

Minutes of the Walton Churches Partnership Council Meeting **17th September 2020, via Zoom**

Present: Rev. Matt Trendall (Chair), Rev. Ruth Gookey, Rev. Ruth Maxey, Rev. Tim Norwood, Lynn Atkinson, Joyce McKenzie, Ayokunna Otunla, Steve Potter, Klaus Reidel, Carolyn Sanderson, Emma Tyler

Apologies: Ann Beaton, Rev. Keith Straughan, Sue Wilson

Introduction

Ruth G. welcomed everyone to the meeting, and opened with some words from Lamentations 3, and a prayer.

Approval of Notes of last meeting (9th July 2020)

Before the Minutes were approved, Ruth G. wanted to clarify some amendments she had made after the previous WCP Meeting. These were at:

- Top of page 3 – clarification on youth provision, that it is *a joint provision across the partnership*;
- Mid page 3 – re. cluster priests – re-phrased as *“the cluster priests had also given much support to the chaplaincy.”*;
- Top of page 4 – re. sharing the building with Catholics – added - *“We have both agreed to reduce our contributions by half until the end of this year, and go into the COG reserves;”*
- Mid page 5 – Safeguarding updates – *“to allow for groups of young people aged 9+ to meet online.”* Amended to - *“aged 11+ to meet online.”*

There were no comments, and the minutes were approved.

Discussion on becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

- Information regarding what we need to do over the next 6 months
At our last WCP Council, (9th July 2020), we learned that all churches have to register with the Charities Commission by the end of March 2021. The WCP is registering as an LEP, that is, as five congregations. At this meeting, we must discuss the Partnership Agreement and the Constitutional Agreement. Rev. Tim Norwood, Area Dean, joined the meeting for the express purpose of helping our understanding of these documents.
First, it is important to understand that the Registration issue has been ongoing for several years. The Charity Commission are still looking at their draft templates and documents, so the 31st March 2021 deadline may slip a little. Tim referred to a Memorandum of Understanding which is an agreement from our Ecumenical officers. However, the figures given are very out of date. This is a national Agreement so we need to use the template which, though very standardised is something we need to make our own.

Matt opened the floor to questions.

Steve had a concern around ensuring that the Constitutional Agreement pushes the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to the fore. In terms of the Operating Procedures, we need to be vigilant that we are not pushed in a direction that we don't want.

Tim responded that the number of Trustees will be key. He will have more information on this in a week's time.

Matt was keen to know how many Trustees are required so that we have a balance across our congregations. Tim thought that approximately 12 might be an ideal number. Each Trustee would serve for a 3-year term. So, we could hold elections every year where one third of Trustees are replaced.

Matt had prepared a document entitled "Comments and Questions on the Governing Document", and went through each point with Tim to clarify understanding, as follows:

6.2(a) – re. a clear expenses policy for clergy and Trustees. [We don't have an expenses policy at present.](#)

9.1 (b) – references to Electoral Roll? Tim explained that, by law, Anglican Churches must keep a list of those in their Parish who are able to vote in an election. So, it is the Anglican version of a church membership document. [Steve noted that there is a principle within Ecumenism that everyone is able to participate in each partner denomination, regardless of the denomination into which they were baptised or confirmed.](#) Ruth G. responded that we can see this as a principled decision. So, we agreed in principle that our WCP membership list would also be our de facto Electoral Roll unless people chose to opt out.

10.2 – re. our decision-making mechanism. Ruth M. said that the URC work via consensus decision-making at all levels. Tim agreed that point 10.2 is linked to [an operating procedure](#) so we can wait until we look at that particular document.

11.1 (d) – requirement to hold 4 'general meetings'. Matt said that this is not something we do anymore. Tim agreed that 4 did sound too many, and that 3 was more practical. However, [this is non-negotiable.](#)

11.3 – re. 90% agreement of LEP membership for 'big' items **or** everything? Tim explained that for a general meeting, there must be 14 days' notice given, and a quorum of members must be present. The thinking behind this is to avoid any kind of manipulation by those attempting to act without due process.

11.5 – re. minimum numbers in attendance at a general meeting. Matt was concerned that the 20% expected was too high, and asked if this figure was negotiable. Tim replied that the Charity Commission are aware of our concerns.

13.2 – re. ex-officio members such as a Treasurer or Secretary. Tim replied that those roles are not ex-officio members. You could invite a non-member to attend but they wouldn't have a vote.

13.3 – re. extra nominated PCC members as Trustees. Tim referred back to the Memorandum of Understanding where the figures are unrealistic. The PCC is a legal body and needs to exist as a separate entity. This is to safeguard against any conflict of interest. Matt said that all church members could be PCC members, too, if they were on the Electoral Roll (see 9.1 above).

Another point re. nominated members. Tim commented that the Catholic congregation at Christ the Cornerstone are part of the CIO. Klaus was keen to check a few points with Father Francis, regarding nominating a Catholic trustee to join the team, before any decision was taken. Steve asked if the Catholic congregation would be included in the 90% of LEP membership as referred to in point 11.3? Klaus responded that Catholics are part of the Northampton Diocese, and have a different charitable status. So, that means there is an overlap of legal bodies.

13.3/16 – length of terms and maximum terms. Matt said we had covered this point already. (See text on page just before **6.2**.) Tim reiterated that it is non-negotiable.

23. re. '**membership lists must include denomination**'. Matt remarked that there are many people in our congregations without a denomination. Steve said that there were several who had come to faith through Ecumenism. Tim understood this but we will need to record denomination as far as possible.

30. Terminology – can/should we **replace 'churches' with 'congregations'** throughout? We have always referred to congregations rather than our separate churches. Tim noted there was some inconsistency in the document.

- Formation of a small group to go through the Constitution/Governing Document and Church Partnership Agreement and complete it for Council Approval by November

Matt thanked Tim for his expertise, and said that the next step was to convene a group of around 5 people to work through the CIO process. Matt agreed to

be the ministerial contact, and Steve agreed to be member of the group. 3 further people are still sought for this group.

- Key dates over next few months regarding CIO work.

This newly formed group will need to put together a draft by November to present to the next WCP Meeting.

Matt thought that it might be easier to exclude the Catholic congregation and have a different Memorandum of Understanding with them.

Ruth M. said it was vital to find a way to communicate with our congregations regarding this CIO work. The information needs to be expressed simply, say, on an A5 sheet.

Ruth G. was keen for us all to use the same information sheet.

Tim left the meeting at 20.39.

Finance report following Treasurers' Meeting (9th September 2020)

Emma notified the Council that our current account contained a healthy balance of £19,842.17, while our reserves were £78,790.80. Emma had no issues for the WCP over the next few months.

Having met with the Treasurers the previous week, Emma was able to report the status of each congregation:-

St Marys and CWW – Had no concerns

All Saints can pay their share this year, albeit with some dipping into reserves

Christ the King needs much support.

Resolution 1: That Christ the King's request for a share rebate, to cover their loss for this year, is agreed. 50% to be covered by WCP up to a maximum of £4k.

Proposed by: Ruth Maxey

Seconded by: Ayokunnu Otunla

Agreed: Unanimously

Emma then referred the Council to her Budget Sheet for 2021 and, particularly, the 'Share Plan by Congregation'. While St Mary's original and revised figures remained the same, the other three congregations had had their figures adjusted according to their circumstances. In terms of overall Loss/Profit, Emma had identified a loss of £2,800 overall. Matt thought that if we achieved this in 2021 it would be very good.

Resolution 2: That Walton Churches Partnership Council agree the 2021 Budget.

Proposed: Ruth Maxey

Seconded: Steve Potter

Agreed: Unanimously

Othona Feedback

Ruth M. referred back to our last meeting on 9th July 2020 when the WCP Council had agreed to release funds from the Bursary Fund to enable families from CWW to have a break away. Ruth wanted to pass on thanks from those families, who had given much positive feedback. Matt was keen to minute his thanks to all members of the Bursary Fund group.

Brief news from each congregation

Christ the King (CtK) – Sunday worship has been conducted online over many months, and continues. Physical services have just started on Wednesday evenings. A new Family Worship service (open to the WCP) is starting in October. Steve's weekly electronic newsletter has been great.

All Saints – Ayokunnu worships every Sunday with her family via the online service. Carolyn felt that the weekly Sunday services in the building (since July) had an enormous benefit for people without a computer.

St Mary's – Joyce reported that we had opened the church, twice a week, from the end of June for Private Prayer. Four stewards, on a rota basis, had given two hours a week on Monday mornings and Thursdays afternoons. Over July and August, about a dozen people took advantage of this opportunity. Since September, we have reduced Private Prayer sessions to just a Wednesday afternoon. Our monthly Tuesday Quiz Nights started again online in June, and are still popular. We've had 3 x weddings, and one of the couples have become regular attenders.

CWW – Ruth M. had generated many activities throughout the week by using 2 x gazebos in her garden. There has been a new mums' group, a coffee morning, and discussion groups among other things. Ruth is now concerned about the new Government law, (from Monday 14th Sept) regarding the Rule of 6. Delivering Sunday worship has become more problematic due to the lack of any indoor space for hire. Pavilions and Children's Centres are not accessible. Ruth has held 2 x Forest Church style events but, with the colder weather approaching, has been looking into using the St Lawrence church building.

Ctk Catholic Congregation – Physical Mass is starting again as well as the recorded Mass services on YouTube.

Potential plans/ideas for joint WCP Christmas events

With the increase in Covid-19 and regional lockdowns, it was difficult to plan this far ahead.

A.O.B – Licences of various kinds are being applied for to ensure we are compliant with the law. For example, online services require the use of recorded music. Licenses need to be organised at a congregational level.

Date of Next Meetings

- 15th October 2020 – AGM and CIO update
- 12th November 2020 – Priority to finalise/approve CIO documents

Close - Ruth M. closed the meeting with prayer.