

Leeds Methodist Mission Management Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Oxford Place Centre

4th December 2013

1 Welcome and attendance

Present: The Revd Madeleine Andrews, Mrs Ann Bailey, the Revd Deacon Joseph Cortis, Deacon Jenny Jones, Mr Bernard Neville (Treasurer), Mr Tim Newman, the Revd Liz Smith, Mr Kenneth Tait (Secretary), the Revd Peter Whittaker (Chair)

Apologies: The Revd Philip Bee, the Revd Tony Bundock, Mr Michael Noble, Mrs Wendy Ribbands, the Revd Sue Sowden.

In attendance: Mr Trevor Parker

Substitute: In the absence of the Revd Sue Sowden, the Revd Pat Creamer (Leeds South and Central Circuit) attended as her substitute (see item 3 below).

The chair, Peter Whittaker, welcomed everyone and, as this was the first meeting for Joe Cortis and Tim Newman, those present introduced themselves.

2 Opening Devotions

Peter read (from the booklet, *A Gift for Christmas*) the reflection on a Christingle by Basil Bridge and then led the meeting in prayer.

3 Substitutes for members of the committee unable to attend

It was agreed that representatives of the Leeds South and Central Circuit and of Oxford Place Church could appoint a suitably qualified person to attend the meeting in their stead. In this event the chair of the committee must be consulted in advance of the meeting. Substitutes could take part in discussions, but not vote.

4 Charity Commission

As Leeds Methodist Mission is a registered charity (No:1138731). The Charity Commission requires details of the trustees. The trustees are the members of this committee. Trevor circulated those present with a form to complete, giving names and contact details. Those not present would be contacted and asked to return the completed forms to Trevor.

[TP, KT]

5 Managing Trustees

The meeting was made aware of an on-going conversation as to who should be the Managing Trustees of the Oxford Place Centre as required by the Methodist Church.

The Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) are the custodian trustees for all Methodist property, but properties also have Managing Trustees who have day-to-day responsibility for the property. Confusion has arisen because Leeds Methodist Mission is a District Project. The members of the District Policy Committee (DPC) are the managing trustees for District property and could be considered as such for the Oxford Place Centre. However, this might cause extra work in respect of processing 'consents and permissions' which would be simpler if the Management Committee were also the managing trustees and the DPC were able to 'sign off' such 'consents and permissions' rather than having to involve TMCP.

6 Safeguarding Form C

Peter suggested that it would be best if every member of the committee signed a copy of this form (Annex A). This was agreed. Jenny would ensure this was done.

[J]

7 Tenancies

- (i) The situation:
 - one tenant is likely to move elsewhere
 - one tenant will move within the building
 - discussion with another tenant about using space in the Gallery for training continues
 - three spaces are vacant, but negotiations with possible tenants are in progress
- (ii) It is expected that by the Spring all space will be occupied. (See also item 8 (v) (a) below)
- (iii) TMCP will not be able to approve the leases until the issue of Managing Trustees is resolved.
- (iv) *Partnership with Nurture (The Lounge Café)* The meeting recognised that in the light of the new situation regarding the Mission, and changes that were understood to have taken place in the relationship between Nurture and St George's Crypt there was a need to clarify the Mission's relationship with Nurture. (see item 8 (v) (c) below)

[J],TP,PB]

8 Finance

- (i) Three papers were tabled:
 - the draft income and expenditure accounts for 2012/13 with the comparable figures for the preceding year (Annex B)
 - a draft balance sheet 2012/13 and the previous year for comparison (Annex C)
 - budgets for the Leeds Methodist Mission for 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16 (Annex D)
 - a proposed division of the reserves (as at 31st August 2013) between the Leeds Methodist Mission (LMM) and the Oxford Place Methodist Church (OPMC) (Annex E)
- (ii) The format of the first three of these indicated how such information will be presented in future. However the present documents cover both aspects of the Leeds Mission Circuit (which ceased to exist on 31st August and will now be carried on by LMM) and OPMC.
- (iii) *Income and Expenditure* The deficit of almost £37,000 at 31st August 2013 was greater than had been forecast. Two items had caused this: the cost of repairing the front steps (about £10,000) and the failure to realise that the September-November assessment (payable to the new Leeds South and Central Circuit) of

£6,000 would become due in August, before the new circuit existed and before the financial separation of LMM and OPMC. (See item 5 of Annex E)

- (iv) *Division of reserves* The paper presented at this meeting was, in essence, an update of the paper presented at the February meeting of the Leeds Mission Interim Management Committee (Annex 2 to the minutes of that meeting) taking into account the changes since that time.

The meeting agreed to the proposal (including items 12 and 13) noting that if the three parties (item 13) could not agree or reach agreement after negotiation the District would mediate.

The discussion of this paper brought up some related points:

- (a) The annual cost of the Oxford Place Centre and its staff is about £194,000, some £3730 per week.
- (b) The refurbishment of manse at 39 Batcliffe Drive (managed by LMM) is almost complete, and approval to let was requested. This approval was given by the meeting with the understanding that letting would only continue until it was needed by a minister.

The meeting agreed that tenants of the manse would be required to observe a 'no pets' rule and a 'no smoking' rule.

The estate agents consulted indicated that the property would attract a rent for about £1,000 per calendar month. Tenancies would be for twelve months with a vacation date around the end of May (each year) to allow for the manse to be taken by a minister on the 1st September after any necessary repairs and renewals. The property would be managed on the committee's behalf by a property management company who would charge a monthly fee of 10% of the rent plus their initial fees at the beginning of the contract.

- (v) *Budgets*

The following issues were discussed:

- (a) If a tenant (of Oxford Place Centre) ended their tenancy then it was likely that a new tenant could only be obtained by charging a lower rent as there was a surplus of office space in the city, much of it of a higher standard than ours.
- (b) The budgets show annual surpluses until 31st August 2015. However, the grant from the District towards the Deacon's salary will terminate on 31st August 2015, leaving LMM with a tiny surplus for 2015/16 and the possibility of a deficit.
- (c) No income had been received from *Nurture* for the year 2012/13 (in 2011/12 the Mission had received £1,100). No accounts for the café were available though it was noted that *Nurture* were being more closely supervised by St George's Crypt and any information relevant to the café would be found in their accounts. The other catering provided by *Nurture* also needed to be reviewed. It was agreed that the group¹ who were to meet with *Nurture* (and had not yet done so) should (with the addition of Bernard) would take up the concerns of the meeting: the relationship with *Nurture*, possible income, and (while recognising that a significant aim of the *Nurture* project was to help people return to obtain work or return to

¹ Minutes of the 3rd October 2013, item 10 (iii) (e)

the community) assurance was needed that the resources LMM gave to this project were being well used.

- (d) *Leeds Christian Fellowship Church (LCFC)* meets in the Oxford Place Centre on Sunday afternoons, Friday evenings and on Saturdays. For this use it pays £1,000 per annum. At present that seems an unreasonably low rate. Originally (in 2008) the *Grace Gospel Church* attended by Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers were offered the use of the worship area on each Sunday afternoon at no cost. The congregation were a fragile community. Since that time a dispute within the church resulted in a change of leadership and a different name. Since then the LCFC has become stronger – a typical congregation was between 60 and 80 – and expanded its use of our premises and agreeing to pay a contribution towards our costs. The arrangement has (to some extent) been informal with the understanding that should the Leeds Mission Circuit or Oxford Place Church wish to make use of ‘their’ space, at a time they normally used it, LCFC would relinquish it.

It was agreed that as their circumstances and ours had changed it was time to review the arrangement and that this would require a delicate conversation continuing to recognise them as partners rather than tenants. Also it was noted that any formal agreement would include a ‘first use’ clause so that they could be asked to forego their use of space in favour of OPMC or LMM. Jenny, Trevor and Bernard would take this forward. Peter offered to be involved if requested.

[JJ, TP, BN (PW)]

9 Deacon’s Report

Jenny distributed a list of areas of work and events in which she had participated (Annex F) with the following main headings. For each she expanded on specific issues, some of which are noted here:

- (i) *Oxford Place Centre* Creating an appropriate sense of presence in the building has taken much effort. In her work with tenants managing change has been important.
- (ii) *Oxford Place Children’s Centre* Jenny is the chair. New employment contracts have been put in place. The contract with Leeds City Council requires a lot of managing. A minor accident in which a child fell and had to be taken to Accident and Emergency, which resulted in the child’s parent suing the Children’s Centre (unsuccessfully) has taken a lot of time with the staff of the centre requiring counselling.
- (iii) *Person-to-Person Listening Service* This project is a ‘little tired’ and in need of refreshing. The problems brought by some ‘clients’ are too complex for the volunteers to handle. Some thinking is required to make this ‘a twenty-first century project’.
- (iv) *City Centre Worship* Jenny had participated in five services. The Baby Memorial Service had benefited from being held in the Oxford Place Centre (instead of the Minster).
- (v) *City Centre Networks* Jenny highlighted her membership of the Welfare Reform Strategy Board². The information that this provides is communicated to the

² The terms of reference of the Welfare Reform Strategy Board begin with this statement: The overall aim of the Board is to ensure that Leeds is the best prepared city for dealing with the implementation and implications of the Government’s welfare reform programme. The full terms of reference are available at: democracy.leeds.gov.uk/documents/s90102/Welfare%20Reform%20and%20Child%20Poverty%20-%20Appendix%205.pdf

district as Jenny goes round talking to groups, and her presence on the Board advertises our interest in the city centre. Poverty is a key issue and the church hears stories that council employees do not.

- (vi) *Prophetic/events* Jenny has been involved for 18 months with other churches in conversation about credit unions. (Jenny was instrumental in organising *Putting People Before Profit* held in OP Centre in October 2013). The Courts Chaplaincy has not been functioning for some time. Jenny has met with the Recorder of Leeds to see how things can be progressed. The Bradford Court Chaplaincy is a more 'lay activity'. The Yurt – from Touchstone, Bradford – a pop-up intentional listening space is coming to Leeds as part of Listening Leeds with which Jenny is involved. Jenny is following the three-week Gipton Advent Course (poverty, homelessness and refugees).
- (vii) *Methodist Diaconal Order* Jenny is, of course, much involved.
- (viii) *Other* Jenny was involved in the 200th Anniversary of the Methodist Missionary Society, an event that was bigger than anticipated.

10 Meetings with tenants and other partners

Meetings open to all organisations and projects (staff and volunteers) that use the OP Centre will be held once a quarter. The next is on the morning of 18th December 2013 when mince pies, coffee and conversation will be available.

11 Linked Ministry

- (i) Liz presented the meeting with notes (Annex G) of a meeting that had taken place earlier in the day at which she, Jenny, Sue and Trevor had been present. The meeting had arisen out of earlier conversations concerning the ministries of a presbyter, a deacon and a lay worker linked through the work of Methodism in the centre of Leeds.
- (ii) The group brought four suggestions to the Management Committee which were (briefly):
 - (a) Sue to have access to the on-line electronic diary of the Oxford Place Centre
 - (b) The Brunswick Prayer Chapel to be the responsibility of Sue and the OPMC congregation.
 - (c) The small room at the north end of the foyer to be for the exclusive use of OPMC.
 - (d) The cupboards in the erstwhile 'superintendent's office' to be removed (and their contents stored elsewhere) to allow for letting to larger groups. (This room had already brought in £5,000 this quarter.)A further meeting of the group had been arranged for February 2014.
- (iii) The meeting agreed to the suggestions and gratitude was expressed for what was an encouraging document about working towards partnership, avoiding confusion, and preserving distinctiveness.
- (iv) Mention was made of symbols, noticeboards and signage appropriate to our new way of working, an on-going issue.
- (v) Linking to item 9 (iv) above, it was noted that a future deacon might not be a local preacher, not able to lead worship, that in the context of city centre worship Sue could stand in for Jenny if needed.

12 Pioneer Ministers

- (i) Liz spoke to a paper arising out of an encouraging meeting held on the 19th November 2013 at which there were twelve people including (from this committee) Liz herself, Peter, Sue, Michael, Tony. She reminded the meeting of that three pioneer ministers had been appointed, one to the business community, whose appointment had come to an end, one to city centre residential community, the Revd James Barnett, and Beth Tash minister to the night-time economy. James's appointment had been, in part, funded by the Methodist Church, the remainder of the funding had come from the Church of England.
- (ii) James's work has resulted in the 'waterside church' which now meets in Holy Trinity Church on Boar Lane. It was suggested that this work is rather like the evangelical revival and John Wesley's work in cities without churches. Wesley's twenty-seven questions have informed the work with the Waterside Church.
- (iii) Beth organises the Street and Club Angels.
- (iv) In discussion a number of points were made:
 - (a) Jenny's work is appreciated and understood
 - (b) The attributes of the Oxford Place Centre give it advantages which are much envied
 - (c) Very soon we will have to talk about what happens here – to the OPMC congregation, to other congregations, to the circuits of Leeds.
 - (d) We have stories to tell and we need to encourage others to make use of what is here.

13 Other matters

- (i) Trevor was asked to supply the committee with a schedule of work on the property.

[TP]
- (ii) Trevor circulated a summary of conference and room hire income for 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14 to date. (Annex H).
- (iii) The meeting was reminded that the District Policy Committee are due a report of the work of LMM at their meeting on 12th March 2014.

[PW, KT, JJ, TP]
- (iv) The chair thanked everyone for their attendance and expressed particular thanks to Bernard and Alan Parker for their work on the finances.

14 Close

After a short period of quiet reflection, Peter closed the meeting with a prayer.