

**Minutes Church Members' Meeting  
27<sup>th</sup> November 2022 at 1.30PM**

Roy Bawden opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

There were 70 attendees.

**Apologies:** received from 100+ members and therefore, names were not read out.

**1. Prayer**

Roy prayed.

**2. Approval of scrutineers**

Roy proposed Ken Garwood and Trevor Bradshaw to be scrutineers for the deacons' elections. The proposal was **approved**.

**3. Deacon Elections**

All attendees were given a voting slip with names of three deacons standing for re-election: Andy Ingram, John Bawden and Tope Oshowole. Roy gave instruction on how to complete the voting slip. Roy advised that Neeraj Soba who, together with his family and especially his father Vijay have been so much in our prayers, is not standing for re-election. Voting slips were collected and the votes counted.

**4. Approval of minutes of the Annual and Ordinary meetings held 28<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

Roy requested approval of the minutes of the Annual and Ordinary meetings held in September, 2022. The proposal was **approved**.

**5. Membership Matters**

Hilary Ross-Smith reported that the list of members is looked at on a regular basis and if folk have not attended RBC for more than a year, they are written to and asked if they would like to be moved to the Friends of Ruislip list (FOR). It was agreed by separate votes that the following members should be deleted and moved to the FOR: Holly Babb, Shannon Buck, Elaine Phillips, David Reed, Connie and Iltaf Said, Sook Mun Chow, Josh Collis, Pauline Grande Lopez and Paula Sims. Connie and Iltaf Said have resigned their membership following their house move. The current number of church members is 279.

**6. Report from Church Treasurer**

Craig Rowland brought the report. The report is available on the church website. Since the last members' meeting in September, there has been no change in the income trend. At the end of October our offertory income was £40,600 below budget; £3,700 below last year. Bank standing orders are £45,300 below budget. This is partly offset by cash and envelope income being £4,700 better than budget. As discussed at the last meeting, "one off" donations (currently shown separately to offerings) are £15,100 better than budget and it has become apparent that more periodic donations are being made, perhaps in preference to bank standing orders. From January 2023 onwards, we will include donations in the offerings figure.

Total income is shown as £84,000 under budget. This is somewhat misleading, as we are still waiting to receive our gift aid refund of £61,000. We submitted the gift aid reclaim to HMRC back in September and, as yet, have not received the refund. This means that we are showing an income shortfall of £61,000 against tax refunds, which will disappear once we receive our refund. We are also still awaiting the £10,000 legacy from Miriam Hammond's Estate and we intend to write to the executors to ascertain why the payment has been delayed.

If we adjust our total income for the gift aid refund and Miriam Hammond's legacy, our total revenue for the first 10 months of the year is only £13,000 below budget, as compared to the £84,000 shown in the members' meeting slides.

As regards expenditure, total expenditure to date is £288,000 (excluding the Ukrainian appeal) which is £49,000 (14.5%) less than budget. The main area of expenditure underspend is within staff costs (£26,000 under spent) and this is driven by the fact that we currently have 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 mainly due to timing differences (especially on external mission) and we expect that most of the expenditure will be incurred in the last 2 months of the year. We are forecasting to be at least £31,000 underspent by the year end, mostly driven by the staff vacancies

Taking income and expenditure together and adding in the gift aid refund and Miriam's legacy, our overall surplus after ten months would be £84,000, against a budgeted £48,000, 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 £53,000 surplus, which will be £18,000 better than budget. As a church, we have been truly blessed by the receipt of significant legacies (£45,000), 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 could run at a deficit of circa £32,000 in 2023.

At the last members' meeting I presented the Finance Committee's plans to close this budget deficit and shared a first draft budget for 2023. Since that meeting, we have received feedback on the budget and have now produced a new budget proposal for 2023, which has been agreed by the Trustees and is presented now for approval. The changes that have been made to the budget since the last members' meeting are as follows: -

- Gift Aid tax refunds up £4,300
- Ministry team pay up £2,500
- External Mission expenditure up £1,500
- Admin/management pay up £800
- Audit fee down £500
- Light. Heat & Water reduced by £5,000
- Offering income reduced by £6,000
- Investment income increased by £1,000

I have restated the key highlights of the 2023 budget below, as adjusted for the above changes.

### **Budget for 2023**

The key highlights of the 2023 budget proposal are: -

- We believe we are facing a possible deficit of £32,000 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 £53,000 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 £32,000 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 11.3% (£32,000) to £314,000. In the last pre-covid church year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019, the church offerings totalled £351,000 (11.8% 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 £14,900 (3.5%) year on year. This seems strange when the increase in offerings (£32,000) 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 £37,700 (10.0%) in 2023. The most significant increase is a £43,800 increase in staff costs due to the impact of being fully staffed as from 1<sup>st</sup> 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 £6,600 from the 2022 budget. This would be achieved by removing 8 of the 12 chosen charity donations 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 £14,900 and an increase in total expenditure of £37,700 gives us a breakeven budget with a known underlying risk of £32,000.

Craig mentioned that Oxford Drive is in a state of disrepair that could cost around £80,000. The current lease ends in January 2023. David Durn has offered advice. The lease could be put on a monthly rolling contract until a decision is made whether to carry out the repairs, sell the property and/or possibly purchase a smaller property.

Finally, Craig reminded members that during the height of the Covid pandemic, the church set up a Fellowship Fund to support people in urgent financial need. A number of people have made further donations to the fund and, in particular, some members have felt that they are not in need of their "Winter Fuel Payments" and have donated them to the fund. If these people are taxpayers, then we are able to claim an extra 25% gift aid on the donation and add it to the fund.

Craig raised awareness of the fund because, in the present economic climate, there may well be a number of people who are in urgent financial need and the church may be able to offer some support. Indeed, in recent weeks, the fund has been drawn upon to support individuals. Please do contact Craig directly if you feel that we could help someone in urgent need.

The 2023 budget was **approved**.

Helen Yarrow expressed thanks to Craig for all the time he spends looking after the finances of the church and also thanks to Jane for supporting Craig as he carries out this role.

Don Pople voiced his dismay at the reduction on spending in mission work. Joyce Pople worked with Support around the World – home-staff for Baptist World Mission: Talents, Treasure and Time in the Lord's service. Many new people to church have not been brought up to give of their time, treasure and talents. Don implored that we all use our time, treasure and talents to reduce the cuts we have made, to fulfil the commandment the Lord gave us, "To go into all the World." Roy expressed his hope that it would not be necessary to apply the lower budgeted mission giving because it would transpire that the Lord provided as He had in the past.

## 7. Report from Church Secretary

Roy Bawden brought the Secretary's report.

The first item was to announce the results of the deacons' elections. All three candidates: Tope Oshowole, Andy Ingram and John Bawden were **approved** for re-election.

Roy gave an update regarding our search for Derek's successor as Lead Minister. As shared at the last meeting, we had received 12 applications of which 2 candidates looked particularly interesting. The sub-group that reports to the leadership team had since met both candidates and produced recommendations. What we are likely to see next, is the odd guest preacher popping up in the New Year who may, or may not, be a candidate. Where this occurs and the guest preacher is a candidate, we will not be uploading the recorded service to YouTube, to protect their relationship with their current fellowship as they and we continue to seek God's leading that he is the right person for us and we are the right church for him. Roy reminded members that all applicants were male.

Provisional timetables have been agreed that capture meeting the wider leadership team and ultimately preaching with a view if the leadership team believe God is affirming a particular person as our new Lead Minister. This step involves prior notice to the church and enabling the person to meet with many if not all – probably over the course of the entire weekend. If positive, a Special Members' meeting would follow because the authority to appoint a Minister rests with members alone under our Constitution. The provisional timetable sketched out allows for this meeting to occur possibly by the end of March. Roy invited questions – none were raised. Roy asked that we continue to pray around the whole process. The appointment is of critical importance.

As already advised, we have appointed a Youth and Young Adults Worker, Michael Adesanya who is scheduled to start in early January, subject to completion of all the necessary references, DBS checks etc. We had hoped slightly sooner but there was a delay in Michael finding suitable accommodation. Another topic for prayer – to give thanks for bringing Michael to us.

A refreshed advert for our Children and Families Worker is scheduled to be released in January.

The Leadership Team has been looking at our Prayer Ministry recently. The deacons' pre-service prayer meeting has been moved forward to 10:00am to provide time to encourage volunteers and be available for newcomers. An announcement will be made soon about a Big Church Prayer event, in early 2023. In the meantime, you may hear about the development of a prayer ministry team that it is hoped to introduce soon. That is, a group of suitably trained members, who are available to pray with others at church services and events. They would be recognisable by wearing a lanyard.

Roy informed members that an improved intruder alarm system, including CCTV, is planned for implementation next year. As a capital project, this will be funded from reserves and sits outside the budget.

It has been agreed not to hold evening services on Christmas and New Year's Day, which are both Sundays.

Roy invited questions – none were received.

## **8. AOB**

Roy asked if there was any AOB. There was none.

Derek closed the meeting in prayer.