**HATFIELD ROAD METHODIST CHURCH, St Albans**

**Minutes of Church Council**

**Monday 28th February 2023 7.45pm at Hatfield Road (in person)**

***Our Calling*** *in the Methodist Church is to: increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love; help people to learn and grow as Christians through mutual support and care; be a good neighbour to people and to challenge injustice; and make followers of Jesus Christ. At Hatfield Road Methodist Church we work out this calling through our adopted statements of purpose, mission and vision, and annual intention.*

1. **Apologies were received from:**

Noelene Browning, Ros Hancock and Lianne Weidmann
**Present:** Rev Andrew Prout (Chair) (AP), Angela Andrews (AA), Eric Bridgstock (EB), Tomas Cvrcek (TC), Maggie Dodd (MD), Freda Gray (FG), Stuart Johnson (Senior Circuit Steward) (SJ), Val Parker (VP), Deacon Nigel Perrott (NP), Joanna Rose (JR), Caroline Tough (CT), Peter Wallace (PW), Denise Willingham (DW)

 **Opening Devotions** were led by NP.

1. **The membership of the Church Council as at 28th February 2023 was agreed.**
2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Church Council meeting held on 7th November 2022 were agreed with no amendments.

1. **Appointments and Vacancies**
	1. **Church Secretary** AP had approached one or two people but with no positive outcome as yet. He will try some others. VP and MD agreed to take notes for this meeting.
	2. **Survey Responses** Thesehad been good, with a number of people expressing interest in taking things on. This included stewarding, which would be needed with AA, DW and LW all standing down in the summer.
	3. **Children & Families worker** Marlborough Road was experiencing financial difficulties, and are no longer able to commit to supporting a new worker. Also, the failure to recruit on two occasions meant there was little confidence of success a third time

However, Emma’s 2 years had left a positive legacy. A couple more people have come forward to help with Babies & Toddlers, which was our area of greatest need, although an overall leader was still needed; and Sunday Club had picked up some other areas of her work. CT for example is now in contact with a number of families.

CT asked what would happen about the donations made by church members for both the CFW and the Anna Chaplain, and whether the CFW element could be returned if we didn’t seek a replacement. She also asked how we were going to maintain the momentum of the work Emma started. AP said that the donation money would be ringfenced for ongoing work with children and families, but people would be able to request money back if they wished.

NP said that continuing Emma’s work was a discussion for the whole church. There needed to be a meeting where people could brainstorm ideas, identify ways in which we can all help, and seek God’s guidance.

DW said this was important for the Anna Chaplain position as well. We needed to plan for the future and think about how to sustain the work after that contract had come to an end. She pointed out that we would already have had to be doing this for the CFW, as Emma would have been completing her employment this July anyway. As the CFW had been a two-church project (as had the Anna Chaplaincy), and may yet be a future project, AP said that any future conversations about ongoing Children and Families work should include members of MRMC, as some of the work was now cross sectional including MRMC & Cornerstone.

AP said that members of MRMC should be invited to join us to talk about thoughts and ideas for a continuing children and families ministry in the near future (Action Joint Stewards).

DW added that, while outreach for families and children was very important, it was also important for single people. There are many who live alone but who are not under the sight of the Anna Chaplain. JR suggested it should be a topic for discussion at our Annual Church meeting, when everyone would be together. We could then share the outcomes with Rev Daniel Yovan when he arrives (Action AP).

EB will contact Joseph Rank, thanking them but saying we are not recruiting. Members need to know about this so they have the option to have monies returned, and also to confirm ring-fencing of the money retained (Action EB).

1. **Letters of Greeting and Support/Correspondence**
	1. **Tonga** AP had received a letter from the Tonga High Commission thanking us for our donation and support, following the severe flooding there.
	2. **Trinity URC** AP had received a letter from the Treasurer to say that Trinity URC are now part of St Albans URC, based on two sites at Homewood Road and Greenwood. The Trinity site is to be sold. There will be a final service on 11th March at 2.30pm.
2. **Matters Arising not appearing elsewhere and Action Tracker**
	1. **New Testament Church of God** RevPearl Roper will be holding an event at HRMC on 11th March, to celebrate her 25 years as Pastor.
	It now seems possible that the refurbishment of the Fleetville Community Centre will not take place, and that NTCG will not need to use our premises after all, but we await confirmation.
	2. **Church’s Chosen Charities** Several had been nominated. AP would circulate the nominations, together with their charity numbers, for Church Council members to vote on. EB expressed a preference for charities that ‘do’ rather than ‘talk’ (‘raise awareness’), eg ShelterBox as opposed to Shelter, and urged people to do some research on their choices. It was confirmed that we would be choosing one from each category of local, national and international (Post Meeting Note: The Charities chosen subsequently chosen were Christian Aid, The Alzheimer’s Society, and The Living Room).
	3. **Eco-Church** RH had checked our status that day, triggering an email to AP asking him, as our Minister, to confirm our position and apply for a Bronze Award plaque. There is a charge of £85 for this, which we would be happy to pay. RH had suggested to DW that, with a little more information, we might not be far from a Silver Award. A Circuit award will be possible if three churches in the Circuit have the same eco award level.
3. **Matters from Circuit, District and Connection (Report from Stuart Johnson)**
4. **Circuit Farewell Service** for Andrew and Vindra will be held at HRMC on Sunday 23rd July, 6.30pm. The Circuit will be involved in organising it - details to be arranged nearer the time. HRMC will be holding its own **Farewell Social** for Andrew on Saturday 15th July.
5. **Circuit Welcome Service** for Rev Daniel Yovan will be at MRMC Sunday 3rd September at 6.30pm. Daniel will be making a second visit to the Manse on Saturday 26th March. He may wish to relocate the office/study to the front of the house to allow for a larger living space for his family, in which case help with moving shelving etc before he moves in would be appreciated.
6. **Lent Course** The online course starts on 1st March in the evening, on Zoom. The in-person course starts at St John’s PB on 2nd March in the morning. They are using the same “I Am” material but the number of sessions will be different.
7. **Next Circuit Meeting** Tuesday 7th March, venue to be finalised. Check the agenda.
8. **Circuit Study Day** 20th May, details to follow.
9. **Saturday morning prayer meetings** These are well attended, please continue to join them.
10. **Circuit Roles** George Woods has agreed to be Circuit Safeguarding Officer, and will be appointed at the Circuit Meeting. He attends MRMC and works with young people. Chris Hancock remains as Circuit Administrator. This will be reviewed in the summer. There is a person interested in taking on the Circuit Treasurer post but it’s too early to supply a name.
11. **District Synod** This will take place on Saturday 16th September, and arrangements have been made for it to be held at St Paul’s, Blandford Road, because of the number of people involved. HRMC may also be used for groups/sessions.
12. **Circuit EDI/JDS** VP had circulated some information explaining the Methodist Church’s approach to *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, and the related theme of *Justice, Dignity and Solidarity.* The Circuit wants to get a group together, with a representative or two from each of its churches, to work on relevant plans and policies. There are examples available from other Circuits. Inclusivity in all aspects of church life is important, and we need to be aware of how we approach people to take on roles and how we decide on and organise events etc, to avoid making assumptions about people, rather than just carrying on doing things in the same old way.
13. **Andrew’s Stationing** AP has found a good new post in Frome, Somerset, from September.
14. **Reports**

Most had already been circulated and would be taken as read. Additional reports, and comments on those previously circulated, follow:

1. **Church Stewards** TC emphasised the importance of recruiting new stewards, as mentioned earlier in this meeting.
2. **Pastoral** The church had gained six new members; all transfers from elsewhere. Joe and Linda Kinchenton had transferred out. The total now stood at 111.
Graham Smith was now back home. Colin Rowe is now in the MHA home in Hitchin for respite and may move in permanently. Cobey Opoku, Agnes’ grandson, has asked to be baptised at HRMC. This will take place on Saturday 15th April, in the afternoon.
3. **Anna Chaplaincy** The Management Group is happy with where MD is and how her work is shaping up. MD is looking at how to establish some Anna Friends over the next 3 years.
4. **Cornerstone House** NP has been building bridges across the three St Albans Methodist sites. He and Jane have been bringing people from Salisbury Village to HRMC (Create & Celebrate, Holiday Club and some other activities). NP had a meeting the next day about Foodbanks/Community Fridges and Satellite distribution, which was looking positive.
5. **Safeguarding/First Aid training** JR reported that training was being organised, post-Covid. With George Woods in post this should now be getting underway. DW asked about First Aid training, which was needed at HRMC. It’s quite possible George (who works with St John’s Ambulance) would know of someone who could run a course for us. We could base the training here and offer it to other churches. AP will follow this up with George.
6. **Social, Outreach & Events** The group has not had a chance to meet for a while, but JR hoped to convene a meeting in March. There are some events already on the horizon:
	1. Quorum Singers concert on 25th March, in support of our chosen charities
	2. Possibility of an Afternoon Tea on Holy Saturday, 8th April
	3. Possibility of opening the church on Coronation Day, 7th May
	4. Farewell Social for AP on 15th July
7. **Property & Finance** The annual accounts were approved and adopted.

Offerings were down, partly owing to deaths or people moving away. AA asked why we were not passing the collection plate around again. Can be misleading/off-putting to new members of the congregation if people who give by standing order are seen to be passing it straight on. NP said the offering, however received, should at least be referenced in the service, as there was a spiritual aspect to it as well as one of resourcing. PW said that we need to make it clearer what the collection is for, including our contribution to the Circuit, which needed to be more generous. It was agreed a collection basket would be placed in a prominent position on the way into the Sanctuary, and taken forward for a blessing towards the end of the service. Church members need to be updated about our financial situation.

The Annual Church Return, will be progressed by AP after the meeting.

1. **Small Hall refurbishment**

A briefing paper had been circulated. EB said the Small Hall desperately needed an update. Alan Smith, who had been involved with the Large Hall project, had been engaged to produce drawings and other documentation to support the planning application we would need to submit for the scheme envisaged. The planning process can take up to 16 weeks.

The scheme includes adding a porch area, containing an accessible toilet, outside the entrance doors to the car-park. Inside the room, there would be a kitchenette, new lighting and flooring, a new suspended ceiling, a screen etc. It was envisaged as a self-contained area that could be used as a conference/meeting room, to appeal to a range of potential external users, as well as ourselves.

Nine builders have been approached, with one company having come in several times to discuss and advise. The cost of the work looks to be around £85k. We could raise this by committing £40k (or, possibly, £50k) from our restricted funds, plus an approach to church members for, say, £20k. We could also apply for a District grant of around 10% (ie £8.5k). The Circuit may also contribute, and local grants were a possibility, since we were making the building more accessible. Alan Smith’s fee would be 7.5% of the total cost of the scheme.

CT expressed a number of reservations concerning:

* + losing a window and lowering the ceiling, which would not help with lighting: EB said this had been discussed with the builders who said that modern lighting panels meant natural light was not crucial. AP said it would be too difficult to put skylights in the roof, but a light-well will be possible. Better lighting is generally needed now and would be needed with any new scheme.
	+ the loss of two parking spaces and, possibly, the bike racks: the racks could be moved elsewhere.
	+ safety, with people exiting straight into the car-park: this was already the case, and the proposed scheme would actually make it safer, as the porch would have a door to the side, not straight across from the existing doors.
	+ who the scheme was intended for: VP said for the same kinds of uses as previously, but the space hadn’t really been fit for anyone for some time, so we either knock it down or renovate it. Groups/meetings that currently use the Aldersgate Lounge could use the Small Hall instead, which might mean less moving of furniture and less interference with equipment in the Worship Area. JR thought that, after Covid, lettings should pick up and that the Small Hall could be a desirable, rentable space.

NP asked whether the room can be used as a ministry space to really reach people, and be of benefit to the community, saying that if it could, then let’s get on with it.

FG asked if the £85k included everything, ie furnishings etc. EB said it included heating and carpeting, but not furniture, as the existing chairs etc can still be used.

A **proposal** was put for: the Small Hall project to go ahead, subject to further detail being accepted by CC; Alan Smith to be engaged to oversee the project; the sum of £50k to be made available from our reserve funds; grants, including from the District, to be applied for where possible. [10 votes for; 0 against]

1. **Other Areas of Mission and Ministry**
2. **Outreach work** AP said that despite the challenges there were many positive things going on in our church, including the Warm Welcome Café; Babies & Toddlers; Anna Chaplaincy; Cornerstone House; Holiday Club; and Day Care. There is much to celebrate in the work we are doing and we are engaging with a significant amount of people across each week.
3. **Boys’ and Girls’ Brigades** There is to be a celebration on 13/14th May to acknowledge the work the Brigades have done at HRMC over the years, but which has now come to an end. The weekend will include a reunion of Old Boys and Girls on the Saturday afternoon, and a service on the Sunday, during which the colours will be decommissioned. AP will advise Sunday Club as to how this will affect them on the day.
4. **Marlborough Road MC** Our ministers are holding joint meetings with the HRMC stewards and those of MRMC every two months. MRMC’s membership has halved from approximately 200 to 100 in about 10 years, but there is no decline in commitment and spirit. St Peter’s is having some building work done so, for nine months from 30 July, they would be tabernacling with MRMC. St Peter’s will continue to use the Octagon, but would be sharing MRMC for church services. It is intended that the main 10.30am services will be joint. This year is the 125th anniversary of the current MRMC building (the fifth that the Society has occupied). To celebrate, they will be hosting the “Knitted Bible Exhibition”! Like HRMC, MRMC are contemplating the question, “Where is God leading us? What witness can we offer in this city?”
5. **AOB**
6. **GDPR** We need to return a form to Connexion saying we are GDPR compliant. This requires a review of how we hold data. AP will approach Angela Spriggs, who may be able to help. This needs to be done annually.
7. **Gift Aid** EB said that it should be possible to claim Gift Aid on the pledges made for our Lay Workers.
8. **Warm Spaces** We are not eligible for any grants under this scheme in respect of our Café, as it has to be for new work. In any case, we could not spend £1000 by the end of February as required.
9. **Dates of next Meetings**

Annual Church Meeting - Sunday 21st May, following the morning service.

Church Council - Wednesday 28th June, at 7.45 pm

1. **Closing Devotions**

AP closed with prayer at 21.47.