Minutes of the Churches Together in Harborough AGM,
Monday 15th June 2026, 7.15 for 7.30 p.m.
at The Octagonal Hall (OLOV Catholic 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 (15)
Maureen Douglas (OLOV), Jackie Melhuish (MHMC), Angela Zemlak (MHBC), Jan Turner (MHCC), Janet Smith (MHBC), Peter Arnold (MHMC), Sharron Brennan (MHCC), Andy Murphy (MHMC), Fr. Chris O' Connor (OLOV), Roo MacRae (MHCC), Alison Iliffe (Anglican), Julie Fagan (Anglican), Dilys Few (MHBC), Sarah Pyne (Anglican), Jeannie Brightwell (Anglican).

The meeting took place in two parts. First, the Churches Together in Harborough AGM, followed by a regular Forum meeting.

a) Welcome
Maureen opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the AGM and Forum. The Forum then held a time of silence to remember David Nixon of the Methodist Church who had recently died. David was a stalwart of CTH, and we will miss his presence at our meetings. We thank God for David's faithfulness and continue to remember his wife Sue and family in prayer.

b) Opening Devotions: Fr Chris O' Conner led the devotions by reading from Matthew 9. ***"Jesus travelled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom……..when he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 He said to his disciples, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. 38 So pray to the Lord who oversees the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields."*** Fr Chris spoke about June being the month, when Catholic Churches focus on the 'Sacred Heart of Jesus.' Here in the reading, Jesus' complete heart of compassion is shown, '***because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.'*** Jesus' heart overflows with divine love for each of us – totally unmerited love, which he shows us. And we as labourers for God's harvest, a harvest that is great, but where the workers are few, are challenged to bring to and demonstrate the unmerited love of Jesus to others. **"Let Christ dwell in us. One heart and will with Him."** (Fr Chris)

c) Apologies for absence: Theresa Kendrick (OLOV), Anita Beer (MHMC), Liz Mills (MHCC and Foodbank), Margaret Atkins (OLOV), Stephen Jack (HCC), Cara Thomson (Bower House), Loraine Tite (Bower House), Nicki Beacher (MHCC), Rachel Buckby (Anglican).

d) Minutes of the CTH AGM held on Thursday 22nd May 2025: these had been circulated prior to the meeting. They were received, unanimously accepted as a correct record of the meeting and duly signed.

e) Reports had been circulated in advance of the meeting from the co – chairs, Jan and Maureen and the charities supported by CTH – The Bower House, The Cube and the Jubilee Foodbank. These reports represent much hard work with different people working together in various ways from across the churches and beyond. An opportunity for comments and questions was invited.
a) Receive reports – Fr. Chris commented on the counselling and wellbeing service that the Cube currently offers in our local schools (all the secondary schools and three primaries), which also includes mentoring and lunchtime sessions with the students. Janet (a trustee of the Cube) asked the churches to pray for the Cube at this time, as it faces challenges regarding the securing of ongoing funding to continue offering services to the young people of Market Harborough.
b) Any questions? There were no further questions.

Actions:

- **HYACT (The Cube) request prayer please for securing ongoing funding and its long term future.**
- **Jubilee Foodbank: has its AGM on Thursday 25th June - 5.45pm for 6pm until 7.30pm, at Newcombe House, (MH Building Society's Head Office) at 16, The Point, Rockingham Road, MH, LE16 7QU. All are welcome to attend. Please RSVP to jubileefoodbankmh@gmail.com**

See Appendices A - E for the full reports from the co – chairs and charities mentioned above.

f) Treasurer's Report and accounts: the CTH budget for 2026 – 2027 and the accounts for 2025 - 2026 had been circulated beforehand, although some people had had difficulty opening the budget document. Copies were available at the meeting. A decision had been made to increase the churches' subscriptions by 10% across the board, which is reflected in the coming year's budget. Once again, the accounts had been audited by Katharine Bentley and thanks were expressed to her for the efficiency in doing so.
Jackie announced that she will be stepping down from the role of CTH Treasurer at the next AGM (10/06/27), so a new person is sought to take on the role. Thanks were expressed to Jackie for her service in this role to date.

Action:

- **Please prayerfully consider whether you or someone in your church could take on the role of CTH Treasurer. Full support and training will be given.**
- **After 2027, CTH will need to find a new person to audit the annual accounts. Any suggestions as to who might be able to do this welcome.**
  Please speak to Jackie or Maureen about the above bullet points

Any questions? Jackie invited questions, and there several asked with comments about the amount of money spent for this year's **Easter Live on The Square,** which had exceeded the budget for the event. This had been acknowledged by the CTH Exec and the Easter Live organising group, on which Maureen had represented CTH. This was further discussed in the Forum section of the meeting under Main Business, Point C, **Easter Live on the Square** – see below on page 4.
A question was asked about the **Good Causes Fund** (residual monies of £3 305.24 from MH Street Pastors when they closed in 2022), which is available for churches and associated organisations to CTH to apply to for funding for small projects. To date there had been one request granted to the Cube of £346.14 to replace the battery and pads on the defibrillator located on the Cube building.
b) **Approval of audited accounts:** The audited accounts were accepted unanimously by the Forum.
c) **Budget 2026 - 27** (Including subs). The budget had been circulated beforehand. The Forum unanimously accepted the proposed budget for 2026 – 27.

g) Chair's Address: Jan and Maureen had each written a Chair's address which can be found as Appendices **A** and **B** at the end of the minutes.

h) Election of officers: the officers named below were unanimously voted in for a further year of service to CTH.
a) Executive 2026 - 2027
(i) Co – chairs: Jan Turner and Maureen Douglas for a further year.
(ii) Secretary: Maureen Douglas
(iii) Treasurer: Jackie Melhuish
(iv) Other members of the Executive: Jeannie Brightwell.
New appointments 2026 - 2027 to the Executive were Rev Roo MacRae and Sarah Pyne.
b) Other Officers
(i) Minutes Secretary: Janet Smith
(ii) Christian Aid Co-ordinator: Dilys Few **(New appointment)**
(iii) Accounts Examiner: K.E. Bentley
Thanks, were expressed to above for their willingness to continue to serve, for those newly appointed and to Peter Arnold who had served as CTH's Christian Aid Coordinator for some years but was standing down.

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<u>June Forum Meeting</u>

Main Business

a) Introduction of Chairs: Maureen and Jan both expressed their commitment to serve CTH as Co – Chairs for a further year and for the blessings and support they received from each other in their role.

Maureen urged the Forum to keep pressing on towards enabling the unity Jesus spoke about in John 17v.2, **'that all of them may be one,'** as together we seek to meet the 3 - fold objectives that shape CTH, namely, to act, to facilitate and respond in shared witness, service and outreach. Jan mentioned her particular joy and privilege of serving on the Bower House Governing Body with Maureen, of being part of the organising group for the World Day of Prayer and the enjoyment she felt at being part of Churches Together in Harborough.

b) Lent Lunches: Lent in 2026 saw OLOV hosting the five lunchtime services and lunches. The theme this year was, '**God's Word: our greatest treasure and deepest delight'** reflecting 500 years since William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament into English. Different churches led the services each week, giving various people the opportunity to share in various ways what God's Word meant to them in their personal faith journeys. The sharing of the now traditional soup and cake lunch, enabling a time of fellowship with people from across the churches was as usual much appreciated. Donations received over the 5 weeks amounted to £1000 which has been given to Our Lady of Victories, Market Harborough, Aid for Developing Countries Group and shared amongst the projects it supports, (details of these projects are available from Maureen). Margaret Atkins of OLOV Church has agreed to coordinate the soup making for a further year next Lent – tide. (Thank you Margaret).

Action: We will need to find a church to host the services and lunches in 2027 and coordinate the provision of cakes!

c) Easter Live on The Square (ELOS): Christopher Brown who had headed up the Easter Live event in recent years was now on sabbatical from the Baptist Church and would not be returning as minster to the church, as he was commencing training as a chaplain in the army in the New Year. The Forum expressed its thanks to Christopher and Maureen informed the meeting that a card had been sent to him from CTH.

This year's event was well attended and received by the community once again.

A discussion around the expenses incurred by the ELOS event suggested that the churches be asked to contribute to any future Good Friday event, as clearly the CTH budget was hard pressed to meet all the expenses. Churches had done this generously in previous years, for example in the years that we hired the big screen. It was felt that the event was worth the expense, but this did not mean that future organisers should not review spending in the future, which may include going for less expensive options. All this needed to be decided BUT it was agreed that nothing could move forward in planning for an event in 2027 before first establishing they there was someone to take over the reins as named organiser, now Christopher was no longer with us.

It was suggested that the prayer aspect of the event could include more interactive prayer activities like using stones, or LED tealights to enable people to express

themselves in and through prayer, as well as people requesting prayer.

Actions:

- **Maureen to approach Stephen Jack (sooner rather than later) and/or other members of the organising committee to establish whether any of them would take on this leading role.**
- **Continue to think of innovative and creative ways to share the gospel with our community through this now established event and feedback to the Executive.**

d) Holiday at Home 3rd - 7th August 2026: this popular event will be held again at the Methodist Church from 9.30 a.m. – 1.30 p.m. each day. Volunteers are currently being sought. If you can help in any way, or to book your place on any of the days, please contact Christine the coordinator on **01858 410878.**

e) It's Your Move Books: These books have been given out to Year 6 pupils in the town's primary schools for years now. The books are produced by Scripture Union. Feedback on the books confirm that the books are well received. This year's books have arrived for distribution in the coming weeks by church leaders and others who have contacts with each primary school. A sticker has been placed inside each book stating it is a gift from CTH and wishing the students well in their new schools. This is a great opportunity for clergy and church leaders to strengthen vital connections with our town's primary schools. Thanks were expressed to Stephen who enabled a generous discount to be applied to the purchasing of the books this year through someone at HCC who works for Scripture Union.

Action: The books have been distributed to the appropriate people for taking to the schools.

f) Christian Aid: Peter Arnold informed the Forum that Christian Aid (CA) Week 2026 had taken place from 10th – 16th May this year. The 'Big Brekkie,' organised once again by the Congregational Church had been well publicised and attended, with Sharron sharing news that the breakfast had raised over £700. Dilys Few, the newly appointed CA Coordinator informed the Forum that a local online donation station had been set up and had raised money that way. Cash donations through the traditional CA envelopes had also been given. No figures for monies raised were available at the time of the meeting. Thanks were expressed to the Congregational Church for their commitment, energy and innovation in organising the breakfast again this year.

g) Moving Forward – the shape of our year to come: Maureen focused on the year ahead in terms of the anticipated CTH activities like the United Service and activities during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January, the Lent lunchtime services and lunches and the Easter Live Event on Good Friday. All these activities and more will see CTH's three objectives being enabled and enacted by Churches Together in Harborough.

h) Refugee Week 15 – 21st June 2026: this is a week where we can focus our attention on the plight of refugees and celebrate what their presence brings to our

local community by way of enrichment and diversity. The theme of 'courage' heads up this year's week and marks the 75th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention. No known activities were taking place locally this year.

i Any Other Business: Andy M shared that he wanted to step down from organising the rota for the Churches Column which has appeared in the Harborough Mail each week since the pandemic, and which Andy had taken over from Derek when he became poorly. Andy explained that contributors were responsible for submitting their own articles online (instructions given on how to do this), these days, so the need for editing no longer existed, however someone was needed to coordinate the rota of contributors if the column was to continue. Thanks were expressed to Andy for serving in this role. **Action: Roo agreed to produce the next rota (thank you Roo), but a person to do this longer term is needed.**

Peace Vigil: despite this being an item on the Forum Agenda since November 2025 in terms of the event's future timing, content and organisation, nothing concrete had progressed to date in terms of anyone coming forward to take the reins in organising it. New ideas for its format, focus and timing had been suggested (see previous Forum Minutes of November 2025 / February 2026), but again no decisions had been made to action these. The Forum expressed a desire that it was imperative to hold some kind of peace event, especially considering current world events and global attitudes. New suggestions were made to maybe tie some kind of peace event in with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and International Peace Day on 18th January 2027.A peace event could/should involve local children and could/should involve us being generally more 'noisy' in our approach.

Action: Ministers /clergy to take it to the Ministers' Fellowship to see if they can 'run' with any of these ideas. Watch this space!

j) Future dates and venues of CTH meetings in 2026 - 27 are confirmed as:

- **i. Thursday 21st September, at the Baptist Church – Renew Wellbeing Café Space, Manor Walk.**
- **ii. Wednesday November 18th at Harborough Community Church.**
- **iii. Thursday 4th February 2027, at the Methodist Church.**
- iv. **June 10th, 2027. AGM and Forum at The Congregational Church in The Lounge.**

All meetings begin at 7.15pm (with refreshments) for 7.30pm start.

f) **Closing prayer:** The Forum closed with the saying of the Lord's Prayer together.

Appendices A - E

Reports for the CTH AGM 2025 – 2026

Co-Chairs of Churches Together in Harborough Report to the AGM 2025-26
A. Jan Turner

Following the resignation of Andy Murphy as Churches Together Chair, I had the privilege of becoming joint Chair with Maureen Douglas. Over the last year I have attended Forum meetings at which Forum participants were able to inform those present about their church issues.

I also regularly attend Exec meetings where we plan forthcoming Forums. We held a preparation day for the World Day of Prayer which is organised by various countries throughout the world. The Day of Prayer was a time of great blessing.
On Good Friday the Minister from the Baptist Church Rev Christopher Brown led a very moving time of Worship which concentrated on what Jesus has done for us in his sacrifice on the cross. Next year I am hoping that more churches will become part of Churches Together in Harborough, so that all participating churches may learn from each other and take the Christian message throughout Harborough and beyond.

B. Maureen Douglas

CTH Co-Chair Report 2025-26 I begin my report by thanking God for another year in Office serving Christ and His Kingdom in answer to St John's Gospel 17; v.21. "May they all be one". My prayer has been for Unity in the body of Christ. And so, I continue to give thanks to God for Churches Together in Harborough and to all those who have worked with me and Co- Chair Jan Turner to realise this vision - 'to unite member churches in common witness and service'. Looking back over the past year's events; The United Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January, Lenten Lunches and Easter Live on the Square have provided wonderful opportunities to join together in Unity with our fellow brothers & sisters from across the churches in the town- "For their the Lord gives his blessing," Psalm 133;v3. Leading up to the Easter Live event we had two worship evenings where we as Christians gathered together in praise and worship to pray especially for Easter Live and for God's blessing on the town of Market Harborough. This prayer was wonderfully answered on Good Friday when as CTH we gathered on the Square to lift high the name of Jesus. Many people from across the churches and the unchurched came and were blessed to hear the Apostolic Gospel Choir, children were treated to an excellent array of activities provided by Harborough Community Church, The Bower House and Jubilee Foodbank. On behalf of CTH our grateful thanks go to the Rev Christopher Brown and the hardworking planning team leading up to Easter Live and to our church members who made this event possible on the day. Finally, my heartfelt thanks and appreciation go to the continued support from the Ministers Fellowship, the Executive Committee- Co-Chair Jan Turner, Treasurer Jackie Melhuish, Minute Secretary Janet Smith and Jeannie Brightwell who without their support we would not be where we are today with Churches Together in Harborough.

C. The Bower House AGM Report to CTH

It's been a busy time at the Bower House with regard to students. A new wave of enquiries has resulted in us welcoming three new counsellors to the team. As we are always mindful of those waiting to be seen for counselling, it's wonderful when we can make allocations to new counsellors.
Our volunteers continue to show unwavering commitment to the service, and we are particularly grateful to our support workers who have covered shifts at short notice because of support worker illness. We would like to bolster our support worker team and are currently advertising for potential new volunteers. Continued professional

development is a commitment that all our counsellors make to keep abreast of counselling developments and to meet the requirements of professional bodies.
We have recently offered two face to face CPD events – one on 'The Mother Wound' and the other on the use of sand-trays in therapy. Both were well attended by the Bower House team and external participants. These events were held at Harborough Community Church, and we are thankful to them for allowing us to make use of their function rooms.
We also organised online specialist Safeguarding training via ZOOM where our counsellors were updated on legislation changes and had an opportunity to explore safeguarding scenarios. On Saturday April 25th we had a team Away Day, with approximately 25 of our volunteers in attendance.
This year we held the meeting at St Mary's Church, Brampton Ash and invited two guest speakers to shape the day: Jo Giles, who is serving her curacy in the benefice of Desborough, Brampton Ash, Dingley and Braybrooke led the morning and Roo MacRae, the Reverend from Market Harborough Congregational Church led the afternoon. The theme of the day was 'Rest'. It was wonderful to enjoy the sunny weather and picturesque surroundings whilst taking time to reflect and listen to the Lord, both collectively and individually. Away Days are always such a special opportunity to connect, relax and enjoy being together again.
Our governing body recently agreed that there was a need to create a new Bower House position. The role of 'Assistant Service Coordinator' is now being advertised and we hope that you will join us in praying for suitable potential applicants.
Once again, we participated in the Harborough Rotary Club Swimarathon. Six of the team swam a total of 86 lengths and had great fun on the day. We applied and were awarded a small grant to purchase collection buckets/boxes, as well as clothing (with the Bower House logo) for fundraising and promotional events.
We also had another well attended fundraiser fashion show. This time held at the Congregational Church. A glass of bubbles was offered to all ticket holders along with finger food and nibbles. Our next fundraising event for 2026 will be in June – we have a stall at the Market Harborough carnival. Please pay us a visit if you are around – it would be great to say hello!
Finally, may we take the opportunity to say that we are so grateful for the support that you all afford us. Thank you for the way you continue to undergird the work, both financially and in prayer.
Every Blessing, **Cara and Loraine**

D. <u>The Cube AGM Report for CTH</u>

2025 was a significant year for The Cube as we celebrated 20 years since the establishing of the charity, **Harborough Youth and Community Trust (HYACT)** in June 2005. The Cube, (HYACT's working name), has come a long way in that time, and in many ways, it is a very different charity to how it was in 2005, especially in the scope of its work, but with its historically rooted values remaining firmly faith based.

Here are some of the opportunities and highlights of 2025:

The building

We have a great building, and we continue to discuss how we can maximise its use to benefit the young people of Market Harborough, alongside the staff and volunteers, (for whom this building is their work base), and for various community groups who hire the building for a variety of activities each week. Plans going forward include a possible extension to the main building, to provide further office and counselling space, with the support of Harborough District Council and other funding streams.

Partnerships with schools

We have continued to build upon the partnerships, successfully established over some years with our local secondary schools, where our youth workers continue to run weekly lunchtime groups, mentoring sessions and meeting young people. We continue to run open access groups after school at The Cube, namely, Oasis on a Wednesday evening and a newly established after school Youth Cafe on a Tuesday, which is proving popular with those in Year 6 as they transition to secondary school, as well as those in Years 7 and 8 at the Robert Smyth and Welland Park Academies.

Counselling and Wellbeing Service

The provision of subsidised access to counselling went from strength to strength in 2025 - a year in which specialist counsellors delivered between March and December, 678 sessions, (339 of which were in schools), to young people. We continue to look at different ways to increase our presence across more schools in Market Harborough, especially in the primary sector.

Governance Review

2025 saw HYACT's Trustee Board reviewing how the charity is governed, and with legal consultation, updating the charity's Articles of Association to reflect more realistically the charity it is today. The Trustee Board has engaged for much of the year in aiming to recruit more trustees, after recognising the need for a bigger, more diverse Trustee Board, and is slowly recruiting new trustees, who bring with them skills and experience that complement the existing board. The charity also continues to look to appoint a new chair who will take the charity forward.

Working with The Cranfield Trust

Part of this important review in early 2025 included a decision to appoint The Cranfield Trust, (https://www.cranfieldtrust.org/), who provide charities like HYACT with pro-bono support. Overseen by Adam, one of the Trust's Regional Managers, a volunteer consultant was appointed to work with us, on a feasibility study looking at the various options available to us. Part of the support involved us completing a **'Journey to Excellence,'** which measured HYACT's progress, growth and success in four core business areas – namely, **Leadership and Strategic Direction, People Management, Financial Management and Sustainability and Performance and Impact** at the beginning and end of the project. After seven months of working with the Cranfield Trust, a personalised **'Journey to Excellence Client Report'** was produced. Overall, this proved to be a positive experience, enabling the trustees to think critically and strategically about the onward direction of the charity.

The Future

Whilst we remain ever open to new opportunities, it is important to HYACT that the work we do continues to make a difference to and in the lives of local young people,

ensuring that they remain at the centre of any decisions made regarding the direction of the charity. New ventures in 2025 have been the establishing of an after school Youth Café, (previously mentioned) and a Youth Forum which meets monthly and where young people's voices are heard loudly and clearly.

Thank you

The end of 2025 saw Dawn O' Connell retiring from the Trustee Board after many years of serving The Cube, which included in the role of Chair from 2017 – 25. We thank Dawn wholeheartedly for her vision, wisdom and guidance. Dawn did not just lead us, she illuminated our path, enabling the charity to understand where we have come from, where we are today and what future possibilities there are for The Cube. As we move ahead with clarity, we are mindful of the impact Dawn's leadership has had on shaping The Cube.

As always, we thank all those who have supported HYACT in so many imaginative ways during this last year, whether as individuals, churches or as part of organisations like Churches Together in Harborough or local businesses. As we take stock of the last year, we thank God for His many blessings and for the way the charity has transitioned over the past 20 years. We look forward to a future that continues to put young people first, enabling them to thrive in themselves, their relationships and their world.

Prayer Pointers

- Thanksgiving and praise for the way God has blessed the Cube over the last 20 years and for His continued blessing into the future.
- As with all charities we face ongoing challenges in securing funding from various streams to enable us to continue our work. Please pray that new, as well as ongoing funding streams would be available.
- Thanksgiving for the amazing team of staff and volunteers who work in a variety of roles at The Cube and for the privilege of working with our young people, who continue to surprise and amaze us every day.

Janet Smith
On behalf of The Trustee Board, Harborough Youth and Community Trust
The Cube on Symington's, Symington Recreation Ground, St. Marys Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, LE16 7DS
T: 01858 437650 E: sarah@thecubeyouth.uk W: www.thecubeyouth.uk

E. Jubilee Foodbank AGM Report for CTH

Jubilee Foodbank Market Harborough Thank you for all your support for the Jubilee Foodbank, Market Harborough. April was an incredibly busy month, and stocks are often running low. Please see Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and the website for information about what food need. We also share support for different groups of people on these pages. If you have not already, you can also sign up to our newsletter through the Jubilee Foodbank website. Due to increased costs (due to inflation and increased referrals), we now have a fundraising trustee, Simon Vickers, who has already secured some funds. We are thankful for his help as we seek to be able to continue to support the local community and the increased demand. Last month, Simon, and other members of the team, were grateful to see the support of

the Leicestershire Fire Fighters washing cars too! If you would like to know more about how to refer, please contact us on jubileefoodbankmh@gmail.com

Liz Mills, Chair Jubilee Foodbank Market Harborough.