



Minutes for HCT Forum - web version

Date: Thursday 8th February 2024
Time: Doors open at 7pm for 7.30pm start
Venue: Holy Trinity, Rushams Road, Horsham, RH12 2NT
Chair: Deputy Moderator, Michael Hogg (MH)

THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS HAD BEEN CIRCULATED PRIOR TO THE MEETING:

- I) Agenda for HCT Forum
- II) HCT Forum Minutes of Meeting 11th Oct 2023
- III) Horsham Matters Report January 2024 Prepared by: Emma Elnaugh (EE)

Welcome: MH opened the meeting and thanked Holy Trinity Church for hosting. He highlighted that the HCT Moderator, Clive Urquhart, is unable to attend this evening and has tendered his apologies. As Deputy Moderator MH will be chairing the meeting.

Opening prayer - Peter Scofield (PS)

Opening Devotions PS and others

- Reading from Ephesians 4:1-6
- Collect Prayer
- "Through our lives and by our prayers" (Present on earth p224) Response: Your Kingdom Come
- The Lord's Prayer

Opening Worship

PS led worship to "We Are One in the Spirit" (They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love)

Forum

1. Welcome to new HCT Delegates

MH welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular those attending for the first time:-

- Rev David Pitkeathly, new transitions minister at URC Horsham with Slinfold and part-time Chaplain at Dorking Christian Centre – a Methodist owned community centre

2. Minutes of last meeting (Tuesday 11th October 2023) and matters arising – MH

Document circulated prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED - There were no questions or amendments raised and no matters arising from the draft Minutes of the last meeting. MH signed them as approved and as an accurate record of that meeting.

MH had one comment to make on those minutes, at that time in October, Rachel Bathurst was the appointed West Sussex Chaplain at the YMCA Downslink, but she has very recently left and her post is currently being advertised.

Additionally, MH highlighted that the Forum Minutes will be circulated and then uploaded to the [HCT website](#) Only the current Minutes are made available on there.

3. Deputy Moderators Comments – MH

- a) A reminder was made of the HCT Constitution, a copy of this document can also be found on the [HCT website](#), MH went onto highlight the following sections:

3 Aims

The aims of Horsham Churches Together shall be:

3.1 to enable the churches, to develop healthy relationships of respect and cooperation between local congregations;

3.2 to enable the churches to live and share the Gospel, to evangelise together and to take further steps to express the unity that we have in Christ;

3.3 to enable the member churches to respond to the needs of their local communities and to witness to the Gospel together;

3.4 to co-ordinate, where appropriate, activities designed to release resources into the community

MH stated that these aims should be at the forefront of our minds One of the things HCT are keen to do, over time, is to have a better representation of all the Churches Together, at the Forum. Whilst it is good to see everyone at this meeting, there is scope for growth, numerically, in the light of the above-mentioned Constitutional terms.

With regards to the composition of the Forum MH referred to the following item: -

8.1.1 Each church shall be represented by its senior minister (or his/her deputy) and up to two other representatives, the three of whom shall be voting members of the Forum

Accordingly, if, say, there were 30 churches, that would mean potentially 90 Church representatives. Delegates are urged to go back to their church ministers to review the representatives they have and if appropriate encourage others to come on board.

- b) MH advised that he had received an email from John Raynham, Chairman Horsham Debt Advice Service (HDAS). They have been searching for 2 additional Trustees since last year, without success. Consequently, they have asked whether there may be anyone in the HCT community who may be interested to explore this role. If so, to contact HDAS. This item will go into this week's HCT Notices. HDAS is a valued agency and much needed in our community. For it to function well it will be good to meet that need. Delegates were encouraged to go back to their fellowships and see if they are able to help in that way.

4. Development Co-ordinator - update

MH announced the appointment of a new Development Coordinator, being Rev Pete Dibdin (PD), effective from Tuesday 13th February 2024. MH advised that he is confident that PD will be a real encouragement and an asset to HCT. PD was invited to provide a brief overview about himself, and about the aspirations he has about the role:

- 5 years ago, PD moved to Horsham taking up the post as part-time Minister at Life Community Baptist Church. He will continue to be the Minister at Life, which meets on Sundays at The Phoenix Stroke Club situated within the grounds of The Forest School, Horsham.

- Currently, he works 4 days a week, as the Minister at Life, but will drop to working the equivalent of 3 days. This is met with a resolution and the support of the Church, releasing him to take on the 15 hours per week HCT Development role, working across the churches.
- Before Horsham, PD was in a Church in Croydon, and before that he was a Software Engineer for a firm on the Isle of Wight, very different to being a Minister but he considers that God has led him on this journey.
- When the HCT Development Coordinator opportunity became available, it appealed to PD's passion for churches to work together, for prayer, worship, mission and to help grow the Kingdom of God. He felt prompted by God to apply. He was subsequently offered the position and, after Life released him, gladly accepted.
- As the HCT Development Coordinator, he is following-on from his predecessors Ian Fletcher, Rosemary Couchman and Richard Jackson. The role will involve working across the churches, to encourage them to work together in mission and come together in prayer. It will involve working with our partner organisations such as Horsham Matters, HDAS, Eco Churches. It involves witnessing together, such as the Good Friday Service in the Carfax, Worship and Prayer Events such as those in Horsham Park. It will involve opportunities of influence, such as liaising with Horsham District Council, our local MP and Councillors promoting what the churches are doing in Horsham and the difference Christians are making within the town.
- PD's Contact Details; - email pete.dibdin@horshamct.org.uk Mobile 07566 202 741 - (this was the one Richard used to have).

PD also went on to give further clarifications, following Q&A:

- His HCT's working time will be quite flexible throughout the week Monday will remain as a day off with Saturday as his family day. So, he won't be available on those days. However, Tuesday to Friday will be his main HCT days, each day looking to divide HCT for half a day and Life the other half. If he's not available over the phone, he suggests leaving a message and he'll return the call when he's next available. On Sundays his main focus will be at Life but he will try to make himself available for any Sunday HCT events. As he will be free Sunday evenings, he will be available attending some of those churches meeting Sunday evenings but hopes that there will be times where he could attend other churches on Sundays during the day.
- The two roles are separate but there are aspects which are related as well. Churches are encouraged to take up the initiative to contact PD to chat to him, share ideas and invite him to their fellowships rather than wait for him to get in contact with them, as that may take some time to get to every individual Church.

Several led prayers for PD and his work in this new role.

5. Horsham Matters (HM) report – Amalia Lovett (AL)

Report of EE had been circulated in advance of the meeting. AL mentioned a couple of additional items:

- a) **“Guarantee our Essentials campaign”**: HM with the Trussell Trust have launched a campaign and petition calling on the UK government to *“Guarantee Our Essentials”* - Universal Credit is based on arbitrary figures, not on specific data, and it is not meeting people's basic needs. Statistics show that around five in six low-income households receiving Universal Credit are going without at least one of the essentials, like food, a warm home or toiletries. The alarming reality is that this is happening right here in our local community.

The petition is calling the Government to review Universal Credit which should protect people from going without the essentials - and help end the need for food banks, so people can afford the essentials. The aim of the petition is to get as many people as possible to sign.

Handouts: A postcard QR code linking to the "[Guarantee Our Essentials](#)" petition website, the "Essential Guarantee Information Pack For Churches" and "Your Church Ambassador Calendar 2024" were distributed for Delegates to take away to their churches and to encourage people to sign the petition. AL urged that if anyone wants further information or resources for this campaign to contact her.

ACTION:

A request was made for the QR code relating to the "**Guarantee our Essentials campaign**" to be made available as a PowerPoint slide so churches can present it on screen on Sundays. Horsham Matters & HCT through notices.

- b) **Horsham Matters – Trustee (Volunteer role)** If anyone has a heart for the work HM does in the community, and has a passion to help people, HM are desperate for a Trustee to join their Board of Trustees and also for further volunteers. Anyone wanting to find out further details about this Trustee role should contact EE on emma.elnaugh@horsham-matters.org.uk
- c) **2024 is a 10 Year Anniversary for The Food Bank.** HM will be using the anniversary to raise awareness about Food Poverty . This year HM will be running various fundraisers and campaigns and it will be appreciated if churches could support HM, including any fundraising initiatives which HM are happy to provide support.

A question was raised whether HM deal with the Homeless Shelter (Turning Tides). HM are partners with them but the two are separate charities. A request was made for an update about Turning Tides.

ACTION: MH advised that HCT can ask Turning Tides to provide an update which could be circulated via the HCT Notices or at a future Forum.

6. Finance report – MH & Veronica Horvath (VH) HCT Treasurer

There wasn't a Financial Report that went out with the other Forum papers, but a presentation was shown on the projector screen at the Forum. (A copy of the HCT Finance and Budget Report 2024 can be made available to an HCT member Church upon request) - MH talked through each of the report aspects, VH was in attendance to answer questions:

- a) **Cash Position:** figures provided are from year end 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and up to 31/01/2024 Under the Total column this shows the funds that were in the bank at that time. The clear highlight here is that the cash reserves, year on year, are diminishing. Additionally, currently, £1000 is set aside for Evangelistic Events.
- b) **Church contributions, from Churches Together, received in 2023:** Total received £17,235 but that firstly, includes £2,681 relating to the years 2021 + 2022, which HCT were not expecting to receive, and secondly, £1050 is awaited, anticipated to arrive in HCT's financial year 2024. Therefore, in effect, the amount HCT received relating to 2023 was £15,604
- c) **Summary of Income and Expenditure 2019 – 2023:** Except for 2020, all other years show a deficit. This is as a result of HCT outgoings being greater than income received for those years.
- d) **The projected 2024 Budget:** Based on 2023 figures, and if the current contributions continue from Churches Together into 2024, it is anticipated there will be another significant shortfall, estimated to be £1,593. Any shortfall would need to be absorbed and will impact cash reserves, at year end 2024 estimated would total £6,958 (currently £8,551)
- e) **Expenses:** are an outline of the various expenditures. The actual at the end of 2023 was Income 17,265 and Outgoings 18,634 giving a deficit of £1369.

- The biggest expenditure relates to staff salary, namely for the HCT Development Coordinator and the Administrator. A decrease for the new Development Coordinator's salary is related to a reduction of hours the new Development Coordinator will be asked to work (15 hours instead of 18 hours per week). However, the approximate 50% difference increase shown for the Administrator relates to there being no Administrator until about half way through 2023.
 - Bank Charges are being avoided as HCT changed banks, from HSBC to Lloyds, and that bank account doesn't levy bank charges
 - The office expenditure relates to a monthly £50 voluntary donation made to URC, who allow HCT space in their building. The main reason behind that is although the Development Coordinator's role is a work from home position, there were certain meetings that Richard was engaged in which weren't appropriate to meet at his own home. Therefore, an office space was required. HCT also went on to use that for Executive meetings and for storage space to archive documents and HCT resources (there are about 6 storage boxes). This will be an ongoing conversation with the new Development Coordinator. MH thanked URC for the provision of this space. Unless there is a Fellowship who would allow a similar space for free that would also be welcomed.
- f) **Proposed Subscription Increase:** in the past HCT has had a healthy cash reserve and no adjustments to subscriptions were necessary. However, it is no longer in that position and significant yearly deficits can't continue to eat into its reserves. MH admitted that not every church that has been asked for contributions has paid and some of that has occurred over a number of years. HCT has sought to take a pragmatic and realistic approach. A couple of Churches that have paid less than what was requested, that has been accepted. If those individual churches or groups have a change of heart then that puts HCT in a better position; likewise, if Churches want to give more. So far, that hasn't been the case. Accordingly, the proposal is a request for an increase of 5%, to churches subscriptions, based on whatever each Church contributed in 2023. This is entirely voluntary and it's something that HCT will want to work with churches and dialogue with them. However, even with this suggested increase it is anticipated there will still be a deficit, estimated to be in the region of £813. Questions and suggestions were subsequently received, to aid bridge the deficits. -
- Approach HDC to enquire whether there is some storage or financial support available, having in mind the service HCT provides to the community. MH - This is something HCT can explore and subject to there being no onerous terms and conditions attached.
 - Seeking outside grant funding for events or activities.
 - Consider opportunity for individuals to give one off or sign up for regular giving to HCT.
 - Consider opportunity for individuals to leave something to HCT in their will.
 - Contributions ideally should be paid by the end of HCT's financial year end, which is December. However, HCT also understands that each individual Church has its own financial year end at different times. Payments can be made as a regular monthly payment or as one lump sum.
 - Setting up a Prayer Diary, encouraging the HCT churches to pray for the work of HCT and financial issues.
- g) **Banking and Finance Details**
- Account name: Horsham Churches Together
 - Account number: 81600763
 - Sort code: 30-98-97
 - For HCT the financial year ends on 31st of December.

RESOLUTION: A show of hands from Delegates was made and carried, to take the principle back to their respective Churches, being for the proposal of HCT requesting a 5% increase on contributions, based on

2023 figures . It was clearly stated that this vote was not asking for acceptance of the proposed increase but for making a request for the increase.

ACTION: HCT will subsequently formally contact each member Church.

7. “Bless the little children in Horsham District” – Karen Park (KP)

KP provided some context of what is happening across the UK. More children are living in poverty and facing a growing mental health crisis. They are waiting too long to receive support; there are increased absences from school; more children are being impacted by abuse, exploitation; and more children are being taken into care. This has particularly increased since Covid-19 lockdown. More and more families are struggling and it seems that the main way of addressing this problem, at the moment, is for more children being taken into care.

KP advised that at January’s Sussex Green Hub, she had spoken to a Christian Health Visitor who said there are now pockets across Horsham District of families who are hungry and cannot afford to switch their lights and heating on. They cannot get GP appointments and baby clinics are reduced to weight clinics by appointment only, whereas in the past there were frequent and regular health checks. As a retired Health Visitor KP was so shocked to hear how restricted the Health Visiting service now is and at a time when the needs are greater than ever. After she had spoken to that Health Visitor, KP saw an online campaign and petition, launched on 24th January 2024, which supported these same concerns.

KP shared a PowerPoint Presentation and this can be accessed [HERE](#)

A [Children at the Table: a children's charities coalition campaign](#), 2-minute Video was shown, specifically about the Petition and Campaign. Ahead of the upcoming general election, the UK’s five leading children’s charities – Action for Children, Barnardo’s, The Children’s Society, the National Children’s Bureau and NSPCC – have come together. Supported by more than 130 organisations from the voluntary and community sectors, are urging that the next government has a plan to make decisions for babies, children and young people and put Children at the Table.

KP encouraged churches to

- Promote the petition <https://act.childrenssociety.org.uk/page/142301/petition/1>
- Write to our local MP and parliamentary candidates
- Discuss how your church can help
- Read a useful report which provides more information [HERE](#)
- Visit the website, which includes further resources <https://childrenatthetable.org.uk/>

Contact KP, horshamecochurches@gmail.com Eco Church Lead for Horsham Churches Together, to share any information or offer to help. She wants to gather a team to help champion this locally.

MH - A notice will go in HCT Notices shortly about this. Contact admin@horshamct.org.uk to sign up to receive HCT Notices if anyone isn’t already receiving them. .

Following an invitation for questions, there was encouragement to challenge the local MP, Jeremy Quinn, with these issues, if possible writing to him, not only as individuals but as Churches Together, laying down the things we would like to see in our community. Also, with the General Election up and coming, likely at some point this year, it would be good to plan towards hosting a Hustings by HCT or HCT member churches

8. Future Dates

- **2 x Lent Study Groups** will be taking place at URC for “Tenants of the King”, Ian Fletcher distributed flyers, both occurring over the 6 week Lent period - see flyer [HERE](#)

- **Climate Justice Events:** Mark Francis,(MF) from TRBC and a member of Christian Climate Action, shared a presentation demonstrating how Climate Change is very real and a serious threat. The shocking reality is that the whole Earth is heating up and that is happening faster than predicted. If left unchecked, we could end up in 2070, potentially at +3°C and a prediction that 3.5 billion of the world's population will live in 'unliveable areas', unable to raise cattle or grow crops. Clearly disastrous and needs to be addressed. The church has an important role in calling for climate justice. He highlighted events occurring over Lent:

- i. Starts on 14th February (Ash Wednesday), for ten days, ending on the 24th Feb at 3pm, - a 24/7 'No Faith in Fossil Fuels Lent Vigil' - outside PARLIAMENT, Westminster, London (specifically at the Carriage Gates), It will bear witness to the impacts of the climate crisis and pray for the UK Government to take bold climate action. The Vigil begins with a reflective Service at St John's Church, Waterloo. Doors open at 11:30pm, with the service starting at 12 noon. From there it will make its way to Parliament where the 24/7 Lent Vigil will begin at 3pm.
- ii. Saturday 24th February, from 2 to 3pm - Closing Service, in front of Downing Street, to draw the ten-day vigil to a close. This will be an outdoor Christian service, right at the gates of power – Downing Street.

MF will be attending both these. KP will also be at the closing service. Further information.

[HERE](#) sign up or just turn up

- iii. 9am to 9.30am on Saturday 24th February: The Horsham Climate Pilgrimage, a 30-minute "pilgrimage" around Horsham town - with moments of spoken word & silence - giving time to reflect on the many elements of the Climate Emergency. Open to all faiths or none. It will start and end outside the Sussex Green Hub (at the United Reformed Church). Optional, time for a coffee at Sussex Green Hub, at the URC, before travelling with Horsham Eco Churches by train to the No Faith in Fossil Fuels Lent Vigil at Parliament (from 12 noon until 2pm) and the Outdoor Christian Service in front of Downing Street from 2pm - 3pm, to draw the ten-day Lent Vigil to a close.

- Anniversary of invasion of Ukraine - Prayer (11am Sat 24th February, St Mary's, Horsham)
- HCT event All About Heaven (7pm Sun 25th February) at Kingdom Faith
- World Day of Prayer 2024 (Fri 1st March) [Click here for the flyer](#)
- Sustainable Church Forestry - leaflet distributed [Click here for the flyer](#)
- HCT Prayer and Worship Events (dates to be shortly confirmed)
- HCT Good Friday event, Carfax (Friday 29th March)

9. Dates of future meetings (for information)

- Tuesday 16th April 2024 - Brighton Road Baptist Church
- Wednesday 17th July 2024 - (with AGM) - Cornerstone London Road Methodist
- Thursday 10th October 2024 - St Mark's Church, Holbrook

10. Any Other Business - None

11. Closing Prayer - PD Forum finished approximately 21.45

There were 26 attendees present, representing 12-member Churches.