



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

MINUTES OF CIRCUIT MEETING – TUESDAY 14th DECEMBER 2021 AT 7.30PM
On Zoom

Present: Rev Lin Francis (Chair); Rev Denise Binks (DB); Rev Duncan Goldie (DG); Rev Kate Konrad (KK); Deacon Rebekah-Joy Spinks (RJS); Helen Coombes (HC); Lynn Heaton (LH); Rev Margaret Oxenham (MO); Rev Christina Le Moignan (CLM); Rev Ruth Farrant (RF); Rev Judy Turner-Smith (JTS); Margaret Whitford (MW); Lewis Buckwell (LB); Steve Watson (SW); Janet English (JE); Phil Butler (PB); Colin Farrant (CF); Christine Lydford (CL); Ruth Jones (RJ); Lis Gosney (LG); Janet Le Moignan (JLM); George Faris (GF); Pearl Evans (PE); Robert Rickards (RR); Norma Le Poidevin (NLP); Esther May (EM); David Wooldridge (DW); Beth Fox (BF); Alan Harrison (AH); Lynda Walters (LW); Anthony Cole (AC); Daniel England (DE); Margaret Evans (ME); Dick Sinden (RS); Mark Parsons (MP); Lindsay Parsons (LP); Adrienne Richardson (AR); Felicity Harrison (FH); Monica Sinden (MS)

This is 39 people present and 35 voting members

Apologies: Jo Bathurst (JB); Geoff Gardner (GG); Gillian Walsham (GW); Sarah Upshall (SU); Bob Jones (RJ); John Taylor (JT);

LF Welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Devotions – LF read from Ephesians 4 – one body, one spirit etc. Each part doing its own work and building each other up. God gives us time, gifts, graces, talents etc., given to us not just to enjoy but to use in building each other up. We are meant to be together, striving together, being diligent in all we do, building the Kingdom of God. Elsewhere we read that Jesus is the gift, he came to build us up. Our individual challenge – what am I doing to build the body of Christ as an individual. As Circuit Meeting, we come to talk of Circuit matters, those struggling, those rejoicing. Pray God is with us as we are working together this night.

- 1) **Minutes of last meeting:** Minutes of the meeting held 28 September 2021 were approved and signed as a true record of the proceedings. LF will scan signed copy to HC for minutes.
- 2) **Agree that this 'Virtual' meeting is legally constituted** - All in favour.
- 3) **Matters arising**
 - a) Memorials to Conference - Under matters arising at the last meeting LF reported nothing had been received back, she has followed this up, responses are online and are recorded with Conference papers. Please find attached a copy of these responses.
 - b) Election of officers – we had talked about Archivist position, not sure where Adam Miller stood at the time, he has now resigned from all posts, so we do have a vacancy for Archivist roll.
 - c) Appointment of signatory to Circuit Legal Documents. We were seeking an extra signatory, DE has volunteered, approval of Circuit meeting was sought. **All in favour.** LF thanked DE for agreeing to take up this post.
 - d) RF said that she was shocked at the last meeting to learn of the change of Job Description for LH which came without warning. She expressed concerns regarding the children's work in Wincanton, LF had heard these concerns at Wincanton's CC. KK explained that it had been necessary to review the job description, with much of the focus recently having been on setting up and managing the 'Pod'. Consideration also had to be given to what help was available in the children's work in Wincanton. Some safeguarding admin may be handed to the new administrator, this may free up some time for children's work. RF said the Wincanton folk feel forgotten. LW pointed out that whilst these families were not coming into Sunday worship, they were coming to church, it just happened to be on Monday.
- 4) **Staffing:**
 - a) Ministerial Staff
 - i) We are currently looking at staffing and where Ministers appointments take us. RJS's 5yr appointment as Pioneer Deacon comes to an end in Summer 2023. In the same period DB's appointment will come up for re-invitation, decisions need to be made early Summer 2022 as to whether she is to be invited to stay or going into stationing
 - b) Lay Staff – LH, NK, HC, LF hopes all feel supported by Circuit.

- i) Circuit Administrator Post: HC retiring in Spring, we need to replace, with time to hand over. KK reported that she is at the point of having drafted a roll profile and Job Description and looking into advertising. Not yet clear on number of hours, partly due to finance, if we are employing need to be able to guarantee job going forward, also looking at which aspects of the job should be retained and what could be done differently, possibly taking in some of safeguarding admin. There was discussion as to whether moving safeguarding to administrator might free up LH to work with Wincanton toddlers. KK needs to discuss with Penny Thatcher, district lay employment advisor. KK sought permission for CLT to plan for 16-20hrs and go ahead and recruit in January – **All in favour** – Permission to push ahead liaising with CLT.

5) **Future of Marnhull & Hazelbury Bryan Cluster:**

- a) Marnhull – GW had advised the last meeting that they had held an informal meeting and the feeling was that they would have to close. At CC there was good news concerning Hayden Williams, who has recovered sufficiently to be able to continue as treasurer and is keen to do so, with assistance from Ron Williams and LB. They were also concerned about the roles of Steward and CC Secretary, at CC they were able to work through this and split jobs, members did not want to close, it was solely a concern about officers. CLM suggested a letter to the CC meeting advising how pleased we are and wishing them well. DW expressed the feelings of all in saying that this is great news, especially about Hayden.
- b) Ibberton, Hazelbury Bryan and Broad Oak. When we met for Circuit Meeting it was thought that Ibberton and Hazelbury Bryan would close, a further CC was required to decide the next step, sadly both Ibberton and Hazelbury Bryan decided that they would close, following resignation of officers. Sturminster Newton had CC last week when it was decided Broad Oak would also cease to meet. It is sad that three churches decided to close in such a short time. Ibberton 5 members present, plus LF & RJS, vote – 3 in favour of closure, 1 against, 1 abstained. **Circuit Meeting vote to support decision 35 in favour, 0 against.** LF read the minutes of the final CC meeting and sought permission to sign them off, **all in favour**. Members did not want a closing service, preferring to remember the church as it was before lockdown. CLM asked if a letter could be sent from Circuit Meeting to the members letting them know that we have not forgotten them and are anxious to keep them in our thoughts and to know what is happening to them. Regarding property CLT felt best to sell the property, and have money come to the Circuit for possible mission work at Hazelbury Bryan. DE believes the Millers have had a professional assessment and valuation of the property and are interested in purchasing, Circuit would need to arrange for our own survey. LB advised if we sell without project moneys will be taxed by TMCP, if selling with project, funds will come to Circuit. CLM wondered if the Millers were planning to set up as an independent Methodist Church, in which case what did the Circuit Meeting feel about this? We can have a caveat, also need to consider Charity Commission requirements. **PB proposed selling without doing the roof repairs, seconded RR, all in favour**, The meeting agreed that CLT could deal with this procedure.
- Hazelbury Bryan LF, MW and RJS attended. Terry Miller attended and left after completing the business he needed to deal with. The church council meeting voted on closure, 4 in favour, 1 against. One member requested transfer to Marnhull. The Circuit Meeting was asked if they supported Hazelbury Bryan in their decision to cease to meet. DE expressed his concern that whilst the chapel had depended heavily on the Miller family, he felt that if there was a chapel that need a project for young people, this was it and it would be a shame to close with so much opportunity in the village. LF explained that they had voted to cease to meet because they knew they could not keep the church going as it was, LF and MO had offered their time to take services and Holy Communion in people's homes. She then advised the meeting of the visit she made to Hazelbury Bryan with PB to take an inventory, of the sight that met them on entry, left as it was before lockdown and so much equipment, it felt wrong to walk away. A door was closed accidentally and jammed, as PB worked to open it, LF prayed that if we were meant to be doing more work here the door would open, the door opened. CLT have discussed the situation and would like to have a project at Hazelbury Bryan, using RJS's gifts in her roll working with families. RJS spoke with great enthusiasm of the ideas she has, but the Circuit needs to be able to continue the work when RJS's appointment ends in 18 months. The building is in excellent condition and there are many resources to support the work. Concern was expressed that we may be stepping on the toes of the Millers who had undertaken a lot of work with young people in the area and may have plans to continue this work, we could be recruiting the same children, we want to maintain a good relationship, must be talking to the Millers. RJS assured the Meeting that the Millers would be consulted. LB expressed concerns that we shouldn't invest funds into any building works at Hazelbury Bryan for this, until we have seen the project start to bear fruit and until we have a succession plan in place to continue the work after RJS's departure in summer 2023. The meeting was asked if they would support Hazelbury Bryan in their decision to cease to meet, **this was carried by a majority vote: 34 in favour and 1 against.** RJS has minutes of the meeting and will forward to LF and HC. Terry Miller had made a point of thanking everyone involved in contributing to the life of Hazelbury Bryan, LF had prayed him out of the meeting assuring him of our blessing and prayers. **This meeting agreed that the minutes should be signed off.** The meeting was then asked if they were of in agreement that we investigate, research, and get on with the children's work in Hazelbury Bryan, **unanimous in favour.**
- Broad Oak – Class of Sturminster Newton – DB reported that Sturminster Newton Church Council had met to discuss the future of Broad Oak, this had been a difficult discussion the members at Sturminster have a great attachment to the

Chapel at Broad Oak. DB learned at this meeting that the Miller family had made a 6mth commitment to this chapel 11 years ago, when it was destined for closure. This beautiful church is part of the community of the village. The lack of water supply makes it unsuitable for mission work with children. They considered ways of keeping a mission here. Marilyn, who worshipped at Broad Oak had a legacy and wanted to use it to keep worship going there, but did not want any form of contract, as she did not belong to another denomination but to a group of worshipping Christians, a Schedule 14 was not possible. Whilst not wishing to sign a contract, Marilyn had indicated that she might be willing to use the legacy to purchase the building. The feeling of the CC was that they would prefer to sell the premises for mission, rather than to one of the neighbours who proposed to either use it as a shed or demolish it. They are not looking to sell at a heavily reduced price, they are looking to obtain a valuation and then work through the procedures. LF advised that we firstly need to decide whether the meeting was prepared to support Sturminster Newton in their decision to cease worship at Broad Oak, the vote in favour was unanimous. Secondly do we agree to sell the property, putting in a clause that it should be sold with a mission purpose if possible. Are we in agreement to go ahead and sell as sensitively as we can? Again, the vote in favour was unanimous. Letters are to be sent to the congregations of these churches, expressing that we are grateful for all they have done in the Lord's name, and we are here to support them.

- c) Future of remainder of Hazelbury Cluster - Sturminster Newton and Kings Stag are continuing to worship, and we will do all we can to support them. MO advised that some members who were at Hazelbury Bryan are attending Kings Stag when they have a service, winter evenings are not best, but hope to attend more when better weather comes, Ibberton members hope to attend when evenings are lighter.
- 6) **Yeovil Methodist Church Update** – KK – Big membership changes are likely when all changes are finalised. Before the pandemic 97 people were worshipping in three churches (8 have died), currently 50 worshipping, members understand that they cannot afford to manage 3 buildings, but everyone wants to meet in “their” church, there are emotional connections, prayers are needed. One meeting has been held and another will take place on 15 January at the Baptist Church, which will be facilitated by the Learning Network. There is a concern that whichever building is settled on, this will have an effect on the membership, some have accepted the situation and are keen to know which church, some are saying “if not my church, I will not be coming”. Current membership is 127, a reduction of this could have an impact on Circuit finances. Still in conversations with Yeovil Artspace. Please pray for Yeovil Methodist Church, we need a miracle, need as many people as possible to get behind the vision of worshipping together in Yeovil. LF thanked KK for her report and noted that we are in challenging times in terms of Circuit and Churches.
- 7) **Discussion of 5-year Plan** – CLT have talked about some of the things we have already covered, staffing levels, closures of churches, projects etc. and have decided perhaps we should postpone discussion of 5yr plan, so that no decision is made at this meeting. CLT are inviting the Learning Network to meet with them early in 2022 and look at strategy and what the Circuit might look like in 5yrs: staffing; funding; spreading assessments. LB is looking at creating a fairer process of how assessment is calculated and will be meeting with Church treasurers in January. Will look at 5yr plan again in March meeting. So much is changing.
- 8) **Deacon Rebekah-Joy Spinks – Report** Sturminster Newton are working with Anglicans in a ‘Tots and toast’ group, helping families with children born directly before and during lockdown, helping them to make contacts. They are planning a toy sale, offering good quality toys from former toddler’s group. Children’s activity packs are being sent out by post. RJS has been helping pastorally at Cheap Street and has been excited to see the work of the ‘Pod’. Working through safeguarding training with LH, some on zoom and some face to face. She is thinking and praying through all that is happening at Hazelbury Bryan, connecting with families she had relationships with before lockdown and trying to put on something before Christmas, an informal act of celebration in the chapel.
- 9) **Vine Youth Ministry Report – Daniel England** - work in schools stopped when the pandemic hit, initially a few songs were put on YouTube which could be used in small groups/bubbles or at home. Then started to put together assemblies online, the 45th has recently been uploaded. Now that schools are back, many are not keen to go back to whole school assemblies but are able to use online assemblies in class bubbles. There have been over 25,000 views since starting and assemblies are reaching 3000-3500 young people. Copywrite has prevented the use of some material online, and Daniel has had to put stories into his own words and write his own songs, he has now released his first album. Used to visit schools once a month, with assemblies online is able to get the Christian messages into schools weekly, in doing this he is able to offer a bigger spiritual journey and schools/classes like to be able to dip in at a time which suits them. VYM are likely to be looking for funding from Circuit again next year. Another newsletter will be out in the new year.
- 10) **Local Preachers Report – Rev Margaret Oxenham** – not presented at meeting due to time, full report included at end of minutes.

11) **Safeguarding Report – Lynn Heaton** – report was not presented at the meeting due to time, full report included at end of minutes, please read and make sure you are up to date with the information. LH has a meeting with District Safeguarding officer and other Circuit safeguarding officers in the District on zoom, if you have any questions to be taken forwards, please email Lynn.

12) **Finance Report: Lewis Buckwell.**

- a) Quarter 1 Financial Update – report sent with minutes. Basically, on track for where we might expect to be at end of 1st quarter, current 5yr plan runs out end 2024 (only two and a half years away), if we end this year with £340k, will be £70k better off than plan indicates, but will still go below our reserves policy level in 2024, when we will need to sell some assets to replenish Circuit reserves. We will have to pick up costs relating to closed buildings which had not been indicated in the report (i.e., electricity / insurance). Even taking this into consideration the full year projection is still possible. Regarding last year (2020-21) – the prepared annual report and financial statements have now been sent to the external examiner and hope to have this back in January for signing off at the March meeting.
- c) Circuit MMPS Donation This has had to have careful consideration, with much up in the air across Circuit and Churches leaving us uncertain how we are financially. The request for 15% seems to be interpreted in several ways. If we look at commitments, we have nothing available, but having acquired 3 chapel buildings we would now seem to be in a position to make a contribution. 15% of our current funds is £65k, we are not in a position to make this contribution, but LB felt we could take a step of faith and **contribute £20k. Proposed LB, seconded PB, carried 33 in favour and 2 against.**
- d) Lay Staff Salary Review LB explained the recent history of matching the percentage increase to the Real Living Wage, the decision being taken in March each year with salary increase taking effect in April. Methodist Church rules are that we match Real Living Wage (“RLW”), we are already exceeding this (we are already paying 7.5% over RLW to Lynn and Natalie, 25% over to Helen). Putting into context Ministers stipends rose by 1.16% last year whilst Lay Staff Salaries rose by 2.15%. CLT felt that our lay salaries are getting too close to ministers’ stipends as a result of annual application of RLW % rises. 2022/23 figures for Ministers have not yet been released. This year’s RLW increase is +4.21%. Whilst we must meet RLW as a minimum, we do not necessarily have to match the annual percentage rises. LF proposed adoption of a new policy of matching lay salary reviews to annual percentage rises in ministers’ stipends (subject to always meeting RLW), and moving the implementation of this annual review to take effect on 1 September each year. Seconded KK. **All in favour.** KK apologized to LH that she found out this way. RF requested that someone speak to NK and ensure that she understands the reasons, KK will do this.
- e) Funding Request – Bell Street and Motcombe CFW – DB reminded the meeting that she had explained the position of Bell Street funding at the last meeting. Thanks to the work of RJ, Bell Street are now able to meet their assessment. Bell Street are continuing to work through releasing of a URC legacy to look to fund this work for a further 2yrs, will have to make application to the Charity Commission for release of these funds. DB was therefore bringing a proposal to seek funding for the CFW work for 1yr of £5100 and seeking to match this from the District. Seconded RJS. **Vote in favour was unanimous.** DB thanked LB, RJ, DW and everyone at Motcombe for the work they have done. Grants are being sought for the period January to December 2022, this is due to Natalie Kay having been furloughed for 10 weeks at the beginning of lockdown, leaving some grant money unused and deferred to the current quarter. Circuit Meeting also **consented unanimously to application being made to District** for a further £5100.

13) **Property:** - Phil Butler – report was not presented to the meeting due to time, written report attached, do please read, PB would like to draw particular attention to the following:

- a. PB has completed the document register checks for all Churches and will provide each Church with a copy of their section for future reference.
- b. PB expressed thanks to John Taylor for completing Motcombe’s return so efficiently.

14) **AOB** – None.

Dates of next meetings:

Tuesday 15 March 2022 query Zoom or in person, decide nearer the date. (Devotions ...)

Tuesday 14 June 2022

Tuesday 13 September 2022 this date had been brought forward in case we need to go into Stationing – DE suggest move LP meeting forward 1 week also.

LF thanked everyone for the work they are doing and Closed the meeting with prayer.

THE REPORTS

PROPERTY REPORT from Phil Butler

1. Churches:

- a. LF and PB had taken an inventory at Ibberton following its closure. ML had undertaken to carry out the weekly inspections to satisfy the insurance requirements. PB was to complete and submit the annual property return report on behalf of the trustees.
- b. LF and PB had carried out an initial inspection at Hazelbury Bryan following its recent closure to assess what needed to be done. AC had undertaken to carry out the weekly inspections to satisfy the insurance requirements and had also offered assistance with taking an inventory. The property return had been completed by hand and PB was to enter the details on the website and submit on behalf of the trustees. PB was also to liaise with AC regarding taking an inventory
- c. Motcombe had completed and submitted their annual return. DW was asked to pass on "Well done and thanks" to JT.
- d. BF had contacted PB regarding what needed to happen should Broad Oak (currently a class of Sturminster) decide to cease worship and close. PB had advised that the annual return would still have to be completed and that initially at least an inventory would have to be taken. BF had undertaken to obtain a key to the Chapel so that PB could take an inventory. PB had also agreed to assist with the annual returns for Broad Oak and Sturminster if and when required
- e. CF had contacted PB for advice and support with Tisbury's property return. PB had forwarded the necessary report forms and relevant guidance documents.
PB had also offered assistance with completing the return if and when required.
- f. Yetminster and Kings Stag had completed their returns by hand. PB was to enter the details on the website and submit on behalf of the trustees.
- g. As previously promised, PB had checked Church documents against the register in both Circuit safes. PB was to provide each Church with a copy of their section of the register for reference.

2. Manses:

- a. PB had visited and completed Property Checklists for 24 Barnaby Mead, 7 Ridge Way and 47 Manston Rd. These would be typed up with additional notes as required and copies circulated to occupants.
- b. KK had completed the Checklist for 34 Poplar Drive with assistance from DE. A copy of the completed report had been emailed to PB.
- c. PB was to liaise with DG re 73 Granville Way and the estate agents re 24 Harbin Close with regard to completing the checklists for these two properties.
- d. PB planned complete the checklists, Circuit Return Report and Circuit Property Information Report and to present the completed reports at the Spring Circuit Meeting.

Key:

LF	Rev Lin Francis	Superintendent Minister
PB	Phil Butler	Circuit Property Secretary
ML	Mary Leamon	CC Secretary Ibberton
AC	Anne Cook	Safeguarding Officer, Hazelbury Bryan
DW	David Wooldridge	Treasurer, Motcombe
JT	John Taylor	Property Steward, Motcombe
BF	Beth Fox	Treasurer and Property Steward, Sturminster
CF	Christine Fordham	CC Secretary, Tisbury
KK	Rev Kate Konrad	Minister
DE	Daniel England	Vine Youth Ministry and Manse Steward for 34 PD
DG	Rev Duncan Goldie	Minister

LOCAL PREACHERS MEETING REPORT Presented by Rev Revd. Margaret Oxenham

The Local Preachers met on Zoom on Dec 13th 2021.

Deacon Rebekah-Joy Spinks led our devotions based around the Isaiah prophecy and St Matthew Ch 2 v 10-12 of people journeying with gifts from afar. Our prayers centred around the phrase 'Give us courage to travel'.

Rev Lin Francis then led on from these thoughts on travelling and journeying, with a discussion based around LP's and travelling. What restrictions do we have regarding travel? We shared on 3 different aspects (1) Locality (2) Cost of travel e.g., fuel/energy/emotions & (3) the journey.

We were pleased to welcome Sue Way as a fully accredited L.P; and to record Charlie James as having received his Long Service LP Certificate. We also officially recorded the death of Ken Harvey (a member at Sturminster Newton) and a long serving LP.

The meeting agreed that both David Bradberry and Mel Hulland should continue on Trial for another quarter,

It was recorded that several LP`s were recovering from ill health or were awaiting surgery and letters of support were to be sent to them.

A Study Day is in the process of being arranged with the District Chair (Rev Andrew De Ville) for LP`s & Worship Leaders. The date May 7th, 2022, the possible venue Wincanton. News to follow.

We will be sharing in the Bible Month as usual next year the theme will be from Isaiah.

Please continue to pray for all those who lead our worship around the Circuit Sunday by Sunday.

CIRCUIT SAFEGUARDING REPORT 14th December, 2021

METHODIST CHURCH SAFEGUARDING POLICY, PROCEDURES & GUIDANCE I have been informed of some updates from Connexion. There is a change in Section 3 concerning the implementation of District Safeguarding Group standards and criteria. There is also, in Section 6, an inclusion of the Anti-Bullying Policy in the overall Safeguarding Policy. This change is very welcomed as we now have one clear policy on how we should handle cases of bullying, and definitions to assist in agreeing thresholds.

CHURCH SAFEGUARDING POLICIES As stated in my last Circuit Meeting Safeguarding Report, I am required to let the District Safeguarding Officer know that all Church Policies have been signed. I have not yet been sent all this information so I will be contacting Church Safeguarding officers about this.

DBS CHECKS There are a few outstanding DBS Checks at the moment, but these will be addressed early in the new year ASAP.
SAFEGUARDING TRAINING With Deacon Rebekah-Joy as Trainer, and myself supporting, we were able to deliver 3 Foundation Module sessions recently. Two of these were face to face sessions, held at St Marks Yeovil and Motcombe in October. A third online session took place in November. 35 people attended in total. The 13 who were unable to attend at this time will be offered training in Spring 2022. Many thanks to the Safeguarding Officers and Pastoral Secretary who assisted with the organizing of these sessions, which is never straightforward!

Connexion are checking up at the moment if all ministers have completed the Advanced Module. This was recently offered online, and I directed a couple of Preachers to it. As a Circuit, we are in the fortunate position of having virtually all of our Ministers, Lay Preachers, Worship Leaders and Safeguarding Officers trained in 3 sessions that were organised before lockdown!

CONNECTION WITH DISTRICT I have been invited by Jane Fisher our District Circuit Safeguarding Officer, to attend a zoom meeting with Circuit Safeguarding Officers from across the District. This will take place on Thursday 16th December. Please let me know if there are any questions or queries you would like me to bring up for discussion at this meeting.

Lynn Heaton Circuit Safeguarding Officer