

## **EMU REPORT – AGM 2022**

### **A year of New Challenges and Activity**

The last year has been extraordinary for all and has seen the Churches in Bristol responding to planned refugee immigration from the Ukraine and Hong Kong (A country and a city beset by oppression and in Ukraine's case war). This has also been a time when the churches were emerging from a Covid fuelled lockdown and had the challenge of redefining their ministries in a Post Covid society. As the year has progressed, a new challenge emerges, that of supporting the communities in Bristol through a winter of increasing costs of living which potentially will increase levels of poverty not seen for 50 years.

In reacting to these challenges, the existence of 'Together 4 Bristol facilitates a flexible and speedy Christian response not possible through denominational Christianity. You will see in Roger's spheres' report results of this way of working. It must be also said that structure alone does not yield results, there also has to be people within the structures committed to making things happen and the Trustees of T4B recognise the deep commitment of those working within the Spheres and the way they have developed an effective working partnership which assists the council to fulfil its responsibilities and at the same time allow the Christians of Bristol to fulfil their calling.

Over time, the development of the 'Spheres' of Christian service and ministry has grown, and it could be said that the local churches, Pastor, Pray and Prepare their congregations for works of service and the Spheres give a width of opportunity for people to serve. The success of this now means that there is a separate report for the Spheres of Life.

This year, in response to requests from Church Leaders, T4B has also hosted a prayer vigil for Ukraine and joint acts of prayer and praise at the Cathedral which has opened its doors wide to the work of T4B. We are grateful to all at the cathedral for their help and support.

The Keyboard Trust was established over three years ago to address the issues facing Black churches in Bristol. The toppling of the statue in Bristol proved that this was indeed the prudent thing to do. This year has seen the promotion of events films and conferences (both online and in-person) designed to meet the needs of Black communities and the education of all church leadership. A separate report on the work of The Keyboard Trust is available also from Carmen Carrol – Keyboard Networker.

Prayer is something which supports all that we do. I am personally grateful for the prayers of many brothers and sisters. The prayer life of T4B is led by Derek Mulubwa and Sheena Tranter who lead the Prayer Sphere. A separate report will explain the width of activity within this sphere. Fatima Sibanda (The new Chair of Trustees) has taken responsibility for leading the quarterly breakfast prayer meeting.

### **A Year of Development and Re-Shaping**

To facilitate the changes and new demands, the infrastructure of the leadership and administration of the charity has changed to facilitate flexibility and provide a stronger base for future development. The Enabler of Mission and Unity (EMU) in the short term is no

longer a funded post and instead the salary associated with the position is now split between a 'Compliance, Finance and Administration Officer and a Website Manager. This will allow the EMU to concentrate on the developmental aspects of the role required and as the County Officer for Ecumenism by the national organisation – Churches Together. The decision for this structural change was also in part a response to the departure of the previous treasurer. Another change to the structure was the recognition of a Spheres and Whole of Life Facilitator (Roger Allen).

A more natural change has taken place with the end of the tenure of the incumbent Chair of Trustees. The re-election process of appointing a new Chair has taken place and the new Chair will be announced at the AGM on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November.

Perhaps not so exciting, but I consider vital to improving the communication compliance and administration – we have set up a Google Works Email and Document Storage facility associated with the Together 4 Bristol domain. Whilst this is not 'out facing,' it will enable the leadership structure of T4B to function more effectively – after a learning curve!

### **Handing the Baton on**

In summary, the year has been one of major structural change within the leadership of T4B, the process of change within what is basically a voluntary organisation has been slow but steady. T4B now has a new chair, a new administrative structure, an improved and increasingly used website, and a leadership with more recognised and devolved roles.

The challenges for the new year are obvious:

#### **1. Improving the finances**

This will undoubtedly be difficult. Most of the income comes from churches and their money comes from congregations who will be facing a squeeze on their disposable income.

This will be necessary to continue to fund the Keyboard Trust's Networker role and at some point, in the future to fund an Enabler of Mission and Unity.

#### **2. Being a City of Hope for ALL**

Whilst T4B has been reasonably successful on 'planned immigration' (Those from Hong Kong and Ukrainians), meeting the needs of a growing number of asylum seekers must be on the agenda also.

#### **3. More positive Engagement with all churches**

The work of T4B can only expand if more churches become involved and informed of the work of T4B. To this end Ian Taylor will be offering short talks in church services this year.