

Chairman's Report 2015-16

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 throughout the six years that I have been the CDEF Chair. When I was first elected in 2010 the fellowship was at a rather low ebb: attendance at meetings had fallen to an unsustainable level, and the need for such an organisation was being questioned. I agreed to take on the role for a year to see if the situation could be turned around, or whether it would be better to close things down. A similar pattern was being seen in quite a few other dioceses.

Very early on I discovered a remarkable cache of documents running back 100 years to the founding of the CDEU in 1910, when nine evangelicals (all men and all ordained) met at Holy Trinity Church in Eastbourne and called for the first gathering together of evangelicals from across the diocese. From the earliest minute book (in beautiful copperplate handwriting) to DVD-Roms with the most recent activities on there is an almost continuous record of agendas, minutes and meetings for the 100 years that have passed since that first meeting. Within a few years a newspaper report of the first major public event undertaken by the group notes that it was 'a gathering of an interesting and somewhat unique character'. It goes on to report that four hundred people attended with the aim of getting to know others. What seems to amaze the reporter is that lay people were invited to take part – 'even in the discussions'¹.

The celebration of our centenary in 2010-11 seemed to provide the impetus for a new burst of energy to establish a regular pattern of two or three meetings a year, and also to engage with the wider diocese in more behind the scenes ways. We have encouraged members of the fellowship to stand for election to national and diocesan synods and committees. We have provided opportunities for evangelicals from different streams to meet to discuss the harder issues facing the whole Church of England.

So six years later we are still here! All this has only been possible because the core committee have been willing to share out the tasks that have needed to be done to make this possible; I am very grateful to them.

Jeremy Taylor
Chairman

September 2016

¹ Quoted in Simon Taylor's informal history of the CDEF.