

Church@thePines AGM Sunday 9th February 2025

Present: Hazel, Brian, EJ, Rev'd Gareth, Indira, George, Beth, Ben, Henrietta, Tamara, Sue, Reg, Linda, Glenys, Jeannie, Tony, Willow (Young Person), Kate, Sarah

Apologies: Pauline, Rev'd Soba and Nava (although they did join us at the very end of the meeting)

Rev'd Gareth opened the meeting with prayer.

Minutes from previous meeting

These had been circulated prior to the meeting and all agreed they were a true record. All in attendance were in favour of accepting those minutes, and Rev'd Gareth signed them during the meeting.

Annual report

Everyone has had sight, one question already raised is to do with the Sponsoring Body – was Churches together in Berkshire, who no longer exist, we are not sure we can answer this question currently, so propose we carry this forward. Everyone present agreed to accept the report as a true record.

Elections

Treasurer – Ben proposed himself, already seconded by Hazel, show of hands for approval, no-one against, Ben is elected as Treasurer again.

Leadership Team

Currently consists of Rev'd Gareth, Rev'd Soba, Hazel, Brian, Pauline, Ben, Linda, Steven, Kate and Sarah. No-one new has stepped forward this time for the leadership team. Rev'd Gareth reminded people to ask Sarah or Brian if they want to get involved.

Treasurers Report

Ben reports good news, after 2 years in deficit we have a surplus of about £760 , primarily an increase in Standing Orders, regular cash giving and the card reader, brought in November 2023, which raised around £1,300, definitely worth the £100 investment. Accounts have now been independently examined, passed and finished.

Sarah asked about the money raised for laptop but not used as we now use the school's laptop set up – Ben confirmed it was around £300 and went into general funds, but could be put towards a new laptop or other item as needed. Ben notes we did donate £,1353 pounds to charity over the year, but if felt needed we could add that money raise towards our charitable giving.

Hazel asks – do we need an external examiner for next year? Ben confirms we use the Methodist Circuit person, happy to continue using her. Rev'd Gareth confirms we are happy to appoint the same person again, all in agreement.

Safeguarding

Beth shares that nothing to add to the report and no questions from anyone present.

GDPR

Brian has sent the report in. Having spoken with Sarah, we have not felt there are any issues, we believe we are very compliant.

Review

Brian addresses the meeting. We are overdue for a review, under the constitution of churches together in Berkshire, as was, or Churches together in England, all LEPs must have a 5 yearly review as to how they are progressing and how they move forward. Our last one was disrupted by Covid. The process is that we as a congregation produce a report of this is where we are, and this is where we believe we are being led by the Holy Spirit. The panel consists of 3 people – 1 independent of no or another denomination, one CofE, one Methodist. So far, we have found an independent person, Rev'd Mike Thomason, a URC Minister, who has good experience of being part of an LEP and reviews. Brian has been given the name of someone from the Methodist Circuit. Rev'd Gareth adds that from the CofE perspective, the Area Dean should conduct, which is due to be Rev'd Gareth himself, so he can not. Then it would be the deanery chair, but he also happens to be church warden at St Michael's, so not appropriate. Therefore, the Area Dean of Windsor and Maidenhead has agreed to conduct the review.

The plan is for Sarah to circulate the report from last year, which can be used as a model for this time around. Then we will ask the 3 people to come together. They will come and sit in on a service, to observe, talk to the congregation, then meet with Rev'd Gareth, Rev'd Soba, the Leadership Team and other interested parties, such as the Head Teacher of the Pines.

They then produce a report, raise any issues, the positive, the negative, and recommendations for how the Church can thrive moving forward. We then get a chance to respond, correct any factual errors. That report goes through to Parish and Circuit and we have to produce an action plan based on the recommendations to then be implemented.

Rev'd Gareth adds from CofE process – the final report goes to the Bishop, with whom the decision lies for whether we continue as an LEP. Sarah asks what the Bishop is looking for – Rev'd Gareth isn't sure, but basically viability, whether still fruitful for the LEP to continue with Anglican involvement.

Church going forward including future structure of the Church

Sarah addresses the meeting, in line with what the Bishop may be looking for, we need to consider if we are to continue as an LEP. About a year ago, we surveyed the congregation, and it was felt that people did enjoy the mix of Methodism and Anglican, do people still feel the same? And do people understand the benefits of an LEP, or what it even means?

EJ shares that when they moved to Bracknell, they really liked the Pines offer, they were looking for CofE, and were happy with the mix at C@P and would like the mix to continue.

Gavin shared, that if we don't continue as an LEP, the risk is we fracture one way or another. He likes that there is a CofE presence, not sure would want to continue here if there wasn't, likes the mix of both, and feels he has learnt things coming to this Church.

Gavin continues, that Rev'd Gareth has brought some traditional CofE things, and being an LEP fits with the inclusive Church part, and welcoming everyone which is such an important part of the vision recently shared.

Sarah thanks EJ and Gavin and thanks Gavin for raising the point about the recently shared vision, which was circulated, she asks if anyone had any thoughts or questions about this, anything that was glaringly wrong, or missing? No-one raises any thoughts.

Rev'd Gareth – it's fair to say that the Bishop will want to see a direction. Rev'd Gareth checks on the process in methodist church and Brian confirms it's similar. Rev'd Gareth continues that what any denomination, they would look at what will the church look like in 5 years or 10 years, how are you looking to carry on doing what you are doing and look at growth. Sarah has been working on taking what was said in that survey done 2 years ago in taking those vision and values and working them into the plan.

Gavin – report should be really positive, thinks they joined just as we were reflecting on the last review, which said we were a little dependent on 1 or 2 people, the report needs to speak really strongly on how that has changed, lots of people are doing roles they weren't doing 5 years ago, and how the Church is supporting that.

Merger

Brian addresses the meeting. We have been talking for a year now about the Circuit merging with another Circuit. We will be merging with HSBC, they are somewhat bigger than our existing Circuit. When Soba and Catherine leave in August of this year, we will be reducing by 1 minister, this might be a risky situation if we are only a 2 minister circuit, whereas if we join with a bigger group, to form an even bigger group, we would have 7 ministers, a much safer situation. The new Superintendent is very dynamic and Brian is sure we will appreciate his leadership. Process now is that almost everything is in place, proposal has gone off to the District Policy Committee, which will continue through the process. On 1st September this year, we will become the "Blackwater Valley Circuit". In terms of day to day activity, worship etc, nothing changes, but it gives us more security in terms of resources.

Rev'd Gareth – worth noting going back to the review, for the Circuit to feed in any thoughts for the next 5 years – anything they would like to add. Brian adds new circuit will have its own vision statement too.

AOB

Pastoral side – Linda raises – what can we do when people disappear – perhaps initially someone putting a card through the door – offering chat etc. Linda can think of separate people who she prays for when notices is missing, worries about them, as a loving, caring Church, something we should be able to do.

Rev'd Gareth says sounds like a great idea – something for the Leadership team to discuss, come up with a plan and come back to you.

Sarah shares that we do hold the details for people and she has checked from a GDPR point of view, her understanding is, and in line with St Michael's, which Rev'd Gareth confirms to be true, we can use our pastoral list, where people have given their contact

details, as a legitimate interest – so a pastoral team can use those details to contact people if we have concerns. Sarah holds the Pastoral List currently. Linda asks about how we collect – Sophia confirms the process – once people have attended our Church on a few occasions we ask them to complete a form, which Sarah then uses to add to the pastoral list (and then destroys), Sarah also asks people, less informally, about being added to the newsletter list and the WhatsApp group.

Circuit Representative

Brian has proposed Sarah for this role, but Sarah asks the meeting if anyone else would be willing to take this up, as she already has a lot to do, Sarah notes you do not have to be a Methodist to take part.

Brians shares that they meet 3 times a year, in the evening, once a year on zoom, a case of attending, and feeding back to our Church, an important role, but not overburdensome. No-one else stands forward for this role, so as Brian had proposed Sarah, seconded by Glenys, no-one against, Sarah is appointed.

Dates for next meetings:

22nd June 2025

October 2025 (date TBC)

February 2025 (date TBC), which will be our next AGM

We closed the meeting by saying the Grace with one another.