

Minutes of the Circuit Meeting held on 13th September, 2023, at St Andrew's Methodist Church, Slough, 7.45 pm

Welcome; opening devotions

Vicci welcomed everyone to the meeting, the first of the new church year. She reminded the meeting of the theme for the year "Hidden Treasures", chosen by the President and Vice President, and of the need to step out in faith. We sang "Trust and Obey" from Hymns and Psalms as the challenge!

Membership of the meeting; apologies

The membership of the meeting was taken as given on the attendance list.

Present: Circuit Superintendent and 3 other ordained ministers, 3 Circuit Stewards and 17 other members. 10 apologies had been received, and 4 members neither attended nor gave apologies.

Agreement of the agenda; items for AOB

The agenda as circulated was agreed. There were some extra items which were added to the appropriate points on the agenda, (mainly finance).

Declaration of interests

None

Minutes of the last meeting

Accepting these minutes was postponed to the November meeting. The Circuit Administrator and the Senior Circuit Steward were both on holiday, and these minutes and other reports had not been circulated in advance of the meeting.

Matters arising not on the agenda

Circuit Strategy – this will be discussed in detail at the CLT Away Day arranged for Thursday 5th October. More at the next Circuit Meeting.

Circuit Directory – this is now available. The printers have apologised for the doubling-up of the material.

Safeguarding report

Kathy's safeguarding report was read to the meeting. It is attached to these minutes. There are a number of important dates included there, relating to different levels of training. Members are asked to check which apply to them, and safeguarding officers have also been asked to ensure that people who are required to attend are reminded. The meeting thanked Kathy for all her work, and for this report.

EDI

The meeting saw a video of James Carver, a former Methodist Youth President, talking about how to make life in churches easier for people with different neurological conditions, such as ADHD, autism and others.

GDPR

The circuit is currently GDPR compliant.

Finance

Ledgers Road church is facing significant building repair work. They have already raised £14,143.00 themselves. They have asked the circuit for help, and a grant of £10,000 has already been willingly given. However, the cost of the work has increased since the estimates were received, and they have asked the circuit for more help. Attached to these minutes is their proposal for grants / loans from the circuit and their time-schedule for repayments. They need £36,168.00 altogether, and have asked for a grant of half the amount, £18,084.00, plus a loan for the other half (£18,084.00) to be repaid to the circuit by direct debit of £304.40, monthly for 5 years.

The circuit had originally approved a loan through an email poll, and this proposal brought the definitive figures.

This current request was proposed by Ruth James and seconded by Phil Mount. Carried.

Property

Sue le Page reported that the sale of Eton Wick Chapel is about to go through, but that the potential buyer for Old Windsor has dropped out, so it is back on the market.

Vicci reported that the system of annual returns has been changed, and the form is now much shorter, but alongside is a guide to checking that everything has been done. This is Methodist Trustees Annual Returns Checklist.

Matters from CLT

- The CLT is having an Away Day in October.
- Keith Machin has resigned as a Circuit Steward, and the CLT brought the name of Frank Bulley to the meeting for appointment as a Circuit Steward. Carried.
- Dave Tottingham is unwell, and Liz has asked to step back as a Circuit Steward with immediate effect. Vicci asked the meeting to think of people who could be approached, particularly in the Maidenhead section.
- Sue then brought a proposal to change the bank signatories from Keith to Frank, meaning that Sue, Joy, Phil Mount and Frank will be the named signatories. Carried.
- Vicci asked for permission to invoke Standing Order 551, which allows the Circuit Meeting to delegate authority to the Circuit Stewards to appoint a new Circuit Steward. Carried.
- Vicci wants, at each meeting, to hear the good news from one church, as an example to encourage all in their mission and ministry.
- Senior Church Stewards are reminded that for the next Circuit Meeting, they will be expected to produce a written report on their church.

Circuit Greetings

The meeting asked that Circuit greetings be sent to:

- Dave Tottingham, who is unwell.
- Malcolm White, who has had a(nother) fall and is in hospital.
- Anthony Nicholls, organist at St Mark's for 50 years.

AOB

MDR – Ministerial Development Review has been completed as appropriate for the three ordained presbyters; Margaret, as a probationer, does not do this yet, but Vicci reported that her first year has gone extremely well.

Conference Report – Anne reported:

- The size of Conference is to be reduced – by order of the Charity Commission.
- Merging of Districts is not going ahead unless there is a desire to get together.
- Walking with Micah is a large-scale project on justice with which churches are encouraged to engage.
- Sonia will be Chair of Northampton District from September 2024.

Vicci commented that it was a thin conference, following a few years when major decisions had been made.

Statistics for Mission – reporting these has been changed. Vicci is concerned that the average number attending the main service does not adequately reflect what is going on in some churches, and is thinking about asking the Circuit Meeting to bring a Memorial to Conference about it. She will discuss this further with Circuit staff and if decided to go ahead, will bring a proposal to the next Circuit Meeting.

Also reported were

- A Rob Halligan concert at Windsor on 21st October. Leaflets for all churches were distributed.
- Old time Music Hall at Burnham, 2.30 pm, 8th November, in aid of Burnham Church and The Well.

Cliff asked if the new acoustic panels in St Andrew's had made a difference. Emphatic answer: Yes!

Closing thanks and prayer

Vicci thanked St Andrew's for its hospitality, and asked Cliff to close the meeting with prayer.

Dates of next meetings

Thursday, 23rd November, 2023

Wednesday, 28th February, 2024

Tuesday, 14th May, 2024

Wednesday, 11th September, 2024.

Documents attached

1. Ledgers Road Proposal
2. Safeguarding Report

Sept 2023

Proposal to Circuit for Re-payment of £36,168.00

The members of Ledgers Road are extremely grateful for all the support we have received from the circuit towards the repair of the Church roof.

To date, we as a Church have raised a total of £14,143.00 Through our own fundraising efforts such as, Gift Day, Ten Pound Challenge, Thanksgiving Prayer and Praise Lunch, a Music Concert, and other smaller events.

We have received grants from Benefactor trust of £3750.00, and £10,000.00 from the Thames Valley Circuit. However, costs were more than double the original quote we were given, so to assist us with the final two payments we are now requesting a further combination loan/grant from the circuit of £36,168.00.

If the circuit approves, we suggest that £18084.00 of that be in the form of a grant and the remaining £18084.00 to be a loan, which we propose to repay over a 5-year period, via a monthly direct debit to the circuit of £301.40.

In order to help us achieve this, our fund-raising efforts will continue in earnest, and as our summer concert proved to be such a success, we propose to make this an annual event. We will also bring back our Caribbean Evenings which have also proved to be successful in the past. Our members have also been asked to prayerfully consider their weekly offerings to help us repay this debt.

We trust this proposal will meet with the Circuit's approval.

Jackie Richardson
Church Treasurer

Circuit Safeguarding Report for September 13th 2023:

Circuit Safeguarding Meeting This was held on September 7th

Training – The next Creating Safer Space Foundation Module is on October 7th 10-1. It was observed that there are some people who have not kept up to date with training and also that the training is a requirement before certain roles are taken up. Please make sure that everyone who needs to do the training returns the booking form. It is the Church Council's responsibility to ensure all who need to do the training attend.

The Hybrid Advanced Module training will be held on Saturday March 9th at 10 a.m. Most of the Local Preachers need to attend as it will be 4 years since their last training. There are several others in the Circuit who are required to attend. Pete Phillips has kindly offered to manage the technology on the day. There is the opportunity of doing the course on-line. The Essential Preparation will be held as a group exercise on Thursday 8th February 7.30 p.m. at Cookham Rise or done individually.

16 year olds helping with a church activity There was some discussion about this; 16 and 17 year olds can be assistants but not the second DBS-checked 'safeguarder' for the activity, for example when helping in Sunday School. They cannot be in a role of responsibility, only an adult.

Report on Child Sexual Exploitation This has led to new guidance being rolled out. It is not clear at the moment whether all organisations will be affected by the new criminal offence of not reporting suspected child sexual exploitation, child being anyone under the age of 18.

Succession Planning Some of the meeting have been in their safeguarding roles for a good number of years. It would be wise to start recruiting others to shadow those in these roles with a view to them taking the lead in the near future. Please consider who in your church might be approached especially for the role of Circuit Safeguarding Officer. There might be someone with relevant experience through their job in Social Services, Education or Health. The job description is on the Methodist Church Safeguarding website.

District Safeguarding Officer Philippa Read will be leaving the post at the end of September. She has been a great help and support to the Circuit, and likewise the Circuit has been a model of good practice in following the correct procedures, which Philippa has used in training.

Date of next meeting Tuesday 12th March 2024 at Windsor.