

Minutes Church Members' Meetings (Annual and Ordinary) - 28th September 2022 at 8PM

Roy Bawden opened the meeting and advised technical points. He welcomed participants to the hybrid meeting and advised that John Bawden was assisting as technical co-host on Zoom and Ros Monteath was taking the minutes. Roy thanked them both. There were 63 attendees: 24 in the room and 39 on 34 Zoom connections.

Apologies were received from Jan and Tony Rose, Dave Connelly, Karen Williams, Chrissie Dore, Nikki Latham, Lyn Prior, Mick Ledden, Derek Page, Andy Ingram, Kim Hatton, Ruth Espinosa and Anne Bawden (door duty).

Annual Meeting

1. Worship and Prayer

John Bawden shared a YouTube worship item and Roy prayed.

2. Receipt of Annual Report for 2021

The Annual report was sent to church members, by email, in March. Roy read its conclusion and stated that membership at the end of the year (2021) was 288.

3. Receipt of Church Accounts for 2021

These accounts have just been received and approved. They show a true value and that we have met all requirements. The set of numbers received in January, look a bit different. There are two sets of accounts: the Management Accounts and the Audited Accounts.

The 2021 Audited Accounts have been uploaded to the church website. The full year 2021 Management Accounts were presented at the January members' meeting and those numbers have now been reported in the audited accounts in the format required by the Charities Commission. In spite of a year when offerings have been significantly below budget the Lord has once again provided for all our needs.

The Church constitution states that "a statement of the Church Accounts (audited or independently examined as required by law) shall be received by a Church Members' meeting" and this obligation is being discharged at the meeting. The accounts have been approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf by Derek and Craig. The important issue for the members is that an independently audited set of accounts tells them that proper books of account have been kept by the church, the financial statements give a true and fair view the Church's affairs as at 31 December 2021 and all financial and legal requirements have been met.

The Audited Accounts are a very important part of our governance framework but we do not use them to manage the affairs of the church. We use the Management Accounts that are presented at the monthly members' meeting to manage the affairs of the church, and the 2021 numbers were reviewed 6 months ago. The Management Accounts are prepared on a cash basis and are an account of all the money that has been received and expended. The Audited Accounts, however, are prepared on an accrued basis and this gives rise to differences in the two sets of accounts. A reconciliation of the management accounts (as discussed at the January members' meeting) to the audited accounts was presented.

Members were invited to look at the Audited Accounts and reflect on what a wonderful God we have. Any questions or comments should be directed by email to (craig.rowland@btinternet.com).

4. Appointment of auditors

The members approved the reappointment of Xeinadin Audit Limited as the church auditors with 1 abstention.

Prayers of thanksgiving were offered for God's work and provision in 2021.

Ordinary Meeting

1. Approval of minutes of last meeting (20th July, 2022)

Roy invited questions about the minutes. None were received. The minutes were unanimously approved.

2. Children, Families, Youth and Young Adults

Helen Yarrow reported on the Children and Families Worker recruitment. The post was advertised before the summer holidays and we had some interest. Those who did had a strong faith and desire to work with children but unfortunately none had sufficient experience. The plan is to 'take down' the advertisement on external sites (keeping it on the website), and re-advertise early in the New Year, making sure we are 'ready to go' to ensure we reach students for example that are beginning to pray and consider their job options when they finish their final year alongside reaching anyone else who, for whatever reason, didn't respond to the first advertising drive. But there is nothing like word of mouth, so members were encouraged to pray and direct anyone they might think interested to the website or suggest they contact Helen for a chat.

Helen reported on how children's and families work is continuing in the absence of a paid employee. Firstly, it goes without saying just how much Farrah is missed. It is hard to put into words just what an amazing blessing she was, not only to our children & families but also the huge impact she had being part of the staff team. Before Farrah left, she left everything in the best of order, the handover and amount of work she did in terms of planning was impeccable and we thank God for that. But of course there is still lots going on that needs to be covered, including Open the Book, School Assemblies, Action Tot's, our Sunday groups, one-off events including in the short term the Light Party, and all the Christmas services and all the administration that goes along with that, registers, DBS's, rota's, risk assessments, families packs, arranging dates and teams to go into schools for Open the Book and schools and of course continued prayer for all our children and their families. The many volunteers who are ensuring our amazing ministry to children and families continues, on Sundays, and midweek were thanked.

We are very blessed to be able to share God's love through our Sunday groups, in schools, and other activities and events. However, it is also becoming more and more challenging as it seems that most Sunday mornings a new family joins us, which is such a blessing but as some families have 3 or 4 children, it does put more and more pressure on our groups as we ensure we keep the proper ratios of adults to children. Therefore, not surprisingly, this is also something prayer was sought, not only by praying for those new families that they feel welcomed but also that we have sufficient volunteers to run our groups safely and to listen, talk and share with the children.

We are, without doubt, missing a Children & Families Worker. An idea of numbers was provided. The previous Sunday, there were 28 children in Extreme, 18 in Sparks, 12 in Stars and 8 children in Creche (although normally 12-14). Prayer was sought for the recruitment process and that we can continue to reach out to the children in a way that is meaningful. Pray for new families and take time to say hello to folk you don't recognise. Sit with people with children. If you feel challenged to assist with children's work in any way, on a Sunday or during the week, let us know. It really makes a difference.

In Nikki's Latham's absence, Helen also reported on the Youth ministry. God is most definitely working in the young people and they are attending groups. Friendships are forming and being strengthened and we thank God for all he is doing with our young people. There are 85 registered youths - those that are 11-18 year olds. There is no contact with 20 of them but 65 are attending at least one of the 3 church groups. so 76% of our youth are back which is wonderful. In September 14 year 7's were welcomed from Extreme.

In our mid-week groups, Refine, there are potentially 32 youths. 9 – 15 are attending including a regular non-RBC person and doing youth Alpha course. In years 7-9 there are potentially 39 and 15 – 21 regular attenders with 5 non-RBC's, doing a Freedom in Christ course.

In Sunday groups, Phase has potential 46 children and 15-22 attend. 15 of those don't attend midweek, so it can be seen how great the numbers are. They are using 'Youth for Christ' resources. Currently, there is no separate provision for 6th formers: 21 youth who stay in the main service.

We have youth serving in youth ministries as young leaders and one youth apprentice on the technical team. We have 12 volunteers in youth groups, serving every week. In Refine we have 4 members serving every week in term time. In Phase we have 6 members, 3 new members and Sam Adedeji and Nikki also serve in Roots. Prayer points - we need at least 2 more in each of these three teams, to ensure we have a safeguarding ratio, as more are starting to attend and to provide good adult role models. Pray for good conversations at Youth Alpha and Freedom in Christ and pray that our youth continue get to know Jesus and not be distracted by the world

they live in. With regard to recruitment, we are looking for a Youth and Young Adult Worker. We have one applicant that we hope to interview very soon. Please pray that the search team and interview panel can discern God's will. If this applicant is unsuccessful, we aim to re-advertise in the New Year aiming at students in their final year, as we plan to do for the Children and Families Worker. Please pray for the staff team, who are working their socks off. Without a Children's Worker and a Youth Worker, there is a lot going on. It is a blessing to be part of that team. Please do lift the staff team up and pray for them. It can be busy with a great deal of multi-tasking going on.

Emma Jones brought the report on Young Adults. There is a team consisting of Emma Jones, Rachel and John Bawden, John and Laura Elliott and Barry and Chrissie Dore, who have met together over the last few months to think about provision that can be put in place for our young adults and youth by supporting them when they go to university and get them involved back into the wider church. A few weeks ago, the team met with a young adult 'specialist' call Phil Knox. He provided tips on how best to get people back to church. We had a list of 45 to 50 people in this age bracket and we have contact with about 20 of them, so looking forward, we want to get these young adults back involved in church.

Chrissie has done an amazing job, reinvigorating a mentor scheme, to make sure young people are paired with a mentor from RBC, supporting them and sending packs out and making sure that there are people at RBC that are connecting with them, so that they feel RBC is a place they can call their home church. The team intend to hold 4 events annually, so that young adults can socialise, not around busy times such as Christmas. The team are excited about young adults attending small groups. We feel it is important that young people stay within the church and use their gifts when they are part of the church inter-generationally. Please let us know which groups can take young adults. We want to help them get back into church, to develop and grow in their faith and maintain their connection with RBC.

3. Membership Matters

Hilary notified the death of Tony Shinkins, who died after a long illness. Roy provided comment regarding membership review and launched breakout groups to consider the question: in your opinion, what are the principal benefits and responsibilities of church membership?

4. Health & Safety Policy Review

Each year members are required to approve the statement. The statement is read out annually. Roy read the statement. A full copy of the H&S Policy is available on the website including changes to last year's. Helen Yarrow reported the changes on behalf of Nikki Latham. These included lone working practices, cash handling and risk assessment completion for new activities.

The members approved the statement with 2 abstentions.

5. Report from Church Treasurer

Craig Rowland brought the report which is available on the church website. Since the last members' meeting in July, offerings have begun to decline further. This has led to offerings being £31,000 under budget after 8 months. As mentioned at the last meeting, we budgeted for an increase in offerings to circa £27,000 per month (below pre-covid levels) but, unfortunately, we have continued at just below the 2021 level at £23,500 per month. Indeed, the average offerings over the last three months has fallen to £22,700 per month. Whilst this is a concern, there has been a significant increase in "one off" donations which are £13,000 higher than budget after 8 months. If we add "one off" donations and offerings together then we have averaged £25,600 this year, compared to £24,900 for the same period last year and £30,000 pre-covid (2019). Looking forward we will need to look at "one off" donations and offerings together.

As regards total income, the shortfall in offerings of £31,000 has been mainly offset by the "one-off" donations being £13,000 better than budget, "other" income being £2,000 above budget and legacies being £10,000 better than budget. We have only just submitted the gift aid reclaim to HMRC and therefore expect to receive the refund in October. This means that we are showing an income shortfall of £61,000 against tax refunds, which will largely disappear once we receive our refund. Ignoring the delayed refund and excluding the Ukrainian appeal, our total revenue of £249,000 for the first eight months of the year is only £6,000 below budget.

Total expenditure to date is £223,000 (excluding the Ukrainian appeal), which is £32,000 (12.5%) less than budget. The main area of expenditure underspend is within staff costs (£19,000 under spent) driven by the current vacancies for the Youth and Young Adult Worker role and the Children and Families Worker role. Once we have recruited into these roles the underspend will cease. The remainder of the underspend is due to timing differences and we expect that most of the expenditure will be incurred in the last 4 months of the year. We are forecasting to be £31,000 underspent by the year end, all of which will be due to the staff vacancies.

Taking income and expenditure together, there is a surplus after eight months of £26,000, against a budgeted breakeven position (ignoring the gift aid shortfall), which is a blessed position to find ourselves in when one considers the significant drop in offerings that we are currently experiencing. Looking forward to the end of the year, we are forecasting to finish the year with a £42,000 surplus, which will be £6,000 better than budget. As a church, we have been truly blessed by the receipt of significant legacies, which have put us in a strong cash position. We should, however, not lose sight of the fact that our underlying income and expenditure position is a cause for concern. If offering levels stay at their current level, we take into account the rise in inflation, and the church is able to successfully fill its vacancies before the start of next year, then we will run at a deficit of £38,000 in 2023.

Budget for 2023

The Finance Committee has discussed plans to close this budget deficit and produced a first draft budget for 2023 which has been agreed by the Trustees, a summary of which was presented. Any questions should be directed by email to craig.rowland@btinternet.com. Approval of the final budget will come before the meeting in November. Alongside the report, members are able to access a detailed copy of the first draft budget for 2023 on the church website. It is a draft budget and not all budget holders have reviewed their expenditure forecasts in detail for 2023. All comparisons are against the 2022 forecast.

The key highlights of the 2023 budget proposal are: -

- The church is facing a possible deficit of £38,000 next year. We do not know what the Lord's plans are for us, but we do know how faithful he is and has been to our church. One way of closing a budget deficit is to significantly cut costs but we believe that this is not a tenable solution and could inflict lasting damage. We also recognise that we are facing exactly the same issue as last year and yet we are now forecasting a surplus of £42,000 this year (enough to cover the possible deficit next year). We have agreed to accept this underlying deficit, as our reserves are strong, but that we would put the £38,000 on to the offerings' budget to help monitor our shortfall in the funds that we require to meet our Kingdom aspirations. Offerings are therefore proposed to increase year on year by 13.5% (£38,000) to £320,000. In the last pre-covid church year to 31st December 2019, the church offerings totalled £351,000 (9.7% more than the proposed 2023 budget). It is also worth remembering that the budget that we agreed for 2022 was £330,000. Whilst the Trustees recognise that the proposed increase in offerings is very challenging (against today's position), they also recognise that the strength of our current reserves enables us to meet any shortfalls that arise as we try and bridge the gap.
- We are budgeting an extra £3,000 for additional rental income from 8 Oxford Drive.
- Total Income is budgeted to reduce by £4,000 (1.0%) year on year. This seems strange when the increase in offerings (£38,000) is considered, but this is mainly driven by the fact that we do not budget for legacies, which this year will amount to £45,000.
- Total expenditure is budgeted to increase by £37,000 (9.9%) in 2023. The most significant increase is a £40,000 increase in staff costs due to the impact of being fully staffed as from 1st January 2023, together with the cost of a relatively small pay award. Our thanks must go to all the existing staff members and volunteers who have been covering the vacancies throughout 2022.
- At last year's September members' meeting we agreed that we did not think it appropriate to cut expenditure on our mission work in the UK and overseas to close the budget deficit, although this would have to be reviewed for 2023 if giving did not recover to "normal" levels in 2022. We have now decided to make some reductions in our external mission expenditure with the proviso that, if we make a surplus in 2023, this expenditure would be reinstated. It was agreed to save a net figure of £8k from the 2022 budget. This would be achieved by removing the 12 chosen charity donations (except the Spurgeon's childcare

donation) and cutting back on the payments to the Baptist Missionary Society and the Home Mission Fund. We should remember that during Covid when many churches were struggling with income problems, we made extra payments to the Baptist Missionary Society and the Home Mission Fund because we had been blessed with legacy income.

- The only other significant cost change is an increase of £8,500 on our energy bills.
- Overall, a decrease in total revenue year on year of £4,000 and an increase in total expenditure of £38,000 gives us a breakeven budget with a known underlying risk of £38,000.

6. Report from Church Secretary

a) Lead Minister recruitment

Applications closed on 10th September. 12 applications were received, one of which was after the deadline. The sub-group considered the applications on the 11th September and shared their findings with the deacons on the 24th September. That work included research into the applicants, preaching videos, information about their churches, etc. By this time, the deacons also had information about the applicants. They were a mixed bag. All applicants were male. 2 candidates were of particular interest and one other also of interest. The sub-group will now be meeting informally with at least two of those candidates in the short term and depending on how that goes, they may be invited to share on a Sunday including a children's talk. This will not be notified in advance to the church. The next stage will be for your Leadership Team to determine who, in particular, they think God is directing us towards and if that occurs, they will invite that individual to 'preach with a view.' That will be under notice to the membership and will involve a whole weekend, meeting with many people involved in our church life. Roy reminded members that the authority to appoint a minister rests solely with the members. If the outcome is that following that weekend the Leadership team recommends someone for appointment, a Special Members Meeting will be convened under our constitution, 75% majority of those voting will be required. In the meantime, the church will be benefitting from a mini-series on Christian Leadership. We feel God has been involved in this process and we pray God takes us to a favourable conclusion, in the short term.

b) Deacons' elections

There are 2 vacancies if all Deacons standing are re-elected and elections will take place in November. All members have a responsibility to look around us and to pray and reflect on who would be a good deacon. Who are you going to nominate? The challenge was laid down and members were asked to go away and pray about it. Candidates must have been baptised by immersion, 21 years or above and have been a member for at least 12 months. You can nominate yourself. If you nominate someone with their agreement, ask Roy for a nomination form to be returned to him by 6th November. The form must be signed by two other members.

c) Sidewalk update

The team is at work on the planning application. It is hoped that will be ready early in the New Year. The church will be informed on how that is going.

d) Next members' meeting

To be held on Sunday 27th November after church, over a lunch, for everyone of all ages to discuss church life issues and then a closed meeting for members only. It is hoped this will signpost the importance of church membership.

7. AOB

There were no AOB items.

Barry closed the meeting in prayer.

Appendix 1

Summary of break-out groups: 'in your opinion, what are the principal benefits and responsibilities of church membership'. *The collated list will include some duplication.*

Benefits of membership

- having a voice
- opportunity to take part and influence decisions
- being part of the decision-making process and discerning God's will for His church
- the sense of involvement that this brings
- gain and development of fellowship
- specialist groups e.g. Tuesday Fellowship
- the more you get involved and serve, the greater sense of fellowship and the more you get to know others
- support from the fellowship
- sense of ownership, especially as within a Baptist Church, everyone has a share
- sense of belonging through coming together
- sense of unity when we agree to core tenets/proposals put forward
- sense of encouragement that comes from these.
- sense of recognition - being identified as part of a strong group.
- awareness of what is going on in all parts of the church: fuller understanding of church life
- made aware of things earlier than others
- able to pray more meaningfully from involvement and receiving information.
- exercising our responsibilities benefits each other
- able to have training in areas of practical and spiritual matters.
- aids sense of positive commitment
- using gifts easier
- potentially greater pastoral support
- entry into a covenant with one another
- belonging to a church family – sense of added security
- hospitality and support network
- access to My ChurchSuite and details of other members
- given opportunity to lead church activities
- ability to interview prospective members

Responsibilities of membership

- attend members' meeting
- to use gifts in an appropriate way to serve the church and wider fellowship
- to pray and support the church community; about things the church considers important
- to give financially
- to listen to God
- to be accountable to each other and hold leaders accountable
- to respond when needs are highlighted in church meetings
- to play our part in the support structure of the church
- to play our part in decision-making in a prayerful way
- to be respectful and show integrity - value one another
- to use our gifts
- to attend worship services
- to look out for newcomers or those on the edge
- to support others pastorally
- to share in expressing our mission statement

- to serve on the tea rota!
- to vote
- to elect leaders
- to interview prospective members