

Churches Together in Farnham
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
Wednesday 22nd November at 7.30 pm,
at the United Reformed Church, South St., Farnham

Welcome and opening worship

The Chair designate, the **Revd Michael Hopkins** welcomed everyone and led opening worship.

26 people were present, recorded in the attendance book.

Apologies for absence were received from 14 people, recorded in the attendance book. The Secretary, Andrew Partridge, had been taken ill, and the meeting expressed their good wishes for his recovery.

Election of Officers

Mr John Goodman took the chair.

The **Revd Michael Hopkins** was proposed by the Steering Group as Chair, and was elected unanimously.

The **Revd Michael** took the chair, and proposed the election of the other Steering Group members:

Secretary – **Andrew Partridge**
Treasurer – **Andy Marriott**
Website – **John Goodman**
Newsletter – **Mary Clarke**
Town Council Link – **Jeremy Ricketts**

This was agreed unanimously.

The **Minutes of the AGM 12.10.2016** were agreed unanimously, and signed by the Chair.

There were no matters arising.

Finance

The accounts were presented by the **Treasurer**, and were unanimously adopted.

Proposal for nominations for Chair

The chair proposed that:

“In view of the difficulties of securing nominations of people to chair Churches Together in Farnham, the Steering Group propose an informal pattern of rotation to encourage nominations. Such a nominee will still need to be elected at the AGM, and the meeting remains open to receiving other nominations. The pattern proposed is the Free Churches, the Church of England, and the Roman Catholic Church should each be asked in to find from within their number a person (lay or ordained) to be nominated to the AGM to serve as Chair for one year.

Were this proposal to be adopted, we would be looking for a Church of England nominee as Chair for the 2018 AGM, a Roman Catholic nominee for the 2019 AGM, and another Free Church nominee for the 2020 AGM etc.

No changes to the constitution, which permits longer terms of office and makes no commitment to any pattern, are proposed. What is proposed is an informal mechanism to try to secure nominations for Chair, in view of the difficulties in finding such nominations.”

This was agreed unanimously.

Review of CTF activities over 2016/7

Written reports were presented, and the contributors responded to questions and comments.

The Churches Together in Farnham Christmas Day Lunch 2016 (Michael McDonnell)

The Christmas Day Lunch was enjoyed by more than 60 Farnham residents who would otherwise have spent the day on their own. Roast Turkey and all the trimmings, Christmas Pudding, a small gift and free transport if required, were the order of the day. It is extraordinary how generous people are with their time on Christmas Day and the coordinators of the lunch are eternally grateful to the volunteer helpers, many of whom are not church goers, who give their time with such warmth and generosity. We were blessed, to have a wonderful chef – David Beale – and are most grateful to him for his amazing happy cooking. We were blessed also to have generous help from John Goodman and FCCT, printing colourful posters and menus. A treat for the guests was a visit by the Mayor and Mayoress of Waverley – Chris and Judith Storey and the Mayor and Mayoress of Farnham John and Gillian Ward - their visit delighting guests and helpers. Most generous support was received from: Morgan's Butchers who donated the turkeys and other meats, The Dempster Trust, Farnham Hedgehogs, Care Farnham, The Bourne Show, Sainsbury's and Waitrose.

The Christmas Crib in Farnham Library (Michael McDonnell)

Last Christmas the Nativity scene in Farnham Library was created by pupils at St Andrew's CE Infant School. It was an amazing scene. All the children at the school played a part in its design and creation. It was an interactive storyboard filled with drawn, cut out, sewed, stuffed and decorated figures made by the pupils. The figures had Velcro on the back enabling them to be positioned anywhere on the board. Children (and adults), were invited to come and have a go at telling the Christmas story themselves. The crib was set up at the beginning of December and was in place until after Christmas.

This year the link person between the Library and the School is Amber Delves. When the crib is installed, we suggest that visitors to the Library – if they like the crib - make known their thoughts to Library staff - because it is important we give positive feedback to the Library. The Nativity scene in Farnham Library is a Christian statement in a public place – marking our joy at the birth of Jesus. We hope to send a picture of the crib and a press release to the Farnham Herald – as another Christian statement in a public place.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and Unity Service (Andrew Partridge)

As in previous years, Churches Together in Farnham marked the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity by daily prayers during the week and a Service of Christian Unity on the Sunday falling within the week (22nd January).

The daily prayers were hosted mainly by St Joan's Catholic Church, with meetings also held at the Anglican parish church of St Andrew and at Farnham Pentecostal Church. The Unity Service was held at Farnham Methodist church at 6.00 pm and was attended by some seventy Christians from a wide range of churches across the local area. It was led by Revd David Ashby of the Rowledge Methodist Church, Revd Michael Hopkins of Farnham United Reformed Church, and David Uffindell, Rector of Farnham. Readings and intercessions were offered by members of the Methodist church, Wevbourne Community Church, St Andrew's and St Joan's. The service followed the format produced by churches in Germany for worldwide use, and featured the construction of a wall between the congregation and the cross – made of bricks symbolising such things as 'hate and contempt', 'persecution', 'broken communion' (12 in all) – which was symbolically overcome by the cross after the congregation offered one another signs of God's peace. After the service there was a good opportunity over a cup of tea to make new links with fellow-Christians from other churches, and to renew old ones.

Monthly Unity Prayers (Bob Skinner)

(held in the Foyer room at St Joan of Arc Church on the third Tuesday of the month at 11am)

Over the last year, this prayer group has continued meeting monthly for an hour of fellowship, sharing and prayer. The numbers coming have increased this year, with up to a dozen people coming, from 7 or 8 different churches.

After brief refreshments, we start the informal meeting with a short spiritual reflection, based on a Bible passage, hymn or a poem. Our prayers reflect the diversity of the group, ranging from prayers of praise and thanksgiving to our Lord, to supplication as we pray specifically for the needs, work and witness of Churches, Christian ministries and believers serving in Farnham and surrounding area. We make time for people attending to share any specific prayer requests, and bring these to God in prayer. Newcomers are always welcome to come along to the meetings.

Good Friday Walk of Witness (Stewart Dakers)

The Walk of Witness continues to serve as a public reminder that that Friday is not a normal day. The silence and absence of any 'clue' beyond the wooden cross is particularly striking in the contemporary world of noise and instant answers. For those taking part, it serves, I hope, to generate a sense of spiritual solidarity, which, again the secular world of today, is most welcome.

Friday Focus (Jenny Floyer)

As ever an enormous thank you to everyone who coordinates Thursday Focus for their church and to those who write and send in contributions. Most weeks of the year have been covered with only a couple of churches not having been able to send in theirs at the last minute. Unfortunately, three contributions that were sent in were not published, two of these not found by the editor and one excellent article thought by the editor not to be suitable for publication! My feeling is that the church should be provocative and challenging.

It is good that in this climate we have the freedom, still, to have published articles of a Christian nature. Friday Focus, now Thursday Focus as the publication day has been changed, has been published for several decades in Farnham Herald. It is my prayer that this slot remains open for us and that much prayer goes into the articles sent in. Being on page 2 it is fairly prominent; I pray this will remain so, by God's grace.

Finally, it would be good to have your thoughts as to Thursday Focus being the best title for the slot or whether another, such as Thursday Thought, might be more attractive. I have no idea how many folk read the articles and are challenged by them, but it is a wonderful opportunity for witness to the town and surrounds of God's love for everyone and invitation to follow him.

Council Prayers (Michael Hall)

I have continued to organise the prayers for the Farnham Town Council Meetings throughout the year and although I am no longer Chair or indeed part of the Steering Committee, I am happy to continue to do this for as long as the committee wants me to. All of us who are involved in this 'ministry' see it as a very important part of the relationship between Churches Together in Farnham and the Town Council, especially as we see, in many parts of the country, moves to separate 'Religion' from the secular business of local councils. Indeed when I first became involved in this, even though the idea of having prayers at the beginning of the meetings had been re-introduced, there had to be a gap between the end of prayer and the start of the meeting. Now though, that has all changed and the prayer now forms the first part of the meeting itself, and feedback has been that it has changed the way the meetings themselves are conducted. Over the past year we have been able to cover every meeting except one and have cover now for the rest of this session of the council, up until May 2018. There are nine council meetings in the year and there are at the moment, six of us involved, so it would be good to get other leaders/clergy on board so that it could be a different face and maybe a different style for each meeting. If there are any other leaders/clergy who would like to be involved and who haven't received this information in the past please let Michael know at hmichaeljill@aol.com.

Website and e-news (Mary Clarke and John Goodman)

The website and monthly E-Newsletter have continued through the year and been steadily developed to offer up-to-date publicity for Christian activities which are open to all local people. Together, these resources supplement the many newsletters, magazines and service sheets produced by individual churches. We particularly appreciate the opportunity to publicise fund-raising activities by local charities and advertise volunteer and paid vacancies in our churches and associated organisations.

The CTF Website and E-News offers a fantastic source of free publicity! We can support churches and charities best when they provide "copy" of activities and events (with or without artwork), giving as much notice as possible. These can then be fed, as most appropriate, into the next month's E-Newsletter and onto the web site. The Newsletter is normally published early each month, so information by at latest the 25th of the previous month is helpful. It is emailed out to church leaders, CTF representatives, church offices and other regulars (ask if you would like to be on the circulation) - and also published immediately on the website for download.

Please remember to tell us early. We do "spot" some events such as concerts and fund-raising initiatives - but to be sure of coverage on the website, please regard us as part of your "marketing" resource. We don't aim to publicise individual church service schedules - but address this by providing a page of easy-access links covering the information on all our member churches - with individual links to the churches' own websites.

If you haven't browsed our website (www.ct-farnham.org.uk) recently, please take a look. You may be pleasantly surprised by the huge range of events offered in the town through our many churches and associated charities and organisations.

Future events requiring decision

It was agreed that the **united service** for the **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2018** would be held on **Sunday 21 January** at 5.30 pm at **St. Andrew's**.

It was agreed not to set a date for the **2018 AGM**, so as to allow the incoming chair to have a say in the choice of date.

Review of Christian activities across Farnham:

Written reports were presented, and the contributors responded to questions and comments.

Christian Aid (Karen Fewster)

This year is Christian Aid's 60th anniversary and today its work is as relevant as it was just after the Second World War when it began by raising money to help refugees. The work continues today, wherever there is need because of injustice, poverty or natural disaster, with partners in more than 50 countries.

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of representatives from 12 churches in and around Farnham, fundraising for Christian Aid has continued to be very successful in 2017. However small the individual donations are, they still amount to significant sums when added together. The cashless society we live in has dented the total raised by collecting door-to-door but we have made up for this with other fund raising events.

The annual letter to the Farnham Herald on the Friday before Christian Aid Week always makes an impact and is signed by ministers from many churches and we are thankful for their support.

Christian Aid Week began with a special joint service held at St James' Church Rowledge. The focus of the week this year was the continuing plight of refugees.

As well as the door-to-door envelope collections, we collected at Farnham station during the morning rush and for the first time collected in Farnham town centre on the Saturday, with just over £18.500 raised during the week.

The now familiar Lent recitals at St. Thomas on the Bourne, coffee mornings, soup lunches, cake sales, a concert at St Martin's and other events across our area contributed to the £26,358 total raised across the year to September.

The 2017 Christmas appeal - 'Enough for everyone' - focuses on the injustice of hunger in sub-Saharan Africa. HM Government will match monies raised in the appeal nationally.

Christian Aid will decorate a tree in St Andrew's Christmas tree festival and will be singing carols outside URC. I hope you will join us for an hour of song!

In 2018, I hope to diversify our fundraising further, to maintain the same level of monies raised despite the reducing amount coming from envelopes. Concerts, street collections and Music in the Meadows tea tent are just a few of the possible thoughts. All ideas welcome! I would also like to see more churches and new volunteers joining us to support the work of Christian Aid and its partners.

Farnham ASSIST (June Trantom)

Farnham Assist continues to expand its reach across the local area to offer support and friendship to older people who live alone. In 2017 we have offered support to 465 individual clients. Our activities include weekend lunches, pub lunches in the week, outings and special events throughout the year, computer tuition, seasonal church services and regular services at care homes and the Gostrey Day Centre plus our one to one befriending service for those who are housebound. All our events are supported by transport provided by our volunteer drivers. It is our volunteers who really make Farnham Assist work and we have been pleased to welcome new members to our team this year. In total we have 110 volunteers, but we always need more to ensure the wide range of activities can continue.

The highlight of this year was being honoured by the Queen in June. We were awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Services and I had the honour of going to Buckingham Palace together with former Manager, Brian Kurton. This was followed by a celebration in Farnham attended by the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey and all available volunteers and supporters of Farnham Assist past and present.

Finance has been tight this year, but I am pleased to report that due to focused fundraising and local support we have been able to eliminate the forecast deficit for this year and have a balanced budget. The appointment of a Fundraising and Marketing Co-ordinator to organise events, apply for trust fund grants and keep our profile high, especially in the press and on social media, has been a great success.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the churches in Farnham for their wonderful support, and all the clergy who give their time and often their church premises freely for our services and client events. We have continued to be blessed by special events that have been organised by churches, such as the Ceilidh and Harvest Supper at the end of September at St Andrew's Church, and by our continued partnership with Farnham Methodist Church for our weekly Understanding Computers sessions and our monthly Silver Service followed by a delicious afternoon tea. This is vital support that enables our work to be sustained. We also maintain a very close working partnership with Farnham Christian Community Trust (FCCT) and were delighted to be an integral part of their Love in Action campaign this year.

Future needs:

- Volunteers to join our Praise and Worship Team particularly anyone who is happy to prepare and lead prayers or a short talk;

- Continue to promote our activities and services through the local churches and any other local groups via newsletters and taking our literature to display in public places;

- Continued prayer support which is invaluable and very much appreciated by everyone involved in Farnham Assist as we seek to transform lives through sharing Christian care and love.

Farnham Foodbank (Rose Williamson)

In the 7 years that Farnham Foodbank has been operating, we have grown beyond all expectations and have fed more people than we ever thought we'd need to. Christians from across the town have joined together to serve God and have fed over 8500 local people.

Thank you to all those who donated during Harvest, your generous donations have helped re-fill our empty shelves and will ensure that we can continue to feed local people who need our support.

Planning for our Christmas hamper project is well underway; Approximately 100 low income families will receive one of our hampers. This year we will also be running a Santa's Grotto, free of charge for foodbank clients.

Filling the hampers with food and Santa's sacks with presents is going to be quite costly and will require a huge amount of food. We are stepping out in faith and trusting that God will provide.

We are unable to accept toy donations but would be grateful for any financial assistance to support such projects. For those wishing to donate food, we currently require the following items:

Instant mash, sponge puddings, chocolate selection packs, Christmas cakes, Christmas puddings and mince pies.

(All Christmas donations are needed by the end of November. We request that all donations are in date and unopened – thank you)

We praise God for helping us meet the basic need of those who are hungry and for enabling us to show people His love and kindness at a time when they feel broken and overwhelmed. Thank you all for your on-going support.

FCCT (John Edwards)

The highlight of the year has been the Gathering, on July 9th. This saw around 1,000 people gather in Gostrey Meadow for a Sunday morning of praising God. This was preceded by Love in Action prayer meetings, which were well attended. Love in Action prayer meetings continue, the last being in October. Another is planned for 25th February 2018, in St. Andrew's.

FCCT continues to provide hub services for many of the projects that are offering reports: Foodbank; Schools Work (Signposts & Cohesion); Friends Together and Farnham money advice. Other supported projects are Parenting; Filling Station and a couple of other miscellaneous projects.

As you will know we have taken various steps to reduce the costs of running FCCT. However, we are still short of the required funding to maintain our support of all the activities, especially those which rely on us for top up funding. Love in Action has provided some relief with some new donors signing up but we need more to ensure that we maintain the current level of support. The first projects which could be affected will be Schools work and Parenting. We would be interested in any new funding sources available and will be making further appeals for help from both churches and individuals. You can sign up to make one off or regular donations on the FCCT website - otherwise please talk to us

Signposts - Primary schools work (Amber Delves)

Signposts schools work supports and complements the work already done by local churches in the primary schools of Farnham and its surrounding area.

The predominant focus of the project is to deliver three tours annually. There are two major tours at Christmas and Easter and the third in the summer, where we work in partnership with Cohesion, to support the year 6 children in managing their transition to secondary school. In this we reach out to approximately 3,500 children several times a year.

We have positive working relationships with 16 primary schools and each tour have added a new school. The assemblies are delivered in sessions of 45-60 minutes to around 100 children at a time, in an exciting engaging and highly interactive way. The project is currently co-ordinated by Amber Delves, who is employed by FCCT on a part time basis. The project is driven and managed by an inter-church core team. The tours are delivered by seconded workers and by volunteer children's workers from 10 churches. Each assembly requires 6-10 adults to deliver. The team are outstanding in the time and energy and positive attitude that they bring to the project.

The last two tours have been experiential for the children, as they have physically walked through dramatic scenes from the Christmas and Easter stories and this method has drawn excellent feedback from the children and schools. We have explored the themes of hope and joy and this year's Christmas tour will explore the concept of peace.

Signposts team members are involved in other activities in addition to the tours, both in the name of Signposts and through their own church activities, for example, lessons on marriage and prayer, Stations of the cross and coordinating the Farnham library Christmas display for Farnham Churches Together. We also have the benefit of bringing churches and children's workers together across the town and have been a resource that individual churches can draw upon or use as a springboard for their individual projects e.g Summer camps, Love In Action, The Gathering, training events, child protection work and Open The Book.

Cohesion

Gille Bulteel gave a verbal report

Friends Together (Yvonne Bryant and Mary Haines)

The idea of setting up a meeting for people who had been bereaved occurred in May/June of 2015. I contacted Mary Haines, who had been recommended by my then Vicar Karen Hutchinson, who said that Mary was interested in starting such a group. We recruited other people who were interested in this type of work and were then able to commence looking at setting up a group.

Friends Together started meeting 2 years ago in the Café Nero, who had kindly agreed to let us use a part of their seating area. Leaflets had been circulated to GP surgeries, the Library, Council Offices who also included our details on their website, Funeral parlours, Farnham Hospital, Round and About magazine and any other place we could think of. We then started to look around at premises that we could hire and where we might find some funding. We succeeded in obtaining a sum of money from The Farnham Institute Charity which enabled us to hire a room in 40 Degreez, where we have been meeting since March 2016.

We are not counselling but offer a friendly atmosphere over a cup of tea and a biscuit, and just chat! Our numbers have not been large but most of the people who have attended our meetings have expressed how much better they feel and have been able to talk more easily about the loss of their loved ones. In September we decided to start an evening session aimed at people who might be working during the daytime. These meetings take place at the Barista Lounge, Downing Street on the second Thursday of the month from 8.00 – 9.30 pm.

Farnham Money Advice (Terry Heath)

Achievements

- 6 Volunteers from Farnham Churches Frontline trained
- Publicity prepared
- Office opened in Farnham (The Vineyard Centre)
- First Client seen at the Farnham Office

Future

- Increase Client Base
- Make contact with key agencies
- Increase influence within Farnham
- Increase Office opening hours

'Open the Book' (Margaret Emberson and Hannah Moore)

"Good Morning, Open the Book Team." This is the enthusiastic greeting we receive every time we visit Badshot Lea Infant school and Folly Hill Infant School throughout each school term. We are now into our fourth year, and over the past three years we have presented dozens of well-known Bible stories to the children in these schools and we have enjoyed every one.

We meet fortnightly for our three P's - To pray, to prepare and to practise. We make costumes, gather props and scenery and decide how the children can be involved. We also meet regularly for coffee and chat, and have a lovely Christmas lunch together at Squires.

There are eight of us in the team, from different churches in the area. One person has left as she moved away from Farnham and another has joined us.

In September we were delighted to be invited into Tootsies Day Nursery, regularly, to Open the Book. This has given us new and exciting challenges. When we visit Tootsies it is Bible Story Time for the children, and everyone makes us feel very welcome.

There are at least two other local schools which would very much like us to visit, so we need more story-tellers.

It is a privilege and pleasure to introduce all these children to God's wonderful faithfulness and love through stories of people in the Bible.

Reflections from new church leaders in Farnham

The **Revd Graham Culver** and the **Revd John Morris** had both sent apologies. The **Revd Phillip Simpkins**, Minister of Hale and Rowledge Methodist churches, was welcomed, and addressed the meeting.

Any Other Business

There was none.

The **Deputy Mayor of Farnham, Councillor David Attfield**, was welcomed and addressed the meeting. The chairman expressed the thanks of the meeting, and made suitable reply.

The **Revd Michael Hopkins led Closing Prayers**, after which the meeting adjourned for refreshments.