

*St Albans and Welwyn Circuit, Beds, Essex and Herts District*

Minister: Rev’d Andrew Prout, 16 Gainsborough Avenue, St Albans, Herts AL1 4NL Tel: 01727 851834

Church Council Secretary: Chris Kitchin Tel: 01707 332 470

**Minutes of the Church Council Meeting held on**

**Wednesday 18 April 2018 at Hatfield Road**

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|  | **PRESENT**  Rev’d Andrew Prout (Chair), Eric Bridgstock, Sue Davey, Marion Eaton, Philip Eaton, Rev’d Rosemary Fletcher, Chris Hancock, Ros Hancock, Chris Kitchin (Secretary), Val Parker, Joanna Rose, George Selvarajan, Caroline Tough, Roy Vivian, Peter Wallace, Denise Willingham. (Total 16 present). | |
|  |  | **Action needed** |
|  | **APOLOGIES**  Angela Andrews, Freda Gray, Lesley Saunders, Lianne Weidmann, Gina Woodhead.  **ABSENT**  Helen Jeffrey, Idy Osibodu, John Scott.  **IN ATTENDANCE**  Geoff Burdett, Alan Davey, Paul Duxbury, Mary Gotts, Richard Jeffers, Glyn Lewis, Rev Colin & Dr Mary Rowe, Angela Spriggs (Total 9 present). | |
| **1** | **WELCOME and OPENING DEVOTION**  The Rev’d Andrew Prout welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with devotions. |  |
| **2** | **MEMBERSHIP OF THE MEETING**  A list of the membership of the Church Council had been circulated with the agenda. The list was approved in accordance with Standing Order 613. |  |
| **3** | **NOTICE OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS**  There were no other items notified. |  |
| **4** | **MINUTES**  The minutes of the Church Council meeting held on 12 February 2018 were signed as a correct record. |  |
| **5** | **Forthcoming Stationing: Process and Appointment of 3 Representatives from the Church Council to the Circuit Invitation Committee**  Andrew explained the stationing process and that both he and Rev Ali Facey were going through a period of discernment about their own futures. They would make their views known at the June 2018 Circuit Meeting. The Circuit Invitation Committee would then consider the matter and invitations could then be made to extend existing appointments for periods between one and five years if they were requested. A decision would then be taken by the September 2018 Circuit Meeting.  It was agreed that the June Church Council meeting would appoint three Representatives to the Circuit Invitation Committee. | Secretary |
| **7** | **Circuit Paper: Seeing The Way to August 2023**  **W**ith effect from 1 September 2018 the Rev Bruce Anderson, a presbyter from an Overseas Conference and currently in appointment in the UK, would be arriving to replace the Rev Nick Young. His appointment would continue through until 2023.  Rev Ali Facey and Rev Andrew Prout were both approaching their re-invitation process. They were both stationed in the Circuit until 31 August 2019 and had to indicate in the summer of 2018 if they wished to extend their appointment beyond that period and for how many years. In its turn, the circuit had to decide whether to offer any extensions, subject to the approval of the Conference.  The Circuit Leadership Team had been working towards a vision plan with due regard to enabling mission across the Circuit, future finances, and implications should the numbers of ministerial staff be reduced. This work was contained in a paper *Seeing Our Way to August 2023* which had been considered at the additional Circuit Meeting on 14 March 2018. Churches had now been asked to comment on the options presented.  The key issues facing the circuit were:  Reducing membership and attendance; lack of funding to continue to support 5 full time ministers, the circuit reserves having been used up over the previous 10 years; increasing assessments; only three of the 10 churches are 'paying their way'; to maintain the *status quo* it would be necessary for personal giving to increase by the equivalent of 65% by the end of the next five years or 28% at the cost of ceasing the continuing grants for mission projects which have been made by the Circuit over the last ten years at £30,000 per annum.  The paper offered three broad options:   * Option A Five ministers   (existing five hubs: Marlborough Road, Hatfield Road, St John’s Potters Bar, Hatfield, Welwyn)   * Option B Four ministers   (four hubs: St Albans, Potters Bar, Hatfield, Welwyn)   * Option C Four ministers   (four hubs: Marlborough Road, Hatfield Road, St John’s Potters Bar, Hatfield/Welwyn).  Andrew explained how the financing of the circuit operated and that the main expenditure was on staffing and manses. Peter Wallace corrected the summary paper and said that churches were being asked to respond to the  *Seeing Our Way to August 2023 paper* and not the summary. There was also some confusion about the labelling of the options offered and these were corrected by Ros Hancock.  Discussion in groups followed with feedback which included:  - there was likely to be a national reduction of ministers within the next ten years, so a reduction in local staffing was inevitable;  - can a decision be deferred?  - don't give up on 5 ministers?  - we were fudging the issue about costs and we needed a review of giving with explanations about what money was needed and why;  - Harpenden High Street had recently launched a 5 steps to giving which might be a useful model;  - there were real issues about maintaining 5 ministers;  - at a recent meeting of church treasurers, none were optimistic about maintaining 5;  - HRMC had not yet decided on the use of its recent large bequests and donations, would it be better to use them for mission rather than buildings?;  - would a circuit merger be an option for the future?;  - need to support the smaller churches;  - focus resources where growth was possible;  - we are not making use of talents within our churches;  - significant number of members were not getting involved in the life of the church;  - reference to a proposed circuit-wide stewardship campaign;  - not enough information about how the churches and circuit work;  - difficult for representatives to the circuit meeting to reflect HRMC views without an indication of support for any one of the options proposed;  Following the group discussions and feedback Chris Kitchin offered a view in support of Option C (of the original options & 4 Ministers Option B in the summary paper) to reduce from 5 to 4 the number of ministers in the circuit from 1 September 2019; sell the released manse and use that part of the capital retained by the circuit to fund the appointment of one or more appropriately qualified people to manage the circuit; identify what ministers need to do; identify what ministers do not need to do - and enable others to undertake those roles and tasks; develop a lay leadership programme to support those who take on new roles; enter into discussion with neighbouring circuits to establish whether circuit mergers or the dispersal of our churches to other circuits are viable options - and to complete that work by August 2019.  There was then a question about whether both presbyters present should leave the room whilst further discussion took place. Andrew as Chair of the meeting ruled that this was not necessary as the discussion was a generic one rather than about individuals.  It was proposed by Phillip Eaton and duly seconded that a generic vote should be held of everyone present with 9 members of the Church Council in favour and 5 against to ascertain what the current feeling was about each of the options. The proposal was carried.  As a result it was further agreed by majority vote of Church Council members to place a sheet at the back of the room for everyone to tick which option they might prefer rather than to have a show of hands. The outcome of this vote was as follows:  Those present: 25 (16 Church Council / 9 Other Attendees)  Option A - 12  Option B - 0  Option C - 5 (but subject to qualifications about Option A, this would increase to 8. | Representative from the Church Council to the Circuit Meeting |
| **8** | **Request by Circuit for Growth/End of Life Plan Statement**  In July 2017 the President of the Methodist Conference had asked churches to prepare Growth or End of Life Plans. Andrew with the church stewards would be drafting a response for consideration by the June 2018 Church Council. | Minister/  Church Stewards |
| **9** | **Appointment of Substitute Representatives from the Church Council to the Circuit Meeting**  The Standing Orders of the Methodist Church (SO 510 (7)) provide that:  *A Church Council may, when electing its representatives under head (viii) of clause (1), appoint not more than two of its own members to attend a meeting of the Circuit Meeting in place of representatives who cannot do so. Such persons are not members of the meeting. They may speak, but not vote nor propose or second any resolution.*  Chris Hancock pointed out that he attended the circuit meeting in two different capacities, therefore there was a vacancy to be filled.  It was agreed that the June 2018 Church Council would appoint Substitute Representatives from the Church Council to the Circuit Meeting. | Secretary |
| **10** | **General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2016/679**  In March 2018 a briefing paper, prepared by the church council secretary, had been circulated to members of the church council. A further briefing paper had been circulated with the agenda which explained the steps needed to implement the regulations locally.  The GDPR come into force on 25 May 2018. There were legal obligations imposed on Church Councils as managing trustees in relation to personal data. The Trustees for Methodist Church Purpose (TMCP) who own all church property have produced guidance about the action needed to meet the requirements. Managing Trustees need to be aware of the changes brought about by GDPR and how they will affect local church life.  With the connexional team, TMCP are producing guidance and a wide range of policies and procedures have already been identified. These will be made available to managing trustees over the coming months to ensure compliance with GDPR.  Andrew said that this matter would be considered further when the Church Council met in June 2018  It was agreed to receive the GDRP Briefing paper and note the 9 Steps required to meet its legal obligations. A small group might be needed to oversee the implementation. | Secretary |
|  | **Dates Dates of future meetings**:    Sunday 20 May 2018 : Annual General Church Meeting  T on Tuesday 12 June 2018: Church Council at 8.00pm  We d Wednesday 10 October 2018: Church Council at 8.00pm.  Gener |  |

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