

Trinity Methodist Church, Woking: Church Council

Leadership Team Awayday and Beyond

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Leadership Team needs to find significant time together away from the busyness of Trinity to hear what each other is doing, what we are working on and planning and to celebrate that we are a Team working together, hopefully guiding Trinity along the path of God's Ministry in Woking. We achieved this on 22nd October and were pleased that the new Superintendent, Rev Paul Glass was able to join us.

It was good to reflect about what is going well at Trinity in response to the challenges of **Our Calling** and to think about the changes and practical challenges we face, certainly, but most importantly, to talk about the opportunities that are emerging as we continue, we hope, to listen to God's promptings.

The following Report is a summary of our conversations and includes the many issues we believe Church Council and the wider Church need to know and pray about, and fully understand that they need to play a part in the future development at Trinity. Full and open discussion at Church Council will lead to consideration of:

RESOLUTION 1

Church Council authorises and supports the Leadership Team to press ahead and explore the creation of a 'Central Services Resource' (Working Title), consulting with others as necessary, reporting what might be possible and at what cost, to the next CC Meeting.

RESOLUTION 2

Church Council authorises the Leadership Team to continue conversations with the Chinese Church expressing our preferred option is to be fully integrated as one Church with multiple congregations.

LEADERSHIP TEAM REPORT

What progress is being made against the main headings of **OUR CALLING**?

WORSHIP

There is a lot going on

10.30am service every Sunday in English

In church attendance fairly stable around 60, more for communion, but slowly growing
Live streaming has improved and become more reliable and Rev Sam uses Chat facility
On-Line viewings have been growing steadily to around 60 per week.

Also able to privately broadcast funerals and weddings.

The number of musicians is growing and thus the variety of music is wider.

2 Baptisms in the last month. (One a Messy Fun Church family). 3 more baptisms booked.

There are some new people who have tried us out and stayed.

1.30pm service every Sunday in Cantonese and Mandarin.

Congregation was a steady 40/50 for several years.

Now around 180 regular worshippers plus 45/50 in Sunday School.

Our Chinese friends take bible study and corporate prayer very seriously and hold 2 or 3 sessions each week.

6pm Foundry Worship every 2 weeks

This is café style and regularly attracts 25/30 people.

Increasing number of musicians and range of instruments and style.

Open, frank and sometimes very personal, discussion about current and personal issues.

All are Christians with most already linked to another church but attracted by our inclusivity.

LEARNING AND CARING

Every Friday Messy Fun Church offering teaching, playing and a hot meal. Numbers growing with 30 youngsters and 20 parents most weeks. They are reaching families Sunday morning worship would not. Families in need of new friendships, love and support, some are in crisis due to family responsibilities, loss of their own parents or illness or the lack of finance due to the ever-increasing cost of living, no matter how many hours they work.

At Messy Fun Church family needs are being met, families are naturally inclusive, they love and respect the difficulties each are going through, they support and encourage, it also offers a safe fun haven and puts food into young children's bellies each week.

New parent volunteers have come forward to assist as they understand parents in similar situations, yet their love for Jesus has given them opportunities to share God's love by serving.

(THE ABOVE COULD ALSO BE INCLUDED WITHIN THE WORSHIP SECTION)

Families are talking to our volunteer leaders and bringing children for baptism.

Bible Investigators is a joint learning session between Chinese and English teenagers.

Junior Church on Sunday in The Kabin, is not popular as too many distractions for children.

For adults we have started Waymaker Group and most attendees come from Foundry Worship

We continue to care for our people through the robust Pastoral Visitor System.

SERVICE AND EVANGELISM

Much of our outreach is achieved through groups started by ROC Initiative. ROC sits in the secular space which has helped develop relationships with other groups, particularly WBC, but all Trustees are Christian with a majority from Trinity/Foundry Worship. The Steering Group are proud that ROC Woking has Christian roots.

ROC Woking is continuing to run three action groups bringing partners together. The Youth Action Group is developing a funding bid to enable more youth work to happen in the Woking area. Working with the Lakeview Community Action Group, ROC are supporting the development of activities within the Lakeview Community Centre. On October 15th ROC helped organise an open day at Lakeview, supported by Trinity Band members and local churches, to find out what the local people would like to see happening in the centre. Over seventy questionnaires were filled in by residents, many offering help with activities. This week ROC had a stall at 'Working together for Woking' a showcase of charities and council services working in Woking.

Locally we have developed Phone Friends, Coffee and Chat and Neighbourhood Parties, as well as a positive relationship with the NW Surrey short stay school.

Whilst acknowledging that there will always be more that could be done, through our outreach and the warmth of our welcome, we have many community groups, large and small, using our premises and regarding Trinity as their 'home' or 'base'.

JAM – a large group of musicians coming together to play their instruments and chat in our Sanctuary.

A number of other choirs also use the Sanctuary for rehearsals and concerts.

Our partnership with IMM opens up many opportunities for gentle witness, including the regular music hub which a number of our members volunteer at.
Short Stay School pupils continue on Wednesday's, gaining valuable socialisation skills.
Blood donors have re-started regular sessions at Trinity.
Cremona dance school use Trinity as a main base, being a significant premises user
Scouts and Guides meet weekday evenings – all groups except Rainbows

Many other recreational and learning groups use the building every week and we demonstrate Extravagant Christian Hospitality for which we have earned a reputation. The result is we receive regular requests to hire the premises. Increasingly we are unable to offer space.

In terms of Christian outreach, there are large numbers of people through the premises each week, with enormous scope to improve how we engage with them.

THE RESULT

These are just some of the hi-lights, but are sufficient to demonstrate beyond doubt that **TRINITY** is **GROWING! BUT it is NOT growing back to what it was 15/20 years ago**, it is becoming a different, modern, inclusive Christian organisation, worshipping God in a variety of ways, and witnessing to the local community. Even though not everyone is a 'Member' in the traditional Methodist sense, everyone is part of the Christian Community based in the Trinity premises.

We should CELEBRATE that so much is going so well.

THE CONSEQUENCES

Growth of course, also brings **CHALLENGES and OPPORTUNITIES**

Constantly short of volunteers - Thus we have to employ people to undertake duties that could be covered by volunteers.

As our membership ages, we need to pay to get work done we might have achieved ourselves a few years ago.

A busier building creates more bookings and thus more welcomes and more furniture movement to make the most of the flexible space!

FINANCE

The steady decline in our membership and our increased activities, also have an impact upon finance.

A growing proportion of Trinity members are now relying on pensions and whilst they might like to give more, cannot. However, we give thanks that others at Trinity have really dug deep to keep our offerings up. Thankyou!

District Grants have helped at £15K pa for 3 years.

Circuit Grants have helped at £30K pa for 3 years.

Those arrangements have expired but District has awarded a further £30K pa for 2 years to help us to develop Phase 2 of The Foundry Project.

For the year 2021/22 we achieved a small surplus of income exceeding expenses but that is with the help of £45K grants and £15K Gift Day. All grants cease in 2024.....what then?

REGULATION

At the same time, legal and regulatory requirements are increasing and becoming ever more complicated to follow. It is increasingly difficult to keep up to date and take responsibility. Areas include:

GDPR, Safeguarding, HSE, Building related issues, book-keeping etc

We are not the only organisation facing these challenges. Many other charities are in the same situation; other churches in the Circuit are also facing the same challenges.

When we first started dreaming about our Mission, we envisaged something called a HUB which was a small team of professionals based at Trinity, some volunteering, some paid, but all available to support Trinity, those who use the building and other charities with whom we are in contact, through the labyrinth of compliance and regulation.

THE FOUNDRY: PHASE TWO

That ambition is becoming more relevant and we need to organise ourselves better. One strand of that is to set up a small Central Services Resource Team now. We have talked about this with District officers who see it as potentially having far wider application and benefit across other circuits in the District, indeed right across the Methodist Connexion. This is at least partly behind the decision to grant Trinity £60K over 2 years to develop this idea and see if it works. Very little detail is settled yet but the Co-ordinator, Regional Learning Network is interested in helping us.

RESOLUTION: Church Council authorises and supports the Leadership Team to press ahead and explore the creation of a 'Central Services Resource' (Working Title), consulting with others as necessary, reporting what might be possible and at what cost, to the next CC Meeting.

THE FUTURE

We have to accept that Trinity on its own, with around 114 members, is no longer able to sustain a viable church with such extensive premises.

From Property and Finance reports, we can see that money needs to be spent to bring the building up to date with current expectations.

For good reason we curtailed the cleaning contract with Vervia and have not yet put a new arrangement in place. Thus, Daniela and Hugh spend a good slice of each morning ensuring the bins are emptied, the toilets are clean, the carpets are free of crumbs etc. We also rely on a volunteer workforce each month. This is not sustainable and we need to engage with new cleaners which will add to our costs.

We need to find additional administrative resource to support Daniela perhaps with Bookings, Welcomes and Invoices.

More committed volunteers are needed or more cost.

THE CHINESE CONGREGATION

There have been a number of meetings between some of the Trinity Leadership Team and the leaders of the Chinese Congregation. In summary, our Chinese friends see their future in this building and we would all like to rearrange things so that they are no longer 'Guests' but are an equal part of what might be called Woking Methodist Church. The latest meeting was on 7th November and the hi-lights of that meeting are:

Both communities looking to find a common direction/vision for our future working together.

There is need for discussion at leadership level and then sharing with wider congregations.

We are primarily looking at 3 possible options for the future:

1. Carrying on with and developing our current 'partnership' model.

2. Working towards a '2 church' model (so 2 trust bodies, with the Chinese congregation being recognised in the Circuit, Trinity Trust still owning the building and a Memorandum of Understanding in how we use/maintain/develop the premises).
3. A full integration as one church/trust but enabling varied congregations within that.

We recognised that we are increasingly growing closer to one another, believing that we are a natural 'fit' and that working ever more together will help us all to maximise our respective opportunities. We agreed further discussion is necessary at Trinity Leadership Team (9th November) Chinese Congregation Executive (10th November) and then a sharing of outcomes at Church Council (14th November)

Meanwhile, there is further growing together planned:

- People from both congregations involved in the Working People of Faith walk next Sat (12/11) in Byfleet.
- Aim to plan another walk before Christmas, with Mike Cope leading.
- Container for The Gambia should be being filled on (3/12) in Sheerwater – confirmation of booking (as much as we can get!) to be shared round both congregations.
- Christmas planning in hand: 18/12 Carol Service – Janice, Grace & Erika liaising, with Cyrus involved re Chinese young people's item; 24/12 Christingle – Sue & Cyrus liaising.
- NOTES RE CAROL SERVICE - Plan for both Cantonese and English people to advise re PowerPoint slides, with readings in both languages and leaders from both congregations involved.

MEMBERSHIP

Traditionally, 'coming into membership' has been the public confirmation of a Christian faith and a willingness to share the responsibility of maintaining the Methodist Church. The number of members is critical in the sharing of Circuit funding and allocation of Ministers throughout the Connexion. It is unlikely that many of the newer groupings within Working Methodist Church, would adopt that degree of formality, and so we need, with the help of Circuit, District and Connexional officers, to develop some new criteria.

RESOLUTION: Church Council authorises the Leadership Team to continue conversations with the Chinese Church expressing our preferred option is to be fully integrated as one Church with multiple congregations.

Leadership Team
9.11.2022