



The Methodist Church
YEOVIL AND BLACKMORE VALE CIRCUIT
Charity Registration Number 1158290

MINUTES OF CIRCUIT MEETING – TUESDAY 29 JUNE 2021 AT 7.30PM
At CHEAP STREET CHURCH, SHERBORNE

Present: Rev Paul Arnold (PA) (Chair); Rev Denise Binks (DB); Rev Duncan Goldie (DG); Rev Kate Konrad (KK); Helen Coombes (HC); Lynn Heaton (LH); Rev Margaret Oxenham (MO); Rev Ruth Farrant (RF); Rev Christina Le Moignan (CLM); Janet English (JE); Lewis Buckwell (LB); Phil Butler (PB); Colin Farrant (CF); Christine Lydford (CL); Terrence Miller (TM); Adam Miller (AM); Janet Le Moignan (JLM); George Faris (GF); Robert Rickards (RR); Gillian Walsham (GW); Margaret Evans (ME); Richard Sinden (RS); Thelma Stevens (TS); Cliff Howell (CH); Bob Jones (RJ); Anthony Cole (AC).

Apologies: Deacon Rebekah-Joy Spinks (RJS); Margaret Whitford (MW); Norma Bartlett (NB); Steve Watson (SW); Kate Rawlins (KR); Carole Miller (CM); Jo Bathurst (JoB); Ruth Jones (RJ); Lis Gosney (LG); John Bathurst (JB); Geoff Gardner (GG); Pearl Evans (PE); Mary Leamon (ML); Esther May (EM); Norma Le Poidevin (NLP); Hayden Williams (HW); Sarah Upshall (SU); David Wooldridge (DW); Brian Cowling (BC); Peter Cleall (PC); Bob Killick (RK); John Haywood (JH); Daniel England (DE); Alan Harrison (AH); Melanie Hulland (MH); Joy Ayles (JA); Lynda Walters (LW);

PA Welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Devotions – Paul started by enquiring whether people were beginning to think about going abroad and asked how many had visited Rome. Today would normally be busy in St Peter’s Square as it is St Peter’s Day. Reading from Matthew 16 starting at verse 13 - Jesus asked who people said he was, Peter answered the Messiah, Jesus said ‘On this rock I will build my church’. The church body has many parts, in the body of Christ we are united. In prayer we remembered Conference which is meeting this week.

- 1) **Attendance:** All attendees has checked in as they entered.
- 2) **Agree that this ‘Virtual’ meeting is legally constituted.** Meeting agreed unanimously by show of hands and telephone agreement. - **Not relevant as meeting in person**
- 3) **Minutes of last meeting:** Minutes of the meeting held 23 March 2021 were approved and signed as a true record of the proceedings.
- 4) **Matters arising** – (From 15th Sept. ’20 and 23rd Feb. ’21)
 - a) Memorials to Conference – We presented several memorials to conference, these were accepted and received and are being presented at conference this week.
- 5) **Mission & Ministry:**
 - a) Staffing – Ministerial
 - i) Rev Paul Arnold – Farewell Service for Paul and Jean 18th July, Gillingham 6pm Capacity approx. 45. PA’s local churches have had an opportunity to request a seat, we can now open up now to other circuit churches – invitation to go to those churches who have not already received.
 - ii) Rev Lin Francis (New Superintendent) – Welcome Service 9th September at Gillingham 7pm Rev Andrew de Ville will officiate, hope to be able to have more in attendance.
- 6) **Rebekah-Joy’s Ordination & Testimony Service** – Report - PA and DB attended, RJS plus 3 other deacons ordained. Joyful service, greetings taken from circuit. RJS is preparing a report for the Bridge.

7) Lay Staffing:

- a) Helen Coombes - Working pattern / Retirement plans. KK explained that HC will be reducing hours to 21 per week across 3 days from mid September, with a view to working towards retirement around Easter 2022. This allows time for Lin Francis to settle in. A new Job Description and Specification will need to be compiled during the autumn to bring to the December Circuit meeting. With the recruitment process beginning early 2022.
- b) Extension of Role of Children's and Families Worker at Bell Street and Motcombe – Natalie Kay is doing exceptional work, she was furloughed earlier in year. Bell Street and Motcombe are looking to extend this work for further period, some difficulties with financial issues at Bell Street. Following an appeal to help continue this work there was a great response with generous pledges received, unfortunately the treasurer has advised that general finances were not healthy, so there are uncertainties at Bell Street, a further appeal for pledges has gone out and they hope to be in better position in September. Furlough period has given extra time to try to achieve this.

8) Oversight and Trusteeship (2020 Conference business digest)

25/1. The Conference directs all Circuit Meetings to review the number of Church Councils in the Circuit and encourages Church Councils to work together to determine the best way of working to achieve the minimum number of trustee bodies necessary to fulfil its calling.

PA spoke on the report, which is being considered at conference. Trying to put it in context as he understands it.

Two main aims are to ensure: 1. we as a church can comply and better demonstrate compliance with our obligations as a charity – recognising charity law is going to change in near future 2. To ensure appropriate representation and a better model to enable the church to be focused on mission.

The report acknowledges that circumstances vary across the country, and that in some areas some restructuring will be required. It also acknowledges some of the issues faced by local churches - (i.e. lack of volunteers and struggle to find people to fill rolls that are needed to form a legally constituted organisation), seeking to find a way forward to enable churches to concentrate on mission. Currently only have to register as charity if church has large income (greater than £100k), changes to law mean that almost certainly all churches will have to be registered with charity commission. There is a suggestion minimum number members for local congregation may be raised from 6 to from 12-25, report says this will not preclude a small no. meeting for worship, and hopes that it will help them to be able to continue (i.e. become a Class – or smaller churches to federate together with one set of officers). Could result in circuit taking on responsibility for some churches, with Circuit Meeting as governing body, this brings with it additional work for Circuit Officers. The way forwards to be decided by each circuit dependent on circumstances.

This resolution is coming to conference this week. Report trying to encourage more streamlined approach to free up people for mission and not be pressured by constant meetings. Similar process begun in Yeovil, within the Circuit we already have 3 Classes, with a potential that Yetminster and Marnhull may seek to become a Class.

- 9) **Marnhull** – Exploration of becoming a Class – The fellowship is experiencing some difficulties. The treasurer suffered a catastrophic stroke, and is unable to continue with this roll, also no Senior steward. Query whether any other church would be willing to take on as a Class; three churches already have Classes, and others are not in position to take on. Circuit Meeting can become governing body for a church but can only do for 2yrs until other arrange are made, this puts extra responsibility on Circuit officers. We will continue to plan services for Marnhull into the autumn but unless volunteers can be found regretfully believe that they may have to begin to look towards cessation of worship and closure. GW asked everyone to hold them in their prayers.

10) Finance: Lewis Buckwell

- a) Financial Report: papers have been circulated with Agenda – LB talked through report and financial statement. Expect to achieve budget for income but to be below budget on expenditure. £25k better than budgeted. This is mainly due to Coronavirus and lack of activity. Aiming to give some back to churches over next couple of years.
- b) Budget
 - i) Budget 2021-2022 – agreed – allows us to reduce assessments. PA and LB met with most church Treasurers. Cheap Street advised they would accept 5% reduction instead of 10% and Motcombe have

suggested they may not accept any reduction subject to confirmation at autumn Church Council. LB has reworked numbers on this information and reassessed, new proposed assessments on sheet circulated. Seek approval of revised assessments to apply from August this year. (standing orders paid in advance for next month). Rescheduling of budget already agreed. Propose LB 2nd PB unanimous in favour.

- ii) Future Plans – At March Circuit Meeting we were aiming to discuss plan at this meeting, but proposing to extend time for this discussion to December 21 or March 22 Circuit Meeting, we have a deadline to make decisions by March, as, if DB goes into stationing we must consider whether or not she will be replaced. LB will commence discussions with LF when she arrives. LB will look at redistribution of assessments across Circuit, circumstances have changed for a lot of churches. LB will need to commence discussions with all church treasurers commencing in Sept, to look to budgeting process for subsequent year. LB and CLT have put together 3 options to look at future financing for circuit, not vital now, but must make decision by March 2022 because of commitments in stationing process. Finances better than expected, but still running deficit, this cannot continue year on year. Covid has brought a number of churches to brink, may just about be able to pay assessments for next year, we do have good reserves, but must think seriously about how to plan for next three years, biggest expense for any organisation is staffing, must look at staffing levels. CLM reminded the meeting that there are 2 sides to every account expenditure/income, how to increase income, rather than how much can we save? Sacrificial giving is encouraged and will be part of the process and initiative of time spent with Church Treasurers. We are however aware that it has not been easy to encourage giving over Zoom meetings and that many of our members are retired, not people with large incomes. But we must be realistic about what having this number of buildings means, same number of buildings open with only 3 ministers, will result in health issues for ministers. Difficult decisions to be made over next 12mths. Part of process is to look at ways in which we apportion assessments, recognising that several churches are paying significant amounts they cannot afford, whilst others are probably under assessed and could possibly afford more, CLT need to work on process which is fair to all.
- c) Manse Expenditure: LB draw attention to fact that overall property maintenance budget is £16,600 incl Quinquennials for churches and manses. Already getting close to this figure, spent £11,500 on prop maintenance, lot of expenditure for certain items on manses in Gillingham and Yeovil, in addition with arrival of new Superintendent we expect to spend significant amount on carpets, window repairs, shower etc. Budget for property maintenance likely to increase to £26k, this is within overall budget for year, but property expenses are higher.
- d) Seek Circuit Meeting approval to draw down £50k from the Circuit Model Trust Fund to cover the Diaconal Project – this was agreed at last circuit meeting. Consent already given.
- e) Circuit financial controls and expenses policy – Policy sent out with agenda, as a charity members of Circuit meeting are responsible to meet certain requirements. There are a lot of things we already do, but which were not written down, this has now been done, there are also new points to note. New expenses policy so everyone knows what they can claim and how to go about it. New section - abuse / anti-crime etc. required by law to advise what risks we face as Trustees – LB will send over next few weeks. Assets register – started putting together list of circuit assets. LB sought approval for new documents – (these need to be reviewed annually). LB propose finance controls and expenses policy be accepted; seconded PB, all in favour. PA thanked LB for detailed and complicated work undertaken.

11) **Property:** - Phil Butler. Report included under reports at the end of these minutes.

12) **Local Preachers Report** – Kate Rawlins. Report included under reports at the end of these minutes. PA read the report.

13) **Safeguarding Report** – Lynn Heaton – Report included under reports at the end of these minutes.

14) **Representatives to Conference 2022** anyone who is a member of the Methodist church is entitled to apply to be a representative.

15) **GDPR** – Circuit and Church Champions – PA explained briefly the requirements, all churches to complete annual check list. HC has prepared a packet for the Church Council Secretary and/or Steward. Consent only last for 2 years, so any consents obtained in 2018 must now be renewed. There is a huge amount of information on the TMCP website, some of this is included in the pack. Each church should appoint a GDPR 'Champion' who should ensure that all requirements of GDPR are being adhered to, in the absence of a GDPR Champion, we have been

advised to refer to the Steward. There is an annual check list included in the pack, GDPR Champion or Steward should work through the requirements of this form, complete it and send to Jan Simons, Southampton District GDPR Champion. If you do not have access to email, please send the completed form to the Circuit Office, where it can be scanned and forwarded. HC is happy to try to answer questions, but may have to refer them to Jan Simons.

16) Any other Business:

- a) CL – MWiB – read a card from MWiB who celebrate their 10th Anniversary on 1 July, everyone is invited to celebrate with them as they mark this anniversary.
- b) Broad Oak – TM raised the question that Broad Oak is a Class of Sturminster Newton, recognizing that Sturminster
- c) Newton leadership is not in best of health, and future of followship not certain, suggested as much of work at Broad Oak is done through T&C Miller, would seem sensible that Broad Oak become Class of Hazelbury Bryan, so Class status be transferred from Sturminster Newton to Hazelbury Bryan, this will be discussed at Church Councils of all churches in autumn, if all CCs agree Broad Oak will cease to be a Class of SN and become class of HB.
- d) Wincanton - BJ felt duty bound to appraise the meeting of the situation in Wincanton, where there is an aging and depleted congregation, and shortage of people to do jobs, BJ finds himself taking on more and more responsibility, situation is fewer and fewer attending, now eating into the legacy, some members unable to increase given, legacy will run out one day, good income has come from Live at Home, looks as if this organisation may not survive. Things are not looking good at Wincanton, the few remaining can see the writing on the wall where they may have to close.

CLM thanks to PA for his presidency of Circuit Meetings, this being his last CM in the Y&BV Circuit. Sadly there will be limited numbers at Farewell Service, and CLM wanted to take this opportunity to say many thanks for all that PA has done, saying that he had always given feeling that he cares about us and had wise advice to give us. We are incredibly grateful.

The Meeting responded with applause.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 28th September 2021– 7.30pm Venue to be confirmed decision nearer time as to whether this should be Zoom or in person. (Devotions ...)

PA Closed the meeting with prayer and sharing of the grace.

THE REPORTS

PROPERTY REPORT from Phil Butler

Churches

St Mark's annual return as at 31 Aug 2020 still to be started/ submitted – hoping to arrange a meeting at St Mark's with Treasurer, Secretary and new Property Steward to complete the return.

Cheap St/ Longburton's annual return still to be completed. Hope to arrange something with Property Steward in near future.

Churches should be looking to begin property checklists during July and August in preparation for completing and submitting 2021 returns.

QQs – Marnhull due in July and Vicarage St in August. Broad Oak and Motcombe were completed in Dec 2020. Rev Konrad pointed out that due to the Vicarage St Project she was working on, the QQ inspection for Vicarage St would be combined with the feasibility survey that was required by the project which had to be carried out by a surveyor appointed by the team of panel solicitors/ surveyors she was working with. I undertook to work with Rev Konrad to inform Adrian Male, our regular QQ inspector of the situation.

Manses

24 Barnaby Mead, work being put in hand to prepare for the arrival of Rev Lin Francis. I am having difficulty in finding contractors for some of the work. Nearly all I have spoken to are fully booked up to October and November. Other contractors have not yet responded.

7 Ridge Way, work is needed to fix issues with the lounge gas fire following the annual gas inspection. The side door to the garage is jammed and needs to be removed, trimmed and refitted.

24 Harbin Close New tenants moved in on 24th June. Unfortunately, a leak from the bath in the family bathroom was discovered this week. The estate agent has instructed one of their contractors to deal with the issue.

47 Manston Rd RJ has had tiles falling off in two of the bathrooms. A contractor promised to call last Wednesday to assess the situation and provide a quotation but I have heard nothing to date. I have also contacted a gardening contractor to deal with ivy growing over the garage and trimming of the boundary hedges – unfortunately predicting 2 to 3 weeks before he will be able to inspect the work and submit a quote.

73 Granville Way and 34 Poplar Drive – no new issues

Budget details

Currently projecting a total spend of around £21,300 on manse maintenance and £1,580 on QQs giving a total spend of some £23,000 compared to the original budget figure of £16,600.

LOCAL PREACHERS REPORT from Kate Rawlins

I am really sorry that I can't be with you, Mike is due to have his pacemaker replaced next week and so we are keeping away from groups of people and trying to be careful.

The Local Preachers and Worship Leaders met on Zoom on the 22nd June.

We were pleased to welcome Sue Way to the meeting and also Alan and Judy Turner-Smith.

Sue has been a preacher in the United Reformed Church and wishes to transfer to the Methodist Church. We heard her account of her call to preach and she will have to accompany an accredited preacher for 1 or 2 quarters. Look out for Sue when she visits your church.

Both David Bradberry and Melanie Hulland are doing well both in reaching and studies.

We have had to make the very sad decision to take Sarah James off of the plan. She has not produced any work for a long time, despite numerous attempts to make contact. Please pray for Sarah in the coming weeks and months.

During the meeting Dudley Coates was presented (virtually) with a certificate to mark 50 years of preaching and I received one for 40 years. Ken Harvey's certificate will be presented to him at a Sturminster cell church meeting on the 23rd July. We hope to present a certificate for Ann Bradford to her husband Alan at the same time.

We noted that Ken Elcock has now moved away. We will miss him for all the tasks he and Sandie did at Tisbury, for his eloquent preaching and for who they both are. We wished them well.

The Local Preachers zoom drop-in sessions that have been happening every Tuesday morning since May 2020 have now stopped, the last one being this morning. We have had a fantastic time of fellowship and made good friends. We said farewell to Paul, this being his last meeting. We shall miss his wise leadership.

Paul and Don gave two superb book reviews:

'Reality, Grief, Hope' – Three urgent prophetic tasks by Walter Brueggemann, and
"The Heavenly man- testimony of Brother Yun"

We meet again on the 6th September.

Please pray for all your preachers and their families.

Blessings to you all. Kate

CIRCUIT SAFEGUARDING REPORT from Lynn Heaton for Circuit Meeting 29TH June 2021

CIRCUIT SAFEGUARDING REPORT 29th June 2021 The Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance document was last updated in September 2020 and there are no further recent changes or additions to report.

DBS CHECKS I am currently in the process of overseeing approximately 30 DBS renewals and new applications across the Circuit. Ministers Paul and Denise have been able to help with some verifying in their areas.

SAFEGUARDING TRAINING In January we were able to deliver two sessions of the Foundation Module online, but unfortunately there are still over 20 people waiting for face-to-face training, which we have not yet been able to offer. I will be contacting all those needing training as soon as we are able to organise sessions, hopefully in the Autumn. I have asked the District Safeguarding Officer, Jane Fisher, to let me know of any further online sessions that some would be willing attend elsewhere in the District.

POSITIVE WORKING TOGETHER In April I attended a webinar which drew attention to the Methodist Church “Positive Working Together” advice and guidance. The webinar particularly focused on tackling bullying in our church life, changing culture, and enabling positive relationships. I thought the “Shared Commitments” policy idea very interesting, where we all commit together to behave in particular ways, enabling everyone to feel safe by committing to good practice. Please see the Methodist Church website for more information!

Lynn Heaton Circuit Safeguarding Officer