



**Minutes of the Churches Together in Harbourough (CTH)
Forum Meeting, Monday 26th September 2022, 7.15 for 7.30 p.m.
at the Baptist Church**

Our objectives:

- to be a visible sign of the churches' commitment to one another.
- to facilitate common witness to Christ
- to respond to the needs of the community in shared service and outreach where this is possible.

Attendees (20)

Andy Murphy (MHMC), Maureen Douglas (OLOV), Derek Williams (Anglican), Jackie Melhuish (MHMC), Angela Zemlak (MHBC), Janet Smith (MHBC), Christopher Brown (MHBC), Peter Arnold (MHMC), Jan Turner (MHCC), David Nixon (MHMC), Keith Rugg (MHBC), Dave Tomlin (MHMC), Theresa Kendrick (OLOV), Jeannie Brightwell (Anglican), Chris O'Connor (OLOV), Stephen Jack (HCC), Alison Iliffe (Anglican), Liz Mills (Jubilee Foodbank), Sharron Brannen (MHCC), Hilary Hearnshaw (Anglican).

Apologies for absence

Stephen Haward (Congregational), Cara Thompson (The Bower House), David Palmer (Elderberries), Phil and Vicky Bryson (Anglican), Barry Hill (Anglican), Deidre Quinn (Anglican), Hils Corcoran (Anglican), Elizabeth Tubb (Anglican).

1. Welcome

Andy welcomed everyone to the meeting, inviting each church and organisation represented to identify themselves by greeting each other.

2. Opening Devotions

Christopher Brown led devotions at the start of the meeting reading from Micah 6 v. 6 – 8, focusing thoughts on verse 8 in particular

**⁸ No, O people, the LORD has told you what is good,
and this is what he requires of you:
to do what is right, to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with your God.**

In an increasingly polarised society, it is difficult to always do what we know to be right and at best we probably do what is right 'some of the time,' which is a recipe for disaster. Our focus and desire should be to submit to His will in humility. Our true humility will then lead to a deep love of mercy and gradually our attitudes will change and how to do the right thing becomes clearer. Christopher then led the meeting in prayer followed by the singing of, 'We Bow Down.'

Andy brought to the Forum news of the deaths of Patricia Pearse (wife of John Pearse) and Joyce Thomas (wife of Rev. Trevor Thomas) of the Methodist Church. John had been the Chair of CTH some years ago and Trevor and Joyce had been active supporters of the Harbourough Action for Justice and Peace Group over many years.

Action: Maureen to send out details of Patricia's and Joyce's funeral arrangements.

3. Guest Speaker Mary Ann Lund – Helping Refugees

The guest speaker, Mary Ann was unwell and unable to attend the meeting, so will be invited to address the November Forum instead. All items relating to helping refugees would be deferred until November too. This would form the focus of the Forum.

4. Appointment of Minutes Secretary

Jan Turner of the Congregational Church was unanimously voted in as minutes secretary and onto the CTH Executive.

5. Minutes of the Forum meeting held on Monday 16th May 2022

The minutes of the May Forum which followed the AGM, having been previously circulated were accepted unanimously as a true record of the meeting.

6. Financial Update

The audited CTH accounts for 2021 – 2022 had been signed off by the examiner and circulated before the meeting. There were no questions or comments about the accounts, and they were unanimously accepted by the Forum.

7. Matters Arising:

a. Good Friday Act of Witness on the Square (7 April 2023)

- **Hire of the screen:** Following the May Forum, Andy had sent costings for the hire of the screen to church leaders, which for 2023 will be £1200. The screen had been booked with the same media company as before and payment was due to be made.
Action: Churches will be invited to contribute to the cost of hiring the screen on the same basis as last year. £300 was quoted as a ballpark figure. Jackie will invoice churches in due course and information on specific contributions made by individual churches last year are available from Jackie should anyone request it.
- **Formation of organising group:** At the May Forum, Elizabeth Tubb, Maureen Douglas, and Derek Williams had volunteered to be part of the organising group for Good Friday. More volunteers were needed, and work would need to start soon. Jan Turner volunteered to coordinate meetings going forward and Stephen Jack requested that he chat to his team at HCC before getting back to the Executive and volunteered to take a lead in heading up a team to organise Good Friday on the Square.
Action: Stephen will speak to his team at HCC and going forward will head up a team from across the churches to organise Good Friday on the Square.

b. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (18 – 25 January 2023)

- The Executive had suggested holding a united service on the afternoon of January 22nd, 2023. Christopher Brown offered the Baptist Church as a venue, and it was agreed that it would be at 3 o' clock. It was proposed and accepted that a collection be taken at the service, which would be donated to the Bower House and the Cube. As Street Pastors were no longer operating locally, it was proposed and accepted that the Jubilee Foodbank would be the recipient of monies from the collection too.
Action: Christopher will plan and organise the service with others, including appropriate activities for children and young people.
- **Weekday prayer meetings during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – in person, on zoom or not at all?** After some discussion around the pros and cons of both in person and zoom prayer meetings, Andy proposed that the following be adopted for 2023, namely that two in person prayer meetings would take place, one at lunchtime and the other in the evening and in addition, one zoom prayer time.
Action: The Executive will arrange times and places of the meetings and inform the Forum in November.

At this point in the meeting Keith Rugg brought some words from a couple of songs to encourage us in our togetherness, for which he was thanked.

c. Lent 2023 (Beginning 22nd February 2023)

- The Executive brought to the meeting a suggestion that in 2023 we choose **either** a Lent Course or weekly lunchtime services, followed by a simple lunch. The delegates from the churches were asked to vote on this, and by 5 votes to 4, the Lenten lunchtime services followed by a simple lunch will be adopted for Lent 2023.
Action: The Executive will provide further information about the services at the November Forum.

Before a discussion took place around the Action for Justice and Peace Group, Andy informed the meeting that as Chair of CTH he regularly gets emails asking, 'what can CTH do about.....?' There was an acknowledgment that CTH does not always have sufficient resources to tackle issues but that individual churches are already doing things to address some needs and issues of general concern. Part of the joy of CTH is discovering what we can do together in friendship. If we do too much, we risk undermining the work already going on, alongside being in danger of spreading ourselves too thinly. CTH's role in many ways is to be a '**network of information**' for ideas/projects. For this to work effectively there would need to be a streamlining of communications ecumenically about what different churches are doing and for each church being proactive in sending information through the Executive.

8. Action for Justice and Peace group

After meeting with some of the key people from the Harborough Action for Justice & Peace group, a summary of the meeting had been circulated with the agenda for consideration. Janet Smith, as chair of the group reminded the meeting that the initial idea to change the focus for the Action for Justice and Peace Group had started before the pandemic hit in March 2020, had been interrupted by it and was now at the point of wanting to implement that new focus for the reasons stated in Andy's summary (NOTE A on page 2 of the agenda), if indeed that was what the Forum wanted. Janet Smith (chair) and Alison Tomlin (secretary) of the group had concluded some time ago that the group could not continue in its present form.

Action: Key people from The Action for Justice and Peace Group and anyone else interested will organise a pilot meeting on a particular topic relating to peace and justice on a date to be decided, to name, talk, and pray through the agreed topic or issue. Anyone with an idea for a name for the newly focused group, please let the Executive know.

9. Street Pastors and social action/Mission on the streets

The closure of Market Harborough Street Pastors over the summer 2022, presents an opportunity for CTH to re - think and re – imagine its social action and mission on the streets. It was acknowledged that questions needed to be asked around what new mission opportunities would look like, who it could involve and where might the times and places be for new opportunity?

It was suggested that in the current climate of ever rising energy and living costs the Homeless/Asking for Help Group might become more important. The Homeless/Asking for Help Group is due to meet on 5th October and would be discussing how to streamline the voucher system and how best to disseminate information amongst the churches about how to proceed with helping people.

Andy thanked the Street Pastors for their invaluable work over the thirteen years they were operating. Jeannie informed the meeting that there were still loose ends to be tied up in winding up Market Harborough Street Pastors but in due course there would be a Thanksgiving Service.

Action: Churches are asked to communicate any ideas on mission on the streets to the Executive and to utilise the networks we already have to maximum effect.

10. Jubilee Foodbank – venues and volunteers

Liz Mills Chair of the Jubilee Foodbank reported that many changes had taken place over the last two and a half years in terms of how the Jubilee Foodbank operates but how it continues to meet the emergency food needs of people in Harborough living through times of financial hardship. Historically, food parcels were given to various referring agencies to pass on to people, including several churches. Things have changed recently regarding the Foodbank's distribution facilities through Harborough District Council (Symington Building), largely due to the council no longer taking public referral interviews. The Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) continues to accept parcels on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Liz asked whether any of our premises might be possibly used as a Foodbank distribution point for one day per week (same day every week) for a couple of hours, probably 2 – 4 p.m. on a permanent basis. If you would be interested in discussing this further with Liz and her team, please do get in touch as soon as possible. Two churches to date have indicated an interest. To run these sessions would also require volunteers – two per session (appropriate training would be given).

11. Cost of Living Crisis

This item on the agenda was deferred to the November Forum. However, churches are encouraged to send any information about what they planning to do or are already to alleviate the pressure on people to the Executive before the next meeting.

12. Tea at Three – ministry to the elderly: This ministry has temporarily stopped while new leadership is discerned.

13. Any news from churches or associated organisations?

Supporting Ukrainian Refugees – a café continues to meet every Saturday morning for Ukrainians to network at the Methodist Church. At the café, a class for children has recently started to provide additional support to those attending our local schools. There is an English class for Ukrainians on a Thursday at the Congregational Church.

Christian Aid Week 15 – 21st May 2022 – In the absence this year of house to house collections, Peter thanked those churches and individuals who had delivered envelopes around town and St Dionysius for being the collection point for returned envelopes. Only 52 envelopes had been returned to St Di's raising £1, 072. The area total was £6, 600

with some villages continuing to do house to house collections. This did not include money raised by the Big Brekkie, organised once again by the Congregational Church, which for the second year running was delivered to people at home with an optional zoom meeting to join with others as breakfast was shared. A bucket collection in the town has been suggested for future fundraising.

Action: Between now and the November Forum ask congregations what they are prepared to do for Christian Aid next year. Christian Aid will be an agenda item in November.

Holiday at Home – Maureen reported that this year's Holiday at Home had gone well. Although numbers were down on previous years, people attending had been able to access a full range of activities which they had very much enjoyed. The Forum confirmed that they were very happy for it to run in 2023.

Action: Maureen will inform the committee of the above decision.

The Bower House - see separate report.

The Cube – a range of activities with young people continue to go well, based at the Cube as well as in schools. Staff and volunteers are preparing for an open event on Friday 30th September from 6.30 - 8.30p.m. (see email sent out on 22/09/22 for further details).

Harborough District Council are wanting to hear from any organisations that are working specifically with 'minority groups.'

Community Governor opportunity – Great Bowden Academy is looking for a community governor to join their governing body.

Action: Andy will send out the appropriate information.

14. Any other Business – there were no items of AOB.

15. Future Dates:

- **Prisons Week: October 9th – 15th**
- **Thursday 24 November 2022: CTH Forum 7.15 for 7.30 St Nicholas Church, Little Bowden**
- **December 2nd: Town Christmas Fayre**
- **January 18th – 25th 2023 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**
- **February 2nd: CTH Forum (venue to be confirmed)**
- **February 22nd; Ash Wednesday (Lent begins)**
- **April 7th Good Friday - United act of worship on the Square.**
- **Monday 22 May 2023 – AGM and Forum (venue TBC)**

16. Date and venue of next meeting: Thursday 24 November 2022, CTH Forum 7.15 for 7.30 at the Congregational Church. Focus on 'Supporting Refugees.'

17. Closing Prayer: Andy closed the meeting with prayer, after which the Grace was shared.