

## **Minutes of a Forum held on Thursday June 25<sup>th</sup> 2015 at St George's, Shimpling**

There were 28 people at the Forum, from 11 churches.

The Forum was welcomed by the Vice Chairman, Lynda Sebbage, who pointed out that this Forum had made history in that it was the first to be held in the open air. She expressed thanks to all those who had prepared and served the barbecue and made the Forum so welcome.

### **1. Worship**

Lynda formally welcomed Rev Matthew Lawson, Chadbrook benefice, on behalf of Churches Together. Rev Matthew Lawson then opened the Forum in the peace of the churchyard and surrounded by bird song with reflections on Psalm 118.

### **2. Update on what is happening in the Chadbrook Benefice**

The Rev Matthew Lawson said that about 440 people lived in Shimpling and about 300 in Alpheton. He said he had spent 20 years in engineering in an urban area and had been humbled by seeing how these small communities come together to support the church in many ways to raise funds for disproportionate costs of maintenance. In comparison Long Melford seemed like a town with a cathedral. For Long Melford just the cost of insurance at £12,000 a year seemed disproportionate. He said that the new bishop was emphasising the need for growth and mission. This is a change for the Church of England. The Diocese was asking churches to "grow deeper"; grow in number; grow in influence and grow younger. New initiatives at Long Melford were Base Camp for children during the morning service, and a Mother and Toddler Club called "Connect". He invited the Forum to join in prayer for all those involved at Long Melford, Shimpling and Alpheton.

### **3 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Malcolm Offord, Peter Halden, Margaret Tracey, Roger Pullan and Gaye Layburn.

### **4 Minutes of the March 2015 Forum**

The minutes of the Forum held on March 19<sup>th</sup> were agreed and signed by the Vice Chairman

### **5 Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **6 Treasurer's Report**

A copy of the Treasurer's Report had been circulated. Peter Heard reported that the £4000 investment in the Credit Union was progressing slowly. He was currently waiting for Credit Union approval.

Peter was thanked for the excellent job he does as Treasurer

### **7 Chairman's Report**

The Chairman's Report is attached to the end of these minutes.

The Forum then moved into the church building.

### **8 The Porch Project**

The Vice Chairman welcomed Craig Hutton, the Youth Work Co-ordinator from St Mary's Hadleigh

Craig introduced himself by giving the Forum an idea of his background. He said he had grown up in Northern Ireland. He had lost his mother to the IRA at the age of 10 so was very angry and did not believe in God. He drank and did drugs and fought a lot. There was a Youth Worker at a local church who really believed in him and helped him a great deal. One day he was taken by a gang to be executed. The gun failed to shoot despite several attempts and a re-loading of the gun. The Youth Worker explained to Craig that God had intervened because He had a purpose for Craig. Since then he had attended Bible and Theological Colleges. He had discovered that "God is right and the rest of us are just guessing". Craig's aim is to see theology worked out in a practical way.

He explained that The Porch Project engages with local young people between the ages of 11 and 20 years. The project was started in 2009 by the Very Reverend Martin Thrower, the Dean of Hadleigh. Instead of asking young people who had gathered in the porch to move, he invited them into the church and offered them somewhere safe they could regularly meet and socialise and so the Porch Project was born. He explained that the young people need loving. After the first evening the church was opened, £700 worth of damage was done to the organ and glass was broken but it was felt important to continue with the project. Volunteers included older members of the congregation who had to put up with bad language, bad behaviour and damage to the church they had grown up in.

Craig said that crime in Hadleigh had reduced over the last few years and the police recognised that the Porch Project had helped. The police went down to the Project and began to gain the confidence of the young people.

He said he was humbled when he discovered the circumstances some of the young people had to endure – circumstances they had been born into and had not chosen.

At the Project they can do cooking classes including budgeting, arts and crafts, music and lyric writing, football, and can have discussion groups and girls groups.

He said that young people tend to be labelled but they all have dreams, aspirations, hopes and fears as others do. He added that it was important not to see young people as a project but as people who need to be loved.

The Vice Chairman thanked Craig for his inspirational talk.

## 9 **Future Events**

A note of future dates was circulated.

## 10 **Any Other Business**

- Malcolm Snow reported that the final total for Christian Aid in Sudbury and Great Cornard stands at £5,260.93. Last year's figure was £5,160.90, so we are up by about £100. Long Melford and Shimpling had raised £2024. Grateful thanks to all who have been involved in any way.

He also said that on Thursday 13 August there will be another sponsored canoe trip down the River Stour from Sudbury to Bures. Revd John Boardman of St John's Methodist Church, and Simon Snell, Regional Coordinator for Christian Aid in Suffolk, are taking part again. If anyone is able to sponsor one of the participants, that would be greatly valued. If anyone you know is interested in taking part, please contact Malcolm for details. The event will be supporting Christian Aid projects in Central and South America and will again attract quadruple funding from the EU

He told the Forum that a new Local Organiser for Sudbury & Great Cornard is needed. The Forum was asked to think carefully and prayerfully whether anyone was known who might be the right person.

- Peter Heard reported that following a difficult time for Sudbury Baptist Church over the past few years, an invitation had been given to the Rev Mark Ulanowski. He has accepted and will be coming with his young family in September. He has been a minister-in-training in Woodbridge so knows the area.

## 11 **Closing Prayer**

The meeting closed in prayer.

## Chairman's Report

Dear Friends

I hope you're having a splendid time in Shimpling and enjoying, from what I've heard, the very beautiful surroundings. I also hope you're well fed and looking forward to an interesting and informative programme for the rest of the evening. I pray that God will bless the whole evening.

My thanks to Richard for all the effort he has put in to make the evening a success and to give Churches Together an opportunity to visit another outpost of the organisation. It has been great to hold our summer Forums in different parts of our area – Lavenham, Bures, Glemsford. Who knows where we'll be next year!

My thanks also to Lynda for bravely taking on the responsibility of chairing this meeting. I know how busy she is, particularly in the light of the situation at St Greg's.

I'd just like to mention a couple of things that have come my way recently.

Firstly, thanks to Margaret Tracey for compiling a very readable digest of CTiS&D's history since 1989. As you probably know Margaret has been house-bound recently, but she has put this time to splendid use in going through all our Minutes and other documents to produce a record of all the major developments that have occurred since then. If anyone would like an electronic version of Margaret's *magnum opus*, please let me know.

And secondly, on Monday 15 June I had the honour of being asked to present the trophy to the winning team in the Fellowship Football league. The winning team turned out to be Vineyard after 55 minutes of regular play, followed by 10 minutes of extra time and then a penalties shoot-out! Thrilling stuff! I just wanted to say how impressed I was with the event. On a number of occasions we have had reports from the Fellowships at Forums, but to actually be present at a match, to see the youngsters and not-so youngsters playing, to see the relationship between the coaches and their teams and among themselves was something else. The caring, the Christian love displayed was truly humbling. So often the Christians we meet tend to be on the elderly side, but here were young men, the coaches, really committed to their charges, and those charges really showing genuine evidence of Christian maturity. I have to confess I found it a really moving occasion and I'd like to commend the Fellowships, both football and snooker, to your prayers and support.

Have a great evening and God bless you all.

Love - Malcolm