

The Methodist Church Thames Valley Circuit Meeting
Old Windsor, 16th July 2014 at 7.45 pm
Minutes

Present Rev Andrew Baker plus 6 other ministers, 6 Circuit Stewards, and 24 other members as listed in the register of attendees. Apologies from 11 members noted there.

Agenda Agreed as distributed plus

- under item 11: Advance Notice of St. Mark's Redevelopment Scheme
- under item 9: Conversation on the work of God, Kathy Rickman
- Deacon Andy: Voice of Hope

Minutes of last meeting were agreed. Proposed: Liz Tottingham, seconded: Ann Hardiment.

Matters Arising

- Creating Safer Space – please register with Kathy R if you have not done the course yet.
- 4th at Cookham – A successful start. Andrew B urged all to come and experience this special service.
- The updated Vision and Mission Statement has been published and is available on the website on the Our Circuit Page.

Circuit Superintendency from September 2015.

A letter was emailed to Circuit members on 7th June 2014 asking for reactions to be given by 13th June to the Circuit Stewards. The Circuit is very grateful to Rev Sonia Hicks for offering to take on the rôle of Superintendent. Anne H reported on the Circuit Invitations committee meeting on 8th July. Andrew B stated that we should first consider the Superintendency before deciding on the configuration of the whole Circuit. Sonia Hicks left the room and the Reasoned Statement, which had been agreed by the Circuit Invitation Committee, was read out. (Copy attached Appendix 1) There were some points of clarification but no further discussion and Sonia was invited back in to receive the circuit's affirmation. She spoke of her desire to serve and lead and a prayer was offered by Malcolm W.

Sections from September 2015 and Profiles for Invitation.

These had been considered by the Circuit Invitations Committee. The Committee had thought long and hard about this and proposed the following responsibilities:

Rev Sonia Hicks as Superintendent with responsibility for Ledgers Road, Burnham and Cookham Rise

Rev Gary Homewood or replacement: High Street, St. Mark's and pastoral responsibility for Woodlands Park

Deacon Andy Packer: Wider circuit brief and one day a week at Woodlands Park

Rev Margaret Dudley: Old Windsor, Windsor, Colnbrook & Poyle and Eton Wick

New Presbyter: St. Andrew's English, St. Andrew's Asian and Hampshire Avenue

This configuration proposal is to be shared and discussed at all our Churches.

Andrew B clarified the timetable for decision making.

Timetable for decisions at District and Circuit Level:

- By 11th September 2014 we should know about our staffing.
- Profiles go into 2 books: one for ministers and one for circuits.
- Stationing committee meets in October.
- 'Matching' – ministers come to view November, December 2014 and January 2015.

Property – Sale of Manse

The St Mark's Road manse has been sold for £622,500 and a new manse in Spring Lane, Cippenham, purchased for £520,000: the Hicks family intend to move into the new manse on 1st August 2014. Before that there will be some work to be done on the manse as follows: refurbishment of an outbuilding used as a gym into an office for Conrad's use (insulation, new windows, flooring, lighting, heating), injection of a damp course into what would be Sonia's study to solve a problem with damp picked up by our surveyor, and subsequent redecoration, and work on the electrical systems in the extension part of the manse.

The difference between the sale and purchase prices means there are funds in the Circuit's Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) Fund, which can be used for specific works: the meeting agreed that the Treasurer should request £20,000 of this money to fund the refurbishment of 1A Spring Lane.

Andrew B thanked Connie Jeffery for her hard work and negotiating skills during the sale and purchase of the manses: he also noted that the Legal section of TMCP had not always been helpful and that he had taken steps to register our disappointment in the way Legal had handled both sale and purchase.

Work on Manses: windows in Upton Road have needed some work, which has been done.

The fence at Clarence Road has been replaced after storm damage.

Circuit Property Consent

Consent was given:

- to Woodlands Park to let the property "Sheen" to a new tenant;
- to Cookham Rise to re-let West End Cottage to the existing tenant.

2014/15 Budget and Assessments

The treasurer proposed that, on a net circuit expenditure of £ 263,824, the total assessment be kept the same as last year at £250,624 with the balance taken from the one-off saving last year, with the shares of this adjusted to the schedule provided as agreed between the churches. This was agreed unanimously.

Conversation on the work of God

Andy P informed the meeting that he had received several copies of a booklet, 'Voice of Hope' from Premier Christian radio. There are enough copies for every church in the circuit. Church representatives were asked to take one.

Report from Conference

a) Larger than Circuit.

Andrew B reported on a discussion on this matter at Conference.

The meeting considered this and comments included:

- Some churches have combined and this has changed the demographics – perhaps to ‘leaner and meaner’.
- Geographically our District is the second largest and also for training purposes the Islands and Southampton are included in our Region. This can lead to communication difficulties.
- Connexion looks after bureaucracy.
- Would it be possible to move Administration to a Connexional Office so that more attention could be given Pastorally.
- Does all administration need to be done?
- The ecumenical factor is different. Diocese, districts and URC synods overlap in different areas.
- How much of this is cash driven?

b) Page 3 Pictures in Media

Should a stand be made against such portrayal? It is not appropriate in a family newspaper.

c) Palestine/Israel situation.

BDS Boycott, Divestment Sanctions (BDS) discussion at Conference with reference to a proposal for the Middle East. Conference had a full and complex discussion on this issue but it was decided that no statements could be made for 2 years. Gary H commented that Methodism can be too slow and women and children were being killed. Sonia H said that the Bishop of Jerusalem is coming to our District Synod in the autumn.

d) Same Sex Marriage

Conference agreed to set up a working group to report in 2016 to consider marriage and re-defining it according to our doctrine.

Andrew B clarified that

- Churches are now permitted to offer services including a blessing to same-sex married couples.
- There is no reason *per se* to prevent anyone within the Church from entering into or remaining in a legally constituted same-sex marriage

Gary H asked for clarification re: the blessing. Would this need the decision of the Church Council? Andrew B answered “yes – if it were to be held in the church building”.

The question of what is homophobic also came up and Andrew B said it would be the responsibility of the connexional equality/diversity group to produce clear guidance on this.

Young People and Worship

Kathy Rickman reported that there are two young people at Cookham Rise (20 to 35+) with whom she takes Bible studies. They have planned a service at Cookham Rise and would very much like to be involved in a group of similar age within the Circuit. Is there anyone in the Circuit who could convene such a group? These are youngsters who need support, but want to engage beyond the family. Andrew B asked people to get in contact with Kathy.

Circuit Correspondence

- Mark Johnson, Lay Chairman of the Burnham and Slough Deanery, will be asking the Deanery Synod to pray for this Circuit Meeting, and asked for our prayers as they appoint new Synod officers.
- Congratulations to be sent to Margaret for her Ordination on 29th June.
- Sympathy to Gill Franklin, as she grieves Gordon's death.
- To Jo Saunders on the death of Bob Saunders.
- Greetings to Mary Austin, Philip Morse and Jim Booth, as they 'sit down'.
- Congratulations to be offered to the next President of Conference, Rev Steve Wild.

Anne Haggarty thanked the meeting for all the support given during Ian's illness.

Andrew congratulated Gary on having his first book (novel) published.

St Mark's Redevelopment Scheme

Rev Gary Homewood gave notice that he will be bringing this to the September Circuit Meeting.

Dates for Diaries (Please see also the diary of forthcoming events on the circuit website)

Sunday 3 rd August	Circuit Lament WW1	4 pm	Windsor
Sunday 31 st August	Circuit Open Air Service	5 pm	St Mark's Crescent
Thursday 11 th September	Circuit Meeting	7.45 pm	High Street Maidenhead

The meeting closed with the saying of the Grace together at 9.25 pm

Appendix 1 Reasoned Statement on Rev Sonia Hicks becoming Superintendent

Of the presbyters stationed in the Thames Valley Circuit at present, Rev Sonia Hicks is the only one who has made herself available to the circuit for consideration as Superintendent of the circuit. This offer has been put to members of the circuit meeting and to church officers of each congregation, seeking their responses.

The overwhelming majority of responses to the “formal” question put to church officers of every church in the circuit were very favourable, many citing her enthusiasm, friendliness, and sense of humour. They also appreciated the sense of continuity and stability that Sonia would bring.

A few (mainly individual church officers who are not on the Circuit Meeting) stated that they did not know Sonia well enough to make an informed decision, though none objected.

The only objections / concerns (4 in total) came as individual responses to the preliminary enquiry to Circuit Meeting members. Those concerns were discussed and addressed at a meeting of the Circuit Invitation Committee.

Sonia has over 20 years’ experience in ministry, and has been a Superintendent in two previous appointments. Her appointment in the Thames Valley runs until 2017 (whether she is Superintendent or not), when she may seek re-invitation.

The majority of the circuit meeting members and all the church officers consulted were in favour of Sonia becoming Superintendent, and following further discussion, the Circuit Invitation Committee recommends to the Circuit Meeting:

That we invite Sonia to become Superintendent Minister of the Thames Valley Circuit from September 2015.

Anne Haggarty
Connie Jeffery
On behalf of the Circuit Leadership Team

July 2014