

Minutes of

Partnership AGM (P-AGM) and CofE Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)

at HTS. Thu 18 May 2023, 7:30pm

1. Welcome

Clive welcomed those in the room and urged folk to sign up their attendance and register apologies as appropriate

Present:

Rev Capt Clive Deverell (co chair), Rev Shirlyn Toppin (Upper Thames Circuit), Heather Benn (Open the Book lead)

And from HTS: Linda Nicholas, Janet Clarke, Christine Rogers, Wendy Dukes

And from St Mary's: Jacqueline Kirwan, Pat Watson, Ed Poole, Mary Poole, Wendy Deverell, Peter Roslyk (co chair)

And from Toothill: Mike Black, Rachel Dowling, Mark Dowling, Rev Mark Tidey

And from Westlea: Pete Gilder, Chris Scarisbrick, Pam Ray

Apologies from: Angela Mak. Rebecca and Steve Kershaw, Neema Mariya, Bob Nicholas, Lyn Morgan, Peter Rogers, Mark Taylor.

Advance papers for the meeting were available online at

<https://wswinyd.org.uk/council/report/> as will be these minutes (eventually)

Looking Back at 2022

Note the minutes of last year's P-AGM, along with corrected central account balance, and the consolidated inspected accounts (for the year 2021) were agreed as accurate at a PC Meeting 13 June 2022. So we didn't need to go over them again here. Available at

<https://wswinyd.org.uk/council/report/>

2. Presentation of Partnership Annual Report for 2022

Chris highlighted some growing risks, limited admin and management resources (people), slowly declining membership numbers, denominational support for LEPs.

Chris highlighted results from our areas of focus in 2022 - Our mission focus we assess as healthy, with Messy Church continuing and a growing Open the Book schools team. We advertised for a children's worker with no response. We need a rethink this year, certainly need to pray, following up college contacts looking for alumni, advertising in more places, carefully considering what sort of person is needed to take the role, and being more focussed with the role description. It was suggested we consider sharing the post with another church. It was pointed out this need is urgent. The Exec will have this re-think on the agenda at their next meeting **Action Exec**

Our focus on admin and management didn't result in any significant improvement last year. We have handed over the office to HTS, and reduced some overhead costs, but most admin still falls on the clergy and the Exec. We need to consider further actions this year too.

Chris highlighted that some of our local churches have reduced attendance on Sunday and we may be still struggling to recover numbers after Covid

We need foundation governors for Oliver Tomkins Schools. Carefully consider and talk to Clive **Action All**

Motion: That the Partnership Annual Report be accepted.

Subject to the addition of correct, checked, figures from the accountants, in the financial statement...and the correction of membership number for HTS (should be 21) and a brief mention that the partnership office has been handed to HTS...**Action Chris**

Agreed

Needs a further corrected and completed draft – for next PC

3. Presentation of Partnership Central Account for 2022

Pam presented the Statement of financial activities and balance for 2022. We are still digging into our reserves, another example of our sustainability issue.

It was pointed out the date was wrong on the first page. The description of the children's worker fund is marked as Youth in a couple of places. This will be corrected. **Action Chris.** After Pam explained how difficult it is to manage the bank accounts held at CAFbank, it was suggested we change banks. This seems like a possible action for our incoming treasurer (eventually)

The partnership holds the Toothill Youth fund, though simply as a column in the ledger, not in a separate account. There have been queries this year about the amount still held, partnership records have been hard to locate. Mike Black said he had the record of transactions and will provide the figure to Pam.

It was asked if any of the donation of £84006 for a children's worker was subject to Gift Aid. It is. The claim will be actioned as soon as feasible, **Action Exec** (probably during the treasurer's hand over).

Motion: That the Partnership Central Accounts be accepted

Subject to corrections above. **Agreed**

4. The Consolidated Partnership Accounts for 2022

...are not yet available. Inspection is ongoing.

Motion: That the Partnership Consolidated Accounts be accepted by the PC at the first available opportunity

Motion: A Vote of Thanks for our accounts' inspector James Gare and especially Heather Weeks at Monahan's for their ongoing work on the 2022 figures.

Motion to appoint James Gare at Monahan's as inspector for 2023 accounts.

All Agreed

5. Prayer of thanks for 2022

Mark Tidey led us in prayer

Looking Forward to the rest of 2023

6. Budget (Exec)

Chris and Pam presented our latest budget for 2023. Its subject to change... It shows the planned deficit this year, the same as last. This is not sustainable in the long term. The budget has been useful so far this year but cannot be agreed here, will be revisited, and agreed, when the final, consolidated, accounts are available.

There are two items to highlight. Our savings account of approx. £20,000 doesn't appear on the balance sheet for 2022, nor on the budget for 2023, though will be consolidated. We have a long standing dept of £10,000 due to the Methodist Circuit, which we intend to pay back this year.

7. Areas of focus for 2023, proposed by PC

- Reinforce our childrens work – appoint a childrens worker
- We need to become sustainable and resilient, so administration needs reenergising. Support for committees and Sunday services.
- We need to become sustainable and resilient Support people who are available to serve during the week.
- Review constitution and ensure it is fit for purpose in the context of discussions about ecumenism and clergy appointments.

Vigorous discussion ensued about the appointment process. The meeting was disappointed by the lack of progress, and strongly stressed the urgency of this work.

There was also significant discussion about the last one.

Shirlyn and Clive explained that the denominations face challenges in appointing clergy and with ecumenism no longer being a priority, they are unlikely to be able to find a successor for Clive, when he retires in 2026. The challenges have been discussed at CofE Diocese, Methodist District and URC Synod level. The issue is common in other local ecumenical contexts too.

There is a proposal to dissolve the formal single-congregation LEP here allowing us to continue in partnership without the formality constraining the 4 denominations. The timescale is to have this done by Sept 2025.

One way this might happen would be for each local church take membership of a single denomination. This might be tricky to navigate. It was pointed out that many folk value membership of multiple denominations. Worship input from, and the legacy of multiple denominations is an important part of our local culture. This transition from formality to informality will need to be carefully planned, communicated, considered and agreed. And is not likely to be a quick process. There will be much praying, learning, listening and consulting to do.

A formal announcement is planned for the joint service on 4 June, we'll need to have settled on a date for a whole partnership meeting on this issue. The Exec will meet as soon as possible on this and start to plan process and communications. **Action Exec.**

Clive was keen to express that this could be valuable new-beginning. Amongst other aspects, he'd be keen to split the West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze parish into two (of a more "normal" size) allowing the possibility of a Toothill parish obtaining more financial support. He has committed to resolving this before he retires, and continuing here until June 2026.

We decided to re-word the last focus area, in the context of discussions about ecumenism and clergy appointments.

- Work towards a new beginning for our partnership, becoming fit for purpose.

8. Renew our commitment to our policies

Full texts at <https://WSwinLyd.org.uk/council/policy>

The meeting read through the summary policy statements

Accessibility

We believe that all people should have an equal opportunity to experience the love of God, to grow spiritually, and to participate in worship and share fully in the life of the Church.

Domestic Abuse

All forms of domestic abuse are wrong and must stop. We are committed to promoting and supporting environments which:

- ensure that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse;
- protect those vulnerable to domestic abuse from actual or potential harm;

Health and Safety

We will:

- provide adequate control of the health and safety risks arising from our activities;
- consult with our employees, members, volunteers and visitors, on matters affecting their health and safety;

Privacy

We will collect personal information only as necessary. We will store such information securely. We will use such information only for the purposes for which it was given.

Safeguarding

This church is committed to the safeguarding of children and adults at risk, and to ensuring their well-being.

- We believe that all children and adults at risk should know that they are valued within the church and safely enjoy and have access to every aspect of the life of our place of worship.
- We recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent the physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect of children under 18 years of age.
- We recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent the physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, financial, discriminatory abuse and neglect of adults at risk.

Motion: That we re-affirm our Accessibility, Domestic Abuse, Health and Safety, Privacy, and Safeguarding policies.

All Agreed

9. Elections to Partnership Council

From HTS: Janet Clarke, Angela Mak (ex off), Wendy Dukes (ex off), Linda Nicholas (ex off)

From St Marys: Pat Watson (ex off), Jacqueline Kirwan (ex off)

From Toothill: Rev Mark Tidey, Mike Black

From Westlea: Peter Gilder, Chris Scarisbrick

Ex-officio, likely to be co-opted or honoured friends: Heather Benn, Rev Trevor Day, Rev Capt. Clive Deverell, Rev Gerald England, Pete Rogers, Rev Shirlyn Toppin

10. Partnership posts – Treasurer, Safeguarding lead

Treasurer: Neema Mariya

Secretary: Chris Scarisbrick

Safeguarding lead: Chris and Julie Scarisbrick

All agreed

Chris proposed a vote of thanks for Pam, for taking up the treasurer role short term and holding it long term, and to Peter for taking on the role of Chair when we needed one.

Agreed

Chair of PC: There were no nominations at the meeting. Soon afterwards Mark Dowling volunteered. This proposal is acceptable to the Exec, and was sent by email to those in the room at the AGM. There were no objections after a week.

Mark Dowling is elected as PC chair

11. Denomination Points of Contact (reps)

West of England Baptist Assoc: Janet Clarke

CofE Swindon Deanery Synod: Dr. Angela Mak. Bristol Diocese: Rev Mark Tidey

Methodist Upper Thames Circuit: Mark Dowling

URC South Western Synod: David Hoar

12. CofE specific posts

Churchwardens

At HTS: Wendy Dukes, Linda Nicholas

At St Marys: Pat Watson, Jacqueline Kirwan

Those authorised to assist at CofE communion

At HTS: Janet Clarke, Wendy Dukes, Steve Kershaw, Angela Mak, Linda Nicholas, Robert Nicholas, Peter Rogers, Mark Taylor

At St Marys: Andy Bissex, Pauline Bowler, Wendy Deverell, Jacqueline Kirwan, Pat Watson

At Toothill: Mark Dowling, Rachel Dowling, Tony Fairfoull, David Hoar, Nicola Hoar

At Westlea: Pete Gilder, Wilson Javaid, Chris Scarisbrick, Richard Williams

Read banns

At St Marys: Cof E clergy + Lis Arnold, Wendy Deverell, Jacqueline Kirwan, Pat Watson

CofE fees for occasional offices

These were circulated, as revised on 1 March 2023 [Link to full fee schedule](#)

Agreed

13. Close in prayer

Peter Roslyk led us in prayer