

Thames Valley Circuit - Methodist Church

Minutes of the Circuit Meeting held at St Andrew's Church, Slough on 14th September 2010 at 7.45 pm

Present: Rev Andrew Baker (in the chair) plus 3 Ministers,
7 Circuit Stewards, and 28 other members as shown on the attendance register.

Welcome and Opening Devotions

On behalf of members, Mr Phil Mount welcomed Revs Andrew Baker and Gary Homewood to this, their first Circuit Meeting in this Circuit. Andrew and Gary led the opening devotions. Andrew has been struck by the diversity of the Circuit. We are all different parts of the body of Christ with the need for the parts of the body to work together.

Membership of the Meeting and Apologies for Absence

Attendees were invited to sign the register, which lists all appointed members of the Circuit Meeting, plus observers representing the Deaneries. Apologies for absence were received from 12 members as noted there. This being an open meeting (though only Circuit Meeting members can vote), 7 others also attended.

Agreement of the Agenda; notification of items requested for AOB

Items notified to the Secretary before this meeting were added under AOB or at the relevant point in the agenda.

Minutes of last Meetings

The minutes of the May Circuit Meeting and the June Extraordinary Circuit Meeting were agreed and signed as correct records.

Update

- Minutes 25.05.10, page 2: Rev Linda Hillier will be taking the Circuit Missions Service on 31st October.
- Minutes 25.05.10, page 3: Church Safeguarding Officers are now listed in the Circuit Directory.

Correspondence

Phil and Irene Morse have written to thank the Circuit for its most generous leaving gift.

Local Preachers

On behalf of the Local Preachers' Meeting, Mrs Connie Jeffery brought to this meeting the recommendation that Mrs Patie Crockett should go from being on trial to being a fully accredited Local Preacher. English is Patie's third language, and she has worked extremely hard. Mrs Jean Barnett seconded the proposal. Members agreed unanimously and with obvious pleasure.

Patie's Accreditation Service will be the Circuit Service at Colnbrook & Poyle on 30th January 2011.

The Local Preachers' Meeting has also agreed that Mrs Kathy Rickman move from being on note to being on trial.

Finance

Application for Grants

Rev Andrew Baker reported that Mrs Annah Mwadiwa has started a Lay Training *What next?* course at Guy Chester Centre. The course costs £1,200. Annah is paying £400. The District, in correspondence with Andrew's predecessor, had agreed to pay £400 and he asked the Circuit to match this. Proposed formally by Mr Phil Mount and seconded by Mr Paul Newton, the proposal was agreed unanimously.

Rev Barbara McIntivey said that Mr Imran Malik (Bobby), whom the Circuit supported very generously throughout his training at Cliff College, has moved on to start ministerial training at Queen's College, Birmingham. However, he is currently without a laptop and cannot afford a new one. She proposed a grant of £400. Seconded by Mr Phil Clack. Carried unanimously.

During this topic, the Circuit Treasurer, Mr Chris Wren, voiced his concern that the Circuit had overspent on its 2009-10 budget, and each extra expense is eating into our reserves. This could impact on future assessments.

Standard forms of accounts

Rev Andrew Baker reminded Church Treasurers that these should be completed, audited, and with the Circuit Treasurer by the end of November.

Property

High Street

A written report from Mr Freddie Daniel giving an update on the lettings situation, was distributed at the start of the meeting.

Ledger's Road Building Project

Rev Dr Emmanuel Jacob gave an update. A lot of the work has been done on the consents form. Once the architect has signed the agreement, their work on the form can be completed. Approval can then be sought from the Church Council, followed by that of the Circuit Meeting.

Hampshire Avenue

Mr Phil Clack, the Circuit Steward appointed to Hampshire Avenue, reported on the church's project. Eight years down the line, the building work has been completed, and hard work by Hampshire Avenue's members has seen their vision brought into reality. They should be proud of all they have done, and now have a launching platform for outreach to the community.

Mr Ben Kumi apologised that, although the project was on course when he left the country due to his work, problems then arose. Since his return, the situation has improved. He thanked everyone who has helped with fundraising and the churches who have given generous grants. He paid tribute to Mr Imran Daniel who, in producing his report, did a marvellous job. Members are much more confident as they go forward.

Their current bank balance of £13,315 means that they can now meet their outstanding liabilities to the builder and architect. That will leave a balance of £2,330. However, they still have other liabilities – such as their outstanding assessment for 2009-10 of £5,475, and repayment of loans. Ben asked the Circuit to waive the outstanding assessment. (Mr Chris Wren pointed out that he has received donations to the Circuit Account, such as £1,000 from St Andrew's, which are ring-fenced for reducing Hampshire Avenue's outstanding assessment.)

Mr Phil Clack pointed out that Hampshire Avenue had raised over £60,000 and had met all earlier bills. Many churches have undertaken building projects, and we know from experience how hard it is to raise the final amounts. Hampshire Avenue's Church Council members are well aware that, if the bills are not paid, individual members are liable as trustees. As assessed independently by Imran on behalf of the Circuit and included in his report, in the long term the church is seen to be viable. However, with payment of the retention amounts, etc, all coming at once, there is a short term cash flow problem. We need to give the church a breathing space.

Phil on behalf of the Circuit Leadership Team (CLT), which has looked carefully into this, proposed the following as the way forward:

- Hampshire Avenue's accounts for 2009-10 to be completed and audited professionally as soon as possible.
- In the light of these, its Church Council (including the two allocated Circuit Stewards, Phil C and Imran) to carry out a review on how to go forward, and say if and where it would like help.
- This is to be taken to the November meeting of the CLT for review.
- The CLT will then bring proposals (perhaps do nothing, perhaps defer, perhaps something completely different – whatever) to the November Circuit Meeting.

In the light of this counter-proposal, Rev Andrew Baker invited Ben to withdraw his request for now, and he agreed.

The CLT's proposal was then put to the meeting, and agreed unanimously.

Dr Ed Filmore explained the reasons behind St Mark's Crescent's resolution (as listed in the Circuit Meeting calling notice). Its members have a duty to be responsible trustees. They had been very anxious that, although they came away from the February Circuit Meeting feeling very positive after Dr Jacob's report that Hampshire Avenue was on course financially, the next they heard was that there were financial problems. They have likewise been through a building project, have every sympathy with Hampshire Avenue's members and genuinely want to help. St Mark's members felt their proposal had been misunderstood. Ed offered Hampshire Avenue's members an unreserved apology if they had misinterpreted the resolution.

After discussion about whether the resolution could be withdrawn as it has been overtaken by events, the meeting voted on the motion that it does NOT accept St Mark's resolution. Carried with 22 for, 0 against, and 7 abstentions.

Mrs Sue Le Page pointed out that if the Circuit is not told about Hampshire Avenue's fund raising events, members of other churches cannot support them. Their members were invited to copy Ledger's Road and publicise their events via posters which go onto the Circuit website and are displayed at the other churches, and to list events in the Circuit *What's On*.

Circuit Appointments

Mr Phil Clack is due to complete his 6 year term as a Circuit Steward in February. Mr Phil Mount proposed that the Circuit Meeting agree to extend his term to the end of this Church year in the light of his ongoing work with the members of Hampshire Avenue. Phil C is willing to stay on. Members agreed unanimously.

Mr Ian Haggarty will not be continuing as Circuit Meeting Secretary beyond April 2011. Rev Andrew Baker suggested that the Circuit Administrator, Mrs Naveela Asif, be appointed as non-voting Minutes Secretary. The meeting agreed. It was also suggested that she work alongside Ian at the next Circuit Meeting to see what is involved. (The Circuit Invitations Committee will appoint its own Secretary.)

When the Annual Appointments are dealt with at the Spring Circuit meeting, we shall also be looking for a Circuit Property Secretary – Mr Phil Mount's term in that rôle having been completed.

The way forward

Update from CLT about re-organisation process

Mr Phil Mount reported that all four ministers and the Circuit Administrator are in place! Manses:

- 36 Upton Road: Completed
- 3 Merton Road: The original buyer wanted completion date delayed by several months and price reduced. This was turned down; an offer of £289,000 from another buyer with finance in place has been accepted. This buyer has seen Number 3 with the extensive building work next door in place, which was not the case when the original buyer saw it.
- Priesthaus: Rev Gary Homewood is very happy with the house. More money was spent than was budgeted, but is the first work carried out there for over 15 years.
- Windsor: Renovations carried out.
- St Mark's: Will be let short term (OK with Charity Commission for 5 years) thereby helping the Circuit's finances.

Rev Barbara McIntivey thanked the Circuit Stewards for all their hard work behind the scenes.

Smaller Churches Support Group.

A written report by Mrs Anne Haggarty giving an update was distributed at the start of the meeting. There will be a meeting on 29th September to discuss possible ways of working and support. All are invited.

Co-ordinating dates of meetings: Timetable for feedback

Mr Phil Mount circulated proposed guidelines for the dates of meetings within the Circuit. This takes into account:

1. The reporting sequence in Methodism (top down, then bottom up – Conference ... Church, and *visa versa*).
2. The need to get the data flow between the Treasurers' Meetings, Spring Church Councils and Circuit Meetings in the right sequence.
3. The request from the May 2010 Circuit Meeting for the CLT to provide a timetable for Stationing 2012

It was stressed that these are guidelines.

Mr Phil Clack explained the timetable (point 3 above):

- The Circuit Stewards were the appropriate people to get feedback from the churches.
- He is producing a list of questions to be raised at each Church Council to find out views such as whether the current pastoral groupings are working, and where that church is aiming with its mission in the future.
- The Circuit Steward will note the feedback from the Church Council, and ensure its members know that they can also provide input directly and individually.
- This feedback will be taken to the CLT as input to its deliberations.
- The process starts with this Spring's meetings to establish the mechanism and ensure it works.

Safeguarding

Quiet on this front at the moment! Important to get the correct *attitudes* in place.

Ecumenical Developments - any *new* Initiatives

Representatives from several churches said they had nothing new to report; others took the opportunity to confirm longstanding arrangements.

Matters arising from the minutes but not covered elsewhere

None

Any Other Business

Slough and District Religious Studies Resource Centre

Mr Ian Haggarty stated that Mr John Newton had asked him to report that, at their meeting on 8th September, the trustees had resolved with regret to wind up the Centre. Use by teachers and others has fallen off steeply, as the Internet is used more and more.

Rev Mervyn Eden queried this, saying that the Centre would remain open.

Annual Report

Mr Phil Mount requested that contributors ensure they get their reports to the Circuit Administrator within specified timescales. Mr Ian Haggarty reminded members of the decision at the Circuit Meeting on 10th February 2010 (see Minutes, page 7) that, as from this coming edition, the Circuit Annual Report will cover a *Calendar* Year with the deadline for copy being *after* the end of the year, with the completed, printed Report being submitted to the Spring Circuit Meeting for approval.

Wireless microphones

Mr Phil Mount informed the meeting of forthcoming legislation regarding the use of certain radio frequencies that will affect users of wireless microphones. This could affect those churches who pay a licence and have four or more microphones. It will not apply to those who use the free frequencies. A compensation scheme is available in the short term. Check with Phil for more information.

Date and venue of next meetings:

- 17th November 2010 7.45 pm at Cookham Rise Circuit Meeting.
- 17th March 2011 7.45 pm at Old Windsor Circuit Meeting
- 24th May 2011 7.45 pm at High Street Circuit Meeting

In his closing prayer, Rev Andrew Baker paid tribute to Mr Neville Thorman, a Local Preacher and tireless worker at Eton Wick and throughout the Circuit, and whose funeral is this week.

The meeting finished at 9.30 pm.