

Churches Together in England Forum 2018

Contact Name and Details	The Revd Ruth Gee, Connexional Ecumenical Officer geer@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolution	90/1. The Council receives the report.

1. The triennial Forum of Churches Together in England (CTE) took place 17–19 September 2018 at Swanwick in Derbyshire, on the theme: ‘I am with you always – together in God’s mission’.
2. The Forum was attended by 270 delegates representing 47 member Churches of CTE, affiliated organisations and county-level Churches Together bodies, and included many delegates under 35 years. It included the six Presidents of Churches Together in England, and was moderated by the Revd Ruth Gee.
3. As a keynote feature of the event, the six Presidents had a conversation together about the ‘Presence of Christ’. Questions were posed from six young adults who were present as Forum delegates, including Ruth Hall from the Methodist delegation, and each President reflected on the ecumenical journey which we all share in response to the prayer of Jesus for mission and unity.
4. His Grace Archbishop Angaelos, the Orthodox CTE President, said, ‘Only by working together can we alleviate the pain suffered by so many’, referring to Orthodox, Anglican and Salvation Army churches responding to refugees. Pentecostal President, Pastor Agu Irukwu, said that our witness to Christ continues despite whatever we are going through. ‘Whether on the mountains or in the valleys, we tell the story of his presence with us just the same’. Archbishop Justin Welby, the President for the Church of England, added, ‘people will see the presence of Christ in us when we stop holding on to things and we start letting God put a cross in our hands’. Referring to Jesus, one of the young adults asked the Presidents, ‘What tables would you overturn?’ Cardinal Nichols for the Roman Catholic Church said, ‘we are being given a consistent lead by Pope Francis on clericalism and the assumptions on a position of superiority and privilege that are sometimes present. He wants that table clearly and vigorously turned over’. The Revd Dr Hugh Osgood, President for the Free Churches, agreed, suggesting we needed new ways of measuring success, ‘We need to come away from the competitiveness we’ve had between the Churches. Why not measure what impact we are having on society?’ All the Presidents spoke of the need for divine encounter. The Revd Canon Billy Kennedy, representing the New Churches, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and the Lutheran and German-speaking Churches, said that in a ‘very fragmented world ... the Church needs to rediscover its confidence,’ and whilst language and culture change, ‘the need in human hearts hasn’t changed.’ Cardinal Nichols used the image of a rose window as a picture of the Church, ‘which always has Jesus at the centre’ he added, referring to the Churches working together in England.
5. During the event, the 270 delegates shared in worship, conversation and mealtimes together. The striking openness and receptiveness to one another modelled by the CTE Presidents was characteristic of the spirit of the Forum as a whole, and many delegates articulated a sense that the Forum signified God doing a new thing in the Church, compared to even just a few years ago. An aspiration of many at the Forum was that this spirit will rapidly come to be shared throughout the Churches at all levels.
6. The members of the Methodist delegation were: The Revds Steven Cooper, Dr Jonathan Hustler, Dr Jonathan Pye, Nicola Reynolds; Deacon Melanie Beaven; Mrs Wendy Ince; Youth President Jasmine Yeboah, and 3Generate reps Kira Barfoot, Berenice Dalrymple, Ruth Hall and Jack Key. In addition, there were several other Methodists present representing local Churches Together and affiliated bodies.

7. The Forum also marked the change of CTE General Secretary from the Revd Dr David Cornick, who retires, to the Revd Dr Paul Goodliff, recently appointed.

*****RESOLUTION**

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