

# Churches Together in Farnham

## Annual General Meeting 2015

Tuesday 13th October at Farnham Pentecostal Church

### Minutes of Meeting

1) **Welcome by our host and prayer**

2) **Apologies for absence:**

Michael Hopkins, Jane Walker, John Ross, Michael McDonnell, Tara Hellings, Alan Crawley

Present: Dora Murdoch and Roy Beard (Farnham URC), Conrad Hicks Graham Sly (Farnham Methodist), Karen Fewster and Laura Mead (Christian Aid), Thea Parsons (All Saints, Condall), Rose Williamson (Farnham Foodbank), June Trantom (Farnham ASSIST), John Goodman (FCCT), John Edwards (Holy Family Heath End), Jenny Floyer (Friday Focus), Maria Doland (St James', Rowledge), Nancy Sackwood (St Joan of Arc), Michael Gittins (Farnham Quakers), Bob Skinner (Weybourne Baptist), Benedict Parsons (Farnham Vineyard), Stella Walter (St Thomas-on-the-Bourne), Andrew Marriott (Jubilee Church, Farnham), Andrew Partridge (St Andrew's, Farnham), Michael Hall (Farnham Pentecostal), Mary Clarke (All Saints, Tilford)

3) **Minutes of AGM 14.10.2014:** Adopted and signed.

4) **Any matters arising - none**

5) **WHAT HAS CTF BEEN DOING THIS YEAR?**

Reports from:

i) **Chairman and secretary** - *Michael Hall, Andrew Partridge*

Activities not covered elsewhere in the meeting were reported, as follows:

- a. The Chairman continues to organise a rota of clergy to lead prayers before meetings of Farnham Town Council; he thanked those who had contributed over the past year.
- b. The annual Christian Unity service took place at St Mark's, Hale, and the chairman thanked the churches of the Hale / Badshot Lea / Weybourne / Heath End area for such a stimulating and uplifting service.
- c. Farnham Pentecostal and Weybourne Community churches again organised an Easter celebration, 'He is Risen', in Gostrey meadow; the chairman thanked all who had contributed. He noted how children, attracted by the music, had led their parents to the gathering.

ii) **Treasurer** - *Andy Marriott*

The Accounts for 2014/15 were presented.

Subscriptions had been requested; some £240 had been received but there were still some subscriptions owing.

The Unity Service raised £210.95, which was split 50/50 between Christian Aid and Water Aid.

**& from the organisers of:**

**(iii) Friday Focus** - *Jenny Floyer*

After taking over from Gwen Mansfield in May 2014, Jenny continues to organise the rota for the weekly 'Friday Focus' contribution to the Farnham Herald. John Edwards expressed the thanks of the meeting to Jenny for this continuing piece of Christian witness.

**(iv) Prayer Meetings** - *Bob Skinner*

The Churches Together prayer meeting continues to take place at St Joan's Church Centre, in the Tilford Road, on the 3rd Tuesday of each month, starting at 11am. It is a truly inter-denominational meeting, often with 6 or 7 different churches represented in our small group. We'd be encouraged to see others join us, even if it is only occasionally, or to receive details of topics for prayer from any of the local churches.

**(v) Good Friday Walk of Witness** - *Stewart Dakers*

Stewart reported that the Walk was well attended as usual. 2015 was the first year in which no police support was able to be provided to the walk; Stewart reported that the stewards had coped well and that the walk had proceeded round the town smoothly.

**(vi) Christmas Crib** - *Michael McDonnell*

Michael reported: Last Christmas the Nativity scene in Farnham Library was created by pupils at Saint Polycarp's School. This year it will be created by pupils at a Farnham primary school, but I am unable to announce the name of the school at this stage. The crib will be set up at the beginning of December and will be in place until after Christmas. It's important that visitors to the Library – if they like the crib - make known their thoughts to Library staff. It's important we give positive feedback to the Library. The Nativity scene in Farnham Library is a Christian statement in a public place - and is therefore of importance to us all. I hope to send a picture of the crib and a press release to the Farnham Herald – as another Christian statement in a public place. I have been the link person for this initiative for over ten years. If someone else here or another church would like to take over from me, they would be very welcome to do so. Please get in touch. Thank you very much.

**(vii) Christmas Day Lunch** - *Michael McDonnell*

Last Christmas once again, the Christmas Day lunch was over subscribed - by both guest applications and by volunteers offering to help. Around 80 Farnham people were guests at the Lunch and transport was provided for around 50 of these guests. It's extraordinary how generous people are with their time on Christmas Day and the coordinators of the lunch are – yes - eternally grateful to the volunteers - many of whom are not church goers. We were blessed, to have a wonderful chef – Alan Blakeley – and are most grateful to him and his partner for their amazing cooking. We were blessed also to have wonderful help from John Goodman and FCCT, printing colourful posters and menus. A treat for the guests were visits by the Mayor of Waverley – Liz Wheatley and her husband and the Mayor of Farnham, Jeremy Ricketts, their presence delighting guests and helpers.

But now another perspective. There has never been a problem attracting volunteers to help on the day or help set up – but finding volunteer drivers has not been easy. However the small steering committee – five people – has not changed for a number of years and it's important new people come through to ensure the Christmas Day Lunch continues. At one time the coordinating was passed on each year - from one church to another and the present steering group formed when no one church came

forward. However the present steering group cannot go on for ever and so I am making a special appeal. Consider coming to a meeting with a view to being part of the Christmas Day Lunch steering group next year. It is essential people come forward if the lunch is to continue – you will be made most welcome. We will show you what we do – you may well have better ideas than we do. Mary Clarke will be happy to take names after this meeting. Very many thanks.

**(viii) CTF Website and E-News** - *Mary Clarke*

Mary reported: The Churches Together in Farnham Website and our monthly E-News each provide vital lines of communication with both our own church members and the wider community.

Last year I gave you the good news that John Goodman at Farnham Christian Community Trust had taken over the task of hosting our website as part of the national Churches Together network. We continue to owe him a huge debt of gratitude for this partnership. Thanks to his interest and technical expertise our website is becoming ever more visually attractive and user friendly.

I try to keep it day-by-day up to date as much as possible, with events that are happening soon featured on the home page. And of course it is there for all of you to make use of – a completely free way of advertising your church event, your project or your news. Items on our website also pick up links to search engines like Google. Do please look at the site whenever you can, and, most important of all – PLEASE let me know of any items you have for the website and the E-News. Many thanks to all who do already keep me posted.

As to the future, with the explosion of social media, should we be thinking of new lines of communication – perhaps a page on Facebook? If anyone has ideas and skills in this direction, it would be good to hear from them.

Following her report, Bob Skinner thanked Mary on behalf of the meeting for all her work.

## **7) WHAT HAVE ASSOCIATES OF CTF BEEN DOING?**

**(i) Christian Aid** – *Karen Fewster*

Karen reported: 2015 has seen unprecedented numbers of peoples displaced by conflict and many thousands of people migrating across several countries to escape the frightening situation in their home land. Christian Aid is among these people helping in the refugee camps and wherever there is a need. Work also continues in many other countries fighting injustice, empowering women, improving health outcomes for some of the poorest peoples in the world and helping communities in the aftermath of natural disasters.

Christian Aid Week 2015 focused on empowering women in rural Ethiopia and helping them work their way out of poverty by giving them livestock to enable them to both feed their children and sell excess produce.

This year our special Christian Aid Week service was held at the United Reformed Church in Farnham. The service was led by Howard Sharp, a retired URC Minister and long time supporter of Christian Aid. His talk gave much food for thought, but with a simple message that we 'walk humbly with God'- an inspirational beginning to the week of door to door collections across Farnham and the surrounding villages. The service was again well attended this year.

After the success of last year we again collected at Farnham station during the morning rush hour throughout Christian Aid Week and we almost doubled the amount

collected last year, with a total of £470.

Apart from Christian Aid Week envelope collections, the excellent Lent recitals at St. Thomas on the Bourne, plant sales, coffee mornings, soup lunches, cake sales, a raffled oil painting plus a joint service and lunch at St James and Methodist churches in Rowledge were just some of the other events which contributed to the total raised across the year.

Christian Aid Week followed soon after the terrible earthquakes in Nepal. Many people donated to both Christian Aid's Nepal appeal (as part of DEC) and again in the envelope collection in Christian Aid Week. The total raised in Christian Aid Week was just under £23,000, again up on the previous year.

Our Annual Farnham Christian Aid meeting will be held at URC Farnham on 29<sup>th</sup> October at 7.15pm and all are welcome to join us as we discuss activity for the coming year. Our current treasurer Ian Jacob will be standing down at this meeting and handing over to Brian Kurton.

Farnham Christian Aid will be singing carols and collecting for Syrian refugees outside Farnham United Reformed Church on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> December from 10.30am - 4.30m. Sadly Sainsbury no longer allows charities which do not have a local focus to collect outside their store. The outpouring of the general public to help the refugees has obviously not moved the management at Sainsbury to be equally generous with the space outside their store. There will also be a Soup lunch in Spire Café with proceeds going to Christian Aid's Christmas appeal. All are welcome!

The Christmas Appeal will help fund a malaria prevention education programme in Nigeria. Proper use of mosquito nets can save lives, particularly of children who are the most vulnerable to the effects of the disease.

To end – some good news! The money raised at Christmas 2014 funded prenatal health programmes and there have been no pregnancy related mother or baby deaths in the Kenyan villages where these programmes are run.

**Laura Mead**, who lives in Heath End and is a Regional Coordinator for Christian Aid, gave some further information on Christian Aid's background and current activities. Christian Aid was founded 75 years ago to help refugees in Europe, and was currently supporting refugees in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. Laura announced an upcoming event addressing malaria prevention on 5<sup>th</sup> Dec, and drew attention to Christian Aid's ecological activities – on which Laura would be happy to give a talk at any interested forum if requested.

**(ii) Farnham ASSIST**

*-- June Trantom*

June reminded the meeting of Farnham ASSIST's aims – to extend the hand of friendship to the elderly living on their own, both in the form of trusting relationships as well as more general fellowship. Activities such as the monthly lunch, one-to-one computer tuition and many others as reported last year continue; ASSIST is also helping with NHS health and wellbeing initiatives.

In 2015 ASSIST moved into new premises in St George's yard, was nominated for a Queen's Award for voluntary services (unsuccessful this time, but will be considered again next year) and was the nominated Charity of the Town Mayor, Pat Frost, after her appointment in the summer.

ASSIST no longer receives grant funding, so there is a greater need for fundraising. A successful Farnham ASSIST Week was held in April, featuring numerous well-supported coffee mornings and a business lunch, for example. ASSIST has only two

part-time paid staff and would welcome more volunteers!

**(iii) Farnham Foodbank** – *Rose Williamson*

Rose reported: The last 12 months have been a busy time for us; the number of people fed has continued to slowly rise and we have seen some significant changes in our volunteer team.

The end of last year saw us bid farewell to Sister Simone, a lady who had been the driving force behind the warehouse for four years. Her presence has been missed but we were glad to welcome Stevie Say as warehouse manager at the beginning of the year.

As we enter into our 5<sup>th</sup> year, we find that we are well supported within the community with members of the public regularly donating food at one of our collection points. The introduction of a permanent collection basket in Waitrose has been a great success. Since then the Halifax bank and the Co-op in Rowledge have also agreed to have both cash tins and food baskets. A number of churches across the town also collect on a regular basis, something we are very grateful for as it helps us to manage stock levels and prevent them from dipping too low.

We are currently in the full swing of Harvest time with many of the local schools and churches donating their collections to us. Our food store is full of food that is yet to be dated and sorted through, something that urgently needs to be done before the Christmas food starts arriving in just 5 or 6 weeks' time.

The year ahead looks to be one of change as we aim to move our food store to a more suitable location. St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church has been the home of our store since opening but as we have grown more than we could have ever have imagined it is time for us to find somewhere bigger with a safer working environment for our volunteers. We do have something in the pipeline but are unable to say more at the moment.

We have been fortunate in that our financial position has always been fairly stable but with the changes ahead and the need to ensure that volunteers have a safe working environment, we are having to spend a considerable amount of money on crates, heavy duty workbenches, racking and other health and safety related items. Securing funding for our future will be an interesting challenge for the year ahead!

We are very well blessed with some amazing volunteers who give up hours of their time to help make foodbank happen. We would however like to find some new volunteers to join our team. We are currently looking for...

- 2 or 3 volunteers to help at the warehouse with processing donations, picking up collections and delivering food boxes to local agencies
- 2 volunteers to be phone holders as part of a job share
- 1 volunteer to lead the Ash Distribution Centre on a Tuesday morning

In addition to that we would also love some people to help on an occasional basis at our busy times, particularly Harvest and Christmas.

**(iv) FCCT / Catalyst** – *Rev John Edwards*

John reported that the Farnham Christian Community Trust (FCCT) continues to provide centralised administrative support (eg handling the upcoming requirement for pension enrolment, etc) for Christian activities across the town (for example, Farnham Foodbank). 'Seedbed' funding is however no longer available, so FCCT is having to generate funding to support itself via the 'Love Farnham' campaign. FCCT will be

moving premises in Feb 2016 when the lease on its current office in Upper Church Lane expires.

John also reminded the meeting of the superb schools work in Farnham, with the Signposts team visiting up to 14 primary schools on their Easter and Christmas tours, and the Cohesion team providing assemblies, lessons and mentoring at Heath End and Weydon secondary schools.

**7) THE FUTURE – discussion of new initiatives, the structure and future of CTF**

Views were invited on the way forward for CTF. With the current committee ready to stand down if replacements could be found for them, what path should we take for the future?

Laura Mead noted that, in her experience, the demise of Churches Together groupings in other areas had left a noticeable lack. Conrad Hicks said that CTF was a valuable body, and that the Annual Meeting was a worthwhile occasion.

Laura noted that obtaining successors was helped by explaining the duties clearly, and having an overlap period. Advertisements could be placed on the CTF website and in local magazines.

Benedict Parsons wondered whether a link with Churches Together in Fleet would be worth exploring.

Michael Gittins noted that the Waverley Faith Links forum (chaired by Michael Hopkins) was open to churches to join.

The possibility of community prayer events, as suggested by our past mayor Jeremy Ricketts, was raised. **It was agreed** to mount a prayer vigil for refugees in November, at St Andrew's. Laura Mead kindly agreed to prepare and lead the event.

**8) Election of Officers**

No new officers were elected. In the light of the foregoing discussion, the existing officers agreed to continue in post.

**9) Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - 18th to 25th January 2016**

It was agreed to enquire if Fr Niven Richardson at St Joan's would be happy to host the Christian Unity service on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

**10) Date and place for next AGM.**

The date was set as Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> October. Venue - Farnham Pentecostal Church.

**11) Any Other Business: None.**

**12) Closing Prayers**