



Minutes of the Meeting of the United Church Council Held on Monday 9 March 2020

Present: David Carruthers, Buzz Coster, Jane Earl, David Edney, David Gilbert, Martyn Gowing, Judith Haigh, Petra Hedges, David Hibbert, Sue Hillier, Rob Kay, John Payne, Adam Shiels, Revd Deborah Snowball

In attendance: Helen Swain

The meeting was chaired by the Lay Vice-Chair, Jane Earl.

1) **Opening prayer:** Led by Jane Earl.

2) **Apologies for absence** were received from John Rhodes

3) **Minutes of meeting held on 13 January 2020:**

The minutes of the meeting were agreed and signed as a correct record.

4) **Matters arising**

- a) *LINK (item 4a):* Deborah reported the LINK team hope to produce the next issue in June. One new person has joined the team but it was noted that at least one more person was needed to help share the workload.
- b) *Monday Morning TLC (item 4b):* Eight people had attended the first session on 9 March which had gone well. David Gilbert thanked everyone who had helped with running the session.
- c) *Roof alarm and fire alarm (items 4c & 4d):* Deborah and John Payne were working to obtain the necessary permission for the installation of these items. It was noted that there has been a change in Diocesan rules such that a Faculty may not be required. It is hoped that approval for the work will be granted in April.
- d) *Lent 2020:* Deborah reported that she had been unable to obtain sufficient quantities of the #LiveLent booklets for the school.
- e) *Thy Kingdom Come 2020:* Deborah asked for people to help with planning this initiative. Jane Earl volunteered.
- f) *New nursery in the Church Centre:* Mavitob Nursery were still awaiting OFSTED registration and were therefore not ready to sign the contract to hire the Church Centre. OFSTED registration may take up to 12 weeks. A second company, Building Bridges, had expressed an interest and, as an established company with an existing service, may be able to achieve their OFSTED registration more quickly. It was agreed that Mavitob be asked to confirm the date on which they had applied for registration so that we would know when an answer might be forthcoming and therefore whether it was viable to await their registration or proceed with Building Bridges. **Action: David G**

5) **Vicar's remarks**

- a) *UCC:* Deborah thanked the members of the Council for their hard work and contributions during the year. She asked members to encourage more people to stand for the UCC next year.
- b) *More@4:* This is a new all-age worship session with activities and a light supper which will take place on the first Sunday of the month from 4.00-5.30pm. It is proposed to start this in June.
- c) *Coronavirus:* New advice had been received from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York that the administration of the chalice be suspended during the current pandemic. All visitors are to be asked to use hand sanitiser on arriving and leaving the church. Other measures may need to be taken in due course. A group will be established to look at ways of supporting the community.
- d) *Sunday Evening Prayer:* Attendance at this service is now extremely low and it was considered that those attending were vulnerable. It was reluctantly agreed that this service could no longer take place safely and would therefore cease.

6) Correspondence

- a) *Fairtrade*: Fairtrade is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year and had written to invite churches to re-commit to their values. It was agreed that this be done.
- b) *75th anniversary of VE Day*: Nina Hosking, together with the Royal British Legion, is planning a community event on Saturday 9 May. She had asked if they might use the church, Church Centre and grounds in the event of inclement weather. Deborah had agreed to this. In the light of this event, it was agreed not to proceed with the plans for the Community Picnic on Sunday 10 May. Deborah is planning a service on Friday 8 May.
- c) *Tree work in the churchyard*: TRDC had written to request permission to undertake emergency work on trees overhanging Church Street. Deborah had asked that this work be extended to include the whole body of each tree to ensure balance of growth to the trees. This work will need permission from the Diocese. It was agreed that a permission from the Diocese be sought.

7) Safeguarding

- a) *DBS checks*: Only a couple of checks remain outstanding.
- b) *Training*: No local training courses are currently scheduled.
- c) *Safeguarding group*: This new group, which includes leaders of groups working with children, young people or vulnerable adults, had met. It will continue to meet three times a year.
- d) *Health & safety risk assessments*: All groups have been asked to complete these by 1 April 2020.
- e) *Persons deemed to be working with or in regular contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults*: A list of these people was circulated and approved.
- f) *Hall users*: A list of regular users of the Church Centre and Room 1 was circulated and approved.
- g) *Safe use of images policy*: An updated version of this had been circulated and was approved. It was noted that this particular applies to LINK and the website.
- h) *Deputy Safeguarding Officer*: Margaret West had resigned from this role. Helen Swain is meeting with a potential replacement. This appointment will be approved by the UCC at its meeting in May.

8) Mission Action Plan (MAP)

Volunteers are sought to work on the MAP and work with the Mission Accompanier.

9) Financial report

- a) *Current financial status*:

	6/3/20	12/1/20
Current & Deposit accounts	71,387	80,573
Epworth (Myers & other bequests)	220,563	228,467
CBF	6,502	6,492
CBF Plate Fund	88,993	74,958

- b) *Contactless giving*: It was agreed that the Treasurer and/or Chair of the Stewardship & Finance Committee be authorised to open an account with Sum Up in order to accept payments by debit and credit cards.
- c) *Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2019*: These had previously been circulated. Adam Shiels invited and answered questions. Subject to independent audit, it was agreed that the accounts be approved [proposed: David Carruthers; seconded: Martyn Gowing]. Thanks were expressed to Adam for his work during the year and particularly in the preparation of the accounts.

10) Reports from sub-committees

Minutes from the recent meetings of the sub-committees had been circulated prior to the meeting.

- a) *Community & Outreach*
- b) *Fabric & Churchyard*:
Electrics: Some electrical work is outstanding and competitive quotes will be sought. It was agreed to accept Jim Branney's proposal to draw up the specification for this work, at a cost of £800+VAT.
- c) *Stewardship & Finance*

11) Diocesan, Deanery and Circuit news

- a) *Diocesan*: Someone from the 'Growing Younger' initiative will be visiting during the year.

- b) *Deanery*: It is hoped that someone from the Diocesan Environmental Group will speak at the meeting in June. The Ascension Day service will be held at St Mary's this year.
- c) *Circuit*: A new minister from overseas will start in September 2020. A new Deacon will also start in Harpenden in September.

12) St Mary's 750

- a) Buzz reported that the leaflet has now been printed. Everyone was encouraged to support the events.
- b) The project to plant 750 new trees has already achieved its aim and work is now starting on a project with local schools.
- c) A new flag has been ordered and should arrive by Easter.
- d) Thanks were expressed to Buzz and Helen for their work on the St Mary's 750 project.

13) Children and Families Leader

A draft job description was circulated and discussion ensued. It was agreed to follow up the proposition of employing someone in this role. It was also agreed that the legacy recently received from the late Louisa Garbett be wholly allocated to this project.

14) Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the UCC will take place on **Monday 13 July 2020**

The meeting ended with the Grace.