

SPECIAL CHURCH MEMBERS' MEETING 29TH SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 8PM

Welcome by Roy Bawden

Apologies: Sue Allen, J Bawden, Chrissie Dore, Gillian Price, David & Gillian Rose, Roy & Liz Treadaway and Sheila Wills.

Reminder: Meetings are for Members only

Headcount: 46

1. Prayer and Worship

Barry Dore led in worship and Roy committed the meeting in prayer.

2. Approval of minutes of annual and ordinary meetings of 21st July 2021

These were approved subject to the correct spelling of Marianne Jeanes name with 1 abstention.

3. Ratification of minute approval of 'virtual' meetings and voting decisions taken since last 'physical' meeting in January 2020

The current constitution does not, on legal advice, give legal weight to the decisions taken - 10% membership need to be physically present. Each virtual meeting was advised that implementation of decisions taken might be reserved if the vote was marginal. This meeting is, therefore, the first opportunity to ratify the minute approval and decisions taken electronically. The meeting voted unanimously to ratify the approval of the minutes of the meetings of 29th April 2020; annual and ordinary meetings of 15th July 2020; 25th November 2020; 27th January 2021; 31st March 2021; 26th May 2021 and the decisions taken at those meetings and those of 21st July 2021.

4. Approval of new Constitution

As reported to the meeting in January, a new Constitution has been prepared to allow the church to hold members' meetings using electronic means, such as Zoom, either in entirety, or in combination with a physical meeting. Under advice to members, a copy of this draft Constitution was placed in the members' area of the website 'red-lined' to show the amendments to the existing one. The amended Constitution is based closely on a BU template, drafted with legal advice from Anthony Collins Solicitors, produced for this purpose as virtually every other church found itself in the same difficulty during lockdown. The revised template Constitution has since received the approval of the Charity Commission. It also states that a minimum of 4 meetings must take place annually but whilst amending it to respond to meeting by electronic means, the opportunity has been taken to remove a supplemental clause (11.2) that obliged us to meet on the last Wednesday in odd calendar months or 6 times rather than 4. The church may well continue to meet every 2 months if the level of business so demands but the clause removal allows us the flexibility to meet at other times, such as on a Sunday afternoon, as we did occasionally, pre-COVID. Questions were invited. Jill Durn queried whether announcing meeting dates on the Sunday before gave people enough notice. David Durn proposed and Denis Golden seconded amending the requirement for one Sunday's notice for ordinary meetings be changed to two.

The new Constitution was approved unanimously subject to the amendment proposed.

5. Pastoral Care

Jill Durn steps down from this role at the end of the month. Derek Page thanked Jill for her contribution and advised that an application has been received for the new role and the person will be interviewed in due course.

6. Youth and children update

Members were updated by Nikki Latham, Children, Youth and Families Administrator. Children back in church has given a feeling of togetherness. Farrah Easton, temporary Children and Families Worker, has hit the ground running with Big Church Breakout and Sunday groups. Nikki thanked volunteers coming back to help. More volunteers are needed. Mid-week groups - Refine and Roots have been meeting regularly and children have been inviting non-church friends. Therefore, the groups are growing. 31st October will be RBC Lightfest. The search for a Youth Leader is ongoing with LST.

Roy thanked Nikki for her report.

7. COVID-19 report

Helen Yarrow reported that more about the Big Church Breakout will be in the newsletter; thanks to Nikki who did most of the planning. New families attended, as well as young and old folk. Patience is required for seating folk on a Sunday when spaces are reserved for those who wish to socially distance. Sunday evening services have resumed. The 1st Sunday will be an evening of Worship, the 2nd a bible study, the 3rd an evening when we meet around the Lord's table and the 4th 'Open to Question.' There will be refreshments and the opportunity to fellowship together. Tuesday Fellowship, Cafe Connect, Craft Group and Springboard have started up. Springboard will be meeting on 3rd Sunday pm at RBC. A new lady is coming in to do art at Cafe Connect. We are in tentative conversations about Accord starting up again.

Friday updates will cease. Information sheets will be handed out on Sunday and emailed out on Monday. Items for the information sheet to be sent by Wednesday. Hand in Hand Deaf Ministry will be starting up again and meeting 2nd & 4th Sunday afternoons 2pm – 4pm on Sapphire and Emerald. 1st and 3rd Sundays will be signed services in church.

We have a duty of care to ensure we share what we are doing with everyone. There are monitors around the building that show the air quality. The church has also acquired medical grade air sanitisers used in hospitals to clean the air with a high efficiency absorbing filter that clears the air of pollutants. These are currently on loan to RBC and are mobile and can be moved from room to room. The H&S Executive sent an email that they are visiting buildings to check that we are doing all we can to protect people. This includes risk assessments of events that we run.

RBC COVID meetings are now reduced to one per month but they have a WhatsApp group and meetings can be called when necessary. Discussions are taking place about the blue bags and how they can be passed round, etc.

Derek thanked the COVID team for the massive commitment they have made during COVID.

8. Membership Matters.

Resignation from Josh Newton and Carol Skov who recently moved away. Deaths of Mairi Coles, Barbara Winterburn and Dee Braithwaite were reported. Alan and Helen Benford wish to re-join the membership. They have previously been interviewed. Their applications were unanimously approved. Membership stands at 287.

9. Data Protection Policy

Roy Bawden advised that this is an area regulated by law – the Data Protection Act and UK General Data Protection Regulations – with sanctions at trustee, staff and volunteer level. It is very important that we review regularly to check we are complying. Other Christian organisations, including churches, have been penalised. Data is any information that can identify a living person of any age i.e. name and contact details, an image or any other information. Under the legislation, additional obligations arise in relation to what is classed as 'special category data'. This includes data that identifies someone's religious beliefs or affiliations. Key principles include the use of data given to us. It must be lawful, fair and transparent. It should be used for its stated purpose when it was provided – this is specified by the church providing a Privacy Notice at the time the data is obtained. The information should be relevant, not excessive, stored confidentially, retained appropriately and held securely. The Trustees have approved a new DP policy. It is available on the church website. A separate Data Retention Policy has also been agreed and is in the Members' area of the website. Nikki Latham, our Operations Manager, has been appointed as the new Data Protection Officer. There have been some other documentation changes to things like Privacy Notices and Consent Forms.

One of the key actions will be to provide training to all those who handle data, such as contact details, etc., for all trustees, staff and volunteers, with annual refreshers. It is also hoped to have an exercise to sweep up those that have not given consent in the past. The Policy is approved at Trustee level.

10. Report from Church Treasurer.

Craig Rowland brought the report. 3 documents have been posted on the church website. If there is anything that needs clarification, email Craig.

Rolling 12-month average income is dropping. By 2022, it needs to be averaging £27,500 in the proposed budget. Offerings to the end of August 2021 are £21,000 below budget. The shortfall in income is due to the church being closed and the loss of 'blue bag' offerings from the Sunday services. Total revenue for the first eight months of the year is however £43,000 above budget, mainly driven by two legacies received from the estates of Eileen Thompson and Jean Lewis that together total £50,000. In addition, a 'one off' donation of £6,000 and a tax refund of £8,000 have been received. We have yet to receive the £25,000 legacy from June Liddiard's estate which, when received, will mean that we have received £75,000 of legacies during a very difficult year.

Total expenditure to date is £233,000, which is £21,000 favourable to budget. This under-spend continues to be driven by furlough payments for the cleaning team (ceased in September as Caroline and Peta returned to full time working), a general under-spend through the church not being fully operational and a saving in staff costs due to vacancies. Our thanks goes to all the existing staff and volunteers who have covered these vacancies throughout 2021.

In summary, the shortfall in offerings (£21,000) has been totally offset by the expenditure under-spend (£21,000) and the unexpected increase in 'other' income (legacies, donations and tax refunds) has given us a cash surplus to date of £64,000. We expect to receive £25,000 from June Liddiard's estate and are now forecasting to finish with a surplus of circa £81,000. We have been truly blessed by the receipt of significant legacies and 'other' income that has put us in a strong cash position. However, 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 being able to successfully fill vacancies before the start of next year, then we will run at a deficit of over £50,000 in 2022.

The Finance Committee has discussed plans to close this budget deficit and have put together a first draft budget for 2022 that was presented. The final budget will be presented for approval at the Church Members' Meeting in November. Last year's budget was low last year with COVID in mind but loss of cash in envelopes is a concern whilst a favourable budget movement was due to Sharon Rose not returning to Moldova but hopefully she will be able to go in January. Within the budget proposal, offerings are increasing year on year by 13.6% (£40,000) to £330,000 (2021 Budget £322,000). In the last 'normal' (non-COVID) year to 31st December 2019, the church offerings totalled £351,000 (6.4% more than proposed in the 2022 budget). Use of legacy money for general use is avoided; 8 Oxford Drive will be rented out - John's leave date is 4th October. Ministerial and Admin expenditure includes pay. Whilst the gross amount increases, the net amount is unchanged due to the benefit of the rental. To close the budget gap should income not increase, costs could be cut but this is not anticipated, with cash reserves available to bridge a gradual recovery - there is a current surplus of £81,000.

Detail of cash reserves held was provided including that designated for women's safe house, unrestricted fund, legacy fund, youth mission, men's safe house, Tuesday Fellowship, mission, fellowship fund and general fund. Money previously spent on the Sidewalk will be future-proofed as it paid for equipment that will be used in the new building.

A number of standing orders have been lost from folk that have moved away, passed away or suffering hardships. We are cash strong but we need underlying cash offerings to grow in the future.

11. Report from Church Secretary

Deacons elections are in November. All share a responsibility. There will be 8 vacancies, of which 5 may be filled by deacons who have offered themselves for re-election. To be eligible, the candidate must have been baptised by immersion in water, have been a member for at least 12 months and be over 21 years of age. To nominate, ask Roy for a nomination form, seek 2 other members and the candidate to agree to your nomination and return to Roy by 3rd November.

Strategic priorities: transition of our Senior Minister. The church team is advancing work on the profile that will be issued when a successor is sought probably in Spring next year, as experience teaches us that it can take a very long time for the process to be completed. Church involvement in that process will be sought. As it is never too early, members are asked to use their Christian networks to get the word out regarding the forthcoming vacancy in late 2023, as the pool of names to replace such an excellent Senior Minister as Derek will not be a very large one. Any suggestions regarding possible candidates can be fed to any of the Deacons.

Gifts and their use. The plan is well advanced and likely to be implemented early next year. Other objectives will be paused as our current focus is on the re-gathering of the church this autumn, the new Sunday evening service pattern, continuing COVID mitigation management and other resource commitment, as we progress into the Christmas season. Other planning and resource commitment too, e.g. services planned for those in our community who wish to celebrate loved ones lost during lockdowns.

12. AOB.

No 'Any Other Business' items raised.

Derek closed the meeting in prayer.