

Minutes of the Walton Churches Partnership Council Meeting

4th February 2020 at 9.00am, The Rectory, Wavendon

Present: Rev. Matt Trendall (Chair), Rev. Ruth Gookey, Rev. Ruth Maxey, Lynn Atkinson, Ann Beaton, Joyce Fennell, Patsy Young (on behalf of Steve Potter), Carolyn Sanderson, Emma Tyler, Larry Kavanagh (on behalf of Sue Wilson).

Apologies: Ayokunna Otunla, Klaus Reidel, Rev. Keith Straughan

Introduction

Matt welcomed everyone to the meeting. Our sole focus today was to discuss funding issues around, not only maintaining the post for a new Pioneer Minister, specifically for Eagle's Farm, over the next ten years, but also for Church Without Walls (CWW), once Ruth Maxey's 10-year term has ended. The meeting opened with a time of open prayer.

Matt began by giving us the good news that the Rev. Ruth Maxey's post (our first Pioneer post to plant a church in Broughton and Brooklands (CWW), had been granted an extension of a further two years, until 2025. This is not only good news for Ruth and her Ministerial colleagues, but will have a beneficial impact on our proposed second Pioneer Minister post at Eagle Farm.

Matt gave a quick review of the demographics in Milton Keynes to give some perspective to where we are now with regard to Ministerial resource. In 2013, when Ruth Maxey and Matt took up their posts in the Parish of Walton, there were just under 29,000 people. Today, there are over 35,000 people, and this is increasing daily as the new housing developments on the eastern flank of Milton Keynes progress rapidly. By 2025, the Parish of Walton will likely be the largest in the Oxford Diocese and, possibly, in the UK overall.

At the last WCP meeting on 15th January 2020, we learned that Diocesan funding for our Pioneer post had changed from 10 years to 5 years, which had a very significant impact on plans already in place. Today's meeting focused on whether we felt it was financially viable to move forward in sustaining ministry at both CWW and Eagle Farm.

Matt referred us to the document "WCP Scenario Planning", and to the first three bullet points:

- Need for paid ministry to maintain a congregation like CWW or Eagle Farm long-term;
- The SDF money is too significant to be turned down;
- Equality of treatment for part time posts between CWW and Eagle Farm after the Pioneer's work is complete – either both lay or ordained.

The bottom line is that we cannot sustain to self-fund a minister long term.

Matt informed the meeting that there was possible extra funding available from either the Deanery or the Diocese. So, Matt and his small Eagle Farm team had looked at possible scenarios already.

Budget Sheet for CWW

The meeting was then referred to this document, which aims to set a balanced budget to cover costs of supporting ministry in CWW to 2031. This is stretching, but possible, if CWW continues to increase its share by £1-2k year-on-year, and we use all of our spare reserves (currently c. £60k of a current reserve of c. £88k) to support CWW. There are also charities like Broughton Trust whose financial support would be valuable, as it has been in the early years of CWW.

In an ideal world, Matt wished he could recruit a Grants and Funds Steward as there are lots of funding opportunities available to us. We just need someone dedicated to researching such.

Ann felt that being in an ecumenical partnership was a real strength as we had access to other congregations' funding resources.

Matt then drew some conclusions from the discussions so far. The prospect of maintaining pioneering ministry work at both CWW and Eagle Farm seemed possible but it will be challenging. The priority, however, is in supporting CWW.

Ruth M. made the point that the WCP have never had to fund CWW so far as, from the start, MK Council, the Broughton Trust, and the Methodist Church had been keen to give their support. Running costs have been covered for the first 5-6 years, but the pinch point is now here. Ruth thinks she needs to be more proactive in raising awareness of CWW and their activities in the community in order to engage the wider WCP churches. She suggested inviting members of our other churches to Dinner Church on 31st May this year.

Ruth remarked that due to there being a large number of unchurched people at CWW, they had no concept of how her ministry was funded and the other costs involved. Ruth has never set any expectations on her congregation to give regularly. CWW had tended to raise money only when there was a charity to support. Perhaps she needs to raise awareness within CWW, too, about sustaining the ministry.

Matt remarked that we need to encourage an outward-looking culture where all our congregations see their role in supporting new ministry and mission. This is not the time to be solely inward-looking at our own congregation. We need to encourage an outward looking culture. Carolyn summed up this thread by saying that we need to consider our human resources as much as our financial ones.

Budget Sheet for Eagle Farm

The budget sheet starts in 2020, and assumes that if a Pioneer Minister was in place within the next few weeks, we would require approximately £50,000 for salary and housing costs. In reality, it is unlikely that anyone would be in post by mid-2020, so Ministry costs in 2020 would likely be minimal.

Under the heading, 'Eagle Farm Fund, the term 'SDF' stands for Strategic Development Fund, and shows the figure which will fund the Pioneer Minister post for the first five years. There is a possibility that we can ask for more, but only if we spend it in the 5-year period.

Ruth M. asked if the figures on this budget sheet were the figures to be used in writing our bid to the Diocese. If so, some candidates considering this vacancy might be deterred from applying. Should we not just look at the first five years and then review? Others felt that we needed to dream 'big', and look to 10 years.

Ann remarked that it would be foolish of the Diocese to grant us just five years funding when research shows that new churches take much longer than five years to become established. Matt suggested that the Diocese would be keen to make sure this post didn't fail as it is one of 20 receiving special investment in this decade.

"Questionnaire for Projects anticipating Support for SDF Stage 2 Bids"

Matt drew our attention to this document which includes 11 sections as guidance for completing our formal Stage Bid. This questionnaire has a deadline of the end of February 2020. Under section 5. *Financial Information*, there are 5 bullet points which have to be addressed (see attached document).

We will only be able to procure more funding from the SDF if we can show we have other expenses. At section 8. *Monitoring and Evaluation*, there are 4 bullet points to consider, and it will be vital that we show that the money granted to us of £298,754 will only last for 5 years. So, we must be very proactive in our monitoring and evaluation to make best use of this money.

Ann asked a very pertinent question: what happens if the Deanery/Diocesan funding is not forthcoming? Matt referred us to the document "WCP Ministry Scenario Planning". Two scenarios are presented here (please refer to document.)

Ruth M. said we need to be very honest with any potential candidate who is interested in applying. While we can reassure them that the first 5 years are secure, we must let them know that the next 5 years are more uncertain. Lynn commented that we may have a different minister altogether for the second 5 years. Ann felt that the successful candidate would have the added bonus of being supported by a Ministerial Team.

Ruth G. said our bid must be worded very carefully so that we demonstrate that we have considered other options for the second period of 5 years.

Our context is unique in that we have a small staff team and are starting from scratch, literally from the ground up as houses are built on previously uninhabited land. Will the Diocese understand other models of church planting? Can this be emphasised and given as a strength of our bid, or will it be misunderstood?

Ruth M suggested that to have more clarity on what monies we spend in regard to Eagle Farm, it would be prudent to have a separate column on our WCP spreadsheets.

Matt shared two 'words' from people praying for us: one was that the level of our faith will determine the amount of blessing God will pour out. Another advised that we should take inspiration from 2 Timothy 1 and be bold.

Lynn asked if we have a list of other sources of funding. The answer was no, but we could all keep our eyes and ears open for ideas. Ann said she would like to undertake this kind of research from August onwards, when her commitments allow, on behalf of us all.

Resolution 1: Walton Churches Partnership commits to supporting CWW with a part-time paid leader (lay or ordained) after Ruth Maxey's post finishes.

Proposed by: Ann Beaton

Seconded by: Ruth Gookey

Agreed Unanimously

Resolution 2: Walton Churches Partnership will proceed with the SDF Stage 2 bid for a fully funded 5-year post in Eagle Farm.

Proposed by: Lynn Atkinson

Seconded by: Emma Tyler

Resolution 3: Subject to additional Deanery/Diocesan funding, and a review after 3 years in post, our intention is to resource paid ministry in Eagle Farm for beyond the 5-year SDF-funded post.

Proposed by: Emma Tyler

Seconded: Carolyn Sanderson

Agreed Unanimously

The meeting closed at 10.30am.