

Chairman's Report 2013-14

In each of my annual reports as CDEF Chairman I have reiterated the four-fold purpose for the existence of the CDEF; this remains:

To promote evangelical ministry in the parishes of the diocese by:

- Representing the views of evangelicals to the bishop and the diocesan staff;
- Making sure that there are evangelicals proposed for elections to General Synod and to the committees of the Diocesan Synod;
- Through its local and central meetings, clergy and laity meeting together to encourage one another and to consider issues of importance;
- Providing a safe place for dialogue between evangelicals of different traditions, so that we may hold together on essentials.

These objectives have shaped our activities over the last year in several areas:

This has been a significant year in the life of our diocese in a number of ways: most notably for the latter stages of Bishop Martin's visitation to all the parishes of his 'patch', during which he has met all of the clergy in their own homes, including therefore all the active clergy members of the CDEF. I know this has given him considerable insight into the way evangelical parishes tick. Secondly, we were delighted that Richard Jackson has been appointed to the role of Bishop of Lewes, with a larger geographical area than previously and a major responsibility for coordinating the development of a diocesan strategy that will be launched at Pentecost 2015. We need to be praying very much for Bishop Richard in these early days of his ministry in the east; relationships and patterns of working are being established that will surely have results for many years to come.

Members of the CDEF were involved in the appointment process for Lewes, and have since been involved in the appointments of two archdeacons and the Dean of the Cathedral. There are a goodly number involved in the drafting of diocesan strategy – we cannot anymore say we are being ignored.

The year to come will be a year with several key elections: as well as a General Election at the UK level, next summer will also see elections to both our own Diocesan Synod and to General Synod. Both new bodies will have to deal with difficult and contentious issues, not least the response to the issues included in the Pilling Report. It is important that we encourage people to stand for these elections; in particular we need to discern lay people in our parishes (and ideally under 60!) who would be willing and able to make this part of their ministry – not an easy ask for all sorts of reasons, but it is not, I think, an exaggeration to suggest that the future good health of the Church of England will be at stake in the lives of these bodies.

The CDEF committee has been monitoring how the Pilling Report issues are being handled throughout the last year. As I said in my report a year ago, we have been planning to call an invited consultation on this at some point this year. In the end we have agreed to do this jointly with the Sussex Gospel Partnership very early in 2015; invitations to senior clergy and lay leaders will be going out in the next few days. We have been encouraged to do this by a proposal that DEFs in all parts of

the country should address the issues involved – a proposal that has come from leaders within a wide range of evangelical organisations.

Our reasonably well established pattern of meetings has continued over the past year, with good attendances at both main meetings and at a quiet day in the summer. The Spring Conference in March attracted the highest attendance (110) for some while at a CDEF meeting. The quiet day was held for a second time at Great Walstead School, near Haywards Heath and was very much appreciated by the 34 people who attended – probably about the maximum size for an effective quiet day; we are exploring where we might hold a similar event next summer, perhaps a little further east in the diocese.

We will also be heading east, at least as far as Eastbourne, for our Spring Conference in 2015: Saturday 7 March at St Elisabeth's, Victoria Drive, Eastbourne, when Bishop Richard will be the speaker on 'How far can unity stretch in a diverse church?'; a critical question as we grapple with the issues facing us. I hope you will encourage a lot of people to come from your church to hear Richard and debate the issues involved. More details and a downloadable flyer are on our website: www.chichesterdef.org.uk.

The Church of England Evangelical Council (which is the national equivalent of the CDEF) recently carried out a review of the DEFs in all the dioceses of the Church of England. This identified 15 dioceses with no existing DEF, 4 with fairly recent evidence of activity, 22 dioceses with currently active DEFs, and silence from the rest. The report ended with a reference to us here in Chichester as the 'jewel in the crown' of the DEFs nationally on the basis of what we have been doing for the last 4 years! That is why I remain very grateful for all the support and hard work that members of the committee have shown over the last year.

Jeremy Taylor
Chairman

October 2014