

Minutes of the Church Meeting at Goring URC
25th March 2023, 10.30

Welcome: Andrew

Devotions: Rosemary

Those present: 25 approx Apologies 6

Minutes of meeting agreed and signed

Matters arising:

Safeguarding Training:

Rosemary reported that some are not happy to undergo safeguarding training, she reiterated that it is a strict requirement of the URC and that we are expected to undertake the training. Safeguarding is part of our ministry. We do understand the negative reaction for the training that is so far away from home but Mary has an option that will make it easier to complete. She said there is a foundation module online which everyone can do at home; it will raise awareness of the need for safeguarding and why. Whatever volunteer rolls we undertake we need to know what situations that may occur and what we can do about them. These issues need to be reported and addressed remembering this is a URC directive.

Mary quoted John 13:34,35 - Safeguarding is part of looking after and loving each other. The course online takes about 1½ hours following the directions and it can be done in your own time and not necessarily all at once. Mary also quoted other methods to complete the training. If you have queries please refer to both Rosemary or Mary who are here to help you.

Andrew thanked them for their work and reiterated the importance of doing the training and asking for help.

Church Family News:

Hilary shared news of the fellowship and those whom we should keep in our prayers.

Andrews Time:

- Andrew reported that plans are being made as to how we continue after he has retired with a new way for the interregnum. A Visionary Companion will guide us through; discussion of this will be deferred to the next meeting.
- With regard to this Andrew told the Church meeting that an Elders Day has been arranged for 22nd April and will be reported at the next CM.
- Maundy Thursday Service is confirmed as 7pm, it will begin with communion and readings referencing the Passion and the church will have a different layout. Sompting has been invited to join us.
- Review of the serving of Communion, it was reported that the Elders are happy with how it is currently done as are many others in the fellowship.

Finance:

- The Finance committee met on 20th March
- Cleaning, there has been a change in arrangements. The cleaning duty is now done by Paul Redman, who is doing an extremely good job and Matthew said it is hoped that it will remain but depends on Paul's Work/life balance.
- This years accounts will be presented at the next church meeting in May.

- Electric Contract, Matthew has signed a up for a years contract with YU Energy and it will be reviewed again next year to minimise any financial risk, The meeting agreed to this measure.
- Investments, we have changed where our investments are kept as Synod advised that the fund we currently hold will close on 30th April. This we have done as it reduces our exposure to loss. The meeting agreed to this being done.
- Hall hire rates, the rates for hire have been raised by £1 per hour and the rates will be reviewed again next year if gas prices rise significantly, again the Meeting agreed. There is a list of rates attached.

Property:

- Paul Redman, a survey has been completed for Insurance. There are works to be done, Water Ingress, Windows need to be replaced in the Sanctuary and the toilets off the vestibule and pointing of brickwork. Paul reported that we need 2 quotes for anything to be done and its difficult to get replies. It is intended we do the work piecemeal beginning with the toilets at a spend of around £2000. The Meeting Agreed.
- The 5 MPH speed limit signs have been put as it is dangerous to drive any faster with the potential of children in and out of Little Fishes.
- It was suggested that a notice for the one way system round the church should be put up but it was said that no-one reads them.
- If anyone finds anything broken or in need of attention please let Paul know and he will deal with it.

Outreach:

- Coffee and Cake is going well with nearly 20 regulars
- Leprosy Mission Coffee morning raised around £80
- Next coffee mornings are 12th May for Christian Aid and a Quiz in aid of Christian Aid will be held on 20th May 3-5pm
- Recent GLAD meal attended by 20 ladies with some new faces, next one May/June, TBC.
- Next Barn Dance 16th September.
- There will be a bring and Share Lunch after 7th May Service to celebrate the Coronation and another on 18th June after Andrews last service as our Minister.
- Mini Fishes, are desperate for volunteers please prayerfully consider if you are able to help. This is a very strong group that is of great value.
- Shoe boxes, Bett asked the meeting if they want to continue with this important outreach. Andrew said this is a great ministry to which the meeting agreed therefore a list will be in the April Welcome etc.

Synod Together Report:

Giles, who made the report, and others from our church attended the meeting, the following is relevant for us:-

‘Some time was spent learning about the role of Visionary Companions, who would help local churches decide on their mission and vision for the future after the departure of a minister taking into account the God given skills of church members. Once all these had been decided a team would be created to report to the Pastoral Committee with a view to appointing an Interim Moderator to help create a profile for a Vacancy List.’

The rest of the report is attached as Appendix 1.

Notices and correspondence:

- The latest Mission and Vision newsletter is at the back of the church.
- For information, news of a URC Big climate protest is at the back of the church.
- Also Ruth and Mamy's newsletter.

Any other business:

- Ruth and Mamy are not retiring yet, they are moving to their new home in North Wales and Ruth will be working from home for at least a year. They still need prayerful and financial support and it was agreed at the meeting that this should continue, it was noted that the amount is the same as it has always been and perhaps should be revised. Matthew will deal with the review.
- Lighting: We do not always need electric lights on during the day in such a bright and airy church. Therefore its been agreed that we do not put lights on unnecessarily. In the Hall the lighting is still the same strip lights and it may be prudent to update them.
- ECO grants are available from Synod but only till the end of 2023.

Next Meeting Saturday 25th May 2023 at 10.30am
Meeting ended at 11.55 with prayer and sharing the Grace.

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Signed By Rev Andrew Sellwood on 25th May 2023

APPENDIX 1
**Report for GURC on Synod Together
Meeting 11 March 2023
Brighthelm Centre, Brighton**

On Saturday 11 March I attended the Synod Together meeting held at the Brighthelm Centre URC in Brighton. After a welcome to those who were attending in-person and the opening worship, led by West Thamesmead Pioneer Ministry, we were welcomed to the formal meeting by the Moderator, the Reverend Bridget Banks, who dealt with Pastoralia after the minutes of the meeting on 9 October 2022 had been unanimously agreed.

Various Synod papers were dealt with in fairly short order. From the Synod council report we were told that each Synod Area would be holding a "Prayer Day" centred on the theme of "Listening" when we could come to listen for God's guiding voice. In listening to this "collective" voice from the different Synod Areas, we hear a prophetic voice in ways which we hope will enable the "synod" to grow stronger in faith and purpose.

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The pilot Energy Audit of church premises has been paused because the reports proved not particularly helpful for the average local property convenor. Synod is now looking for other more realistic ways in which churches can act on the path to reduce their carbon footprint. The target date for reaching net zero emissions has been moved from 2025 to 2030. To reach this goal it is proposed that each church will produce a self-assessment checklist of practical options to assist in embarking on the road to reducing their carbon footprint. Grants will be available from Synod until 31 December 2023. Churches should aim to become Eco-churches. Manses would be upgraded during vacancies.

On Finance the Treasurer thanked all those responsible for the effort put into submitting M&M reports. He was pleased to report that the 2023 payment to reduce the deficit on the Pension Scheme had been paid in October 2022. In order to ensure that accounts and M&M reports were submitted on time the Treasurer recommended that church treasurers should attend governance meetings.

In the report on the work of the Children and Youth Committee it was mentioned that groups from Germany and France will be holding a holiday in the Lea Valley from 12-19 August. The cost of taking part in the holiday is £95.00. The Youth Assembly had discussed many topics relevant to local churches including the provision of a substance abuse resource, a Warm Space, a quiet space in church, inter-church support and on-line courses on mental health. There are already some dates for the last item.

Shortly before the lunch break the Revds Sally and Andy Willett told us enthusiastically about their work establishing a church in West Thamesmead. Starting from scratch they had walked around the area talking to people, invited people to drop in for coffee and a chat, stood outside a petrol filling station and in local streets. As people became involved they managed to hire a school where Messy church and the Harvest festival were popular. Other activities included street evangelism with the local police on Saturday nights, an Open air Nativity and Easter fun in a local park.

During a discussion on new and retiring ministers the Moderator thanked Andrew Sellwood among others for their services to their churches. Jacob Bali gave his account of work as a Special Category Minister. Joseph sees it as his duty, independent of local churches to make people aware of faith and show them it is possible to have faith in their everyday lives.

After lunch we were shown a video entitled the "Legacy of Slavery". This gave examples of racism experienced by members of the black community in the UK and of the way URC churches had acted to overcome the problems, including a confession from the URC and an apology for slavery. The video posed the question, " What could or should local and the wider church do to become an anti-racist church?" One delegate queried why the video did not deal with the question of black on brown racism. This brought the meeting to a close with a final act of worship.

The next meeting is scheduled for 21 October 2023 at St Mary Cray in Kent.
Giles Wilson, Synod Together representative.

