Minutes of the Churches Together in Harborough,
Wednesday 12th November 2025, 7.15 for 7.30 p.m.
at St. Dionysius' 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 (14)
Maureen Douglas (OLOV), Phil Bryson (Anglican), Jackie Melhuish (MHMC), Jan Turner (MHCC), Janet Smith (MHBC), Christopher Brown (MHBC), Simon Bentley (The Cube), Peter Arnold (MHMC), David Nixon (MHMC), Jeannie Brightwell (Anglican), Andy Murphy (MHCC), Fr. Chris O' Connor (OLOV), Nikki Beacher (MHCC), Gavin Dean (Jubilee Foodbank), Alison Iliffe (Anglican).

Welcome and opening devotions

Maureen opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the Forum.

Opening Devotions: Phil Bryson led the Forum in prayer, committing the meeting to the Lord. We then sang, 'For all the Saints,' a hymn reflecting our unity in diversity.

Apologies for absence: Angela Zemlak (MHBC), Theresa Kendrick (OLOV), Stephen Jack (HCC), Anita Beer (MHMC), Liz Mills (MHCC and Foodbank), Roo MacRae (MHCC), Sinead Henderson (Grace Communion), Julie Fagan (Anglican).

1.Minutes of the CTH Forum held on 8th September 2025 at the Baptist Church: 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: Jackie reported that the accounts are in good shape and went on to explain there had been three applications to the Good Causes Fund since the September Forum (see point 3 (a) below)

3.Matters Arising:

a) Good Causes Fund: Following the September Forum, and the circulation of a letter inviting churches to apply for monies from the Good Causes Fund of £3305, the Executive had received and considered three applications from:

Harborough Youth and Community Trust (HYACT), The Cube who applied for £346.14 to refurbish the defibrillator at their premises with a new battery and electrode pads to ensure the defibrillator is 'fully operational going forwards for the next few years."

Market Harborough Baptist Church requested funds to refurbish an area of the Renew Wellbeing Café with a crafting space.

Market Harborough Congregational Church requested funds to help set up community cookery classes working with The Jubilee Foodbank, The Village, and Community Fridge, with the aim of increasing food education, budgeting and reducing food waste, and to that end would like to buy a set of portable electric hobs and saucepans.

Action: After consideration by the Executive, it was decided to award funds for all three causes, but have written to the leaders of the Baptist and Congregational Churches asking for a breakdown of more detailed costings for their proposed projects and await their response.

4) Main Business:

a) Speaker, Simon Bentley of the Cube: The Forum welcomed Simon who is the Administrator at The Cube. Simon began by outlining the four main areas of work The Cube is involved with currently, namely: **youth work, schools – based work, wellbeing and the hiring of the Cube as a venue for a range of community and church based groups.** This work is carried out by a full time Charity Manager, a part time administrator, a part time Wellbeing Lead, 2 part time youth and support youth workers, 6 self - employed counsellors, 5 members of the Trustee Board and 5 committed volunteers.

Simon then described the areas of work by going through what happens at the Cube each day in an typical week – from Let's Play outdoor sessions for pre- schoolers in the Cube's garden, to open access youth groups and a youth café after school, staff training and development, church and volunteer/community groups as well as being the venue for some counselling sessions plus much more!

The schools work takes the form of lunchtime clubs in the town's secondary schools and mentoring and counselling sessions offered through the Youth Counselling Service, set up in 2022 with a National Lottery Communities Grant. Plans going forward include a possible extension to the main building with the support of HDC and other funders. As with all charities, plans to apply for and acquire funding from various sources is an ongoing process to enable the Cube to continue its work in the years ahead. The Cube is also looking to recruit more Trustees and a Chair going forward. Simon expressed heartfelt thanks to CTH and individual churches for their long standing and ongoing support. To find out more about the Cube's work in all its aspects please contact: **The CUBE on Symington's, St Mary's Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, LE16 7DS** 01858 437650 admin@thecubeyouth.uk

b) Update on CTH Reps: Nothing to report.

c) Peace Vigil- Date: Discussions around the most appropriate date for the long established CTH candlelit Peace Vigil, which has traditionally been held in early January are ongoing. Although several dates around February (anniversary of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine), October (anniversary of Hamas' incursion into Israel) and the UN International Day of Peace in September (next year's date is Monday 21st September) had specifically been mentioned to think about going forward, no actual date had been arrived at. Janet suggested that there could be a sub - group formed to organise the event.

Action: Continue to feedback ideas to the Executive. There will be no Peace Vigil in January 2026

d) Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2026 - the theme 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. Plans for service and prayer events were shared and it was decided, following an

offer from Father Chris to lead and host such a service, that there will be a united service at 3 p.m. on Sunday 18th January. It was decided that in 2026 no mid – week prayer events would be offered as in the last couple of years attendance at them had been low.

Action: Father Chris and the congregation of Our Lady of Victories, Roman Catholic Church will lead on this. More details to follow.

e) Lent services and lent lunches: The hosting of the Lent services and lunches for 2026 was discussed. The Congregational Church will take back to the church's Steering Group for further discussion and decision, whether as a church they can host next year's services and lunches. Once we have a venue then a Lenten theme and which church leads each Friday service can be decided.

Action: The Congregational Church to get back to Maureen and Jan with a decision as soon as possible.

f) World Day of Prayer - Friday 6th March 2026. Planning is underway. Next year's prayers and service on the theme of, **"I Will Give You Rest: Come,"** based on Matthew 11:28-30 have been prepared by the Christian Women of Nigeria. The service will be held at Harborough Community Church at 2pm. https://www.wwdp.org.uk

g) Good Friday, 3rd April 2026: Christopher Brown reported that plans for the Easter Live Event next year on Good Friday are underway, with many similar aspects to the 2025 event featuring again, but with some new additions too, like the booking of a local gospel choir instead of the band. The Praise and Prayer nights in the months leading up to the Easter Live Event having been well received will be repeated (this time 2 rather than 3). Christopher and team will be making a video inviting people from across the churches to get involved with appeals for involvement and help in specific activities

Action: Christopher will update the Forum as and when there are things to report and requests for help to be made. There will be two Praise and Prayer evenings on Sunday1st February and Sunday 29th March (Palm Sunday) at 6 p.m.. Locations will be confirmed in due course.

5.Any news from churches or associate organisations: Gavin Dean, treasurer at the **Jubilee Foodbank** updated the Forum with the Foodbank's latest news. Gavin reported that the Foodbank continues to rely on referrals to its services from a variety of sources including The Cube, local churches and the Renew Wellbeing Café run by The Baptist Church is the biggest referral agency currently. There is a mismatch to a certain degree in what the Foodbank receives in donations and what they give out. To that end there is now an App which can be used to inform the shopper of what the Foodbank's most urgent needs are and the Foodbank has funds to be able to buy additionally needed items from local supermarkets if necessary. For clients there is the additional option of vouchers to buy fresh food from a couple of stalls in the market who are very generous when vouchers are presented and restricted Aldi

vouchers are also given out. The homeless continue to be supported with food vouchers and food. Referrals are up 20% on last year, which is not surprising looking at national trends. The Jubilee Foodbank now has charitable status, which brings with it benefits like Gift Aid, alongside statutory responsibilities and it has decided to remain as an independent Foodbank and not join the Trussell Trust, who nationally are responsible for running, **"1,400 food bank locations, supported by 36,000 volunteers, 12,000 churches, 100,000s of community groups and schools, and millions of people around the UK."** **https://www.trussell.org.uk/our-work**

Gavin thanked the churches for their referrals and donations which are greatly appreciated. Gavin was assured of CTH's continued support. For further information about the work of the Jubilee Foodbank go to https://www.jubileefoodbankmh.uk/

6. Reports: Christian Aid Week – Peter Arnold reported that Christian Aid Week in 2026 runs from

May 10th – 16th. Peter also informed us that all regional Christian Aid Representatives were soon to be made redundant, so the anticipated visit of Jeremy Gowers-Cromie from Loughborough who was due to lead one of the 2026 Lent Lunchtime services on 26th March will no longer happen.

7. CTH Executive Body. Moving Forward – specific or general roles: Maureen reported that the Executive is looking for new people to join it and be part of the organising and decision making arm of CTH. Janet Smith had announced her intention to stand down from the Executive at the AGM in June, although will continue to take the minutes. Please prayerfully consider whether you are being called to a role on the Executive. If so, contact Maureen.

8. Any other Business: Father Chris raised the general concern around the issue of a lack of banks now available in the town and wanted to make people aware that he had been told by both the Post Office and the Banking Hub that Lloyds Bank are soon no longer to accept cheques, which would cause particular issues for the Nottingham Diocese as it banks with Lloyds and continues to issue and receive many cheques and as yet has no facility for online banking.

Maureen closed the meeting with prayer and the Grace was shared.

Dates of next Forum meeting:

- **Thursday 5th February, at the Methodist Church**
- **Monday 15th June 2026 AGM and Forum – in the Octagonal Hall at the Catholic Church**

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