

Churches Together in Farnham Annual General Meeting 2014

Tuesday 14th October at Farnham Pentecostal Church

Minutes of Meeting

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

2) **Apologies for absence:**

Michael Hall, Michael Hopkins, Michael McDonnell, Mary Clarke, Michael Gittins, Alan Crawley, Jenny Floyer

Present: Conrad Hicks, Graham Sly (Farnham Methodist Church); Andrew Partridge (St Andrew's); Thea Parsons (Anglican); Stewart Dakers (Badshot Lea with Hale); Stella Walters (St Thomas'); Brenda Stokes (Farnham Quaker Meeting); M Freeman (Farnham Pentecostal Church); Bob Skinner (Weybourne Baptist Church); John Edwards (Holy Family Church); Andrew Marriott, Valerie and Oliver Beckerlegge (Jubilee Church); Karen Fewster (Christian Aid); Rose Williamson (Farnham Foodbank); John Goodman (FCCT); June Trantom (Farnham ASSIST)

3) **Minutes of AGM 10.10.2013:** Adopted and signed.

4) **Any matters arising - none**

5) **Special report: 3rd Fleet 'Environment and Faith' Festival - Katie Roberts**

Katie described the past three festivals and the lessons learned; she outlined current activities and suggested events in Farnham that could be used as a basis for similar events (eg Farmers' Market, Organic food initiative, eco-congregation initiative at the URC); and she concluded by outlining key points for mounting a festival:

- An enthusiast to drive things forward;
- Prayer;
- Link with Churches Together;
- Look at existing activities
- Ask volunteers for *well-defined* contributions

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

Reports from:

i) **Chair and secretary** (*prepared by Michael Hall (chair); delivered by Andrew Partridge (Secretary)*)

To begin with, I must apologise for being unable to attend tonight's meeting due to family matters, but I am sure you are in safe hands with Andrew Partridge, who has agreed to chair this meeting.

As most years there is not a lot to report from the chair point of view, as most topics will be covered in other reports, but there are a few things I would like to mention.

(1) The Unity Service.

This was very kindly and ably hosted by the United Reformed Church, and very well organised by the Rev Michael Hopkins. So I would like, on behalf of the Steering Committee, extend our thanks to Michael, the team at U.R.C. and all those who took part, for making it such an enjoyable service and time of fellowship.

(2) He is Risen' Easter Celebration

This year the weather wasn't very kind to us, but we persevered and set up all the equipment in the Bandstand, in Gostrey Meadow, only to get to the point of switching on and finding there was no power. After much deliberation and phone calls to the Electricity Company, we decided to pack up and move back to the Pentecostal Church, leaving someone at the bandstand to re-direct anyone who did turn up, to the church. There we set up all the equipment and went

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through the programme in the dry. I would like to thank the very hardy souls who did venture out and joined us in the church. I would also like to thank those members of Weybourne Baptist Church who joined with us to make up the Worship Team.

We are planning to keep the event going and so look forward to seeing many of you, in much better weather next Easter Sunday. If anyone would like to get involved, please let us know, it would be good to get as many churches involved as possible.

Finally, and I'm sure you will hear this from others this evening, we need new blood on the Steering Committee. The chair should change every 3 years, and it should alternate between Clergy and Lay. I have now completed 4 years as Chair and so am overdue to step down, and there are others on the Committee who have been in these positions for longer than me. So please if you feel you would like to get involved, do put yourself forward.

iii) Treasurer - *Andy Marriott*

The Accounts for 2013/14 were presented.

The monies from the collection in memory of Desmond Parsons was used to purchase a laptop for use by the Signposts Primary Schools team.

& from the organisers of:

(iv) Friday Focus - *Jenny Floyer*

First a warm tribute to the late Gwen Mansfield and her sterling work over many years of coordinating Friday Focus. Friday Focus appeared almost every week in Farnham Herald, giving a point of reflection for its many readers. It is so good to have this free opportunity for Christian witness at a time when so much secularism abounds, with restrictions on religious expression.

Since May when I took over from Gwen I have been rethinking the contributions from St John the Evangelist in Churt. Churt is linked with Hindhead and Beacon Hill in the Haslemere group of churches and with discussion among their ministry team they have decided to concentrate on this connection rather than be part of Farnham Churches Together. I am delighted that St Thomas-on-the-Bourne has rejoined the rota in submitting Friday Focus contributions.

It has been of some concern that some articles submitted to Farnham Herald have not appeared or have been published a week later than anticipated. I have been to see Tony Short, the editor of Farnham Herald, and hopefully in future our reserved slot on page two will have Friday Focus each week. Unfortunately, in spite of an email reminder from me, one or two churches have not submitted their article. I do hope, please, that Friday Focus will remain a priority as our opportunity for Christian witness. A very warm thank you to everyone who has submitted Friday Focus contributions. Currently I am working on the 2015 rota and hope to have this ready by next month. If your 'person of reference' for Friday Focus has changed I would be grateful for updated information as to the contact person for your church. Please remember that both lay people as well as clergy are welcome to contribute articles for Friday Focus.

(v) Prayer Meetings - *Bob Skinner*

These continued monthly over the year, kindly hosted by St Joan's Roman Catholic Church.

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

About 200 attended. Stuart commented that 'silence is its own witness'.

**(vii) Christmas Day Lunch
& Library Christmas Crib** - *Michael McDonnell*

The Christmas Crib.

Last Christmas the Nativity scene in Farnham Library was created by pupils at Tootsies Day Nursery. 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

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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.

The Christmas Day Lunch for people who would otherwise spend the day on their own.

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, once again, to have an amazing wonderful chef – Chris Smith – we are most grateful to him. Chris is now stepping down, after years of extraordinary service. We give him a big thanks and wish him every blessing. An additional treat for the guests was a visit by the Mayor of Waverley – Patricia Ellis, her 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*

Thanks to a new partnership, the CTF website continues to thrive and develop. Following the regretted departure from Farnham of Richard Wimbush, our website is now in the capable hands of John Goodman of Farnham Christian Community Trust. We owe John a huge debt of gratitude for taking on this task. He is giving us the benefit of his skill, experience and technical expertise to improve and enhance the site - making it ever more visually attractive and user friendly. Our website is now part of the countrywide network of CT websites hosted free of charge by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland - so we have a strong basis on which to work.

The web surely provides us with an unmatched opportunity to communicate both with our fellow Christians in other churches and denominations and with the wider community throughout the Farnham area and beyond.

I try to keep the website right up to date - day by day when possible – but this really depends on **you**. We are now getting splendid feedback from several churches and associates about activities and events to put on the website and in the E-News – our thanks to them. But there are still many we do not often hear from. **Please** all of you remember to keep us posted about what you are doing. You have a great source of free publicity available to you at the touch of a mouse button so do make use it!

And if you would like to keep track of what other Churches are up to – why not put our website on your favourites list?.

Help us to make it one of the best and most visited sites on the Churches Together network - reaching out to all.

7) WHAT HAVE ASSOCIATES OF CTF BEEN DOING?

(i) Christian Aid – *Karen Fewster*

2014 has been another year peppered with emergency appeals some almost so awful it is too hard for us to comprehend. Work also continues in countries like Haiti and Philippines where the after effects of natural disasters are still being felt several years later.

The need for funds has never been greater but Farnham has continued to be very generous in its giving, for which Christian Aid and its partners are forever grateful.

At Christmas 2013, we collected over £600 for the Philippines' emergency appeal by singing carols outside Sainsburys' Water Lane.

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In January, at the Service at United Reformed Church during the week of Prayer for Christian Unity the collection was donated to Christian Aid's Syria crisis appeal and I was invited to read one of the Scripture readings. There have also been bucket collections in various churches around Farnham in aid of Syria and Gaza through the year.

In May, the Farnham Herald published an article prior to Christian Aid Week about Ben Palmer, a Christian Aid intern from Lower Bourne. It described his personal experiences in Columbia working with partners who are seeking land justice for indigenous peoples who live in constant fear of violence from those who seek to remove them from their land.

Christian Aid interns are available to give talks about the work they have witnessed and to share their experiences first hand with church and youth groups.

In May our special Christian Aid Week service was held at St Thomas on the Bourne. The service is an inspirational beginning to the week of door to door collections across Farnham and the surrounding villages and was again well attended this year.

We also collected at Farnham station during the morning rush hour throughout Christian Aid Week and hope to build on the success of this in 2015.

Apart from Christian Aid Week collections, the excellent Lent recitals at St. Thomas on the Bourne, plant sales, coffee mornings, 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.

The total raised was just over £20,000 which is up on 2013.

Our Annual Farnham Christian Aid meeting will be held at URC Farnham on 30th October at 7.15pm and all are welcome to join us as we discuss activity for the coming year.

We currently have 11 churches represented by church representatives in Farnham Christian Aid and it would be wonderful if we could include more congregations within the Farnham area in 2015.

This year as in previous years, we have lost some collectors and finding volunteers to fill these gaps has been and continues to be one of the biggest challenges that Christian Aid in Farnham faces.

(iii) Farnham ASSIST - June Trantom

ASSIST was created to reach out to the older people of Farnham and particularly those living on their own. We seek to combat isolation and loneliness together with sharing the love of God in practical ways. The variety and number of activities that were held during the year were focused on that client group. This has only been possible thanks to the dedication of the small team of paid staff, supported by around 100 volunteers, who share the vision for ASSIST in Farnham.

Overall review

During this time we have had some significant changes in staffing with the successful appointment of an Events Co-ordinator and the retirement of our Manager/Company Secretary of over 8 years. There was a period of 4 months when we were without a Manager from May – August 2014. I took up the position from 1st September and have been warmly welcomed.

The 2014 version of our Events Booklet, (listing all the events taking place throughout the year, from afternoon tea in the spring to the carol service in December) was produced early in the year and 1000 copies were eagerly awaited and taken up by older people across the town.

Knit 'n' Natter has continued to be very popular – each week meeting in the local Parish Rooms, there is lots of chatter and knitting, though it is often more chatting than knitting! Over 700 items have been knitted, which have either gone to the Cleaford Christian Trust (a local Christian charity working in Romania) or Operation Christmas Child (taking shoe boxes full of essentials to poor and needy children in remote corners of the world).

The Ladies Pub Lunch takes place on the fourth Monday in the month. This has become very popular, with between 20 and 24 ladies coming along to enjoy fellowship as well as a good meal. At Christmas the ladies joined forces with the men from the Pie & Pint Club for a joint Christmas lunch – around 50 people in total.

Where can you go with your bus pass? During the summer months, we ran a number of outings from the Centre using local buses. Two volunteers led the groups, helping people on and off the bus and providing information on things to do in Winchester, Godalming and the RHS Wisley. Then in the afternoon they would return with tired, but very appreciative, people.

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Looking at the individual areas of ASSIST:

Over 60s Centre –

The Centre is open from 9.30am -12.30pm Monday to Thursday for people to pop in and see us. We have a small comfortable meeting room that we use for our clients to meet with a local solicitor or Citizens Advice.

Citizens Advice Adviser – Our partnership with Citizens Advice Waverley, whereby a specialist Home Visit Adviser visits housebound older people to help them with applications for benefits and other entitlements, continues to play an important role in reducing financial and social isolation.

Silver Services – These have become established as a regular event in the ASSIST calendar. Taking place each month and run in conjunction with Farnham Methodist Church, the services are non-denominational, with a guest speaker. The service is followed by a tea and we have been very encouraged by the positive response that we have had.

Other Services – We celebrated the International Day of the Older Person with our Songs of Praise at the United Reformed Church in the town centre. Our annual carol service took place on the first Monday in December, at Farnham Baptist Church. Attendance was good at both services and enjoyed by all, including the Town Mayor.

Understanding Computers (and IPADs!) – The importance of being able to access new forms of technology, including tablets and I-Pads cannot be stressed enough in this ever changing world of technology and communication. Many of our attendees are in their 80's (and some in their 90's) when they are buying their first laptop or tablet. Being able to use these forms of technology confidently, following our 1-1 tuition, enables them to communicate with their families and reduces the feeling of isolation from their loved ones. We now have had 235 people attend the sessions since they began in 2007, which is a remarkable achievement and this aspect of our work continues to be in demand.

Praise and Worship continues to go into four residential care homes and the Gostrey Day Centre. These are invaluable times to bring the word of God into people's lives, many of whom are unable to get out at all. This event has been enhanced by the provision of updated hymn books and a half day training workshop for all volunteers

Pie and Pint has maintained a steady number of clients over the year with about 20 men who regularly attend the three venues, some going to all three, some to just one. One of the highlights of the Club year, the annual summer outing, took place in July 2014, the venue being the Amberley Museum and Heritage Centre.

The weekend lunches at Hale and the Gostrey Centre continue to meet a real need, at what is often a very lonely time for people. We cater for around 90 people each month and we are very grateful for a number of new volunteers, at both lunch venues.

(v) Farnham Foodbank – *Rose Williamson*

It was reported that 1450 requests were made in the year 2013-14, compared with 655 in 2011-12. More than 80 hampers were delivered to families in need at Christmas. A request was made for more volunteers and for storage facilities.

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

FCCT continues to provide a support structure for inter-church activities.

(vii) Bible Society (*no report given*)

8) Election of Officers

No new officers were elected. The existing officers will continue in post.

9) Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - 18th to 25th January 2015

The churches of Hale / Heath End / Badshot Lea kindly offered to host this service.

10) Date and place for next AGM.

The date was set as Tuesday 13th October. Venue - Farnham Pentecostal Church (to be confirmed).

11) Any Other Business: None.

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12) Closing Prayers