

## Report of the January 2019 Meeting of the Church of England Evangelical Council

The Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC) held its annual meeting at High Leigh, on January 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>, with a focus on “*Contending in unity for the gospel*”. Since our relaunch four years ago we have been encouraged by so much for which we thank God, including:

- The deepening fellowship and unity we have enjoyed when we meet as representatives from evangelical traditions within the Church of England around our basis of faith and declarations
- The appointment of a number of our members to serve as bishops and in other key responsibilities
- The growth in the number and activity of affiliated Diocesan Evangelical Fellowships/Unions
- The rebirth of the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion (EFAC) of which we are a constituent member.

One of our tasks at this meeting was to appoint our four Officers/Trustees to serve for the next four years. We can now report that all four current Officers were re-elected unopposed.

|           |                              |
|-----------|------------------------------|
| President | The Rt Revd Julian Henderson |
| Chair     | The Revd Hugh Palmer         |
| Secretary | Stephen Hofmeyr              |
| Treasurer | The Revd George Curry        |

The elections followed discussion at the Council of the recent release of the House of Bishops’ “*Pastoral Guidance for use in conjunction with the Affirmation of Baptismal Faith in the context of gender transition*”.

Bishop Julian acknowledged that [this Guidance](#) and the [associated press release](#) with a supportive comment in his name, as Chair of the Delegation Committee, has been understood to be in direct contradiction with his subsequent signing of the [response to the Guidance](#) which was issued by CEEC Officers and Working Group and wholeheartedly endorsed by the Council at its meeting.

Apologizing for the confusion and anxiety caused to many by these actions and the mixed messages in the press release, Bishop Julian said that in retrospect, and after further reflection on the Guidance, he now believed it would have been wiser not to consider it incumbent on him to speak as Chair on behalf of the Delegation Committee, but rather request someone else to express the mind of the Committee. He clarified that the word ‘we’ in the press release refers to the Delegation Committee and that the CEEC response reflects his own position, in that he is unable to commend the Pastoral Guidance in its present form, and supports the calls for it to be clarified and modified or for its status to be changed so that it is seen as a contribution to the Living in Love and Faith (LLF) Project.

Bishop Julian explained that the Guidance itself and the title of the Press Release suggest the creation of a service for gender transition which he had never been able to support, as expressed in his voting at Diocesan Synod and General Synod. He recognized that this makes

the use of the phrase 'mark this transition' in the press release in his name open to misunderstanding but he made it clear that in his view the only transition marked in an Affirmation of Baptismal Faith is commitment to Christ, which all people, including those who identify as transgender, are invited to make.

Following his re-election as President, Bishop Julian said:

'I continue to be sorry for the confusion that my different roles and statements have created and am very grateful for the trust my re-election as President of CEEC expresses. I remain hopeful and expectant of the impact that the Gospel of Jesus Christ will make in our country in 2019.'

Reflecting on the Council meeting, Hugh Palmer said

'It was striking to see how the growth in evangelical unity over recent years has continued during these two days together. We have welcomed new members, valued everyone's contributions, and thank God for the progress that has been made.'