

Minutes of the Walton Churches Partnership Council Meeting
12th October 2020 at 7.30pm, via Zoom

Present: Rev. Matt Trendall (Chair), Rev. Ruth Gookey, Rev. Ruth Maxey, Lynn Atkinson, Ann Beaton, Joyce McKenzie, Ayokunna Otunla, Steve Potter, Klaus Reidel, Carolyn Sanderson, Sue Wilson

Apologies:, Rev. Keith Straughan, Emma Tyler

Introduction

Ruth G. welcomed everyone to the meeting, and opened with some words from Philippians 4 vs 4-9. These were comforting words at any time, but especially during the Covid-19 lockdown. The reading was followed by a prayer.

Matt thanked Ruth, and asked Joyce to share some brief news. Joyce reported that she was stepping down from the WCP Council as she was moving out of the area within the next few weeks. Matt wanted to minute a vote of thanks for all of the work Joyce had undertaken in recent years.

1. Approval of Notes of last meetings (17/09/2020, and 15/10/2020 AGM)

Carolyn flagged up an error at the top of p4 of the AGM Minutes: the SDF stands for Strategic Development Fund and not Staff Development Fund. This was noted, and both sets of minutes were approved.

2. Review of CIO documents, and attest updates

A small group/committee, comprising Steve Potter, Ruth G., Ann Beaton, and Matt, had met a few weeks ago to produce a draft document for the WCP Council meeting this evening.

- Partnership Agreement v2 – Matt shared his screen so that we could all see this document. Matt explained the colour-coding: basically, any print in **green** refers to wording that is either factual or is a required paragraph; any print in **blue** refers to anything for which we are awaiting further clarification; words in **red** refer to any wording that the committee would prefer to change, (there is only one short phrase here.) Matt reported that the committee had met with a legal advisor, Tessa Hennessy, this morning to clarify any areas of confusion.
 - Tessa advised that any name changes are best done when creating the CIO. Currently our name is Walton Local Ecumenical Project: Walton Churches Partnership is our ‘trading name’. Everyone agreed that Walton Churches Partnership should become our official name as a CIO.
 - In the updated version of the Partnership Agreement, only received this morning, point 5c was changed to ‘The East Midlands Synod’; Point 7 has changed to a list of ‘The Relevant Authority for each Participating Denomination’; The next paragraphs have been re-numbered;

Point 12, regarding Baptismal policy, raised some discussion. If Baptists are involved in the Partnership, then we have to include the wording on page 2, currently colour-coded in green. The committee had agreed that they want to remove the last 4 words of this paragraph, (coloured red) “as a Baptist only.” As an ecumenical body, the WCP does not want to make any distinctions between denominations. Steve said that it was a theological issue. Ruth M. said that, it wasn’t really an issue, in practical terms. Overall, if we must retain the clause, we are content to do so.

- Clause 13 – we must include this.
 - Matt also pointed out that throughout the document, the words, ‘the Church’ and ‘the congregation’ were used interchangeably. Matt has asked the Charities Commission for clarification.
 - To the text on Safeguarding, 3 paragraphs have been added.
- Constitution document v2 – Matt took the Council through changes in this document.
 - 9.1 – *Membership* – point b) “Those persons who are members of any of the Participating Churches....” There had been some confusion over what was meant by a membership list as opposed to the electoral roll. Following discussions, this is now resolved. The Electoral Roll **is** the Membership List, unless members consciously choose to opt out of the Electoral Roll.
 - 9.5 – *Provision of services to non-LEP members*. This simply affirms what we do already.
 - 11.1 – *Types of general meeting* – this states that we are expected to hold 4 meetings per year: 1 x AGM plus 3 x other meetings. The Charities Commission expect 20% of membership to attend in order to ensure congregational representation. This, at first, seemed an impossible expectation. Ruth G. said that we need to think creatively. Our present routine model is that of a few members taking on responsibilities for a good deal of the time, while most other members were not involved at all. Perhaps we could transition to a more even model, where every member is invited to take on a smaller but more regular role. In other words, facilitate a more even spread of responsibility across the whole membership. This is a good way to get people involved. Lynn agreed that it would bring us all together more and expand others’ understanding of what is involved in running a church.
 - 12.3 – *Number of charity trustees* – we are proposing at least **4 elected trustees**, and no more than 12. If we have two from each of our four congregations, that is 8 people, allowing for two new congregations in time to come. **Ex-officio trustees** are the clergy. We are proposing up to **4 nominated trustees**, including the Safeguarding Officer. Our legal adviser said we should aim for 12-15 trustees in all.

- Steve wanted to emphasise that the Church Sharing Agreements are unaffected by the process of becoming a CIO.
- Questions for meeting with Tessa Hennessy (Legal Adviser) - Matt took the Council through the various paragraphs of this document.
 1. *The involvement of the Catholic Church in the CIO* – Matt took the meeting through these paragraphs. Though the Catholic Church, at Christ the King, is a signatory of the original 1985 LEP Constitution, they stand alone as a separate entity when it comes to worship and finance. We need to develop some kind of negotiated arrangement rather than include them formally within the CIO. This would include having 1 or 2 observers on the board of trustees. Klaus agreed this was a good way forward, and he and Ruth G. would talk with Father Francis in due course.
 2. *Clarification regarding the position of the 'subsidiaries' of Walton LEP* – these do not have to be brought into the CIO.
 3. *Baptist Pension Liability* – this is out of our hands. Rev. John Robertson, of Milton Keynes Mission Partnership, has agreed to look into this, by talking to the appropriate people.
 4. *Financial arrangements once we are a CIO* - the legal adviser said that we don't need to have only one bank account. We can retain our existing arrangements, which will make matters more manageable for the individual treasurers. Steve flagged up that it was important that the treasurers used the same layout when they presented their budgets.

Ruth G. stated that she was aware her employment status would change once we are registered with the Charities Commission. This would trigger the TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings – Protection of Employees) process. Ann B. volunteered to do some research on this topic.

Next Steps – Once we are satisfied with the wording of our Partnership Agreement and our Constitution, we need to:

- Share the news with our congregations;
- Register with the CIO. The registration document is long and complex, so we must look into what's involved. Matt asked for a volunteer to look into the process; he and Steve will take an initial look first;
- Move our funds over to the Charities Commission;
- Sort out Ruth G.'s employment status. However, we must resolve Ruth's pension liability first.
- Notify the names of our trustees. As regards, **Ex officio trustees**, there was a brief discussion on the need to check whether 'clergy' included only those in a paid capacity or all licensed ministers. Matt will follow up with Keith in due course.

- the Charities Commission's definition of the term 'clergy'. Matt will speak to Rev. Keith Straughan regarding his status;
- Matt agreed to upload the CIO documents to the WCP website. It was agreed that the colour coding should remain.

3. Various updates

- **Finance updates** – Emma reported that our account was looking very healthy with £78,000 in our Reserves, and £110,000 in total. She is meeting with our other church treasurers in December, and will be liaising with CtK regarding their rebate.
- **Safeguarding** – There were no updates from Rachael, and no concerns were raised either.
- **Draft Environmental Policy** – Before lockdown in March, Lynn had produced a draft policy using the URC policy as a template. This was intended purely as a starter for discussion, and each congregation will be responsible for producing their own version of an environmental policy. However, it needs to be circulated among the Stewards first.
- **CWW Reference Group** – Ruth M. and Steve had met recently. It was heartening that our congregations had grown, during and despite of, the pandemic.

4. Lockdown

- **Current arrangements by congregation**
 - *Catholics* – Klaus reported that they had not met for either private prayer or worship. Mass continued online each Sunday;
 - *CtK* – they continue with the online service on Facebook each Sunday.;
 - *CWW* – Sunday worship continues via Zoom. Ruth M. had started to use gazebos in her garden to facilitate a mum's group, and a group for those struggling with the pandemic;
 - *St Mary's and All Saints* had held 'in-person' Sunday services since July until the 2nd lockdown. Eight new people had joined our membership during these interim months. We have now reverted to weekly pre-recorded online worship. Lianne Tyers had begun fortnightly creative art & craft online sessions for children.
- **Major concerns/challenges** – there were no comments.
- **Advent/Christmas planning** –
 - Klaus was unable to report on any Advent plans. If any were being generated, they would be in the very early stages;
 - Ruth G. hopes to plan an 'in person' service on 1st Sunday in December if that is allowed by Government. Ruth was looking to hold a joint Crib Service with Father Francis.
 - Ruth M. was planning an Advent Forest Church and Café Church. As only small groups were allowed, these events would be repeated several times. Ruth was also planning a Christingle service on 20th

December. Ruth was also keen to promote a Christmas trail that was being planned by Scripture Union. There were many resources available, and Ruth had already purchased 200 booklets.

- Alise was generating a virtual Advent Calendar with contributions from both St Mary's and All Saints congregations. Our Tuesday Quiz Nights and Home Groups continued online.

- **Other planning for winter 20/21** – at their forthcoming congregational meeting, CtK will focus on outreach /mission plans. Steve flagged up that some thought should be given to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, as it followed very soon after Christmas.

A.o.B. There were no items raised.

Date for Next Meeting – Thursday, 7th January 2021