



July 2021 - Looking back and looking forward

One consequence of the recent unprecedented times is that the Chair of CTIA did not pass from Methodists to Anglicans last summer, Gary Carter kindly agreeing to extend his two year term by an additional year and keeping ecumenical relations “ticking over” so well in difficult circumstances. At this year’s Annual Meeting the Chair will pass to me for my second term of two years (unless extended)! As at the date of writing this (9th June) CTIA hopes it will be able to hold its AGM in St John’s churchyard on 25th July together with a “Songs of Praise” but with the ongoing uncertainty about the relaxation of Covid restrictions and what is allowed by way of outdoor gatherings and communal singing nothing is certain! Please keep an eye on church notices and websites for further information.

Looking back I think my first CTIA meeting was in March 2000, the other attendees being Paul Arnold, Rachel Black and Jean Griffiths (from Alresford Methodist Church), Carol Beetham, Michael Keane and Terry Pinner (from St Mary’s), Diana Wooldridge and Graham Trasler (from St. John’s), Piers Armstrong, Laura Brill, Peter Gregory and Nick Reynolds (from St. Gregory’s), all kept in order by Secretary Paul Kennedy. As the person who has produced most of the meeting minutes in the subsequent 21 years I have often reminded myself of Paul saying that he did not intend that his minutes to be a comprehensive record of everything discussed but more of a general record of the meeting in question and have used that as an excuse for any omissions or inaccuracies!

Twenty one years older Piers, Laura and I remain on the CTIA committee and others (e.g. Jackie Connell, Rosemary Chambers, Jon Whale and Gary Carter) have clocked up many years involvement between them. Even our “newcomer” Sarah Wilding joined the committee as long ago as 2016. It is often said by those in the know that the CTIA committee meetings are the “friendliest and best in town” but without the least intention of pointing the finger at any of the existing committee I do hope that by the time the CTIA Chair passes to St Gregory’s in 2023 that the committee will have new (ideally younger) faces committed to develop and strengthen our common cause.

At the 2000 AGM Paul Rolph, then Area ecumenical officer for Churches Together in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, explained that at that time Churches Together in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight were moving from doing ecumenical things to doing things ecumenically. That we took on board in Alresford and hopefully that can be in the forefront of our thoughts as we revert to “normal” over the next (hopefully) few months, always trying to remember that the individual churches in and around Alresford should not be doing things on their own which can be done as well or better together.

One of the successes in recent years has been the various away weekends in Bournemouth, the last of which just “slipped under the wire” before the first lockdown last year. Whether the next away weekend will be possible / advisable / sensible in 2022 remains to be seen. I am aware that many look forward to the time when they can be part of another weekend of good fellowship, study, fun and food! Unfortunately the Bournemouth hotel that has accommodated us so well in recent years has been refurbished and it no longer has the necessary meeting rooms so an alternative venue needs to be found. If you are aware of a reasonably priced hotel (or other venue) with meeting rooms within two hours of Alresford (preferably at the seaside) which might “fit the bill” please let me or any CTIA committee member know so that once it is felt the time is right to start planning the next away weekend we already have a shortlist of potential venues.

James Pinniger