

Thames Valley Circuit - Methodist Church
Minutes of the Circuit Meeting
held at Cookham Rise on Wednesday, 17th November 2010 at 7.45 pm

Present: Rev Andrew Baker (in the chair) plus 3 Ministers,
7 Circuit Stewards, and 34 other members as shown on the attendance register.

Welcome and Introduction

Mrs Connie Jeffery extended a warm welcome to Cookham Rise. Rev Andrew Baker added his own welcome and asked us to remember Mr Gordon Franklin who is recovering from a knee operation, Mr John Scott who is having trouble with his eyes, and anyone else we know who needs our prayers.

Andrew introduced the theme for the meeting - **hospitality**. God's work involves hospitality. Following on from this year's autumn's district synod, it has a key part to play this year.

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 7 members as noted there.

This was an open meeting (though only Circuit Meeting members may vote) and 4 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 Meeting

The minutes of the September Circuit Meeting (circulated previously) were agreed with one minor change and signed as a correct record.

Hospitality

Celebration of Holy Communion

Rev Gary Homewood led us in a moving celebration of Holy Communion.

Hospitality around the Circuit

Representatives from five churches gave brief presentations about hospitality at their churches: Mrs Connie Jeffery (Cookham Rise), Mr Phil Clack (Eton Wick), Ms Brenda Cheeseman (Hampshire Avenue), Mr Kieron Shaw (St Mark's) and Miss Ruth James (Ledger's Road).

As the first speaker, Connie defined hospitality and went on to say that, as Christians, we welcome guests and strangers in Christ's name. Hospitality springs from the love and care of Christ. "I was a stranger and ..."). Hospitality is not an optional extra.

There was much similarity across the presentations on various aspects of hospitality:

- A very welcoming and friendly church, often resulting in attracting unsolicited appreciation from visitors.
- Sharing food and drink featured prominently, with emphasis on serving the community, not just church members - coffee mornings, lunch clubs, coffee after services, ...
- Regular meetings during the week and a wide range of activities.
- Church premises used by community groups / non-Methodist churches.
- Activities publicised (e.g. via village newsletters).
- Visiting people in their homes and hospital.

In addition to the above:

- Phil stressed the emphasis Eton Wick put on “seeking to serve”. The two churches of Eton Wick and Burnham, each with few members, work together. Members offer hospitality in their homes and “seek and serve” the community however and wherever they can.
- Brenda stressed the advantages Hampshire Avenue has gained from its new facilities, including the enhanced kitchen and spacious new hall. They now have a door open into the community and are working for the future.
- Kieron said that his church is always looking for improvements. Its bi-monthly Messy Church (which includes a meal) is open to *everyone* and not just those with children.
- Ruth referred to birthday gifts, children enjoying taking part in their services, the joint services they hold with, for example, St Andrew’s, and their Caribbean evenings.

Safeguarding

Mrs Kathy Rickman stressed that safeguarding is behind the scenes of hospitality. We need to ensure that visitors come into a safe and welcoming place. Safeguarding is not just about children ... it is about ALL people, but especially children and vulnerable adults.

Safeguarding involves:

1. **Heart** - an attitude of welcome, respect, everyone of equal importance, making people feel good.
 - Faith organisations are about hospitality and building relationships.
 - There is a shared responsibility. *Everyone* has a responsibility to keep people safe.
2. **Mind** - producing inclusive policies.
 - Keeping people safe
 - Maintaining buildings [health and safety]
 - Plans must be in place in case of fire.
 - Clear communication needed.
 - Policies must be kept up-to date
3. **Hand** - putting policies into practice.

Every local church is responsible for ensuring that

- It has its own agreed written Safeguarding Policy.
- It has clear instructions for what action(s) to take in regard to its Policy in handling issues that may arise.
- It has CRB Disclosure certification for all those working with children and young people.
- It encourages training in Safeguarding and all related issues.
- There is access to the local (church or Circuit) Safeguarding Officer.
- All church key-holders have signed a self-disclosure form.
- There are proper booking arrangements for all outside users.
- Everyone is aware of our shared responsibility.

Circuit Finance

Merton Road has been sold.

Repaying Bridging Loan & Relationship to St Mark’s Manse [see attached document]

Rev Andrew Baker introduced the position as described in the attached document and explained the rationale behind the CLT’s recommendation to pay off the £71,000 bridging loan from reserves. [This was based on the difference between the low returns on our investments and the much higher rate for the loan.] It will save the Circuit money.

Mr Freddie Daniel proposed that we sell St Mark’s Manse and pay off the debt. Mr Mike Willcocks seconded this.

However, Mr Phil Clack pointed out that the necessary work required on the Manse prior to rental, was now virtually complete (at a cost of about £7,000) and a tenant was lined up.

Two major concerns were raised:

- Selling the manse. If we do not, and in the future we are able to return to having 5 ministers, we SHALL have our fifth manse already available.
- Have we enough, under Charity Commission regulations, in reserves?

The meeting voted unanimously to pay off the £71,000 from reserves.

The document recommends that we get back to the current level in the reserves within 5 years. This was queried - why not longer? Mr Daniel opined that it will be difficult to raise the extra 6.75% (see document, item 3) from the Assessment. Also, he did not feel it was necessary to duplicate both Church and Circuit reserves, and he questioned whether the Circuit reserves needed to be restored to their pre-loan-payback level. Mr Ian Haggarty pointed out that not all churches have the recommended level of reserves.

It was noted that any rental contract through the Letting Agents would be for a year. This was built into the Circuit's budget.

No final decision (*i.e.* to rent or sell) was taken. This matter is to be referred to, and reviewed at, the Treasurers' Meeting on 19th January 2011.

Members recorded our thanks to both Mr Phil Mount and Mr Phil Clack for all their hard work on property matters.

Hampshire Avenue Update [see attached document]

Referring to the £22,000 loan from the Circuit, as stated in bullet point 5 in this document, Hampshire Avenue asked for "*a deferment of repayment (by instalment) until January 2011*".

The Circuit Leadership Team understood this to refer to the **existing agreement of five annual instalments** with the first due in December 2010. On the basis of a one month deferral of this first repayment, they recommended acceptance. However, Dr Emmanuel Jacob stated that "instalment" to him meant **monthly**. In sorting out the confusion, several members pointed out that this involved extending the length of the loan and the amount of interest would have to be increased accordingly. In summary the requirements from both church and circuit to satisfy Hampshire Avenue's request are:

- To extend the loan period from the original 5 years to 6½ years.
- To recalculate the interest due to the extended time of the loan.
- To have 60 monthly repayments [around £367 plus interest per month].
- The first instalment to be due on 31st January 2011, and the final one due 31st December 2015.

Members voted unanimously in favour.

Any Other Business

Worship Leaders

The Circuit is hoping to put on a training course for Worship Leaders. Anyone interested, please tell your minister.

Preachers without their own transport

Rev Andrew Baker stated that two preachers have to rely on transport being provided for them to get to their appointments and most churches are able and willing to provide this. He proposed that as, the Circuit makes the appointments, if a church has to leave the preacher to make his/her own arrangements (when shown as "T" [Transport required] on the Plan), the Circuit should pay the (taxi?) costs involved. Members voted unanimously in favour.

Property Points

Mr Phil Mount reported that this document now covers more than just property, and has legal information, etc, included. It is expected to go to all Church Senior Stewards, Church Treasurers, Church Property Secretaries and Circuit Leadership Team members. It is available on-line. However, just one printed copy is being distributed to each Church. Some key points in this edition:

- Radio microphones
- Financial reporting - Church Treasurers to send their 2009-2010 schedules direct to the Circuit Treasurer.
- A high standard of energy efficiency is being made mandatory.
- Registered charities:
 - If registered with the Charity Commission [this applies currently just to the Circuit and to High Street] the charity registration number must be shown on **all** documentation.
 - If NOT registered, no number must appear. Hence individual churches must **NOT** use the Circuit's number.

Circuit Website

Mr Ian Haggarty said there have already been 16 changes to the December / February Preaching Plan since it was printed. All known changes are put onto the listing on the website.

This year the website has an Advent calendar, with a new page added to the site each day in Advent. Written by Jill Baker, there is an introductory page already on the site.

Many items have appeared in the Circuit NEWS page over the last 3 months. Thank you to those who sent them - and an invitation to everyone - keep them coming.

Bible Festival

Next year is the 400th Anniversary of the King James Bible. As part of "Bible Fresh", the Circuit will be holding a series of events on 16th and 17th April 2011. *Provisional* information:

Saturday, 16th April:

- 9.30 - 11.30 am St Mark's
- 12 noon - 2 pm Eton Wick
- 2.30 - 4.30 pm Hampshire Avenue
- 7.30 pm Windsor

Selected Bible readings:

- OT History and Law
- OT Wisdom and Prophets
- NT Gospels and Letters
- Celebration of the Bible, including
 - Songs from the Psalms,
 - Food from the Bible and
 - Dramatic presentation of the Bible story.

Sunday, 17th April

- Morning: Appropriate Lectionary readings, including those for Palm Sunday.
- Evening: Circuit Service at St Andrew's: Henry Brown's Service of Admission to the office of a Local Preacher

Pastoral Visitors

A training morning for all Pastoral Visitors will be held at St Mark's Crescent Church on 25th June 2011.

Date and venue of next meetings

[All dates given in these Minutes are listed in the Circuit website DIARY]

- 30th January 2011 4 pm at Colnbrook & Poyle Circuit Service of Admission to the office of a Local Preacher for Mrs Patie Crockett
- 17th March 2011 7.45 pm at Old Windsor Circuit Meeting
- 16th / 17th April Bible Festival (details as above)
- 24th May 2011 7.45 pm at High Street Circuit Meeting

Rev Andrew Baker closed the meeting with a prayer around 10 pm.