Minutes of the Churches Together in Harborough,
Monday 8th September 2025, 7.15 for 7.30 p.m.
at Market Harborough 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 (17)
Maureen Douglas (OLOV), Jackie Melhuish (MHMC), Angela Zemlak (MHBC), Jan Turner (MHCC), Janet Smith (MHBC), Christopher Brown (MHBC), Peter Arnold (MHMC), David Nixon (MHMC), Jeannie Brightwell (Anglican), Andy Murphy (MHCC), Fr. Chris O' Connor (OLOV), Anita Beer (MHMC), Roo MacRae (MHCC), Sarah Pine (Anglican), Sinead Henderson (Grace Communion), Nikki Beacher (MHCC), Julie Fagan (Anglican).

Welcome and opening devotions
Jan and Maureen opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the Forum.
Opening Devotions: Christopher led the Forum in devotions by welcoming everyone to the Renew Wellbeing (RWB) Café space, explaining that it is run by the Baptist Church on a Tuesday morning and Thursday afternoon. It's open to all and regularly welcomes people from all walks of life, (who are often not church goers). It's a place where 'it's OK not to be OK.' The RWB café partners with local organisations offering support and advice and signposts when appropriate. Christopher shared thoughts on Mary, mother of Jesus, whose birthday is celebrated on September 8th and reading words from Luke 1, The Magnificat, reminding us that God had chosen Mary for a special role in bearing His Son and of her total obedience and surrender reflected in her words, 'I am the Lord's servant.' As Christians and Churches Together in Harborough, we are reminded of our mandate to be humble and obedient servants of God as we carry Christ's presence into the world. Christopher then led us in prayer.
Apologies for absence: Theresa Kendrick (OLOV), Rachel Buckby (Anglican), Stephen Jack (HCC), Phil Bryson (Anglican) Liz Mills(Jubilee Foodbank)

1. **Minutes of the CTH Forum held on Thursday 22nd May 2025:** these had been circulated prior to the meeting. The minutes were accepted unanimously as a correct record of the meeting and duly signed.
2. **Financial update:** The accounts are in good shape, and after discussion by the Executive after the AGM about how subscriptions to CTH are calculated for each church, it was decided that due to its recent growth the subscriptions for HCC would be increased to match the amount paid by the largest churches like OLOV.

3. **Matters Arising: a) Church subscriptions –** see above in point 2.
   b) Good Causes Fund: Maureen had circulated a letter to CTH contacts from the Executive before the meeting reminding churches of the availability of funds from the so called 'Good Causes Fund' (that's how the fund is referred to in the CTH accounts) to help set up or contribute to already established small projects and activities. Such projects would ideally be meeting the needs of our community in some way and reflect wholly or in part the ethos of Street Pastors in '**listening, caring and helping, following the example of Jesus himself.**' Churches are invited apply to the Executive by describing the project and how much money they would like. There is £3305 available.

4. **Main Business: a) Speaker, Anita Beer-Harborough Fairtrade Town:** The Forum welcomed Anita Beer, a member of the Harborough Fairtrade Town Group who began by reiterating the ongoing importance of the now long established Fairtrade movement for producers and communities worldwide. Market Harborough has enjoyed 'Fairtrade Town' status for the last eighteen years or so. One of the ongoing projects the group is working on with the Council to install welcome signs at the town's boundaries informing travellers that we are a Fairtrade Town. This is proving to be a frustratingly slow process! Other events the group has been actively involved in recently have been the hosting of a 'Big Brew' event, showcasing Fairtrade tea in conjunction with the Harborough Eco Churches Group, with another such event being planned for March 2026. A stall on Green Street at the June carnival was another highlight. The group works hard to dispel some of the myths around Fairtrade products such as 'they are too expensive' or 'I don't like Fairtrade ……' Since there are so many fairtrade products now available in our shops and supermarkets, often being sold at competitive prices, such arguments no longer hold credence. The group has produced a leaflet highlighting some comparisons between usual and fairtrade products available to us locally. The town's very own fairtrade chocolate bar (now available in plain as well as milk chocolate), continues to be sold in local churches and outlets like the Methodist church, Louisa's Place, Emerson and West's and Welton's shop and Post Office in Great Bowden. Anita gave advance warning of Fairtrade Fortnight, running this year from **September 22nd - October 5th** with a variety of activities planned to include the annual Rice Challenge and a speaker from the Fairtrade Foundation coming to an open meeting of the U3A. Watch out for further publicity.

   b) Update on CTH Reps: New reps Nikki and Sarah were welcomed to the meeting and Roo, minister of the Congregational Church, who was attending his first Forum was extended a warm welcome.

   c) Prisons Week - 12th - 18th October. Theme: 'God's Word is not chained'.An annual event supported by many organisations working with and within the Criminal Justice Service as well as the churches nationwide. Father Chris who is a regular visitor to HMP Gartree asked for our continued prayers for Gartree and indeed the whole prison estate, which continues to face challenging times. Information about the week will be available nearer the time and prayers will be available to pray each day.

   d) Peace Vigil- Date: A discussion around the most appropriate date for the long established CTH candlelit Peace Vigil, which has traditionally been held in early January concluded that it might be more relevant to be topically focused each year. Two dates, or dates around those below were specifically mentioned to think about going forward.
   (i) **7th October** – the date in 2023 of the Hamas attack on Israel that triggered the latest ongoing conflict in the Middle East.
   (ii) **February 24th** - the date in 2022 when Russian military forces entered Ukraine from Belarus, Russia and Crimea. The Executive will consider these dates.

   e) Prayer events during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2026 - the theme next year is **"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling" (Ephesians 4:4).** The week runs from 18th- 25th January 2026. Plans for service and prayer events to be shared at the November Forum.

f) Lent services and lent lunches: Following this year's successful and enjoyable series of Lent services and lunches at the Baptist Church, next year's will be discussed further at the November Forum. The Executive will be looking for a church to offer to host the services and lunches during Lent next year which begins on 18th February.

Roo informed the Forum that Christian Aid has called the churches across Britain to a Day of Prayer for world peace on Sunday 21st September to coincide with UN World Peace Day and the global call to prayer from the World Council of Churches. https://www.christianaid.org.uk/

g) World Day of Prayer - Friday 6th March 2026. Planning is underway. Next year's prayers and service have been prepared by the women of Nigeria. Because the Friday will clash with a Lent Lunchtime service, a Saturday morning service on 7th March is being considered locally to enable more people to attend. Details to follow. https://www.wwdp.org.uk

h) Good Friday, 3rd April 2026: A discussion around whether the Easter Live Event should be repeated next year on Good Friday concluded that despite the tension of managing the solemnity of Good Friday with the joy of the resurrection, it would be good to run it again as a community event to present the whole of the Easter story to the local community. The praise and prayer nights in the months leading up to the Easter Live Event were well received.

Action: Christopher to work in planning the event with the Ministers' Fellowship and a team. Include in the planning praise and prayer evenings.

5. **Reports of recent events: Christian Aid Week –** Peter Arnold reported that the town had raised £3,192 for Christian Aid (including £215 from online donations). For this we give thanks, however, Peter drew to our attention to the fact that this amount is well down on pre – covid times. Peter informed us of our regional Christian Aid representative from Loughborough - Jeremy Gowers-Cromie who is willing to speak locally.

Action: Peter to invite Jeremy to speak at the Lent lunchtime service on Friday 27th March 2026.

Dilys, Janet and Brian Davies attended the 80th Anniversary service for Christian Aid at Westminster Abbey on12th June. Beginning with breakfast in the House of Commons, the service included Inspiring speakers, amazing corporate worship, a parade of banners highlighting all Christian Aid's campaigns over 80 years, local school children and Rev Kate Bottley's bright pink shoes (she'd forgotten her black clerical ones) made it an amazing and memorable day. https://www.christianaid.org.uk/news/about-us/christian-aids-80th-service-westminster-abbey

Big Brekkie: Another successful Big Brekkie drawing people from the town as well as the churches in aid of Christian Aid. A big thank you to the Congregational Church for their energy and inspiration in organising, it once again.

Boat Festival: A service led by Jeff Bonser at Foxton Locks was well attended. Thanks were expressed to Jeff for leading this and to Ady on the guitar!

Harborough Carnival: A super-hot day. Various CTH related organisations were involved on the day by either having stalls, participating and helping on the fun run or in showcasing their facilities and offering games and refreshments.

Refugee Week: Hosted by The Village on 17th June during Refugee Week was a free programme of family friendly films and creative opportunities to contribute to ceramic artwork. In the evening the film 'Fremont' was screened.

Farm comes to Harborough: Julie Fagan reported on a successful day on 9th August, attended by seven local farmers (and a cow and sheep). A Chrisian farmer opened the event. The event to raise awareness of issues facing the farming community as well as to showcase farming – related initiatives was supported by Eco Church Harborough, the Sustainable Harborough Community, Harborough Climate Action and others. As Julie said in her emailed report after the event, "I can't thank you all enough for making the day so memorable. We have no idea what seeds were sown for new initiatives, even careers." Next year a similar event is planned but will be take place during the Big Green Week on June 7th, 2026.

Holiday @ Home: This year's Holiday @ Home from 4th – 8th August was once again an enjoyable event, attended by many local older people and organised by volunteers from across the churches. See separate report at the end of the minutes for further details.

Reports from organisations: The Cube's Hello Summer activities - The 5 weekly events for 11 – 16 year olds at the Cube were well received and attended by 51 young people over the Tuesdays of the summer holidays. **On Tuesday October 7th a new after school Youth Café opens at the Cube running from 3.30 – 5 p.m. and on Wednesday evenings, the open access youth group Oasis run from 5 - 6.30 p.m.** See fuller report at the end of the minutes.

6. Communications: Nothing to report.

7. Any other Business: Angela highlighted the Leicestershire 'Ride and Stride' on Saturday 13th September when 315 local and county churches would be open. Local people would be taking part to raise money for the Leicestershire Historic Churches Trust. https://www.lhct.org.uk/ride-and-stride/

Julie highlighted a talk by Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust on September 10th in the Octagonal Hall at OLOV Church at 7.30. https://www.lrwt.org.uk/

Dates of next Forum meeting: PLEASE NOTE CHANGE TO NOVEMBER FORUM DATE

NOW Wednesday 12th November at St Dionysius (St. Di's)

Future dates and venues of CTH meetings in 2025 - 26 to be confirmed

i. **Thursday 5th February, at the Methodist Church (Confirmed)**
ii. **AGM and Forum – venue will be the Catholic Church but date to be confirmed, considering the request for the AGM next year to be in June.**

All meetings 7.15pm (for refreshments) for 7.30pm start.

Report on The Cube for the CTH Forum - September 2025

Since the May AGM The Cube has celebrated its 20th birthday!

After a fun filled weekly 'Hello Summer' programme of activities at the Cube, attended by over 50 children, the youth workers return to our secondary schools this week, where during term time they are present, running weekly groups, meeting young people through the popular drop-in lunch time sessions and tailored mentoring, alongside after school sessions run at the Cube. **On Tuesday October 7th a new after school Youth Café opens at the Cube running from 3.30 – 5 p.m. and on Wednesday evenings, the open access youth group Oasis run from 5 - 6.30 p.m.**

We continue to provide subsidised access to counselling where specialist youth counsellors meet with young people both in schools and at the Cube and we have recently established new links with Kibworth Mead Academy in this regard.

Thank you, Churches Together in Harborough for your continued support of the work of the Cube through prayer and financial donations and by using the purpose built facilities we have to offer young people.

Trustees and staff meet for prayer at noon at the Cube on the first and third Wednesdays each month. Everyone is welcome to join us.

To find out more about the work of the Cube or to respond to any of the things outlined in this report, you can contact us at: **The CUBE on Symington's, St Mary's Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, LE16 7DS 01858 437650**

Janet Smith, Trustee

Jubilee FoodBank

We do appreciate all of the support the churches have given. Particular thanks to the Renew Wellbeing cafe for their referrals and service to anyone to attends on a Tuesday morning or Thursday afternoon. Many thanks to the Community Church for their ongoing referrals and collections from the church on any week day. Thank you to the Catholic Church for the Tuesday afternoon opportunity for people to collect food parcels.
We have seen an increase in donations from many churches after our appeal this summer. We are grateful for being able to give out food parcels as requested all summer. Thank you for any Harvest collections coming up too. We appreciate your ongoing support. it's only by working together that we can continue to support our community.

Liz Mills
Chair, Jubilee Foodbank Market Harborough