking work over the coming year.
- **Cottam** Anglican / Methodist / URC LEP – has been formally dissolved, and the congregation is going forward as part of the Methodist Circuit. I am satisfied that this is the best possible solution on the ground, and gives them the greatest chance of flourishing as a 'Fresh Expression' of church for the Cottam community. I am still facilitating ongoing discussions as to the future of the Manse – currently jointly owned by the Diocese and the Circuit – and the final financial settlements.
- **Great Harwood Trinity** URC / Methodist LEP –has begun its new life as 3 congregations become one. It is still working through the detail of its formal constitution. I am trying hard to ensure that the foundational paperwork is not completed and signed without incorporating some of the lessons that have been learned from the situations described above.

In all the above situations, I have sought to involve and work with the relevant Denominational Officers, often having discovered that they have not been automatically included in discussions at an early stage. We still have a long way to go in enabling our DEOs to function as representative of their denominations in LEP discussions – still less able to make the decisions required of a well functioning Sponsoring Body.

Encouraging New Models for local Ecumenism

Maintaining support of our existing LEPs is essential, but it is equally important to be encouraging new models for local ecumenism on the ground. This is the theme of most of the input I give when asked to speak in local situations. The following are some specific examples in which I've been involved;

- The promotion of **HOPE** (see www.hopetogether.org.uk). This is a national ecumenical initiative which has grown out of HOPE 08. It has

arisen from the independent churches' networks, but is keen to work in partnership with the mainstream churches. Its focus is missional service of local communities by local churches working in partnership with each other and with other statutory and caring agencies, and it seems to me the most vibrant and authentic expression of the direction in which the ecumenical movement needs to go forward. It is also the most positive way for us to try to build bridges with those churches of goodwill who are currently outside CTL's official networks

I have been building relationships with HOPE practitioners, and have invited the Free Methodist minister Chris Drury from Lancaster to lead a presentation at the 2011 Forum.

- I have been particularly encouraged by my work with **Churches Together in Chorley** in trying to find a new way forward in partnership between local churches. Their programme of committee meetings for the year has been refashioned into a programme of ministers' breakfast fellowship meetings, a vision evening for members of local churches, and a programme of social gatherings to enable trust to grow, and promote shared involvement in such activity as Street Pastors etc.
- The 4 small CT groups in **Morecambe** wanted to find a way to share resources, news and information without introducing another layer of committees and bureaucracy. We have formed an informal Forum, facilitated by a website, an email circulation list and 4 open meetings a year. So far it is working well in a 'light touch' way, and has enabled various shared events, much better communication, and increased friendship across the network of Morecambe's churches.