

GURC Church Meeting. 26th May 2022

19 members plus minister present - 11 apologies

Devotions led by Ryan Thomas

Minutes of previous meeting agreed and signed by Revd. Sellwood.

Matters arising.

Safeguarding. Rosemary Terry gave an update.

The church safeguarding policy has now been updated and signed off. This is displayed in the Cornwall room and main hall. A copy of this was distributed to members at the meeting.

Thanks were offered to Graham Redman for his help in putting this document on the website and App which is due to go live soon.

All contact details are up to date and the safeguarding email address and mobile phone number are now up and running.

Unfortunately, it will not be possible to have face to face safeguarding training in the church, but these sessions will be organised on an area and Synod level. Rosemary will investigate this.

Kestro.

This situation is ongoing and is a work in progress.

Rosemary acknowledged her difficult position as the Safeguarding lead. She is working closely with Synod and Kestro, as well as with Matthew and Wilma Smith with regards to hall lettings.

Rosemary requested that any church members who come across hearsay that the church does not want Kestro to continue please stress this is inaccurate and that we are working towards a satisfactory outcome.

Rev Andrew Sellwood stated his appreciation for the work Rosemary is doing on behalf of the church in this challenging task.

Agenda items

Church family news. Hilary Redman.

The meeting shared news of the fellowship. No special needs at the moment and those in the family who have been unwell are now recovering

We remembered those in the church family who have not yet returned to worship with us in person but are joining via the streaming service.

News was also shared of new visitors to our services.

The meeting stood in remembrance of Gordon Brunton who passed away on 22nd April and Doris Baker who passed away on 8th May. Funeral details were given for the latter.

Issues to be discussed. Valerie Cooper.

Church members were invited via Welcome last week to bring any concerns to be discussed at the meeting. One issue was raised around church cleaning. Matthew Smith confirmed the cleaners work two hours on a Monday morning to clean the Halls, kitchen and main areas and one hour on Thursday to clean the Sanctuary. Matthew informed the meeting there has recently been a review with the manager Gemma who subsequently organised a Deep clean. It was acknowledged the situation was not perfect but that alternatives would have implications around cost, sourcing a provider and value for money.

Valerie Cooper noted the cleaners had recently been seen cleaning the kitchen on a Sunday morning and that Mini Fishes have reported the floors being in a bad state.

Use of Face Coverings. Matthew Smith.

The church has been following the recommendations of the Moderators meeting around face covering in church. This is not a legal requirement but a personal choice.

It was noted that less people are now wearing face coverings in church and that these are removed to share coffee time. Matthew suggested we change our wording to people being welcome to wear a face covering if they wish but that we are not encouraging them to do so.

Arrangement of chairs and position of Aisle. Valerie Cooper.

A discussion was had regarding the positioning of chairs and the Aisle and the rationale for this. It was considered by the Elders to give a more relaxed and informal first impression to any new visitors and was felt to be more inclusive.

It was acknowledged that we are fortunate to have flexibility with the layout of the Sanctuary which can be changed for events such as Weddings and Funerals. The members were advised that this has been previously discussed in church meeting at the time the central aisle carpet was removed. This was pre Covid.

Various opinions were raised around how this impacts on church members and it was noted some may not be happy with the current layout. It is a subjective issue, but Elders are suggesting flexibility of layout is for the greater good.

Bett Swierk confirmed she has checked that the layout does conform to fire regulations.

Complaints Procedure.

In line with URC guidelines the meeting was advised that any complaints should firstly be taken to the Church secretary and NOT the Minister. If these complaints are regarding either the Elders or Minister they should go to Synod Pastoral committee.

Four people will then be appointed to investigate any complaints.

Matthew Smith reminded the meeting of the promises they make to support the elected Elders in their role and that it is not helpful or supportive to have the Elders in the firing line. He also reminded the church we should be looking forward, not looking back.

Andrew's time

Andrew reiterated what Matthew had said, adding we have a very good Eldership currently who have been subjected to much criticism and personal attack. Andrew stated his sadness that some of our fellowship are involved in this ungracious activity.

Andrew reminded us that before the Covid Lockdown the Church was planning how we could develop a mission field in the new housing estate, thinking about opportunities and considering getting a CRCW to help. We also looked at redeveloping our church interior to be more attractive and welcoming. Covid may have led people to think more of themselves than others and stressed the need to break out of this self-centredness.

Andrew also asked if the time of lockdown and Covid had somehow made the church more inward looking in light of current discussions and described how claustrophobic this felt to him. He stressed the importance of not going back to pre-vision times and we need to face the challenge and look for growth of the Kingdom of God in this place, not favouring our own limited wishes.

Andrew reported on the progress of Sompting URC (our sister church) and the Grace Spaces project, developing a community garden. This is building relationships with the local community, working together, an example of outward looking. Andrew asked the meeting what we can do in Goring URC. Engage with the outside world and share our great message or are we happy to stay as we are and diminish. We need to move away from our own agendas as this is not what God wants for us, His vision is much larger than ours.

Once Andrew has retired in June 2023 the church will be in a time of interregnum and may not have a minister for 4-5 years. The Elders are already taking on more responsibility and this will increase in the absence of a minister. The role of the Eldership has changed and is very different to how it was even five years ago. They have more accountability as trustees of the church and a legal responsibility under the Charitable commission.

Andrew asked the meeting to look after the Elders and asked the Elders to ensure they communicate efficiently with the church.

Matthew Smith added to this stating the Elders are doing what is absolutely essential. They are putting in a great deal of work and that once these plans are in place and agreed, it should not be necessary to re-visit them.

Group Reports

Finance and Hall lettings. Matthew Smith.

Accounts signed off by Munro Wightman. These were approved and carried by the meeting. Thanks were given to Munro.

Youth group funds to be amalgamated with children's work funds and retitled 'Children and Youth work'. The designated fund status is maintained but allows some flexibility of use in the future.

This was agreed and carried by the meeting.

Hall lettings. One booking lost. Wednesdays and Thursdays the halls are vacant. Anyone interested in hiring please contact Matthew and Wilma.

Gift Day will be Sunday 5th June, Pentecost

Property. Bett Swierk.

Property and outreach groups are looking to replace the outside notice board with one that is easier and safer to access.

Outreach. Valerie Cooper.

Mini fishes have now settled to around 25-30 families attending. More offers of help with this are needed please.

Coffee and cake grew to double figures last week. They plan to move outside when the weather allows.

20 ladies enjoyed a meal at the North Star recently and a Men's meal is being planned.

Skittles evening is booked for 25th June at The Spur in Slindon. Please add names to list at back of church.

A barn dance is planned for 8th October.

Due to low numbers and a small team, Messy Church will not be continuing. The families that attended enjoyed their time and were given a bible.

The church meeting gave their agreement to a proposal to hold a weeknight praise evening, probably on the last Thursday of the month. This will initially use Worship Lyric Video music.

Craft club continues on the first Saturday of the month from 9:30 -12:30

AOB.

An invite is extended to us from Revd Helen Higgin-Botham to a Synod Together meeting at Crawley URC on 11th June. Caroline Hibbs will be attending. Anyone else is welcome to join her.

Sussex Synod, a letter invites young families to help write and prepare Advent material. Tickets can be obtained via Eventbrite.

Welcome Editors needed!

Requested by Wilfred Rhodes (who was not at the meeting). More editors are required to join the rota please to share the load.

Date of next meeting. Thursday 28th July at 7:30 pm

The meeting ended in prayer and the sharing of the Grace