

## **THE FINANCIAL POSITION AND POLICY OF CHURCHES TOGETHER IN HARBOROUGH**

A number of matters were raised at the AGM on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2019 and the following proposal adopted: 'that the Treasurer be instructed ... to prepare a response / report reflecting the desire of the meeting to ensure that our charities are more reliably supported.'

On 10<sup>th</sup> June the Executive met to consider these matters and agreed to prepare an initial response as follows:

### **END OF YEAR BALANCE**

At the meeting it was noted that a closing balance of **£3,176.09** was reported for the financial year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. With the meeting of expenses for our Good Friday event we are able to report that on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2019 the balance stands at **£2,579.73**. This includes £100 still to be distributed between our three charities from a special event.

As reported to the Meeting, CTH is responsible for underwriting some activities each year. It is the view of the Executive that £2,500 is an appropriate balance to maintain for this purpose and that it would be unwise to allow our reserve to fall significantly below this figure.

So far it has proved possible to maintain such a balance with the level of subscriptions currently agreed. Naturally we have no wish to build up a balance significantly greater than required, but that is not the position at present.

### **'DONATIONS FROM THE BUDGET'**

This phrase appears in the AGM minutes (page 3, line 9) in what we hope is a faithful summary report of the points made by Rev Andy Murphy.

It is our view that the difficulty we all experienced at the meeting in dealing with this matter more concisely rests on the fact that two different matters were being conflated and as a result were perhaps being discussed interchangeably.

#### **a) Donations**

It has been and continues to be the practice of Churches Together in Harborough to disburse equally between HYACT, the Bower House and Street Pastors any sums raised through special collections at our joint events.

However, it is normally the case for those events to be hosted by one of the member churches and the decision as to whether such a collection is taken up properly belongs to that host church.

So the figure of 'anticipated donations' that used to appear in the CTH budget was actually a bit of an oddity - and its removal as proposed by Andy two years ago seems to us to have been a helpful clarification.

Our support for those presenting as homeless also needs to be maintained. That could also be supported from special collections, but this may not be necessary or appropriate - and it would probably be helpful if the Forum came to a view on this matter.

#### **b) Grant Support**

To the best of our knowledge it has never been the practice of Churches Together to use its income from subscriptions routinely to support our three charities. As indicated above that would require subscriptions to be raised, but more significantly it would alter fundamentally the relationship between CTH, its members churches and these organisations.

In effect it would turn CTH in part into a tax-gathering organisation, and that would be a radical (and in our view inappropriate) departure from all previous practice.

#### **IN SUMMARY**

The principle on which Churches Together in Harborough operates is that 'we' (CTH) are our member churches in action together. That ownership by the churches is practised through the meetings of the Forum. It is of course perfectly in order for the Forum to decide to distribute surplus funds as it sees fit, but it is the view of the Executive that such a surplus does not exist at present.

It is also our view that it is not appropriate for organisations to rely on CTH for regular income. We do think the Forum would wish to act as a 'friend in time of trouble' to our organisations, financially as well as spiritually, but we should expect any such actions to be specifically authorized by the Forum on a one-off basis.

**Rev Stephen Haward**, Chair

**Mrs Janet Smith**, Deputy Chair

**Mrs Rose Williams**, Treasurer

**Rev Derek Williams**, Communications Officer

13<sup>th</sup> June 2019.