

Minutes of Churches Together Annual General Meeting
held at Trinity Methodist Church, Bury St. Edmunds
on Monday 18th September 2023

Welcome

Helen Moore welcomed everyone to the meeting and referred all to John 15 v.12, which urges us to 'Love each other in the same way that Jesus loves you.'

Present

Helen Moore (Southgate), Elaine Green (Quakers), Andrew Caldecott (CCMH, Gerda Tooley and Bob Jones (Southgate - observer), Rosemary Clare (Garland Street), Sharon Steven and Elaine Robertshaw (Whepstead Baptist, David Wakeford and Rosie Keys (Trinity Methodist), Sally McDermott (Vineyard), Pam Pitts (Cathedral), Robert Mark and Paula Ashman (Salvation Army), Rosie Perham (St. Mary's), Richard Shone (Seventh Day Adventist), Gavin Moss and

Margaret **Steavenson** (LVNBT) – Minutes (NB spelling of surname!)

Apologies

Jonathan Ford, Peter Sebbage, Philip Lloyd-Jones, David Bagstaff and Walter Chenyika, Paul Doswell, Robert Green, Claire Rose, Andy & Ali Miller, Andrew Soman.

Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true record.

Matters arising

Badges and lanyards will be available soon.

Election of Officers

This was conducted by Andrew C., who commented that Churches Together is now established in the community, thanks to Heather.

Helen Moore was nominated to be Chair, proposed by Andrew Soman and seconded by Eilish Heath. All voted in favour. The rest of the existing Committee were re-elected en bloc, with the addition of Heather Corbell as Communications Secretary. David Sutherland (Forge) has offered to shadow the events organiser.

Prayers for the new Committee were said.

(Sally McDermott's Spoke about her recent involvement with DTI . A summary of her report can be found at the end of the minutes

Finance Report

Elaine had circulated papers before the meeting. Her main points were:

£2,931 income (as at today's date)

£2,973 total expenses

(However, the accounts have not yet been signed off for last year.) It is hoped to be able to finance next year's Walk of Witness and the Abbey Gardens event.

Vice Chair's Report

We got the year off to a less than auspicious start as we cancelled firstly the proposed Christmas event and then the summer event for 2023 planning to have one in 2024.

In October the exchange of Greetings was relatively well supported and seemed to be a very positive experience for all.

In January the WPCU took place organised by Heather this time last year. We received particularly positive feedback from the launch service. Thanks are due to all who took part and who led the week day meetings.

The Walk of Witness was particularly well attended in the Cathedral and 300-400 also walked to the Market Square and joined in the service there. About 50 people from 10 churches played some part. Particular mention of Simon

Ladd who gave a powerful talk, and more so to Hojat and Peter who had the courage to stand and bring their personal testimonies to the crowd. For many this was the highlight of the day, bringing the gospel to the heart of the town and deserving of the name walk of “witness”.

2 study and share sessions were attended by about 40 people, a core of 20 to both and others were able to attend just 1. Thanks to Mike Simm and Simon Ladd for their input and to the 2 churches who hosted us.

Four prayer meetings have happened regularly, on 2 occasions accompanied by a fine breakfast. We know that we can't do anything without that firm foundation of prayer so we persist in meeting together.

We have begun to receive reports at our meetings about different churches which help with unity.

2 ongoing things throughout the year have been our weekly TFTW column in the BFP, thanks to Peter and his band of writers and Heather continues to keep us up to date with church life with the What's On sheet that she regularly produces, thanks go to her.

Since our last meeting, Heather welcomed us to her house for a prayer meeting in early September. On Saturday 16th September Andrew and Helen were welcomed by Linda Sebbage at Barrow for their benefice farmers' harvest breakfast. It was not specifically a CT event but a wonderful opportunity to support one of our churches in the great work they are doing in their community, Dean Joe was there to represent the cathedral.

CT is a team of people, working and praying together to support each other. We need to be guided by 2 verses, “not by might nor by power but by my spirit says the Lord,” from Zechariah and from Psalms, “unless the Lord is in the building the labourers toil in vain” We are here to do the Lords work to build for Him in the strength He gives.

Exchange of Greetings

Claire reported that seven pairings had been set up, so 14 Churches are involved this time – the same as last year.

Advent Service in Cathedral on 10th December

A meeting had been arranged with the Precentor to discuss the Service. More Church groups were sought to introduce a song.

Week of Christian Unity

Launch service Sunday 21st January 2024 at St. Mary's.

Prayer Meeting

This is to be on Sat. 25th November. Venue is sought.

AOB

Southgate Church are seeking a CT representation to act as Trustee. They are also planning to celebrate their 50th anniversary at Pentecost 2024 with a special service.

Fair Trade

Pam reported that Bury's Fair Trade status had been renewed. A F.T. coffee morning would be held on 21st October from 10-12.

Date of next meeting **8th January 2024 at Vineyard Church** 28 Northern Way IP32 6NL

The meeting ended at 20:45 with the Grace

Report from DTI (Dreaming the Impossible) Dreamingtheimpossible.org

<u>Challenges our teenagers are facing</u>	Pressure to conform
Identity	No right, no wrong, no rules for me Your truth
Status -Matters	Achievements & Property Exams, Designer clothing Likes on social media, money, houses, cars
Addiction – Digital	Screen time 9 hours a day damaging their minds correlation with poor mental health & self harm Comparison with other people Anxiety and fear regarding the future

This, along with what is happening to our planet is leading to increasing levels of despair and suicide. At times like this we have seen God move. In Asbury University in February there was a sovereign Move of God which is impacting the young people.

We want to be part of that

God's desire for our young people :-

- To know that they are loved
- To raise up sons and daughters to an army for Him
- Not perfection but connection
- For them to linger in His presence
- To spend time in the bible, listening to God
- To live out the gospel day by day
- They live life to the full
- They take His compassion to the hurting world around them.

This is what DTI is all about.

Dreaming the Impossible started 25 years ago as a small youth camp in one small Vineyard Church. Over the years God has allowed it to grow to the extent that this year there was 3500 young people and their youth leaders being served by 500 volunteers. Over 60% of the attendees came from non-vineyard churches. We encourage the bringing of non - Christian friends as we want them to meet God

It lasts for 4 days at the end of July and is held at Staffordshire Showground.

Each church or group has it's own site and leaders who will be expected to feed and pastor their own members. Neighbouring churches can arrange to be camped together and can share responsibilities

The main sessions are held twice a day and are where the children are led in worship, taught from the bible and encouraged to pray for each other and hang out in God's presence leading to an encounter with the Living God which will impact their future lives. In the beginning the volunteers do most of the praying for the children but as they grow in confidence at seeing God move they do it themselves while we oversee the process to ensure that it is done safely and securely.

Seminars are held in smaller groups. There is even a series for the youth leaders.

Plenty of opportunities for play, sports and competitions, film shows even in the rain!

We partner with
24/7 Prayer – prayer room
Scripture Union – Outdoor activities

Safeguarding

We work with Thirtyone:eight to develop our policies

At the centre of how the camp is organised.

Secure site – access and exit controlled.

Every child and volunteer has a personalised bracelet which can be charged with money that can be spent with any of the merchants or food trucks on site.

All adults on site are vetted and visitors/delivery people are escorted on site.

Every adult is expected to wear their badge at all times. On the bracelets of the volunteers is the phone number of the lead safeguarding officer. Several of our volunteer leads are professionals who are there to ensure appropriate care if a serious concern is identified. This is so that no volunteer can be left feeling exposed. Incidentally the volunteers also have their own team pastor if they need help

All Volunteers have a separate campsite and activities and teaching is provided for any younger children that they bring. They are fed by an 18 strong catering team.

Only people who are DBS checked and accredited and trained are allowed access to the campsite or to minister to the children.

Each of the campsite area has a camp host team who are available 24/7. There are also teams who look out for those children who are not engaging with the activities so that they can talk, be supported and be ministered to.

For the autistic children and others who can be overwhelmed there are safe spaces – low stimulation – including in main auditorium.

Chat Room – confidential

Feedback

Multiple testimony sheets recording the way that God has impacted each of the children completing them.

Over 200 new commitments

Over 170 recommitments

This is a challenge to all the churches to nurture our young people so that they can be a light in our local schools. It is aimed at 12 to 18 year olds

If you are a small group why not join with another. I am sure Vineyard would be glad to discuss this with you. Maybe we could take a BSE group having all the young people from the town and villages together, possibly under the auspices of BCY.

More information is available at dreamingtheimpossible.org.

Please check out their you-tube channel where you will find the talks from the main sessions in the last few years. These speakers are able to connect so well with the young people (and their leaders)

Next years DTI is booking for Saturday July 27 to Thursday August 1

Cost £139 (Earlybird £119)

Free places for youth leader of a new group.

Zac, one of the leaders from DTI, will be in Bury St Edmunds at the end of March. Gavin has invited him for the BCY Anniversary Celebration.

SO looking forward to seeing what God will do !

Bury Drop-In report by Robert Green, from last week at the Churches Together meeting.

The trustees and supporters of Bury Drop In are so grateful to local churches for their amazing support, prayers and encouragement. For more information about the drop in please visit burydropin.org

Earlier in the year we published our **Vision and Strategy for 2023-2026** which is available to read on the website 'Hard copies' are also available. God's provision through personal gifts, church and charitable donations, local government support and grants has been outstanding and, though we are in turbulent financial times, Bury Drop In is holding its own financially. We expect challenges in the next three years. We expect our costs to be around £90k in the coming year – which means it costs around **£14.50** to support each of our 120 guest for a week (we think that's an excellent use of resources)

We have an extraordinary team of volunteers, many (not all) of whom are drawn from local churches. They are an amazing team and during the summer we said a big 'thank you' to them at a volunteers' BBQ which was a lovely occasion. Please do consider volunteering if you're not already doing so.

We continue to serve our homeless and vulnerably housed neighbours in partnership with other agencies and supporters to bring practical, emotional, spiritual and medical support to guests. We work particularly closely with the council's Rough Sleeper Team and the NHS Health Outreach Team.

A few notable things to watch out for:

- **8th October 4.30pm at St Edmundsbury Cathedral** a service to celebrate the last 12 months of BDI's ministry. All welcome (invitations have been posted online and by snail-mail – but come anyway!)
- **October/November** – Continued dental care for drop in guests funded by the drop in. This is an amazing project considering how difficult it is for the population in general to get dental care.
- **November 16th** – The drop in will be there for the Christmas lights switch on charity event!
- If churches (and other groups) would like a representative from the drop in to visit, we would love to come and give you more encouragement and information and answer questions.

And finally....

Drop In sessions are on Tuesdays and Fridays 11am-1.30pm at Trinity Methodist Church. We are enormously grateful to Trinity for their partnership in the gospel through the ministry of the drop in.

Grace and peace,

Robert Green

Chairman of Trustees

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