

Minutes of Church Members Meeting

27th January 2021

Welcome by Roy Bawden

Attendance: 55 Connections; 72 people on the call

1. Prayer and Worship

Roy Bawden opened in prayer and reflected how God's word comes to us in many ways, not least in a whisper. The meeting of the fellowship is an opportunity for God to speak into our corporate lives, as a church, through the agenda and prayed that the meeting would fulfil that description. We can reflect that although we are meeting virtually, God is with us.

2. Approval of minutes of Meeting 25th November, 2020

Roy asked if there were any queries on the minutes of the last meeting. None were received. Approval of the Minutes was put to the vote and received **82% Approval; 18% Abstained**.

3. Report from the Church Treasurer

Craig Rowland's report and slides are available on the website. At the last meeting a deficit for 2020 of £16,000 was forecast yet we ended with a £3,000 surplus which is great news. We had a surprising increase in donations of £14,000 including a particularly large one. Offerings were back on budget for the month and expenditure was slightly under. The 12-month rolling average shows a decline in offerings year on year. At the end of December 2020, we were 8.5% less than this time last year. We were budgeting £27,000 a month in offerings and we actually achieved that in every month before COVID i.e. January, February and March. From March onwards, we have been averaging £24,000 with the church closed and not receiving cash donations or envelopes. We have been prudent but are forecasting a slow increase in donations through the year, providing the church is open.

The last slide showed 2020 outcome by actual, budget and variance. Income includes standing orders directed towards the building loan with related outgoings under expenditure. Offerings are £28,000 adverse although standing orders are up as people have moved from giving by cash in envelopes. Donations were £16,000 a month better than budget leading to an overall adverse variance of £11,000 for total income which is regarded as positive given the circumstances. Total Ministry costs were £7,000 less than anticipated including £5,000 as no support for interns was given. Church premises costs were £17,000 favourable due to receipt from the Government of £10,000 in furlough payments for the cleaners. We also under-spent £4,000 on utilities and £3,000 on maintenance given closure. In net terms, expenditure was £25,000 less than budget which together with the adverse variance on income produced a surplus £14,000 better than budget and £3,000 more cash than at the end of 2019. Praise the Lord!

Chris Follett has been preparing schedules for the 2020 audit. January is a busy time. We agreed a prudent 2021 budget. When we do open, income may not increase as quickly as expenditure. We recently paid £3,000 for a boiler at Oxford Drive. Expenditure is beginning to come through but we have a robust budget going into the next year.

4. Youth and Children update

Helen Yarrow reported the formation of a Search and Recruitment committee whose purpose was managing the search and recruitment process for a Youth Worker and a Children's Worker. The committee comprising Derek Page, Marianne Jeanes, Nikki Latham, Karen Ingram, Helen Smith, David Rose and Helen Yarrow had their first meeting on 30th November. Under the terms of reference established by the Trustees, their first responsibility was to identify people, within the fellowship, who could be potential candidates to take up 3-6 month temporary employment contracts overseeing all or parts of the roles. We are delighted that 4 people have taken on these temporary roles: Helen Smith – Children's Ministry Co-ordinator; Nikki Latham – Youth Ministry Co-ordinator; Marie Dendy – Youth Admin Support and Chrissie Dore – Youth Pastoral Co-ordinator. They all started their roles on 18th January. Thank you for your prayers, for which they are very grateful.

The search team are now focussing on identifying the needs of our Youth and Children and ensuring that the job descriptions support those priorities. We will be seeking the views of those engaged in Youth and Children's work and also the Youth. They are keen to engage with them and also the parents of our children. This will lead to production of a plan for permanent candidates and selection of a recruitment panel for each vacancy. Next Monday evening, all those that have been involved in Youth and Children's work have been invited to a meeting at 8pm, that will be hosted by Derek. We are chatting to our youth and will shortly be sending out a survey to them. Likewise, we will be chatting to parents of our children from crèche up to Xtreme and the parents of the youth.

Creche, Stars and Sparks will be learning about big Bible characters. Sunday on-line family sheets will be continued. Helen Smith will be delivering some craft packs, involving as many volunteers and youth as possible to provide bible stories and engage in Zoom calls, so that the children see some familiar faces. Xtreme will be following the same themes as the younger children to give families, with children in different groups, the opportunity to share what they have learnt together. Gillian found out that Tops Bible Notes have been discontinued, which is a huge blow. Xtreme leaders have put together their own notes, that will complement the teaching on big Bible characters. Notes will be sent out this week. They will also put together video sessions to be sent out to parents each week and Zoom sessions will also be arranged. They are also looking at using Google Classroom, as a safe way for children to keep in touch with each other and Xtreme leaders. Roots have been meeting for 1 hour on Thursdays and that will continue, until we can return to Church. Refine have continued to meet on Tuesday evenings. Nikki plans to phone the children we haven't seen over the last few months, introduce herself and get their thoughts on how they can engage with us again.

All the staff involved are grateful to God for his guiding and we are grateful for His provision and thank you for your support and prayers. Helen's full report is available on the website.

5. COVID-19 Report

Helen Yarrow reported that the Covid Group has been continuing to meet each week. The Covid Group is conscious how difficult lockdown is for so many people. During November, some of our groups were able to meet – youth groups, Tuesday Fellowship and it was great to see folk worship in church, whilst others watched on live stream. Following on from Lent and Daily Devotions during the summer, we were blessed with Advent Devotions in December. Thanks to Gillian Rose and Marie Dendy for putting it all together and to those who contributed. It was moving to see so many families in church for our Christmas Family Service. We held our annual Lightening the Darkness service, with a number of folk able to come into church for that as well as being live streamed. We were able to meet in church for 3 Carols by Candlelight services. It was good to see so many folk in church for the events that were held. There was a great time of fellowship.

A massive thanks to all those who played a pivotal part in our Christmas services: the musicians, technicians, stewards, church office, organising seating and the beautiful flowers and we are so grateful that we could actually be together to worship and celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. One-line viewings of services are: Family Service - 678; Lightening the Darkness - 360; Carols by Candlelight - 1165; Christmas Day service - 462. That is just screens and often there were at least two people watching. A wonderful way of reaching out in ways we never thought possible.

It was disappointing that after a lot of preparation for the children's Christmas nativity trail, it had to be cancelled. Again, thanks to those that hand delivered them. We are really grateful to Louise SurrIDGE for arranging handing them out. We also had an on-line Advent Calendar.

The Trustees felt it was the safe and right thing to do to close the church after Christmas even though Government guidelines allowed churches to meet. A poll was taken to ratify the decision to close the church to a congregation until the Trustees consider it is appropriate to re-open. **Agreed 94%, Against 2%, Abstained 4%.**

Leading up to Christmas we did a mammoth mailing out. We have been in regular contact with Café Connect but felt it important to engage with Holiday @ Home and Senior Citizens Christmas party guests too. 180 packs were sent out. We had a collection of warm clothing for refugees arriving in the UK and

Hillingdon Food Bank collected a whole van of food just before Christmas. The NHS (Harefield Hospital) had been using the main hall for clinics but stopped at the end of November. We have been contacted and they have been using the hall again, from last Monday. We are grateful to the church for allowing that use. Thank you for those who kept the church open for Safe Space, somewhere for people suffering domestic violence. Again, stopped in December but will start again on 1st February.

Pastoral care ministry has been very busy with phone calls, cards, letters, etc. It has been a church-wide effort. We thank everyone that has been involved. Care Home ministry continues: Barbara Avery prepares and sends material each week with hymns, prayers, bible readings and explanations, to care homes.

We will be running another on-line Alpha course commencing in February. Start thinking and praying about who you would like to invite. The invite can be shared by internet, Facebook and also hard copy invites will be available. We will be stopping evening Zoom meetings and starting Peter Grieg's Prayer course, that will take us up to Easter. This was part of our 2020 Vision and some of you will have the book. Details of how to access and join the course will be shared. Anything you feel we could/should be doing/could do better, please share thoughts and suggestions with us. In response to a question, Derek Page advised that the prayer course is intended for the RBC family only and the course will not be shared on-line. Zoom details will be sent to members and friends of RBC.

6. Membership Matters

Alison Dennis reported two deaths: Kathie Payne who had been a member since 1954 and Jean Lewis who was a member for 40 years. This brings our membership number to 295. Derek Page subsequently informed the meeting that just prior to the meeting, he heard that June Liddiard had also died. It is Kathie Payne's funeral tomorrow. As a result of Covid, only 3 people will be attending. Kathy's daughter Hilary, her husband Ian and Derek who will be officiating. Others will be watching by live stream.

7. Report from Church Secretary

Roy Bawden reported 3 items. Firstly, following on from the last meeting, votes taken via Zoom will have to be ratified when we meet again physically and a quorum is present under our current Constitution. It is possible to amend the Constitution to allow for participation by electronic means and the Trustees have agreed these in principle but again, the amendments will have no legal affect until we can meet physically, under the terms of the current Constitution. This item will, therefore, come onto our agenda, when we can do that, for your approval and that will be a Special Meeting. Attendance at members' meetings held on Zoom has increased by 80% to what they were when meetings were being held physically.

Secondly, Roy has begun a review of our Data Protection Policy and will share more at a future meeting. If anyone has expertise in the field of Data Protection, please get in touch. Members are asked to re-familiarise themselves with the policies on our website. It is particularly relevant to volunteers - safeguarding, health & safety and data protection, for example.

Thirdly, Roy shared an update on strategic priorities and a forthcoming Trustees' away-day. We are all familiar with our mission statement: building a vibrant, Christ-centred community, with a vision for extending His kingdom. The Trustees (our deacons and Ministers) have been giving thought to strategic priorities for this year and beyond, to sustain that mission going forward. These include our children's and youth work, of which you are aware, as well as how we are responding to Covid, an enforced event. The objectives were shared and the members' help enlisted at the meeting in relation to the third one:

1. How we organise and manage ourselves internally and how information flows around the church and out to the wider community;
2. Evangelism strategy going forward;
3. How we manage the recruitment of Derek's eventual replacement and how we transition that. Derek is due to retire in under 3 years;
4. How we perform as an inter-generational church;
5. How we identify gifting and ensure their use;
6. How we serve young adults within our fellowship and community;
7. The older generation;
8. Building management;

9. Racial justice;
10. Prayer;
11. The digital revolution.

The list is not endless but these are some of the key topics that have been drawn out and that will be focussed on in more detail alongside the routine items of policy, finance, property, etc.

The Trustees are going to have an 'Away Zoom' morning on 6th March to pick some of the priorities up in more detail. The members were asked to assist by discussing in small groups that included a Trustee and reporting back on the following question: WHAT THINGS DO YOU THINK YOUR DEACONS SHOULD BE INCLUDING WHEN DEVELOPING OUR FUTURE EVANGELISM STRATEGY?

The question was purposefully broad and open. The hope is that God speaks to us as a church and we can capture what he is telling us about how, as a fellowship, we should be pursuing our strategy for evangelism going forward. [Collated responses are appended below]. Roy encouraged us to pray for the Trustees' meeting on 6th March.

8. AOB

Roy thanked everyone for their contributions to the discussion and shared that they had prayed before the meeting that God spoke to us.

9. Derek closed the meeting in prayer.

Collation of small group feedback (grouped under common themes; starring indicates several mentions)

1. Community Social Engagement

- H4All (volunteering; partnering) <https://www.h4all.org.uk/hillingdon>
- Teaching English as a foreign language.
- By using our financial resources <https://acts435.org.uk/>
- Involvement in 'honing' job skills for those out of work, including mentoring & CAP money courses.
- How can we connect pastorally with our community?
- Pay someone to obtain professional qualification and offer the related service e.g. bereavement, marriage.
- A 'Love Ruislip' day where we, all-age, provide a range of good for our community services.

2. Demographics; peoples group focus

- Research Local Authority demographic data.
- Re-engage/establish e.g. men's groups; mum's groups.
- How can existing groups be strengthened and supported?
- Younger lonely people/singles - run events; use cafe culture.*

3. Social media and the internet

- How can we exploit technology to reach people without faith?*
- Continue live streaming for those people who can't/won't attend.*
- Regular short vlogging - 'Thought For The Day' or daily devotions - build up followers.
- Continue use of Zoom events.

4. Family-based

- Events, such as Dads' Camps. Continue and expand.
- Post COVID Family Fun-day.
- Help parents with on-line learning support.
- Run meetings for those with new babies; Little Angels resumption*

5. Interest-based bridge-building

- Copy past success of Accord and Craft Club.
- Walking groups.
- Running group.

6. Youth and Children

- Run youth events with friend invites.
- Restore Blaze Cafe.
- Continue involvement in local schools including 'Open the Book', leading assemblies etc.*
- Expand school-related activity e.g. lunch-time & after-school clubs, supporting Christian Unions, etc.
- A children's group to replace Rainbows Brownies Guides for both boys and girls doing similar kinds of activities.*
- Work with students at risk of exclusion.

7. Personal evangelism

- Equipping people to share faith; grow in confidence.
- Run Adopt-Your-Street by members and provide supporting resource through each year.
- Identify, encourage and use those with evangelism gifting.
- Run sector-based workplace groups e.g. one for teaching staff, another healthcare, office-based etc.
- Have general workplace evangelism seminar/webinar including apologetics*.
- Continue Alpha*; have revolving programme.
- Personal invites to watch Easter services on-line.

8. Other

- Exploit COVID changes of outlook.
- Church plant/support closing churches*.
- Local business outreach.
- Jesus video.
- Restart On Your Doorstep.*
- Dedicated evangelism prayer group/activity.*
- BLM campaign, use of.
- Maximise use of premises.
- Review our external advertising.*
- Evaluation of outcomes
- Research and learn from other churches
- Get new ideas from the Fresh expressions movement <https://freshexpressions.org.uk/get-started/pioneer-ministry/>