

Minutes of Ordinary Church Members Meeting

15th July 2020

55 connections, 74 members on the call

Apologies: Carol Skov, Hilary Ross-Smith, Faith Tuft, Duncan Tuft, Jim Green, Kim Hatton, Lyn Prior

1. Approval of minutes of last meeting (29th April 2020)

Roy asked if there were any queries on the minutes of the last meeting. None were received and the minutes were approved.

2. COVID-19 report

Helen gave a presentation. The Covid-19 Group has been meeting on a regular basis; twice weekly initially and now meeting once a week. Helen Yarrow, Barry Dore, David and Gillian Rose and Alistair Moore, trying to work through this Covid situation. They have a work stream plan that is brought up on the computer and the team works through that and it is constantly updated and when targets are met or activities planned, they are recorded. When something has been achieved, the item is archived. It is really interesting to look back and see what has been achieved over the last few months, as a Church. Over 70 actions have so far been archived.

Members attending tonight's meeting it is assumed are blessed with good internet connections. The capacity and ability to understand how technology works. Words we didn't use before February eg Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Jitsi, are now familiar to us. We have been blessed with devotionals, watching and listening to our services on-line, prayer meetings, fellowship together on Sunday mornings. We know that Small Groups have been meeting on line and supporting one another, as have many other groups. All our children and youth have been receiving resources and sharing them, taking part in Zoom calls and sharing God's word on line. Things like Dad's Camp couldn't happen but they managed to have a virtual curry evening. The first and possibly, not the last ever, on line Alpha course. Over the next few weeks, the church will be open for the NHS to see outpatients.

We are conscious that there are a number of our fellowship that don't have the ability to connect in the way that we are now and that has been the priority of the Covid-19 Team and many of you. We know there has been so much support going on: phone calls, visits, odd jobs, shopping and this amazing network of people phoning one another, keeping in contact and praying for one another and this is the love of Christ being so tangibly demonstrated every day. A wonderful reflection of everyone working together.

Café Connect team guests have been sent a regular newsletter every month and this month, they have been sent a mask. Holiday@Home sadly won't be meeting but they will be receiving an activity booklet. Our care homes are receiving bible readings and studies. It is up to the care homes but if they can and do share it, what a blessing that is.

Thanks to Hannah Dendy our intern, everyone including those not on line had their own personal prayer journal. Again, that has been a real priority for the Covid team.

Most recently, we have been focussing on what we are going to do with regards to opening church. Anything and everything we have decided to do will be following Government and BU guidelines and directions. The Covid-19 team has been diligently reading them and the updates they receive. They have been hearing from schools about how that is changing and it is also changing within the church and the BU guidelines.

We are conscious that different people have very different views about how, when and if we meet up. Healthy and robust discussions have taken place within the Diaconate and the Covid-19 Group. It has been agreed by the diaconate, with the guidance given from the Covid-19 Working Group, with a very strong caveat that there are no changes to the current guidance and policies based on where we are at the moment, our intention is that we open the church from Sunday 16th August for a trial three weeks.

The plan is to open on August 16th, 23rd and 30th August at 9.30 am for a short, devotional style service. The idea is to start small, to ensure we have sufficient people to staff it and sufficient people to ensure we have all of the necessary projection, sound, welcome team; that the stewards are sufficiently trained and confident in meeting the many guidelines and structures that need to be in place. Slowly building up to what will be permissible numbers. At the moment, based on the recommended social distances, within our church this is between 71 and 110. There may well be couples coming. The intention would be that in September, to open the service up for anyone that would like to come. That, in itself, will be more challenging. There may be more people that want to come, so we will operate a booking system. That might be a problem as not everyone will be able to book on line but that is the plan. We will invite people for the 16th and slowly build up to almost capacity on the 30th, so that everyone will be safe and we know we are meeting all the guidelines and we are confident that people are going to be in a safe place.

It will not be a traditional service as we have had in the past. It is likely to be 40-45 minutes. No singing is allowed. Worship songs will be projected. We are also encouraging those who attend to leave the building as quickly as possible. Sadly, for the first few weeks, children and youth will not be permitted. It will be people's choice if they come along. We will not be able to give lifts. We plan to live stream that service at 9.30 am.

As well as the 9.30 am service, we will continue our 11 am service and our Sunday evening prayer/bible study service. At the moment, Derek is teaching a bible study on 1 Peter.

Before we meet, there is a lot to do. We need to work out basic things like how people come in and out, ensure that people are socially distanced. We need to write an events risk assessment, an employer risk assessment, a re-opening of buildings check list, pre-event check list, a cleaning check list and an emergency action plan. A number of check lists will be created. It's exciting. It will be a challenge but we think it is worth it to enable people who are able to and want to, to come back and worship. We will be engaging with all those we are looking to be part of those first three weeks. We are very conscious that there may be stewards who are unable to come back, there may be folks who don't feel comfortable to come back. Whenever we choose to do it, all the above is going to have to happen anyway and obviously, your prayers would be valued as to how we proceed and work forward. Questions were invited. Will toilets be open? They will be open but on a one-in, one-out basis. As in schools, it is encouraged that you go before coming but this is something that

will be part of the plan. Q – Would people be able to sit at the front i.e. Paul with Marian and Barry. This will be in terms of distancing with whoever is speaking on the stage area. This is something that can be discussed separately.

A poll was taken "When an additional service is available as described, would you aim to attend?" The results was: Yes 67%; No 17%; Abstain 17%.

Helen thanked everyone for their prayers. A number of people will be approached for different activities and events, getting people in and out and numbering seats. This is an opportunity to get some work done in church to help make this run as smoothly as possible. We really appreciate it. We also appreciate those who cannot make it and that's one of the things we are conscious of, that we want to support those who cannot make church or feel worried about coming and that is why we are continuing with the other services and the other support networks will continue. We are not stopping at all, this is extra to what is going on.

3. Membership matters

Report brought by Alison Dennis who reported the death of Kath Wilkinson.

4. Health & Safety Policy Restatement

We are all conscious of our Safe to Grow and Safe to Belong policies. We missed restatement last year though of our Health & Safety Policy - it is a hugely important part of church life. Helen and Andy Ingram sit on the committee and would appreciate support on this, in terms of the 6 monthly risk assessment and generally trying to keep up to date and invite those with experience and expertise to join.

Helen read out the H&S policy. The policy will be read annually at the church meeting, where progress on carrying it out will be monitored. As a re-statement and does not require a vote this evening. As Senior Minister, Derek will sign the policy on behalf of the church. The policy will be available on the church website.

5. Social Media Use Policy

John Bawden brought the report. On-line media is increasingly being used as a means of communication. It has come to light that at RBC we don't currently have a policy on the use of Social Media and in line with advice from the BU that it is good practice for churches to put in place a policy, a draft policy has been written and approved by the diaconate. Thanks to Andy Ingram for his time putting this together. It is a policy that church members will be asked to adopt; the draft is available on the website. There are a number of good tips that could be helpful to look at and distribution by PDF will be made.

The policy was approved: 92% voting in favour with 2% against (1 person) and 6% abstaining (3 people) approved the policy.

6. Report from Church Treasurer

Craig brought the report. The report is available on the website. A slide was shown showing the 12 month rolling average, basically, offerings. Offerings have been good but just as we reached or budgeted line, Coronavirus hit and offerings have been dropping by approximately £3,000 a month, so we are approximately £10,000 down. Second slide showed 6 months to 30th June 2020. Anything in a bracket is bad news. Offerings are the item that stand out. We are approximately £9,000 down in income.

On the expenditure side, we have furloughed Peta and Caroline, saving approximately £4,000 and we are spending less. Within the church premises line, that has a 0 variance, we would be £5,000 favourable but we paid for new chairs for the main hall, all in one go but we budgeted across the year. If you adjust for that, expenditure would be £9,000 favourable and our bottom line would be bang on where we planned to be, which is an absolute blessing, given our church is closed. That is a good position to be in.

We have paid extra into the Home Mission Fund for other Baptist churches, who rent out their premises and have lost that rental income and are in a bad way. Things are improving however, as churches like us have donated more. We are down to about £12,000 on our loan and that will be paid off in September. An incredible achievement. God has shown us that it was his intention for us to build the extension. We are totally blessed that this has been paid off 6 years early.

The pension fund was a worry for the Baptist Union as it had a large hole of £98 million, now reduced to £18 million. Although a whole, it is greatly reduced. Questions were invited: are we saving any significant money, electricity bills etc. A: Yes we are making savings on work at the manses that is not happening and stationery, etc.

7. Report from Church Secretary

Next meeting is scheduled for Sunday 15th November, which will include our budget for next year and will also include the Deacons elections and there will be two vacancies. As we are not meeting before then, it is appropriate for the Church Secretary to ask members if any of us wish to nominate anyone to be a Deacon. Nominations have to be in 3 weeks before November, so there is plenty of time to think about that. You need three people to agree with you and also for the candidate to be agreeable themselves. Anyone standing for the diaconate, need to have be baptised by immersion and have been a member for at least 12 months.

Zoom: it is not a perfect method of meeting but we are seeing more numbers than when we were physically meeting and that is great to see because our meetings are how the church conducts its business and discerns the mind of Christ. Roy thanked everyone for attending and sought feedback to the church office regarding experience and our use of Zoom.

8. AOB

No other business.

- 9. Derek** closed meeting in prayer and Roy also prayed for Shiv and Ryan whose return to Papua New Guinea has been unexpectedly delayed.