



**Churches Together in Harbourough AGM
Monday 16th May 2022, 7.15 for 7.30 p.m.
at the Methodist 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)

Janet Smith (MHBC), Andy Murphy (MHMC), Maureen Douglas (OLOV), Derek Williams (Anglican), Jackie Melhuish (MHMC), Angela Zemlak (MHBC), Ceriann Kelly (The CUBE), Peter Arnold (MHMC), Jan Turner (MHCC), Mandy Gays (Street Pastors), David Nixon (MHMC), Elizabeth Tubb (Anglican), Keith Rugg (MHBC), Dave Tomlin (MHMC), Theresa Kendrick (OLOV), Dee Quinn (Anglican), Stephen Haward (MHCC), Chris O'Connor (OLOV), Stephen Jack (HCC), Alison Iliffe (Anglican)

Apologies for absence

Christopher Brown (MHBC), Cara Thompson (Bower House), David Palmer (Elderberries), Tom Grant (Anglican), Barry Hill (Anglican), Jeannie Brightwell (Anglican)

Welcome

Janet opened the meeting by thanking people for coming to the AGM. This was the first time since 2019 that we have been able to meet in-person. Janet gave a special welcome to Stephen Jack, Lead Elder at Harbourough Community Church, as he is attending his first meeting.

Opening devotions – Revd Andy Murphy

Andy began by reading from Ephesians 3:14 – 4:5.

These words from Paul challenge us to:

- Not lose hope, because God is faithful
- Seek to know more and explore deeper the love of Christ
- Use our gifts that God has given us
- Learn to cherish each other's unique gifts. Unity never means uniformity. Unity can rejoice in diversity including in theology, practice, doctrine and worship.

Andy then led prayers for the churches in Market Harbourough and the surrounding villages, closing with the Lord's Prayer. The meeting then sang: I the Lord of Sea and Sky.

a) Minutes of AGM held on Thursday 20th May 2021 by Zoom

There were no corrections to the minutes which were accepted by the meeting and signed by Janet.

b) Reports

These were all previously circulated. There were no questions but:

- It was noted that the Bower House building will be closed for three months whilst they have renovations to improve facilities. They will be based at the Harbourough Innovation Centre during this time.
- The meeting was also informed that Liz Mills from the Jubilee Foodbank was receiving her MBE at Buckingham Palace this week. It was agreed to send a card of congratulations from the Forum.

The groups were all thanked for their continuing work and witness, despite the restrictions over the past years. We must all be encouraged by these reports.

c) Treasurer's Report and Accounts

At the time of writing, the accounts are with Katherine Bentley (of E T Peirson and Sons Accountants) to be examined. They will be sent out in full after they have been finalised but a summary is provided below.

Balance Carried forward:

CTH own funds	£4,084.56	
Holiday at Home	£1,233.77	
Homeless and asking for help	£722.53	
Total		£6,040.86

Breakdown of Profit and Loss

CTH Income	£1,667.10	
Less Expenditure	£955.67	£711.43
Holiday at Home	£673.30	
Less Expenditure	£630.00	£43.30
Homeless and Asking for Help	150.00	
Less Expenditure	£88.00	£62.00

The accounts are in good shape and no adjustment to Churches subscriptions is felt necessary for the coming year and the relevant invoices will be sent May/June

d) Election of Officers

a. **Chair**

Janet is standing down as Chair after completing her 2-year term. Andy Murphy has served the last 2 years as Vice-Chair and now stands for election to the Chair. The meeting unanimously agreed to elect Andy as Chair

b. **Vice-Chair**

Janet reported that she had asked a year ago at the 2021 AGM for people to start praying about who would take on the role of Vice-Chair this year. To date there are no nominations for the Vice-Chair's position. In the past months various people have been asked, who after prayerful consideration do not feel for various reasons that they can take on the role.

Andy and Janet had sent out an email asking for someone, lay or ordained to consider taking on the role for a year without the expectation that they would become Chair or serve the full term. This would allow the Executive time to continue to seek a Vice-Chair. If no one comes forward, this is potentially problematic for continuity.

The Forum were asked to continue to pray about the situation and if anyone does feel that they can take on the role for a year or indeed now feels called to step into the role of Vice-Chair that they contact Andy as soon as possible. If anyone wants further info on what it involves day-to-day, we would be very pleased to speak to you.

c. **Treasurer**

Jackie Melhuish has is willing to continue as Treasurer and the meeting unanimously agreed to her election. Jackie was thanked for her work in taking up the role of Treasurer in the last few months after Rose Williams moved away from Market Harborough.

d. **Secretary**

Maureen Douglas has is willing to continue as Secretary and the meeting unanimously agreed to her election.

e. **Communications Officer**

Derek Williams has is willing to continue as Communications Officer and the meeting unanimously agreed to her election.

f. **Minutes Secretary**

Angela is stepping down after four years of taking the minutes. She was thanked for her hard work and diligence. No-one has come forward to take on this role. It was noted that there would only be four meetings a year instead of five. Anyone interested, please speak to Janet or Andy

g. **Christian Aid Co-ordinator**

Peter Arnold has only recently taken on this role and the meeting were unanimous in electing him for the next year. Peter is hard at work as this week is Christian Aid week. He is working with Village Churches as well as those in the town.

h. **Accounts Examiner**

Katherine Bentley has agreed to inspect the accounts next year.

Janet closed the AGM with prayer, giving thanks to God for the Churches in Harborough and blessing Andy and the Executive as they go forward into the new year.

Andy thanked the Forum for their vote of confidence. He had seen how Maureen, Stephen and Janet had served so faithfully and he hoped and prayed that he could live up to their integrity and faithfulness. He then paid tribute to Janet. She has faced a difficult two years as Chair, taking over at the height of the first lockdown in 2020 with a meeting held on Zoom. Over the last two years, meeting have been difficult to convene, worshipping together in person has also been near-impossible, and many of the regular events we would normally take for granted have had to be replaced with online version.

Janet was presented with a card and gifts and the meeting closed in Prayer.

Churches Together in Harborough: Reports 2021 – 2022

The Bower House

The Bower House team has shown amazing adaptability and resilience in the last year. The uncertainty and new ways of working that COVID brought have presented numerous challenges to the service, but our 70+ volunteers have continued to embrace them in all in order to provide what clients need.

As COVID restrictions began to lift, we have continued to grow as a team; two much needed support workers have joined us, and we have a couple of students being inducted into the service. The phones have been quiet since we contacted GPs to pause their signposting to us and the team have worked hard to offer sessions to those waiting. We anticipate that we will be able to open up the waiting list by writing to GPs again in the next few weeks.

All counsellors are required to have monthly clinical supervision for the work that they do, and the counselling team are offered an hour's free supervision per month at the Bower House. Our supervision provision has now been strengthened by the addition of four trainees who started their various courses last year. This has really helped to spread the supervision load and has made it easier to allocate supervisors when counsellors join us.

The Bower House, for the first time in its history, will shortly be re-locating to another venue. The Innovation Centre have agreed to house us, and we have been working with them to make the transition as smooth as possible for both clients and volunteers. After receiving grants from the Howard-Watson Symington Trust, The Bowden's Charity, and Council 106 funding (we feel very blessed to have been supported by the community and council in this way), we were able to commission builders to start reconfiguring the Bower House front entrance to improve access. Exciting times! This work will begin in June and so our commemorative area, Jenny's Garden, has already been relocated to the temporary safety of a support worker's garden in readiness. We anticipate returning to the house for a September re-opening and so will re-imagine Jenny's Garden on our return.

Our last coffee morning was cancelled due to Covid, but we are due to host a Jubilee fundraiser on the 21st May at Harborough Theatre. It will be great to hold an event where we are able to properly reconnect with the local community again and hope that many people will drop by for bacon rolls, tea, cake, tombola, and chat. It would be great to see you there if you are able to attend.

After years of dedicated service, Trish stepped down from the role of service co-ordinator last month. The Bower House Team gathered for tea and cake and to present her with gifts on her last, official day. Although we will miss her in this role, we are also very grateful that we will still benefit from her gifts and wisdom (she will remain as a volunteer counsellor and supervisor) and hope to appoint a new service co-ordinator to work alongside Cara in the near future. As always, we appreciate your prayers and support and feel upheld in the work that we do.

Cara Thomson

Homeless and Asking for Help Project

The new hot meal voucher system set up with Cod's Scallops in February last year has been running well, and has been quite well used.

The Food bank have issued a number of vouchers and they have been replaced as needed, and paid for by the Food bank.

St Dionysius Church have given out all the vouchers they were allocated and are currently awaiting replacements, which is in hand.

The group has also been in contact with Beacon Care who have requested help for homeless clients on several occasions. We have been able to supply them with sleeping bags from The Street Pastors, food bags from the Food bank and hot food vouchers from Cod's Scallops.

While keeping track of numbers is very difficult, as the vouchers are pre-paid, so we do not always get notified when vouchers are used, it is clear that we have been reaching many more homeless people than in previous years. The increased council involvement during the Covid Lockdown period seems to have helped to forge links that are continuing to be useful.

Jane White

The Cube

The Cube continues to run 6 groups a week, which take place both at the Cube and in schools. The Wellbeing service has had a soft relaunch with 2 new counsellors joining us and taking on clients.

We are currently seeing around 50 individual young people across the groups, not including counselling, with school lunch groups drawing in significant numbers each week. Ceriann has started making church visits to talk about where the Cube it is at now, and how people can get involved.

We recently held fundraising event at JAGA for an outside counselling space and have raised £640 so far!

We are going to be open on Carnival Day and would love for our local congregations to pop in and say hello. Our Youth workers are seeing young people really opening up and beginning to share their lives with them.

Ceriann Kelly

Street Pastors

This is my first report as chair of Street Pastors, taking the post following the untimely and very sad death of our chair Liz Howe. The last year has been something of an unusual one partly because we were not able to patrol in the normal way due to the restrictions and other times found us walking around the parks and open areas during the weekend afternoons and early evenings. This proved rewarding in many ways, meeting up with families, children, and folk we would not encounter in the late time patrols.

There have been a number of changes within the group, both in Street Pastors and prayer support, some of us retiring, moving away, failing health etc. However, we have had some success in recruiting and are able to continue, BUT the need is greater than we can fulfil, so we welcome any interest shown in joining us. As we are self - funding we give a huge thank you to all those giving financial support, the churches, the council, groups, and organisations who raise money and the donations from private individuals.

Street Pastors are very grateful for the use of the Bower house as our base on our nights out, our sincere thanks.

I believe the Street Pastor initiative is in good heart and with the presence and Spirit of God we move forward into the next year.

Jeannie Brightwell

Communications Officer's Report

There are three main ways of making CTH activities and needs known within the churches and wider community. One is via regular mailings to church representatives on the Forum mailing list and to church leaders, distributed by the CTH Secretary, Maureen Douglas. We ask recipients to pass this information in turn to their church members via websites, notice sheets etc.

The second is via our own CTH website managed by Dave Kennard who posts news and information as he is given it. We ask reps and church leaders to check it out regularly (www.harboroughchurches.org.uk). We are grateful to Dave for his ongoing support and efficiency.

The third is via local media. The weekly *Harborough Mail* newspaper often includes both advance information and reports of CTH activities (and will do so for newsworthy items from individual churches if it has space). It continues to publish a weekly "Churches column" (generally a gentle spiritual "thought for the week" suitable for both church members and people who do not have any church affiliation) for which I organise a rota of writers most (but not all) of whom are church leaders linked in some way to CTH. The local radio station HFM usually mentions any major CTH coming events in its news updates. We are very grateful for the support of local media, which should not be taken for granted.

My role is to supply the website and media with relevant information, liaise with others over publicity for CTH events, and to assist the Executive Committee in its day-to-day planning.

Derek Williams

Jubilee Foodbank Report

2021 was a busy year again with many families and individuals supported. Our volunteers have worked tirelessly to make sure those referred are able to create meals. Sadly, the Jubilee team has lost several volunteers due to ill health. However, we continue to have many people interested in volunteering to help those in need.

Harborough District Council is our main referrer as has been the case for several years. However, since the changes due to the pandemic, referrals are made by other organisations through the Harborough Community Hub website. These include: Beacon Care, CAB, Home Start, social prescribers (working with doctors), adult social care, schools and churches.

The need to provide food is not decreasing. In 2021, Jubilee Foodbank supported 329 households. On average, 4500 meals per month were provided. 2021 referrals were 14% higher than 2019 (before Covid) levels.

The Harborough community, churches and organisations have donated in many different ways, helping Jubilee Foodbank to continue. Jubilee Foodbank is so grateful for your support as it encourages the Jubilee team to continue to volunteer time and efforts too. VASL (Voluntary Action South Leicestershire) volunteers have continued to deliver parcels enabling a wider range of people to be reached. The Well, Kibworth continues to support local villages with their foodbank too. The Eco Village is developing a Pay-it-Forward scheme for people who need food.

Becoming an independent charity has been challenging for various reasons, not least with the need to continue to maintain the foodbank at the same time. However, we have recruited new members who will become trustees once our charity application is approved. There is still a trustee position available for developing external links, including links with Churches Together in Harborough. Do get in touch if you are interested.

Please continue to pray for all involved to make the right decisions in supporting people as more families and individuals in England struggle to make ends meet.

Liz Mills, Jubilee Foodbank, Chair jubileefoodbankmh@gmail.com

Harborough Action for Justice and Peace Report

We have mostly not met in person this year, though we have stayed in touch and continued to act on-line where possible.

However, we were able to hold the Peace Vigil in January this year. It was good to be able to stand together in the Square and pray in the silence for peace in our world. And considering the need to work for peace, we have been part of the support for Ukraine, both in terms of sending aid, and in seeking to support those refugees as well as refugees already here.

Our main concern this year has been to try and work out exactly what the way forward might be. We are aware that there are many groups in Harborough concerned with a wide variety of Justice issues – local; national; and worldwide. We believe that God is inviting us to seek ways of working together with people of all faiths and none, while maintaining our desire to offer these concerns in prayer and worship. There has been some delay in the conversations about this – partly due the pandemic restrictions, and partly due to the personal concerns of those involved. However, we are still working on it!

We continue to find helpful facts with additional information and reflection on the results of governmental policies (including those specifically relating to the pandemic) from the ecumenical Joint Public Issues Team. <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk> It may also help people's praying to look at what is offered each day as a world prayer focus by them.

We continue to write to Neil O'Brien and others involved in government; we have written, emailed, and lobbied where that was possible; and we have been part of offering financial support, both at home and overseas. And of course, we have continued to pray.

Alison Tomlin

Chair's Report

Our lives and CTH activities have continued to be largely influenced by the effects of the pandemic during this last year with the ongoing uncertainties of the COVID infection rates locally and nationally meaning that the overwhelming voice of continuing caution and felt responsibility towards church congregations rightly prevailed. However, there were opportunities to celebrate and remember in different ways using Zoom and live streaming as well as an increasing return to in-person meetings and activities.

This last year has seen new church leaders welcomed to our town. In September and October, I attended the inductions of Stuart Allen and Stephen Jack and the licensing of Hils Corcoran on behalf of Churches Together as they came into leadership at Christchurch, Harborough Community Church and St Peter and St Paul's Church at Great Bowden; and Tom Grant was welcomed to the Anglican Team as a church planting curate. We also said goodbye last summer to James Pickersgill as he moved to pastures new as Chaplain to the Bishop of Leicester.

Thus far, 2022 has seen CTH getting back to some sense of normality and returning to our more usual rhythm of events and activities in our life as churches together. We held our traditional Peace Vigil on the Square in January and of course more recently, Holy Week saw the welcome return of the Good Friday service and witness on the Square. In many positive comments received afterwards, one summed it up like this, **"It was such a positive witness to those on and around the Square about Jesus and the work of Churches Together,"** and indeed it was! It also felt great to be able to utilise the LED screen that we had first hired back in 2020.

Our affiliated organisations too in recent months are getting back to more usual working patterns. It is exciting to see and hear what is planned for the Cube in its continued support of our young people, to see Street Pastors patrolling our streets again on a regular basis and to share the excitement of the Bower House as it embarks in the next few months on some building work to enhance access to the building which has been its home for so many years.

A review of the CTH Constitution last autumn saw the Review Group propose some minor changes which will be implemented going forward. However, what has not changed are the three objectives that remain at the heart of CTH. They appear at the top of each Forum agenda as a reminder to us all of what we are about. They are:

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

I am greatly indebted to my fellow Executive Officers and thank Andy Murphy, Derek Williams, Maureen Douglas, Rose Williams, and Jackie Melhuish for their unstinting support during this last year. Thanks also go to Angela Zemlak for her four years of service as our efficient Minute Secretary, who is stepping down and to Dave Kennard our webmaster for his technical support over another year. I am sure that CTH will endeavour to continue to meet its objectives as it navigates a world undoubtedly changed by the pandemic but nevertheless always moving forward in hope, along with a sense that we will always seek to find more within our faith that unites rather than divides us as Christians in this town as we continue to share God's love with others in mission and service.

Janet Smith