

## **Churches Together in Cirencester**

**Annual General Meeting - 21<sup>st</sup> July 2022 at the Salvation Army Hall, Thomas Street**

### **Present:**

Ashcroft Baptist	Mike Dearsley Matt Frost, Karen Simson, Iona Birchall, Wendy Hewett, Peter & Maggie Langman
Cirencester Parish Harnhill	Rev Joe Mottram, Ian Robertson Rev Tim Hastie-Smith
Hope Cirencester New Life Church	Kathy Folkestad
Religious Society of Friends	Jane Huntington
Salvation Army St Peter's Stratton	Mark & Corinne Walters, John & Cherry Umasanthiran, Ann Harrison
St Peter's R.C. Church	
Street Pastors	Peter Ewart
Cirencester Foodbank	Anton Wynn

### **Welcome & Prayers.**

Matt Frost welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the Salvation Army members for their hospitality. He read words from Psalm 25 emphasising the need to put our trust in God at all times and asked for others to pray as they felt led.

### **Apologies:**

Apologies were received from Cannon Graham Morris, John Lawrence, Rev Alison Love, Envoy Kim Whyard, Sheelagh Hughes, Ros Burnip & Rev Wendy Tucker.

### **Resignations:**

Mo Jackson (CBC), Kiki Stanton (New Life Church), Peter Ewart (pending Street Pastors dissolution) .

### **New Representatives:**

Ian Robertson will represent Cirencester Parish and Karen Simson will represent Cirencester Baptist Church. It was noted that New Life Church and St Peter's RC no longer have lay representation and that CBC, Salvation Army and St Peter's Stratton only have one lay representative each at present.

### **Previous Minutes:**

The minutes of the previous AGM held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021 were approved by a show of hands as being a true record and duly signed by Matt Frost noting that they were circulated to members on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and that there were no errors or omissions notified to the Administrator at the time.

**Debt Counselling & Support:** - Presentation by Anton Wynn, Manager Cirencester Foodbank.

Cirencester Foodbank now covers the South Cotswolds an area of 210 square miles including many outlying rural communities. The number of referrals continues to grow year on year but ideally it would be preferable if there was no need for Foodbanks. Referred to the Trussell Trust overseeing Foodbanks nationally and Financial Inclusion being driven by current economic crisis. Foodbank provide 3 days of long-life food together with sanitary and household cleaning products. Many people suffered from worry

& anxiety particularly through lockdown and may still find it difficult to share or to know where to go for help.

Referred to the Pathfinder Programme and using data and peoples lived experiences to inform how to improve levels of support to intervene before crisis.

Foodbank partners with other care organisations and has re-opened a Support Hub at the Opportunity Group in Beeches Road on Thursdays where anyone can drop in for help & support with a view to being signposted to other organisations. Referred to carrying out benefit checks to look at entitlement together with reviewing household spending to differentiate between needs and wants.

Currently operate a delivery model in order to reach outlying communities and provide telephone support again helping to signpost people to other organisations such as the Churn Project, CAB, Signpost and P3 where appropriate. Partnership with Citizens Advice and fund two days per week for one to one counselling/advice. Looking to employ specialist advisers for further two days and to engage with schools to identify families in need.

Explained about the Community Money Advice service (CMA) which has two models:

1) Debt Centre which is local and 2) Connect Centre which is more centralised out of county. Aware of work done by Christians Against Poverty can be a barrier to those of other and no faith but CMA can partner with local churches without being overtly Christian. Belief that churches can help to identify people in need through relationship and being open. Already massive support from churches and individuals through food donations. CTiC was fundamental to the start up of Cirencester Foodbank which has changed out of all recognition as, sadly, the need has grown. Concern at what will happen this winter as fuel costs really begin to rise significantly.

Aim to provide a safe space for people to feel confident to share and build relationships/trust through other activities. Looking to apply for grant funding through Trussell Trust to set up CMA training for up to 6 volunteers who would then provide specialist advice through the support hub. Perhaps CTiC would consider contributing financially to training programme.

Q. Is it appropriate to use term "debt" in title as it may put off some from seeking help? Is there a stigma attached to debt?

A. Work in progress, CMA have various branding that could be used to be more inviting.

Q. Will investment in training volunteers be secure – what commitment will there be from volunteers?

A. Ideally only those with a heart to serve would come forward and there would be a vetting process to explain what would be involved before training given.

### **Chairman's Report:**

Matt reiterated that there were good relationships between the churches and that there was a friendly atmosphere at joint events and a willingness to express the love of God collectively. He referred to the RAU chaplaincy which involved Graham Morris, Kim Whyard and himself as an example of how those in leadership can work together.

Good Friday and Pentecost are highlights of the last year. Hundreds of Christians from our churches together worshipping, praying and witnessing. Something to be very grateful for.

We served together at Christmas with the Nativity Trail and singing in the Marketplace.

As Covid has eased, the chaplaincy work at the hospital and the RAU is growing again.

Above all, it is the friendly relationships between our churches and the ministers which is the best part of CTiC – and is a witness to our local community. We hope to get all the church leaders together for lunch or breakfast in September to grow this.

My personal thanks to Adrian, our treasurer, who sadly died earlier this year. He was a faithful servant of CTiC for many years. We will miss his handwritten accounts!

Praying for God's blessing for all our churches in the year to come.

### **CTIC 2022 Alpha Course – Dorian Ferdinando**

On behalf of CTiC we ran another successful Alpha Course at Cirencester Baptist Church from January to April. Having run two online courses over the lockdown period, this was our first 'hybrid' one, with two live groups & one online, all at the same time. The online group enabled people to be part of it who were unable to get to the Church, including one couple from Athens in Greece!

Guests came from different Churches in the town & wider area, deep friendships were formed, and most moved closer to God. Alpha sees a mixture of, frustration at the lack of progress of some and huge joy as others hear the truth of the gospel & respond & move on. Also answered prayer is always exciting & we are so grateful that we follow a God who is living and active, hearing us & moving in our lives. That is one of the things which gets the attention of guests on the Course & helps them to follow Jesus.

A very big thank you to all the helpers; with the groups & on the catering side.

### **Acting Treasurers Report**

Adrian Snow passed away on 30<sup>th</sup> March this year before he was able to finalise the accounts for 2021. The financial records were passed to the Administrator pending the appointment of a new Treasurer. As can be seen from the Income & Expenditure account there had been very little "financial activity". Subscriptions were deferred for both 2021 and 2022 and so there was no general income. The 2021 accounting year closed with a balance of £7074.75 at the bank with no outstanding liabilities. We are grateful to Kathy Folkestad for auditing the 2021 account as being accurate.

Further expenditure to date included Alpha Course costs, Public Liability Insurance, Easter & Pentecost expenses and Bibles for school leavers.

Voluntary donations towards the cost of the children's Bibles this year had been received from three member churches amounting to £400 which together with money held over from the previous year allowed the whole account to remain in credit of £5413.91 as at 21<sup>st</sup> July 2022.

Some surprise was expressed at the average cost of Bibles (circa £12.84 each) but explained that choices included the Action Bible and Lion Graphic Bible as appealing to younger readers.

Post Meeting Note: It is reported independently that all of the Bibles were well received by the children.

### **Annual Subscriptions:**

Given that there are still substantial funds in hand and that there are currently no significant planned items of expenditure it was proposed that Subscriptions should be deferred again for one further year as from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023. This was approved by a show of hands by those present there being no dissent.

### **Election of Officers:**

It was reiterated again that there is no succession planning and that in the past officers served for a period of two years plus a further year if they were willing. The post of Deputy Chair is currently vacant and members were reminded that each of the posts of Chair and Deputy should alternate between lay and clergy. The position still needs to be reviewed at subsequent meetings and applications will now be invited for Chair, Deputy and Administrator.

Kathy Folkestad kindly agreed to become Treasurer. Proposed by Matt Frost and agreed by those present.

### **Street Pastors :**

Peter Ewart confirmed that 'The Management Committee determined that it is appropriate that the charity, Cirencester Street Pastors, be dissolved and that, in accordance with paragraph 64 of the Constitution, we shall convene a meeting of the members by giving not less than 21 days' notice of that meeting (stating the terms of the proposed resolution)'

There will be a meeting of Street Pastors in September to confirm that the charity, Cirencester Street Pastors, be dissolved. It will require a two-thirds majority of those present and voting to confirm the proposal. In this context, 'members' are those Street Pastors who have been authorised to patrol and have not resigned, and the members of the Management Committee.

In light of the difficulty in arranging enough Street Pastors for patrols, we also agreed that we would suspend all further patrols of Street Pastors pending the outcome of the proposed members meeting in early September.

Peter was keen to emphasise that Street Pastors, as an initiative of CtiC, had been a great success and that there had clearly been a change in the atmosphere of the night time economy in the town with fewer violent incidents. The impact of Covid together the cost of living crisis would continue to affect hospitality venues and the individuals level of disposable income.

He referred to the recent meeting with the neighbourhood police as being the start of more conversations with local authorities as collectively we find a new direction to serve the community.

### **Phoenix Festival – Prayer Tent Proposal:**

The organisers of the Phoenix Festival have confirmed that they would welcome a "prayer tent" run by CTiC which would focus on the conflict and rebuilding of Ukraine. Volunteers are needed to pull this together asap. Joe Mottram and Karen Simson both said that they would be available to be involved with the event but the details would need to be worked out. ie gazebo hire/borrow – prayer trees or wall – labels or post-it notes – rota for church members – Ukrainian flag – other signage.

Post Meeting Note: Possibly Rev Alison Love and Bernie Harding may be involved together with some folk from CBC who are involved with Ukrainian refugee families. TBC

### **Experience Harvest:**

Interactive opportunity to engage with Years 4 & 5 from local primary schools (Chesterton, Sapperton, County Primary, Watermoor & Siddington, possibly Powells as well). Six stations covering Patience, Peace, Humility, Generosity, Joy and Thanksgiving. Alison Lock from CBC is co-ordinator and team leaders have been allocated for each station. More volunteers are needed to cover the sessions which will run from 9:30am to 3pm on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September at CBC. Alison can be contacted on email at [alisonlock53@gmail.com](mailto:alisonlock53@gmail.com) for further information.

### **Joint Christmas Activity:**

Provisional date agreed with Town Council & Cotswold Markets is Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December. Salvation Army band are currently available and proposal is for traditional carols and readings. Suggestion of handing out mince pies to general public and having some form of activity to engage and explain the meaning of Christmas. Need for further planning meeting – take to September Forum but open to dialogue in interim.

### **AOB**

**Website.** - Nigel Price who administers the website has informed that we need to have an SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) certificate. The current domain host does not provide this and neither do we pay any annual subscription. Nigel proposes that we change provider to YNH Ltd whom he has worked with in the past and found to be very reliable. The overall cost would be £42 per annum comprising Domain Registration of £12pa and host fee of £30pa. The move and expenditure was approved by those present at the meeting.

**Tom Elliot – Big Night Out** – Tom has contacted CTIC to ask if we would be interested in hosting a Big Night Out which involves himself weaving the Gospel into stand up comedy and magic supported by other local acts if possible. It provides an opportunity to invite non-Christians to an evening of fun and entertainment whilst hopefully encouraging them to find out more about Christianity and the local church. Graham Morris has indicated that he would be interested to find out more and Matt Frost said that CBC have hosted Tom in the past to good effect. His website address is [Tom Elliott - Comedy Magician & Coach \(tom-elliott.org\)](http://TomElliott-ComedyMagician&Coach(tom-elliott.org))

Tom is based at Minchinhampton Baptist Church and takes his act throughout the uk. He charges a fee of circa £750 but it is open to CTIC to promote ticket sales or underwrite the cost from funds.

The meeting approved in principle but resolved to ask the Forum to find out more before making any further commitment.

**Post Meeting Note:** Forum asked to consider the Eco Church initiative and look at the church's environmental work and "faith for the planet". Promoted by Gloucestershire Churches Environmental Justice Network.

### **Next Forum Meetings** –

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> September – 7:30pm at the Friends Meeting Hall

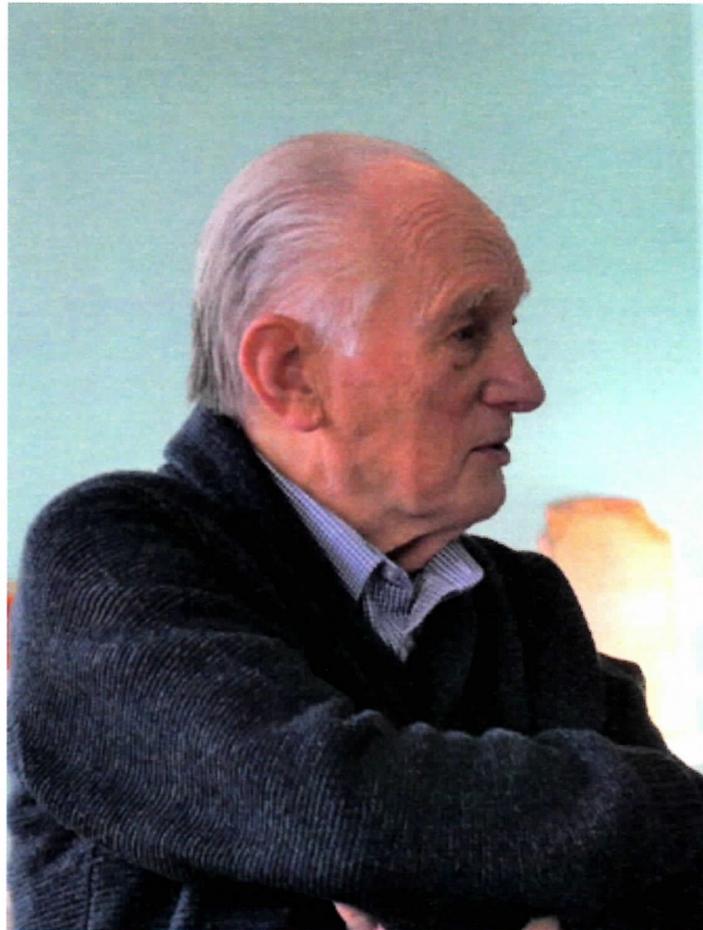
Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November – 7:30pm at the Parish Forum

The AGM closed with prayer at 8:55pm.

In loving memory of

*Adrian John Snow*

20th March 1939 - 30th March 2022



*CTiC Treasurer June 2011 – March 2022*