

Minutes of the Church Meeting at Goring URC
Saturday 29th March 2025 - At 10.00am in the Church

Welcome: Val G

Devotions: Val C read by Val G. From the Gospel of John and Glory to Glory Lent readings.

Those present: 21 - Apologies 7

Minutes Agreed and Signed

Matters Arising:

No matters arising this month.

Church Family News

- Hilary reported that Denise Woods has passed away aged 99. Her funeral will be 1st May at the Crematorium.
- 2 of our members have fallen, one with a shoulder fracture and one who was admitted to hospital. Three others have experience medical issues.
- Some good news one of our young people passed the driving test first time, congratulations was sent to her.
- Hilary ended her report offering prayers for these folk.

Outreach Group:

- Val C reported that the plans for Holiday at Home are going well. The SS Barringbury will sail on 9th April. There is still availability so please speak to Captain Mary or Galley Chief Val C.
- Other dates for your diaries are - Saturday 26th April from 11am - 2pm is our plant, book, handicrafts, and cake sale. Soup and roll lunch also available.
- May 11th we will celebrate 80 years of VE Day. It will be held on a breakfast Sunday which will be served as usual and then a bring and share lunch after the service. Please bring a plate of food to share together. The lunch will conclude with a Quiz.
- Sompting are hosting the Maundy Thursday Evening Service at 7pm and we are hosting the Good Friday morning service at 10am.

Finance and Hall lettings: Report by Matthew Smith, Treasurer.

Finance group met on 18 March, when I took them through the many and complex issues facing our finances at this time, in some considerable detail – I have since copied the Elders into my briefing paper as they have an oversight responsibility. However, I will spare Church Meeting much of the detail – there is just too much of it – but feel free to ask questions as we go along.

Manse Policy:

I am still waiting for a response from Synod to my email of 24 January – although I understand the matter has been referred to the Synod Trust and await developments. **Questions None.**

How we deal with Manse Income for accounting purposes remains in the balance. It is in our account at the moment.

In the meantime, a new/revised version of the Manse Policy (5th edition) was presented to Synod together on 8 March. The revisions revolve around policies relating to the operation of the Manse Fund rather than the issues I have raised.

The most notable changes are:

- that the Annual Manse Grant has increased to £1.5K Per Annum (from £1K)
- new provisions relating to Pastorate Profile/Calling a Minister
- revised provisions relating to Arrival/Departure of a Minister

None of these will affect us until we are nearer issuing a call! **Questions None.**

Manse:

Cumulative net income from the Manse to 31 December amounted to £14,776.34 and is accumulating at approximately £2K per month. (The net income figure is derived from the underlying accounting figures and not directly discernible from the accounts which we will consider later).

The Renters' Rights Bill currently going through parliament has potentially significant impacts on terminating our rental agreement going forward – this comes up for renewal in May.

Given that we hope to be in a position to call a minister in the next year or so, and having discussed

- the wider implications for Synod's Manse Policy,
- our ability to recover possession of the property,

- the need potentially to do structural works in advance of a minister taking up residence, and
- the consequences of potentially long delays for the Minister and our sister churches who will be issuing the call

Synod and Finance agree that it would be sensible to extend the current tenancy by a fixed/final period of 6 months taking us through to November. Hopefully this will circumvent all the potential pitfalls and enable us to ready the property for the new minister!

We have the option to increase the rent upon renewal but as the suggested increase is only £25 per month Finance recommend no increase. **Questions none**

Approved by CM that we renew the tenancy for a fixed period of 6 months without any rent increase.

Property/Quinquennial Survey:

I provided Finance group with a broad overview of where we are on our 5 year plan to address the issues raised by the survey. A lot of progress has been made with some relatively minor actions outstanding to complete our Year 1 objectives – I will provide a fuller report (possibly at the May Church Meeting)

Heating: Thanks to Paul the heating issues have now been resolved – we (me especially) continue to learn the more subtle nuances of the system and hope for better performance next winter.

Pointing: Pointing work has been scheduled for 16/17 April (weather permitting) – I will put a notice in Welcome warning of the possible impacts on traffic flow – we all need to be mindful of our responsibilities to safeguard the workers. **Questions none**

Sanctuary Windows: Graham and I have met and agreed the way forward in broad terms and identified some of the side issues we are likely to meet along the way. Graham is already in contact with 1 builder, as well as exploring another option which has come to light – best to leave no stone unturned.

We will very much be working together on the project and have no illusions about its scale and the potential timespan involved – it could very well take until 2026 to get to the implementation phase. We will keep Church Meeting advised of progress. **Questions none** Graham added he is in touch with local builders and is looking into a renovation company to replace glass.

Kitchen: Val Cooper's Synod Grant application for the proposed new Kitchen area in the Sanctuary has been deferred by the Strategic Mission Fund panel, as not coming under their remit, and referred instead to the Synod Property Officer. I will need to put in an application to the Buildings & Loans Panel in due course. In the meantime, I have asked Val to revisit the details and obtain appropriate "written" quotes to support the application. Ballpark costs are possibly in the region of £7.5k with funds currently available of £3.7K, from the O&E fund.

Fire Alarm System: It has been brought to our attention that there is legal requirement to have a sitewide automated system in place because of the constraints Little Fishes are required to work under - it would also be best practice from the hall lettings perspective. Having taken advice from Synod, who have confirmed the responsibility rests with the Church, we are seeking to have a professional fire safety survey and risk assessment conducted. Once we have the report we will consider the best way forward and report back to Church Meeting.

This will qualify for Synod support and I will make the necessary grants and claims application in due course. **Questions none**

Decorating: I had hoped to arrange the external decoration work (previously approved by Church Meeting) to take place during the Easter break but this has not proven possible. Instead, the work will be conducted during half term at the end of May – again I will arrange a suitable notice in Welcome nearer the time.

I propose bringing decoration of the kitchen forward from Year 3 of our plan, because of the spread of mould, as a H&S issue – I have received a quote for £1,014 from Dan Boiling who will endeavour to do this in the same half term week. As the cost exceeds Property's £1k authorisation limit I would ask Church Meeting's approval to accept this quote,

An issue has arisen with the decorating at the back of the stage which looks like damp. It is too high to be rising damp, so I will have a word with Ace Wall Ties when they are on site to check the pointing in this area and remedy as necessary. Again, I have asked for a quote but this work will be left in abeyance until after pointing and external decoration are complete – a suitable space of time will then be required to allow the wall to fully dry out. **Questions none & approved by CM**

Finance:

2024 Accounts. I'm afraid that I need to postpone presentation of the accounts until the next meeting. I have to thank Alan Westcott for spotting a minor discrepancy of £24.84 on Page 4 of the accounts. I have bottomed out the underlying error which necessitates corrections on Pages 2, 4 & 5 of the accounts. I am uncomfortable of asking the meeting to approve the accounts in their present form. I will explain the detail to Finance group at a suitable opportunity and advise the independent Examiner of the changes. Revised accounts will be recirculated in due course and ahead of the May Church Meeting.

The headline results (see Note 4 on Page 2) are unaffected except that our overall net Assets position reduces by £24.84.

Utilities: A reminder that our new 1 year contract for Electricity commenced on 1 October with Smartest Energy. Since then, we have recently secured a 2 year contract with Eon Next for 2 years commencing 1 October 2025 - 2027

The new 3year contract for Gas was due to commence 1 November. However, the previous supplier British Gas Lite rejected the transfer request, claiming the contract runs to 26 November! We are not sure where they get this date from. However, our Broker has squared things with the new supplier EOn and they have provided supply from 27 November. This should have a transitional benefit, given the new contract is more than double the BG Lite costs!

Our total energy costs will, as a result, fall from a high of £7.75K in 2024 to approximately £7.35K in 2025 and £6.9K in 2026 – still well above what we were paying pre Covid. Needless to say actual usage costs may vary, but the rates are tied in until the autumn of 2027 – hopefully the markets may move in our favour on the meantime. Also the replacement windows should produce a benefit once in place.

Water. I have just signed off on a new 3 year contract with Everflow, locking us in to the same wholesale rates, which are non-negotiable, but at reduced fixed rate “retail charges” which will see an annual saving of £187.51 – every little helps! **Questions none**

Hall Letting Rates:

Taking into account of the welcome £5.3K increase in Hall Letting Income in 2024 and the generally healthy state of our finances weighed against the financial challenges arising from the Sanctuary Windows and Quinquennial Survey – as yet unquantifiable - we have concluded that there is no present justification for a rates increase this year. We will, of course, be able to review again next year as the current variables are hopefully resolved and greater clarity emerges.

Questions none

Hall Letting

Nothing further to report at this time. Wilma did give a reminder that she has advised hirers to lock the doors and now asks key holders in the church to do the same. All folk are to double check this is done. This is for the church and its buildings to always be secure.

Synod and Sassa meetings:

Notes on the Sassa meeting at Crawley URC in February attended by Val C and Val G;

- Meeting chaired by Rev Helen Higgin-Botham for the last time. She retires in September. Rev Ann Lewitt will chair the next meeting in June. Denise Woodhatch will also retire in June
- Pagham URC voted to close the church in November following the retirement of Rev Helen H-B. in September.
- They have a very small membership of elderly people and they felt it was time to close.
- The list for the redistribution of property will be available nearer the time.

- Deployment of Ministry ... there is a group of churches on the Sussex/Kent boarder who are above us on the list (Goring Sompting and Emmanuel) for a minister which means we will probably not see a minister before 2026.
- The meeting reported that any church putting AV into their building can call on Ian from Banstead URC for his professional help there will be a fee for him.
- The new Training and Development Officer and Training Consultant a report will be at the Synod meeting later in these minutes.
- Good News Stories:- Came from Marsh Green, Horsham, Crawley and us when we reported new members have been welcomed into the church and that people have enjoyed the variety of services we experience with our visiting speakers.
- Next SASSA meeting in June 2025.

Notes on the Synod meeting: East Croydon URC on 8th March attended by Val C & Val G

- The theme was 'Welcome the Team' Chaired by Rev Russell Furley-Smith in place of Rev Bridget who was unwell which was unfortunate because she wished to share the happy news of her engagement to Margot.
- Opening Worship was led by Rev Memona Shabaz, who expressed her gratitude to the URC for allowing her to be a minister; as women are not allowed to be ministers in Pakistan, she also asked for joy, happiness and to work together in unity
- A number of proposals was sent out prior to the meeting for us to read, after much discussion some were passed.
- Then proposal for the Centres of Education was discussed at length because they are struggling financially when there is several million pounds in the URC family pot. The situation was discussed at length and another proposal had to be added. The discussion and decisions took a very long time.
- The new members of the Synod team were introduced: Mark Rigby, Ian Moore, Jo Patterson and Charissa Hunter-Clump take over from Martin Hayward who is now Synod Clerk and Andy Twilley who returned to the Baptist Church.
- Elders training was announced 'Leadership and Spirituality' to be held in the North Downs Group in October or November (to be confirmed).
- The Synod meeting close at 1.20pm just 20 minutes late - with prayer led by the Chair.

The Church Meeting ended at 12noon approx. and Val G led us in prayer
by sharing of the Grace.

The next meeting is at 7pm in the Church - Thursday 22nd May 2025

Signed byVal Gill - 22nd May 2025.