

Minutes of Churches Together AGM - Monday 20th September 2021

7.30 pm The Crypt - St Edmunds Church

Present: Heather Corbell (Horringer Benefice) Elaine Green (Quakers) Andrew Soman (Bridge Community) Linda Andrews (St Leonards) David & Betty Wakeford, Jason Vineyard (all Trinity Methodist) Andy Williams, Sarah Gull (St Marys & St Peters) Stephen Griffiths (WSH Chaplaincy) Fr David Bagstaff, Anna Parminter, Jane Harper, Nicola Trask, Eilish Heath (all St Edmunds RC) Jonathan Ford & Andrew Caldicott (Christ Church MH) David Fisher (SHCT) Rosemary Clare, Gavin Walter & Thomas Mundell (Garland St Baptist Church) Claire Rose (All Saints Team) Mike Simm (Southgate) Peter Sebbage (Barrow Benefice) Pam Pitts (Cathedral) Margaret Steavenson (North Bury Team & Cathedral) and Sharon Steven (Whepstead BC)

1. HC welcomed everyone to our first face to face meeting since February 2020, with a special welcome to new ministers to the town. Scripture readings included Mark 1: 15, 1 Corinthians:4, Matt 6 and Luke 17 and prayers were offered.
2. Apologies: Val Gagen, Martin Tilley, Andy and Ali Miller, Simon Harvey, Catrin Diverres, Jim Herrington, Gerda Tooley, Regina Collender and Paul Doswell.
3. The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as accurate.
4. No matter arising.
5. HC presented her annual report in which she reflected on the past two years and the difficulties the Covid pandemic caused. There were indeed some events that had to be cancelled, but much continued thanks to Zoom, including the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity events, the Share and Study groups, and the erection of a large cross on Angel Hill to mark Good Friday with a brief ceremony of dedication. Prayer 'mornings' have also worked well on via Zoom. However, the Summer Celebration in the Abbey Gardens held in August this year went ahead, went well and was enjoyed by all who attended.
6. EG presented the treasurers report which showed that in spite of few events taking place in the past year finances are still healthy, but Elaine appealed to churches to send their subscriptions as soon as possible.
7. Weekly column in the Bury Free Press: Peter Sebbage explained the he had been approached to supply a column from Churches Together to the local paper. He hopes to gather a team of 26 to facilitate this which will start at the end of October and the first column will be supplied by the Chair, HC.

This elicited some questions - SG asked about the type of articles but there are no restrictions from the BFP on this. AS asked if the names of the authors could appear on the column and JV spoke of the differing theological backgrounds of our many churches.

All material for the column will go through PB and HC and HC looked forward to a Christian column with a width and breath of views. A vote was taken on this going forward which was unanimously in favour.

8. Election of Officers: The following were elected to the Executive Committee for the coming year - Heather Corbell - Chair, Helen Moore - Vice Chair, Margaret Steavenson - Minute Secretary, Treasurer - Elaine Green, Events Assistant - Andrew Caldecott, Independent Examiner - Linda Andrews; and ex-officio - Claire Rose - Google group manager and Nic Wright - Web-Site Manager. Sharon Steven prayed a prayer of commission for the elected officers.

Heather thanked Eilish for all her work as Minutes secretary over the past nearly three years, and presented her with a card and a gift.

9. Annual Church Greeting: This had been organised in previous years but this year churches are encouraged to arrange the exchange of greeting themselves. For next year CR and MS will take on the organisation of this.

Reports:

i) Bury Drop In: A comprehensive report was received from Robert Green in which he set out their mission and vision for the future. During the pandemic volunteers served the homeless by keeping in touch via 'TextMagic', providing food to hostels and the 'pods' and assisting people to get settled once housed. As from September 2021 face to face sessions with guests will resume.

ii) Suffolk Historic Churches Trust: David Fisher reported on the work of SHCT and said that £15,500 had been paid in grants, ranging from small to large. The main funding for this comes from the Heritage weekend and the Ride and Stride event which last year raised 1750.00. The Classic Cars event also raised £14,000. David encouraged churches to provide volunteers at the churches to welcome people and for signing in. Next year it is hoped that the Bury Rickshaw will be able to take part in Ride & Stride and again Sunday volunteers are needed to enable the Rickshaw to do this.

There was a question from MS as to what qualifies as 'historic', and it was pointed out that all churches are able to benefit from a grant, they do not need to be 'old'.

iii) Bury Christian Youth: Gavin gave a short introduction to BCY and spoke of the disruption the pandemic had caused to their work in schools. However, during that time the team has been very busy; planning an office move, issuing a new mission statement, considering taking on another worker in the future, and working on a new vision. Wellbeing groups will be offered to schools to help address mental health issues, and planning to connect with primary school age children as well as middle and secondary.

www.bcy.org.uk will have much more information and offer opportunities to support the work.

11. Future Planning:

i) Prayer Breakfast /Morning: It is hoped that the next Prayer Breakfast can be arranged in November

ii) Advent Service: An Advent Service has been planned for Tuesday 7th December at 6.30 pm in the Cathedral. This will be a public event, organised by CT/Cathedral, and will consist of music, readings, and scripture. AC will arrange posters.

iii) Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2022: This will be January 16th - 22nd. though the international week is 18th - 25th, we always do a Sunday to Saturday in Bury. The service will be at St Edmunds RC Church on Sunday 16th January at 6.30 pm to open the week. Fr David will lead the service and the speaker will be Rev. Simon Harvey from St Mary's. The week will continue with the lunchtime prayer sessions, 12.30 - 1.30 pm, in the different churches as usual - Monday - the Cathedral. Tuesday - Garland St Baptist Church, Wednesday - Trinity Methodist Church, Thursday - St Edmunds, Friday - URC and Saturday - St John's.

12. A.O.B

Sarah Gull spoke about the Lectio Divina which takes place on Sunday evenings at 8.00 pm, at present via Zoom. If anyone would like to join or know more about this Sarah can be contacted on seg30@cam.org.uk. JV spoke of the value of this scripture/reflection group from his experience in his last parish in London.

HC read a report from Jo Copsey for Town Pastors in which she said that more volunteers are needed, both as street pastors or as prayer support while pastors are working.

PP said that Fair trade fortnight was now from 9th - 22nd October and DW spoke about the Fair Trade link with schools. Anyone who would like to know more to speak to David about live link-up.

HC showed the booklet 'Starting Over' published by The Bridge Community Church at West Road and Westley and AS said this could be obtained by contacting him.

HC shared greetings from Ian Howells, who has left WSH and moved away.

AC spoke of the hope of establishing a 'Men's Shed' here in Bury, and we are invited by the Cathedral to be involved in that project.

Date of next meeting: Monday 31st January 2022, venue to be arranged. Closing prayers were offered by Fr David and Jonathan Ford.