Minutes of the Churches Together in Harborough Forum,
Monday 21st September 2026, 7.15 for 7.30 p.m.
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 (13)
Jackie Melhuish (MHMC), Angela Zemlak (MHBC), Jan Turner (MHCC), Janet Smith (MHBC), Sharron Brennan (MHCC), Fr. Chris O' Connor (OLOV), Roo MacRae (MHCC), Dilys Few (MHBC), Sarah Pyne (Anglican), Jeannie Brightwell (Anglican), Stephen Jack (HCC), Susan Hammond (Living Rock).

Apologies for absence: Maureen Douglas (OLOV), Theresa Kendrick (OLOV), Alison Illiffe (Anglican), Phil Bryson (Anglican), Andy Murphy (MHMC), Peter Arnold (MHMC).

Welcome and Opening Devotions
Jan opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the Forum and committing the meeting to the Lord in prayer. Janet Smith (MHBC) led devotions by reading Psalm 133, ***"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore."*** (NIV) and giving answers to questions based on our town's churches, which people had been pondering over during coffee. Janet reminded us that God's Church is so much more than our buildings, which are so loved by us all for many different reasons. The Church of God, of course, remains without our buildings because, the Church is the gathered family of God. "When we view the Church through the lens of Psalm 133, our definition of 'home' expands. We realise that our brothers and sisters meeting down the road in a completely different building are not our competitors - they are our roommates in the larger household of faith." (www.liveoaks.church).

1.Minutes of the Forum held on 15th June 2026 at Our Lady of Victories Church: these had been circulated prior to the meeting. They were received, unanimously accepted as a correct record of the meeting and duly signed.

2. Financial Update: Jackie brought the meeting a financial update, reporting that CTH funds were sound.
Good Friday expenses – the Gospel Choir had been paid £500. There was £669 in the Good Friday account to carry forward. Jackie reminded us that a new CTH Treasurer is being sought to take over in June 2027 when Jackie steps down (see **Matters Arising point 3 e)** for details of the Treasurer Role.

Thanks were expressed to Jackie for her organisation and diligence in managing CTH's finances over a number of years.

3.Matters Arising

a) Peace Vigil: Roo reported that a proposed Peace Vigil for September would now take place in the Spring. Proposals included the involvement of the local schools through poster/colouring competitions at each Key Stage, the formation of a joint choir alongside an invitation to the wider community to join the Vigil. Permission to use the Old Grammar School and/or the Square for the event had been sought and granted. Watch this space!

Action: Proposals will be firmed up in the coming weeks, with the aim of bringing them to the November Forum. Any further suggestions for inclusion in the Vigil to Roo.

b) Churches Column in the Harborough Mail: Roo had agreed at the June Forum to take over the organisation of the rota from Andy. Articles in the weekly column, which had been established during lockdown continued to be appreciated by Harborough Mail readers and the newspaper keen for it to continue. Roo reminded the meeting that this opportunity for churches to have an uncensored voice in the local community was rare and should not be taken for granted or lightly.
More contributors are needed going forward. Details of what articles could include and had included, the required word count and how to submit articles to the newspaper or to Roo were readily available.

Action: Church reps to seek out writers in their congregations as future contributors. Feedback names and contact details to Roo. Further information is also available from Roo (mhccroo@gmail.com)

c) Easter Live on the Square (ELOTS) 126th March 2026: It was agreed at the June Forum 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. Christopher had led successful ELOTS for the past three years and now it was time for someone else to take the lead. Maureen had met with Stephen Jack who had agreed that HCC would take the lead on the organisation of the event, with the support of other churches, building a team to plan and execute.
Stephen is currently seeking the support of each church leader and finding out what each church feels they can contribute to the event. Is important that all churches feel able to 'buy into it.' It was acknowledged that many of the roles on the day are physical roles in the setting up and packing away, which obviously excludes some people from volunteering in such roles, but there were plenty of other opportunities for a whole range of people to get involved.
New suggestions were to form a CTH Choir for the event which would keep costs down. The hiring of the sound system is a major expense, but a must, considering the various challenges of effective sound projection across the Square over the years.
A suggestion that ELOTS was organised bi - annually was rejected, as an annual opportunity on Good Friday was thought to be a major opportunity for CTH to come

together and witness to the community - thus fulfilling CTH's objectives and showing that we could and should do things well.

Actions: By The November Forum a more detailed plan would be shared including the submission of a budget for ELOTS and knowing how each church feels able to contribute to the event.

d) Lent Services and Lent lunches - Lent begins on 10th February 2027. We would need to find a church to host the services and lunches in 2027 and coordinate the provision of food! For various practical reasons, such as a lack of kitchen facilities, and other uses of church buildings on Fridays, some churches felt unable to offer to host. Father Chris suggested that there was no reason why the services and lunches could not the held at OLOV again (thank you Fr. Chris!). Margaret Atkins of OLOV had confirmed at the June Forum that she was prepared to coordinate the making of soup for 2027 and a lengthy discussion around the provision of cakes which did not reach any firm conclusion could be carried forward and decisions made in due course.

Action: Members of the Executive present at the meeting to speak to Maureen and move forward with arrangements for the Lent services – theme, acquiring speakers for each service and the liaising with Margaret over soup coordination and deciding on how best to coordinate the provision of cakes.

e) CTH Treasurer and Auditor Vacancy: Jackie reminded the Forum in her report of the need for us to prayerfully consider whether we could take on the role of CTH treasurer when she steps down next June.
As CTH Treasurer, you would:
• Send subscription invoices to the Harborough churches. Payments are made by BACS and recorded on an Excel spreadsheet.
• Pay invoices submitted to the Treasurer. Payments are made through the bank and authorised by the Chair, with each payment recorded on the spreadsheet.
• Reconcile the accounts by checking that the Excel spreadsheet matches the bank statements.
• In March and April, prepare the accounts and spreadsheet for checking by an accountant or independent third party, ensuring that the money has been spent as Churches Together intended. The time commitment is very manageable:
• Approximately one hour per month for most of the year.
• Up to two hours per month in March and April to prepare the accounts for checking

Action: speak to Jackie or Maureen if you are interested in finding out more or feel you could take on the role.

4. Update on CTH Reps and required number to vote at Forum Meetings: Janet Smith reported that a working party last reviewed and updated the CTH Constiution in 2021 as part of a 5 yearly cycle. See point 12 of the Constitution below:

12. REVIEW

It is intended that Churches Together in Harborough shall reflect the developing life of the Christian Churches as they continue their pilgrimage together. Every five years

a Review Group shall be appointed by the member churches…. to report on the progress of the pilgrimage and to make proposals for desirable changes.
Point 6 in the Constitution covers the Forum and its representatives.

6. FORUM

6.1 Member churches shall be represented by their church leader(s) and in addition:

- for churches up to 100 members, 2 lay representatives
- for churches over 100 members, 3 lay representatives

6.2 Each associate member shall be represented by two members, who may attend meetings of the Forum and contribute to the discussion but shall not be entitled to vote.
6.3 There may be not more than six co-opted individual members.
NOTE: Member churches should ensure that representatives are empowered by their individual church bodies, to participate in the decisions of the Forum meeting, based on the previously circulated agenda.
Most member churches have representatives. HCC currently does not, although Stephen has approached various people to take on the role. The parish of the Transfiguration could have more representatives, as historically both St. Hugh's and St. Nicholas have had 2 representatives each.
A discussion centred around how to attract a wider and younger 'audience'/age profile to Forum meetings and ultimately involvement in CTH. Suggestions were made to:

- Re – assess what the agenda is made up of each time.
- Take a new look at the year and see what new things could be introduced, rather than the same things be repeated year on year.
- There was a need to find ways of attracting a younger generation and for them to find their place in CTH.

Action: The Executive will discuss the above points from the constitution and decide upon future action which they can bring to a Forum at a later date.

5. Prisons Week – 11th – 17th October. The theme this year is, 'All Are Invited' from Matthew 22 v 1 – 14. Hard copies of the prayer leaflets were available at the meeting and churches were invited to take some for their church. The leaflet is also online and can be accessed at www.prisonsweek.org
Fr. Chris asked us to continue to pray for our local prison HMP Gartree, also for the new prison HMP Welland Oaks which is currently recruiting key staff and which should be operational in 2028/9.

6. Week of Prayer for Christan Unity (WPCU) - 18th to 25th January 2027. A Church is needed to host the United Service - Sunday 24th January. The theme for the WPCU Unity 2027 is: "Do not be afraid, li le flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32) 7. No decision was reached at the meeting at to who would host the service.

Action: The Executive will discuss this further.

7. Centenary of The World Day of Prayer. Theme - United in Prayer for Justice & Peace. Friday 5th March 2027. Venue - Methodist Church. Further details to follow in due course.

8. Reports of recent events: Holiday @ Home. The Holiday @ Home Team had sent a report which is included at the end of the minutes.
The Cube: had had a great summer of events with the young people. The Youth Workers are back in the schools running lunchtime clubs at the town's secondary schools, WPA and RSA, alongside mentoring and counselling sessions across local schools including the primary sector. The charity is grateful for some significant grant applications being successfully secured over the summer, a real answer to prayer, which means security for the ongoing provision of services for the foreseeable future for local young people. As ever, we thank churches Together in Harborough, as well as individual churches for their ongoing support and prayer for The Cube in what is now its 21st year.
See link to The Cube's Autumn Newsletter **The Cube - Newsletter Autumn 2026**
Creation Life Adventure: Susan Hammond of Living Rock Church explained her vision for setting up a new venture and to promote a free family event which she was piloting on Saturday October 3rd from 3 - 5 p.m. at The Cube. Themed. 'The Wonder of creation,' Susan described the event as one to help families of primary school – aged children grow together and flourish while having 'faith – filled fun.' Parents and carers would be expected to stay with their children to experience the activities as a family. Leaflets and posters were available. The venture will launch next Spring.
For booking and further information for the free event on 3rd October email:
https://creationlifeadventure.co.uk

The Bower House: all are invited to attend the AGM.
"We would like to take this opportunity to formally invite you to the 2026 AGM for the Bower House.
The AGM is going to be held at **Harborough Methodist Church, Northampton Road, Market Harborough. LE16 9HE,** on Friday October 16th, 2026.
Arrival for tea and coffee from 6:30pm. The AGM will start at 7pm.
We would appreciate it if you could let us know by Friday October 2nd 2026. if you can attend. We would love to see you there.
If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us either by telephone – 01858 469257 or email officeadmin@bowerhousecounselling.org
Cara Thompson and Loraine Tite

Fairtrade Fortnight: Anita Beer reported that the Fairtrade Town group would be holding a Fairtrade themed morning on Saturday 26th September at the Methodist Church. All are welcome. Posters and flyers were available.
"Come and support Fairtrade Fortnight on Saturday 25th September, 10am - 12.30pmat the Methodist Church. Fairtrade Stalls, Fairtrade drinks and cakes, pancakes and bacon butties."

The Jubilee Foodbank: Sharron Brennan reported that the Jubilee Foodbank had experienced the usual higher referral rate during August because of the school holidays.

During August, 220 people had received food, including 70 children. The total of referrals to date in 2026 is nearly 2000.
Churches were encouraged to consider donating to the Foodbank during this harvest season, which would be very much appreciated as after the summer, stocks are usually low.

9. **Any other Business:** there was none.

The meeting closed with the saying of The Grace

Dates of next Forum meeting:
Wednesday 18th November 2026: 7.15pm for 7.30pm. Harborough Community Church Thursday 4th February 2027 - at the Methodist Church
Thursday 10th June 2027- AGM and Forum- at the Congregational Church in the Lounge.
All meetings 7.15pm (for refreshments) for 7.30pm start.

Appendix A

HOLIDAY AT HOME REPORT 2026: To begin this report the organising committee would like to thank Churches Together for supporting the Holiday at Home initiative which helps us to plan and execute an interesting and fun programme for the participants.

Holiday at Home is run by a group of 8 volunteers under the auspices of Churches Together Harborough at the Methodist Church on Northampton Road. It is aimed at any senior citizens living in Market Harborough and the Bowdens of any religion or none who would otherwise not be able to go on holiday because of finance, loneliness or infirmity. In 2026 participants paid £8 per day to help cover the cost of lunch and expenses. Free transport was provided for those who needed it.

This year Holiday at Home took place from the 3rd to 7th August inclusive. There were 44 participants during the week. Some attended every day and others just for a few days. Altogether there were 18 volunteers on a rota basis, with some coming each day and others just once or twice plus 7 volunteers from the Methodist Church who cooked a two- course meal on two days. In addition, there were about 42 volunteer speakers, musicians and activity leaders.

The programme for the week ran as follows:

- Coffee/tea/biscuits on arrival
- One hour of a chosen activity of three per day. This year it included art, armchair exercises, a beetle drive, quiz, cooking demonstration, looking after indoor plants, a very popular talk on AI and line dancing. We aim to have physical activity, a craft and a 'listening' 'watching' session each day.
- One hour talk or music session which this year included the U3A choir, a talk on Birds of Prey including meeting the beautiful birds, MH ukulele group and a talk on looking after yourself/other people as a carer.
- A two- course lunch.

Participants included those who had been coming for years and new ones who tentatively came for one day and stayed for the week.

Participants included those who needed to be accompanied by a carer or needing a mobility scooter/walker to get around and those with vision impairments as well as the elderly well and active. It is wonderful to look around the room when the participants are having coffee or their lunch to see them chatting, smiling and laughing together. At the end of the week, they were exchanging telephone numbers. It makes us, as volunteers, feel it is very worthwhile.

We consider Holiday at Home to be an important community initiative which enables senior citizens to come together to make new friends and undertake new experiences which lift their spirits and confidence.

Holiday at Home Committee