

Thames Valley Circuit Meeting
16th February 2023, at 7.45 pm
Burnham Church, Eastfield Road, SL1 7NZ

Circuit Meeting Minutes

- 1 Rev Vicci welcomed everyone to the meeting. She then talked into how, from her experience of working with them, young people today can seem to be a little disappointed with their adults as not being quick enough to embrace change, especially in the areas of inclusion, personal security, fairness and equality – putting right the things they feel we got wrong in previous generations, and embracing the way the world is now.

Vicci pointed out that through Safeguarding, GDPR, Fairtrade, EDI and other initiatives, the Church world is a safer, more inclusive place than ever and that we as the Trustees and people responsible for working these policies should see them as doing the work of God.

We sang together the hymn “The right hand of God is working in this land”, which summarises how the hand of God is working through His people in this time.

- 2 The membership of the meeting was agreed. It is recorded on the attendance sheet in the minute book.
Those attending were the Superintendent, 4 other members of staff, 1 Supernumerary Minister, 5 Circuit Stewards and 17 other members.
9 apologies were received, as listed on the attendance sheet; 6 members neither attended nor sent apologies.

- 3 There were no declaration of interests.

- 4 The agenda was agreed with no other items requested for AOB.

- 5 The minutes of last meeting were accepted and duly signed,

- 6 Matters arising not on the agenda:

Rev Peter spoke about the Ash Wednesday Pilgrimage Walk and maps of the route were handed out and explained.

Ian Haggarty (Webmaster) has asked for pictures from the day to be sent to him for inclusion on the website.

- 7 The Connexion has made EDI training mandatory for all those in Leadership roles in the Church, and training has been launched entirely online through Youtube. It is about four and a half hours of watching. Superintendents have made the Connexion aware that they are asking too much new to be done in too short a length of time.

Vicci’s aims to roll out the training in small groups around the Circuit, working through small chunks at a time.

Should anyone wish to work through the Training on YouTube, please contact Vicci or Pauline for the link.

The Youth President, who has ADHD, has made a video which will be shared at a later meeting.

- 8 The Safeguarding Report is attached to these Minutes. There was nothing of particular note to share in the meeting.
- 9 GDPR - Vicci
1. The meeting was asked to read and take note of Pauline's report. The GDPR Audit is coming – the forms should be in Churches next week – and it is something that HAS to be done. Those needing help should contact Pauline. If, as the Methodist Church, we do not get this right we will all be subject to Government Audits.
 2. When there is any doubt or possibility that a document may have safeguarding implications, it is better to err on the side of caution and keep it. This is better to keep something we later find we do not need, rather than destroying something which in later years we discover is needed. Anything with a Safeguarding implication must be kept for 70 years. Registers of work with Young People must include attendees and leaders on each occasion and be kept for 70 years. If in doubt, keep.
- 10 Accept reports already circulated - these were Annual Reports from each of our Churches. Vicci encouraged everyone to read them and see the amazing things that are happening. Deacon Margaret gave an update of the work at Colnbrook and Poyle, a limited congregation with a generous heart. The £250 grant from the Circuit has provided the Toddler Group with new equipment and they now have 8-10 families each week. They are working with MIND – a Friend in need is a Friend indeed project. One volunteer is undergoing training in March and in April a Tuesday afternoon Warm Place group will open up, with coffee and cake. Colnbrook is flourishing. Vicci reminded the meeting that 18 months ago Rev Margaret Dudley brought this Vision to the Meeting, and some members were sceptical but so much has been accomplished in six short weeks. We give thanks for Gods' work in Colnbrook and for Deacon Margaret.
- 11 Finance Sue Le Page talked through the Finance Schedules which will be sent out with these Minutes. The proposed Assessments are set out and will come to the next Circuit Meeting for approval. At the Treasurers Meeting both Colnbrook and Poyle and Woodlands Park offered £1k above their assessment. High Street Church are struggling with increased energy costs and will be £13k short in their Assessment. i) Several Churches are struggling with energy costs and failing heating systems. With sale of properties in process there will be money ringfenced by TMCP which can be applied for and used, with their approval for works on buildings. SLP put the Proposal to the Meeting: "That once we have monies in the Model Fund we apply for it, to be used in properties and Churches". The question was raised as whether this would be in the form of a Grant, or a loan and the response was it could be either. The Meeting agreed the Proposal unanimously. ii) There is a predicted shortfall of £11k budget against income, because of the decision to employ more Ministers and Presbyters. Sue advised that it is possible to apply to use some of the Model Fund to cover costs for Ministry. The question of the Circuit Reserves was raised and these currently stand at £60-£100k, including £20k for emergency building projects. SLP proposed that "The Circuit apply to TMCP to use some of the Model Trust Funds towards the costs of a Deacon". The Meeting agreed the Proposal unanimously.

Rev Pete suggested that the best course of action would be to claim as much as possible from the Model Trust Fund, and replace any not used, as any funds left in the account in September attract a levy.

iii) SLP advised that we can apply to District to claim back the District Levy paid two years ago. It was unanimously agreed that we do that.

iv) Ledgers Road are in need of major refurbishment works, in the region of £30k. They have already pledged £7k themselves and are asking the Circuit for a grant of £10k. It was agreed that this will be met from the £20k in Reserves for emergency building works. They are also planning a range of fund-raising events which the members were encouraged to attend.

12 Property - there were no questions about the report already circulated.

13 Matters from the CLT – there were no matters not covered elsewhere.

14 Circuit Greetings

i) Vicci shared a letter from HRH King Charles III, received in response to the letter of condolence, sent on behalf of the Circuit. The card was passed to the Secretary for Archiving.

ii) Naomi Sharpe sends greetings via Anne Haggarty.

iii) Keith Machin shared greeting from Rev Sonia Hicks.

iv) Rev Pete has sent a letter of condolence to Rabbi Romain on the death of his son.

v) Burnham Church are seeking a grant from the Circuit for £5k for heating the Chapel. The new system will reduce fuel costs and noise levels in the Chapel. It was proposed that “we grant Burnham Church £5k from the Reserves for emergency building works. Any residue will be returned”. This was agreed unanimously.

Ed Filmore reminded the Meeting that the Circuit is not the only source of funding. He will provide Pauline with a list of places to apply to. He also suggested that all Churches sign up to receive Methodist Insurance newsletters and the link for that will follow.

Fairtrade – Sue Trout, the Circuit Fairtrade representative said Fairtrade Week starts on 27th February. We were reminded that Conference says that all Churches should have Fairtrade Coffee and Tea as a minimum, and we need to revisit that.

Vicci thanked Sue for bringing this to the Agenda – and for providing chocolate samples!

Kathy Rickman advised the Meeting that Tradecraft (which launched Fairtrade) has gone into liquidation.

The Circuit Service at Windsor was blessed with over 110 people in attendance. There followed discussion about whether this should be done again, and what shape, venue, time would work best. It was agreed to consider a Circuit Service at St Andrew’s at the end of January 2024.

15 Any other business

Next year's synod representatives – The current Lay reps to Synod are Joyce Brown, David Ridley, Anne Haggarty, Ian Haggarty, Philip Mount and Peter White. Ian has indicated that he is happy to continue to attend, as a non-voting observer and Liz Tottingham volunteered to take his place. The Meeting is happy with that arrangement.

16 Dates for Diaries

23rd April Easter Offering Service

4pm at Cookham Rise Church, followed by tea. Parking is free in the station car park on Sundays.

16th July Circuit Service at High Street at 4pm, led by Rev Jenny Impey to celebrate the long service of: 60 years of Arthur Baker, 30 years of Evan Richardson and 20 years of Richard Cracknell.

Next Circuit Meeting: Tuesday 16th May at Colnbrook Church.

Parking is available in Vicarage Way, Slough SL3 0JY, opposite St Thomas' Church.