



## Minutes of the Meeting of the United Church Council

Held on Monday 13 July 2020

Meeting held on Zoom

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

**In attendance:** Helen Swain

The meeting was chaired by Vicar and the Lay vice-Chair, Jane Earl

1) **Opening prayer:** Led by the Vicar.

2) **Apologies for absence** were received from David Edney and John Rhodes

3) **Minutes of meeting held on Monday 9 March 2020:**

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

4) **Matters arising**

- a) *Fire alarm (item 4c):* Information had been sent to the DAC for approval. The DAC had enquired as to the reason the additional roof beam had not been included; this had been explained. It was unanimously agreed that, if the DAC insist the roof beam be included in the installation, that this should be added to the project.
- b) *Roof alarm (item 4c):* DJS will follow up progress. **Action: DJS**
- c) *Nursery (item 4f):* There has been no progress on letting the Church Centre to a new nursery. Mavitob had not been able to have an OFSTED inspection yet. Building Bridges had declined to pursue their enquiries during the pandemic. David Gilbert will contact both companies for updates on their individual situations. **Action DG**
- d) *Tree work (item 6c):* Nothing further had been heard about the proposed works. **Action: DJS**
- e) *Contactless giving (item 9b):* Online giving has now been set up and two donations have been received. Contactless giving will need to be set up before services resume in church, by which time WiFi should be available in the church building. AS will follow this up with John Rhodes who had started to make enquiries about contactless giving. **Action: AS.**

5) **Minutes of Standing Committee meetings**

The Standing Committee had met on 25 March 2020, 20 April 2020 and 11 May 2020. The minutes of these meetings had been circulated to the UCC and were received.

6) **Vicar's remarks**

- a) Deborah thanked everyone for their prayers for our church during this time. She also thanked everyone for their commitment to keeping in touch with the church community and the wider community. She highlighted the fact that housebound members of the congregation have been enabled to be in better contact than in 'normal' times and intends to ensure that communication continues in the future.
- b) Deborah reminded everyone that, when we return to worship in church, things will not be as they were before. It will be time of change, transition and learning as we try different ways and continue to be creative and adaptable. Planning for many special services, eg, Remembrance Sunday, will need to start early in order to anticipate with the logistical issues that will arise.
- c) Deborah continued to be impressed at how many people have sought to get online and join services and activities.
- d) Jane Earl expressed everyone's thanks to DJS for everything she has done over the last few months in challenging circumstances.

## 7) Safeguarding

- a) *Report from Safeguarding Officer:* DBS checks are completely up-to-date. Training is outstanding for one individual but no courses are currently planned. Group risk assessments have not been completed due to the pandemic.
- b) *Deputy Safeguarding Officer:* It was unanimously agreed that Sue Johnson be appointed to this role.
- c) *Safeguarding Officer:* Helen Swain is moving out of the area and therefore will be stepping down from this role. Thanks were expressed to her for the outstanding work she has done.

## 8) COVID-19 pandemic update

- a) *Returning to worship:* A draft of the Risk Assessment had previously been circulated, together with guidance from Churches Together in England and West Hertfordshire & Borders Circuit. It was noted that any decision about returning to worship needed to reflect the views of both denominations as well as follow Government guidelines. There was wide-ranging discussion:
  - i) *Proposed services:* Deborah proposes holding three Eucharist services each week (two on Sunday mornings, one on Wednesday mornings). Communion in one kind will be given at two standing points. There will be no sermon.
  - ii) *Maximum number of attendees:* A plan of the church, identifying potential seating arrangements, had been circulated. St Mary's is able to set the maximum number of people who can attend. Booking in advance will be necessary. It was provisionally agreed that a maximum of 60 people be able to attend at any one service. It was further noted that Government guidance on this may change in the coming weeks.
  - iii) *Online services:* It was agreed that, even when services resume in church, they continue to be livestreamed to enable those unable to attend in person to participate. There is currently no WiFi in the church building and steps are being taken to rectify this situation. Services will not resume in church until livestreaming is working, aiming to give all worshippers the same experience whether online or in the church. It was noted that there are a number of people who are not online who will welcome the opportunity to return to worship in church.
  - iv) *Face masks:* Under current guidelines, the wearing of face masks is at the discretion of the church. [Note: since the meeting, new guidelines have been issued. Clergy will wear transparent face shields for services and all visitors to the church must wear face coverings]
  - v) *Logistics:* Plans will need to be made for bookings, stewarding, pathways and general guidance. These will be flexible to enable us to adapt to changes in national guidelines.
  - vi) *Proposed date:* It was unanimously agreed to aim to re-open St Mary's for public worship in September 2020 with the first services taking place on Sunday 6 September. This accords with the Circuit advice. This timing will enable plans to be developed and put in place.
- b) *Suspension of requirement to hold services:* Under Canon Law, there is a requirement to hold certain services in church each Sunday. The UCC unanimously passed the following resolution: The Vicar and the parochial church council of Rickmansworth acting jointly authorise dispensing with the reading of Morning and Evening Prayer as required by Canon B 11 and the celebration of the Holy Communion as required by Canon B 14 on the following occasions: Sundays 19 July 2020 to Sunday 30 August 2020 inclusive.
- c) *Church opening for private prayer:* There is a rota of people who will be in the church during opening hours. Everyone was urged to encourage others to visit.
- d) *Church opening for occasional offices:* All previously booked weddings have been postponed. No baptisms have been booked. For funerals, the current maximum number who may attend is 60 (specified by St Mary's) and attendees must sit in socially distanced household 'bubbles'.

## 9) Mission Action Plan (MAP)

This item will be considered at a future meeting.

## 10) Financial report

### a) *Current financial status:*

	10 July 2020	15 June 2020
Current & Deposit accounts	£75,686	£77,459
Epworth (Myers & other bequests)	£217,067	£214,391
CBF	£6,515	£6,515
CBF Plate Fund	£88,993	£88,993

- b) The Treasurer had previously circulated a report showing income and expenditure have both fallen over the past three months. Planned income continues to come in but there are no cash collections and income from Church Centre lettings has ceased. Investments have made a modest recovery.
- c) *Donations:* A number of donations totalling approximately £2,800 have been given specifically towards the shortfall caused by the pandemic.
- d) *Fundraising:* Deborah is keen for people to undertake fundraising activities. She suggested a sponsored walk with each participant undertaking their challenge independently. David Gilbert will undertake investigations. Adam to reinvestigate Justgiving membership. **Action: DG, AS**

## 11) 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:* It was noted that the policy document for fire risk assessment had not been circulated to UCC as it had not yet been approved by the Fabric & Churchyard Committee.
- c) *Stewardship & Finance*

## 12) Proposed building projects

- a) *Minor works in churchyard:* Details of three minor projects had been circulated. These are not in the budget:
- Replacement/extension of concrete plinth to existing bench area
  - Extension of paved area to bin store
  - Extension of paved area for courtyard
- It was agreed to accept the quote of £1,068 + VAT from D C Garden Services. DJS will check the depth required for bench. **Action: DJS**
- b) *Access project:* Plans had been circulated. These include access by the north and west doors.
- c) *Lady Chapel altar:* Illustrations had been circulated but were not warmly received.
- d) *Tower plans and pew removal:* The architect would normally meet with interested parties on site to discuss but this is not currently possible.

## 13) Diocesan, Deanery and Circuit news

- a) *Diocesan:* No report
- b) *Deanery:* The Rural Dean has stepped down with effect from end July. His successor is being sought.
- c) *Circuit:* No report

## 14) Patronal Festival celebrations

- a) It is currently too early to know what form these celebrations may take this year.

## 15) St Mary's 750

- a) *Trees:* The 'I Dig Trees' scheme is being repeated this year; Tim Tims is coordinating orders.
- b) *Timeline:* This has now been put on the website. Thanks were expressed to Martyn Gowing and Helen Haigh for their work on this.
- c) *Other events:* It is presently not possible to confirm whether or not any other planned events will take place.

## 16) Any other business

- a) *Charitable giving:* The list of charity disbursements based on giving in 2019 had been circulated. The amounts proposed were unanimously agreed. Chair of the Charitable Giving Committee, Jane Earl, thanked Rob Kay, Jackie Wilcox and Sue Hillier for their commitment.

- b) *Extension of WiFi into the church:* An estimate of approximately £400 has been received to extend WiFi into the church building. An alternative provider would charge approximately £40 per month. It was agreed that the Standing Committee be empowered to make final decision.
- c) *Church Centre:* This building will remain closed until September. DJS and Martyn Gowing will work on the Risk Assessment. It was agreed that the Standing Committee be empowered to approve it in order that the Centre can be opened.

**17) Date of next meeting**

The Standing Committee will meet in August

The next meeting of the UCC will take place on 14 September

The meeting ended with the Grace.