



## **Minutes of Churches Together Meeting and AGM held at the Crypt, St Edmunds Church, on Monday 15th July 2019**

**Present:** Pam Pitts (Cathedral) Mallie Sharpe (St Peter's) David Wakeford (Trinity Methodist) Debbie Borda (Trinity Methodist) Elaine Colechin (URC) Mark Howarth (Thingoe Deanery parishes) Claire Rose ( All Saints) Elaine Green (Quakers) Helen Moore (Southgate) Robert Green (Garland St Baptist Church) Andrew Caldecott (CVM) Eilish Heath (St Edmunds) Andrew and Mary Soman (Westley Community Church) Simon Harvey (St Mary's) Jim Herrington (St Mary's) Jonathan Ford (Christ Church) Regina Collender (St Edmunds) Pansy Bird (Whepstead Baptist Church) Sharon Steven (Whepstead Baptist Church) Wendy Waugh (Whepstead Baptist Church) Catrin Diverres (Trinity Methodist) Richard Shore (Seventh Day Adventist) Miriam Webb (All Saints Church) Sally McDermott (West Suffolk Vineyard) Steven Gray (St John's) Kevin Bullock (West Road Church) Heather Corbell (Horringer Benefice)

1. **Prayer:** HC welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Jim Herrington from St Marys church, who was attending for the first time. She read from Psalm 57, and led the meeting in prayer.
2. **Apologies** were received from Paul Doswell (Salvation Army) and Howard Scott, who sent a report on Christian Aid week, and Sam Chirwa (Mental Health Chaplain), Rosemary Clare and Claire McMillan (Garland St.), Jonathan and Mary Barrett (7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventists), Val Gagen (NBT) Julie Mansfield (St. Edmunds), Duane Hall (BCY), Gerda Tooley (Southgate).
3. **The minutes** had been circulated and were signed as an accurate report by the Chair. HC thanked EH for doing the Minutes.
4. **The annual report** from the chair was circulated and read by HC. She highlighted the main events of the year - the Advent Service, the Week of prayer for Christian Unity, the Study and Share groups, the Good Friday event and the Summer Celebration in the Abbey Gardens. All events attracted a good attendance, some more than others. For Good Friday Improvements will be made to the sound system and encouraging the crowd to move closer to the stage for the event in the Market Square. HC thanked all who had contributed and supported all the various events. Various improvements can be made to the Summer celebration – good for a first effort.

CR offered thanks to Heather for all her hard work, and there was an enthusiastic round of applause and appreciation.

5. CR gave the **financial report**, pointing out that the Summer Celebration costs were similar to the Good Friday Walk of witness, and it is important that the churches be encouraged to make individual donations to cover these.

CR proposed that the annual subscriptions from the churches be increased. Churches with under 25 members to be £40; those with congregations between 35 - 100 increased to £80, and congregations over 100 to be asked to contribute £120. A lively discussion followed with the agreement that any church having difficulty paying their subscription would be treated with discretion; DB saying that these churches would be encouraged to pay what they are able. This was proposed by CR, RG seconded the proposal and it was unanimously accepted.

6. **Election of Officers** - the following were proposed, seconded and elected to serve for the coming year - Heather Corbell as Chair, Eilish Heath as Minute Secretary, Elaine Green as Treasurer and Bob Huddleston as Independent Examiner. CR thanked BH for his willingness to continue as Independent Examiner, and CR will continue to operate the Google Group.

AC will continue as logistics organiser for events, and Nic Wright will continue with the Webpage, Claire Rose will continue to look after the google group.

RG offered a prayer for the newly elected officers, and HC thanked CR for her many years as treasurer, presenting her with a gift and a card on our behalf.

7. HC feels that **Communication** can be erratic and is sometimes disappointed at the responses from churches. There needs to be understanding that events are for whole churches not just reps. Also encourage all to be part of google group, and to know about the web-site. Include Ch. Tog. Events in intercessions in church. RG said that struggling with communication is common to us all, people access information from different sources - church newsletters, pew sheets, website.

AC wondered if people in the churches know their representatives, perhaps wearing an ID badge at church events and services could help. This idea did not get much support, and it was noted that some churches appoint representatives at church AGM's and some volunteer to serve.

8-12 **Review and Forward planning** of public/outreach events - AC outlined the future Ch. Tog. events, especially the **Advent Service** which concludes the Christmas Fayre on 24th November. Planning in advance is very important, and he would welcome help from 3/4 people to share the workload, especially stewarding. Feedback is very useful and helpful in improving all that we do.

9. **Annual Church greeting** – Autumn, date can be difficult so it was decided to go flexible and make it anytime in September/October. SG offered to set up a table of churches and their contacts to exchange a greeting during a service they can mutually arrange. This offer was gratefully accepted.

**Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** begins on Sunday 19th January 2020 with a service at St Mary's which will be led by Simon Harvey. HC said that a speaker has been asked. The usual prayer lunches will take place from 12.30 - 1.30 daily, beginning with the Cathedral on Monday, Garland St on Tuesday, Trinity on Wednesday, St Edmunds on Thursday, URC on Friday and St John's on Saturday. **Good Friday Service and Walk of Witness** is on Friday 10th April 2020 and planning is under way.

**Summer Celebration** - this year's event in the Abbey Gardens was well attended. Thanks was offered to Marcus from SETS and to all those who helped on the day, especially the choirs and the Salvation Army and DB who led the Songs of Praise. The date for 2020 is June 28th and everyone was encouraged to encourage their churches to support it. MH said that that weekend is difficult for some Anglican clergy as it is ordinations weekend.

**World Day of Prayer** in on March 6th next year and services will be held at 10.30 am at St John's and 7.30 pm at Southgate Church.

10. **Share and Study Groups** - HC said that it is part of our mission statement that we share and study the Bible together, and there was discussion as to how this can be done. It was felt that numbers were down this year and this generated much discussion as to changing days and times, perhaps a day conference instead of three evenings, though some felt that a day would be difficult. RC said that the speakers this year had been excellent and had encouraged much discussion among the groups.

11. HC reported that the **Prayer Walking** in the town on Monday afternoons was much appreciated and it is important that we continue to have a praying presence in the town. There was a suggestion that a 'Prayer Gazebo' had in the past been successful, but at present HC will continue with the prayer walks and invites any new ideas to be sent to her.

SH reported that the **Town Memorial Service** would be held at St Mary's on June 14th at 3.00 pm. **Prayer Breakfast** will be at West Rd Church on Saturday 16th November between 8.15am - 9.45.

### 13. **Reports:**

There was no report from Mental Health Chaplaincy as SC was unable to attend.

AC said that **Relevant** meets this Friday at Garland St Elvin Centre for a 'Calypso and BBQ' evening and a new event will be planned for September. [ Now confirmed as 27<sup>th</sup> at WRC ]

Duane sent a message from **BCY** asking for prayer as he in need of rest and recuperation. HC encouraged all to keep BCY Team in prayer.

HS reported by email that **Christian Aid Week** had raised £15,934.11 in collections, and thanked all churches that participated. They will now return to raising funds for the Kenya project aimed at helping children and mothers fighting AIDS and HIV.

**Date of next meeting** was agreed for October 7th. RG will check if Garland St can host the meeting.

**A.O.B.** DW raised the question of summer holidays and families experiencing difficulties with food and wondered if any church in town offers summer lunch clubs to help with this. SM reported that Southgate Church distribute bags of food to those known to be in need and RG said that links with SS and Children's Services could highlight those in need. DB said that Messy Church often can identify families in need also.

AS raised the idea of 'Men's Sheds' to help with loneliness and isolation and invited ideas on how this might be set up.

The meeting closed at 9.35 pm with prayer led by AS and KB.

EH / HC.

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