

Churches Together in Harborough

Minutes of the Forum Meeting

on Thursday 9 January 2020 at Market Harborough Congregational Church

Welcome and Opening Devotions

Stephen welcomed everyone to the meeting. He led the devotions by reading from Jeremiah 29 including v11, one of his favourite verses.

He spoke of his sister whose new job was 10 minutes down the road compared to the previous 100 mile round trip to work. She wrote to Stephen using the same verse "I know the plans I have for you" says the Lord, "plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope".

These words in scripture confirm that God has a hold on each of our lives. Rather like the promise made to Joshua on the Canaan border "I will never leave you nor forsake you" Jeremiah's words have a different and larger meaning. They were written a time when it would have taken weeks to arrive. Unlike now, then was a slower world. Niebuhr said "Nothing worth doing can be accomplished in a single lifetime.... therefore we are saved by hope".

We are reminded that God's plans may be a bit of a slow boil and our part may seem most humble yet also have value. No adult reading Jeremiah's words would be alive to see them fulfilled. The promise made is not to an individual but to a whole people not yet born.

What is God's plan for us as a group of churches? What does the Lord require of us? In coming to this Forum this evening you are saying that you are willing to think about these things in the plural. As a person from Glasgow would say, "I know the plan I have for you".

Stephen finished with prayer.

1) Apologies for Absence were noted on the sign in sheet along with the attendees

2) Minutes of the last meeting were approved and signed by Stephen

3) Matters Arising

1. Logo

Is available for all, Derek Williams will send hi-res copy out but can be downloaded from the website. Colour reproduces well into black and white.

Rose Williams to distribute Logo to all Forum reps which will include Ministers

2. Refugees

There had been a welcome party at Christmas. They are well catered for with language lessons and education for the children by the South Leicestershire Community Sponsorship group. Another group also supports refugees coming to the UK and Andy was one of some people helping another family settle in the Harborough area

3. Thank you letters

Stephen had visited both Nikki Longley (designer of picture used in previous logo) and Barry Osborne (previous Holiday at Home lead) and thanked them both.

4) Recent Events

1. Hustings

Thanks were given to Andy Murphy, Derek Williams and David Nixon were thanked for arranging and hosting the event. Thanks as well to Bryony for chairing the meeting. Around 170 people attended; it was a really positive evening and it was felt to be good political debate, better than those in the media.

This Sunday is Bryony's last service before leaving St Peter and St Paul. There was a card to be signed on the desk.

2. Homeless

A single man has been provided with accommodation in Naseby Square. David Tomlin along with Keith Rugg and Janet Smith had visited, taken food and bedding. He was invited and attended the Christmas lunch. The Baptist Church will continue to maintain contact.

3. Christmas Fayre

There had been issues with the cost of the clean-up after the event, but following the article in the Harborough Mail a donation to cover the cost had been received. Juliet Mayer has stepped down as Coordinator but the 2020 event planning has already started and it is believed someone else is considering coordinating. Most Churches reported numbers of visitors down; Congregational because no other events at the top end of town; also the weather just before the event was really bad. Baptist Church had good numbers. Stephen will contact the new organisers to ensure CTH are included in any planning for 2020.

5) Good Friday Planning

Following the last meeting churches had given their pledged funding to enable the large screen on the square to be rented:

Baptist	£500	(mainly by the two, already planned Coffee Mornings)
Congregational	£400	
Anglican	£426	(total from different churches in the group)
Community	£500	
Methodist	£600	
OLOV	£600	
Total	£3,026	

This means Lizzie and Abby have the green light to move forward with the project.

Christopher Brown will be asked to order the screen.

Abby, Lizzie and Stephen are meeting on 20 January and the whole group are meeting on 3 February. It was suggested we ask MH & Bowden's Charity for help with finances but it is not part of their remit. Lizzie and Abby had been invited to talk during services at Methodist and Baptist. They would be happy to talk at other Churches. It is important that all church members / attendees are encouraged to attend on the Square. The words of the hymns / songs will be on the screen.

Lizzie will circulate in advance

6) Future Events

1. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Service is at Congregational Church from 10.30 am. The theme is Difference. The first half will be all age then the children and young people will leave. Nikki Beecher (Cong) will coordinate the Primary children's group in the Lounge. Dawn O'Connell (Anglican) will coordinate the young people's group in the Vestry.

All churches are asked to provide one DBS adult to help with the groups

The themes for the weekdays were all agreed; Tuesday will be Community Organisations, Local Charities and Support Groups, Schools and Emergency Services.

Updated information on dates and venues are included with the Minutes

2. Sight-Loss Friendly Workshops
James Pickersgill gave details of two ecumenical workshops. Becky Davies, from Torch Trust, will be leading them. James was thanked for organising.
Monday 27 January 2.30pm at the Baptist Church, Janet Smith to host
Thursday 6 February 7.00pm at St Dionysius, James Pickering to host
Several churches had already signed up to be / become sight-loss friendly including Congregational, Baptist, Community and most Anglican
3. Lent lunchtime services
Methodist Church is hosting this year, 12.30 to 1.00 (plan for 20 mins) with lunch afterwards including OLOV soup. Andy and Stephen will coordinate final details.
Each church is asked to provide 2 lay people to lead the service
4. World Day of Prayer, Friday 6 March
Publicity is on way. Time to be advised but not to clash with Lent lunchtime services

7) Reports from our organisations

1. Street Pastors
No report
2. Bower House
No report
3. The Cube
Charlotte thanked the churches for their continuing prayers and support. God is providing. The building work is due to finish tomorrow. One of the builders has offered to help with other jobs as and when needed.
The Christmas party went well. From 22 January the Wednesday meetings from 5.30 – 7.00 pm would start for Years 7-9. Meal included.
Charlotte will be on Hfm on Wednesday at 4.00 pm
The Years 9-13 youngsters need a group but there is a shortage of volunteers.
Churches may use The CUBE for free for one-off events and at a reduced rate for regular events and possibly free for regular events if for benefit of young people.
Churches are asked to promote the need for more volunteers.
4. Jubilee Food Bank
Margaret Nash reported an increase in referrals; during December there were 82 for 186 clients = 112 adults, 74 children and 2 homeless. This equates to 1,674 meals. Last April there were the highest number of referrals, 100 referrals (228 clients) and in October, the 2nd highest, 93 referrals (117 clients).
Good news is that 2020 costs are covered for the rent of the store. There are a positive number of people donating funds and food as well as supermarkets. Volunteers are committed and a very great team. Moving to new premises a year ago has been a great success. All the Churches are thanked for their ongoing support.
MH is a very generous town. The Harborough Mail would not be approached as there is a risk it could result in some bad publicity.
5. Torch
No report
6. Fairtrade Town Group
Janet Smith reported that Fairtrade fortnight is officially from 24 February to 8 March. MH will be beginning activities from 15 February to coincide with Leicestershire Schools' half term. The theme is about chocolate and the farmers that grow cocoa.

- From 15 February, trail around various shops to find answers to question. There are 9 pictures in all. Completed forms taken to Oxfam shop where all receive a small prize
 - Businesses which promote Fairtrade are being invited to have a window display; cafes to have special promotions. 'Story bombs' produced by Fairtrade Foundation will be available in shops/cafes and other locations.
 - On 28 February, the Oxfam Bookshop will hold an event to sample and promote Fairtrade tea, coffee and hot chocolate. Free drinks and producer stories will be shared.
 - From 25 February to 6 March the library will host a Fairtrade themed stand. This will include World Book Day (5 March)
 - On 29 February, the annual FT Breakfast at Methodist Church Youth Centre will be held. Poster will be distributed soon.
 - CTH website will host promotional videos and other materials
 - All Forum members are encouraged to promote FT Fortnight in their churches
 - This term there will be competitions in conjunction with their Design and Technology departments at WPA and RSA to design a wrapper for a FT chocolate bar unique to MH. The resulting chocolate bar will be retailed in the town later in the year.
7. Fairtrade Town Group
The annual Peace Vigil will be held on the Square from 5.00 – 5.30 pm on 10 January 2020, all welcome: bring candle in a jar or similar

It was agreed that the other groups, particularly the Bower House, should be encouraged to be attending the Forum and reporting on their work.

8) Any other business

Homeless project

A year ago the Methodist Church and an individual had donated money to the Homeless project because of a lack of funding for the vouchers. The only group now handing out vouchers was the Street Pastors. St Dionysius had dry food pack that it handed out. Otherwise homeless were directed to the Jubilee Foodbank.

Andy Giles, who is on the Homeless committee, will investigate and report back

9) Dates and venues for 2020/21 Forum meetings were offered all starting at 7.15 pm

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| 1. Monday 2 March | | OL of Victories Catholic Church |
| 2. Monday 18 May | including AGM | OL of Victories Catholic Church |
| 3. Monday 7 September | | Anglican Churches to provide venue |
| 4. Thursday 12 November | | The Cube |
| 5. Thursday 7 January 2021 | | Methodist Church |
| 6. Monday 1 March | | OL of Victories Catholic Church |
| 7. Thursday 20 May | including AGM | venue tbc |

Prayers were said for Angela Butlin, due an operation on Friday.
The group then prayed before the meeting closed.