



## **Minutes of the Meeting of the United Church Council**

**Held on Monday 14 September 2020**

Meeting held on Zoom

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

The meeting was chaired by the Vicar

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

**2) Apologies for absence** were received from John Payne and Helen Swain.

**3) Minutes of meeting held on Monday 13 July 2020:**

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

**4) Matters arising**

- a) *Contactless giving (item 4e):* We now have two machines to enable us to take donations. It is hoped they will be operational from this coming Sunday (20 Sept).
- b) *Return to worship:* We are learning from experience each week. Feedback is welcomed.
- c) *Pandemic update (item 8):* The church is now only open for prayer on Sunday and Wednesday (11.00am-2.00pm). DJS would like to set up a QR code so that, once the app is available, visitors can scan the code to record their attendance on site for Track & Trace purposes relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Church Centre is also open now. Thanks were expressed to Martyn Gowing for assisting with the necessary changes to ensure the building is COVID-secure. The new doorbell enables us to see how people are behaving.
- d) *Minor works (item 12):* DC Garden Services have been contacted as our preferred contractor for these works. The DAC had a few queries that DJS has dealt with.
- e) *Extension of broadband/WiFi (item 16b):* A good deal has been secured and there is now WiFi in church. It is hoped that a permanent camera can be fixed in church for the broadcast of services.

**5) Minutes of Standing Committee meetings**

The Standing Committee had met on 10 and 17 August 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 ongoing engagement, attendance and prayer. There is no end in sight for so many of the changes that have been made and review will be ongoing.
- b) It is not known if it will be possible to hold the APCM in the church with changing legislation about the number of people who can meet together.
- c) Not everyone has been able to join in services and activities. Every effort has been made to be as inclusive as possible with electronic and hard copy orders of service, newsletters and other literature being sent out to mirror each other.
- d) Everyone is encouraged to try and come back to services if they can. Extensive measures are in place for everyone's safety and it is hoped that those who do attend will be able to reassure those who are still apprehensive.
- e) Update on the Church Administrator: Katrina has had the first four cycles of treatment. She is now awaiting tests to determine the next steps. The Standing Committee had agreed that she be paid in full for three months. Karen Ellis is doing 12 hours a week.
- f) Deborah thanked everyone on the United Church Council for the work they have done over last 18 months. She encouraged as many as possible to stand for election at the meeting in October.

## 7) Correspondence

*Ethnic Minorities Charter*: This had been sent through from the Diocese and circulated before meeting.

## 8) Safeguarding

a) Nothing to report.

## 9) Mission Action Plan (MAP)

a) Nothing to report.

## 10) Financial report

a) *Income and expenditure*: Both were lower than planned. Expenditure was lower due to the absence of collections at services and venue lettings. However, more than £5,000 had been received in donations towards the shortfall in income.

b) *2021 budget and Parish Share*: The Diocese was implementing cost-savings including cutting stipendiary posts. Despite this, the Parish Share for next year will fall from £95,000 to £89,000k.

c) *Current financial status*:

	14 Sept 2020	10 July 2020
Current & Deposit accounts	£71,207	£75,686
Epworth (Myers & other bequests)	£217,056	£217,067
CBF	£6,522	£6,515
CBF Plate Fund	£88,993	£88,993

d) As a result of the drop in income from the Church Centre, a significant deficit of at least £25,000 is forecast for this year.

e) Thanks were expressed to Adam for his work as Treasurer. Thanks were also expressed to David Gilbert who continued to work on church giving.

## 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*:

i) Update re electrical works: Following queries from the DAC the specification had been updated. Invitations to tender had gone to 6 companies against the updated specification.

ii) Approval of plastering works in Vicar's vestry: Three quotes had been received and were circulated. The preferred contractor is K G Plastering (£2,040) and it was unanimously agreed that they be asked to undertake this work .

iii) Fire Risk Assessment Policy: This was approved.

iv) Health and Safety Policy: This was approved.

c) *Stewardship & Finance*:

## 12) Matters to do with disbandment of Church Centre Management Committee

a) Streamlining the management of the building. Thanks were expressed to Martyn Gowing and the other members of CCMC for their work in getting things in order.

b) *Allocation of tasks*: A list of tasks which have been allocated to the F&C and S&F committees had been circulated.

c) *Extension of financial controls for F&C Terms of Reference*: It was agreed that the F&C committee be authorised to make additional purchases as required:

i) Purchase of cleaning materials to the value of £100 per 3 months

ii) Purchase of consumables to the value of £100 a month

iii) Extension of the authorisation of emergency repairs to the value of £500 twice a year specifically for the Church Centre.

d) *Authorised signatories to bank account*: It was unanimously agreed that Revd Deborah Snowball, David Gilbert (CC Treasurer), Adam Shiels (Church Treasurer), a Churchwarden and a Steward be signatories on the Church Centre bank account.

e) *Name of bank account*: It was unanimously agreed that the bank account for the Church Centre be named: St Mary's Church Centre Account

f) *Appointment of Treasurer*: David Gilbert was formally appointed as Treasurer of the Church Centre.

### **13) Annual review of Charitable Giving Policy**

- a) The policy had been circulated.
- b) A discussion took place regarding the percentage of planned giving that will be given to charities from income in 2021. In the light of the exceptional circumstances relating to the COVID-19 pandemic and the significant deficit forecast both for 2020 and 2021, it was considered imprudent to continue to give away 15% of planned giving. The Council reluctantly took the difficult decision that the percentage of 2021 planned giving be reduced to 10%. This is reviewed annually.
- c) Jane Earl expressed her thanks to Sue Hillier, Rob Kay and Jackie Wilcox for their work on this committee.

### **14) School: appointment of new governor**

The Council unanimously agreed that David Gilbert be appointed a PCC-nominated Foundation Governor of St Mary's School.

### **15) Diocesan/Deanery/Circuit news**

- a) *Deanery:* The new Rural Dean is Revd Simon Cutmore.
- b) *Circuit:* Two new ministers have arrived, a Deacon in Harpenden and a Minister in Rickmansworth. The welcome service is still available to watch on the website of High Street, Harpenden. Only one church has re-opened for worship (Flamstead) although others are finalising their plans. Most churches have held some form of online services.

### **16) Any other business**

- a) *Annual meetings: 11 October:* Although it is hoped to hold this in church and Zoom, changes in legislation may mean that it can only be held on Zoom.
- b) *HSBC accounts:* It was noted that the Treasurer is not a signatory on either of the accounts held at HSBC. It was unanimously agreed that Adam Shiels should be added as a signatory to both accounts and that the correspondence address be changed to Adam's home address **Action : DJS**

### **17) Date of next meeting: Monday 9 November 2020**

### **18) Closing prayers**

The meeting ended with the Grace.