

Leeds Methodist Mission Management Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Oxford Place Centre

25th June 2014

*This meeting took a form that was somewhat different from what I expect to be a usual committee meeting in that we had a number of longish papers presented to the committee and a smaller fraction of our time was spent in discussion. I could have produced a short set of minutes that under certain items stated that a specific paper had been spoken to and added a few lines of comments and questions. This, I felt, would not communicate the reality of the meeting, so I have summarised the papers, including comments and questions as well as extra things mention by the authors of the papers. This left me with a few items that did not sit comfortably anywhere so I have put them together in the item **Reflection on the meeting**. I hope that in reporting the meeting this way I have captured what happened.*

Ken Tait

Note: A small number of minor corrections were made to these minutes at the following meeting on 15th October 2014. These changes are highlighted below and were made by hand in the signed copy held by the secretary.

1 Welcome and attendance

Present: The Revd Madeleine Andrews, the Revd Philip Bee, the Revd Tony Bundock, Deacon Jenny Jones, Mr Bernard Neville (Treasurer), Mr Tim Newman, Mrs Elizabeth Smith, Mr Kenneth Tait (Secretary), the Revd Peter Whittaker (Chair)

Apologies: The Revd Deacon Joseph Cortis, Mr John Goacher, Mrs Wendy Ribbands, the Revd Sue Sowden, the Revd Liz Smith

In attendance: Mrs Rachel McCallam (Consultant to the Committee), Mr Trevor Parker (Conference and Property Manager)

- (i) The chair, Peter Whittaker, welcomed everyone, explaining that Rachel McCallam had taken the role previously filled by Michael Noble. It was also noted that John Goacher had replaced Ann Bailey as one of the two representatives to the committee nominated by the Oxford Place Church Council.
- (ii) The meeting noted that in September Philip would be taking up an appointment in the Denby Dale and Clayton West circuit of West Yorkshire district. This would therefore be the last time he attended a meeting of this committee. Philip was thanked for his contributions over the years to the work of this committee and its predecessors. Philip reassured the committee that he would play a full part in the Stationing Process (Item 9 below) until the end of August.

2 Opening devotions

Peter led the meeting in prayer and read from John 1 – John the Baptist points to Jesus and we should be doing the same.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting (17th February 2014)

These were accepted as a true record and signed by the chair.

4 Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting

- (i) *Leeds Christian Fellowship Church* [Item 5 (iii)]
 - (a) Payment for use of the premises was now made by a regular transfer through BACS.
 - (b) The monitoring of the behaviour of children had improved particular when the senior elder was present.
 - (c) Concern was expressed (in the light of proposals to refurbish our rooms set out the proposals in the Maintenance and Project Report – Annex A) that there was a risk, in the future, to upgraded property and new furniture.
- (ii) *District Policy Committee (DPC)* [Item 6 (iv)]
 - (a) Peter explained that he had presented a report to the March DPC. The same report had been given at the Spring Synod.
 - (b) The discussion at the DPC had been good and it was pleasing that the committee had engaged with the issues. There had been a focus on partnership. We already have a number of interesting partnerships, but it would be better if we could develop partnerships with nearby Methodist communities. To this end, Peter is to meet with the superintendent ministers of circuits in the Leeds area.
 - (c) Jenny has been asked to take preaching appointments in the 'outer band' of the Leeds area.
- (iii) *Leeds Mission Database* [Item 12(i)]
 - (a) Over many years the Leeds Mission had built a database of contact information for an increasing number of people who had or had had a link to the Oxford Place Centre. This database was judged not to be appropriate for the present situation. It was, therefore, proposed that the responsibility for the collection and maintenance of contact information should be distributed to the various groups within the Leeds Mission (Children's Centre, Person-to-Person, Management Committee) and to the Oxford Place Church, each maintaining its own information in its own way.
 - (b) The items in the old database which are still relevant to the Oxford Place Church will be passed to the secretary of the Oxford Place Church Council.
- (iv) *Safeguarding forms* [5(i)]

All members of the committee had now signed these forms.

5 Reports

- (i) *Oxford Place Church* The secretary communicated to the committee the substance of the report received by email from the Revd Sue Sowden and given here (with some light editing):
 - (a) Ann Bailey has resigned as representative from OP to LMMMC and will be replaced¹ by John Goacher.
 - (b) We are happy to receive a formal representation onto OP Church Council as a regular thing to facilitate information sharing and good will etc. If a name could be forwarded to John Goacher (the secretary to the Council) that it might be entered into our list of members please.

¹ The Church Council nominates, it is the Autumn Synod that appoints the committee.

- (c) We continue to experience a reduction in our fellowship as some have transferred their membership to more local churches, some have experienced declining health and some have simply chosen not to continue (the latter being only a very small number). There is a flourishing study group that continues to meet and we give thanks for them.
- (d) I would herald the joint activity planned for Le Grand Départ when the Circuit and the Mission have come together to offer ourselves as a presence and to take part in the Servant Evangelism water give away. We have been, at the time of writing this report, been somewhat disappointed with the response from the District to our appeal for small donations of money to enable us to buy the water. It has been what can only be described as 'slow'. We have, however, been able to raise enough to buy one pallet of water which is 2040 small bottles which will be labelled with love, and lots of coffee...
- (e) Finally, I simply want to confirm that I will be going into the station rounds from this autumn.

The suggestion in item (b) was discussed and it was noted that this committee has three members (JG, TN and KT) who are also members of the Church Council. Consequently it was felt that further representation was unnecessary.

- (ii) *Children's Centre* It was noted that the application for a grant from the District Advance Fund (for £6000 pa over three years) had been approved by members of this committee by email (31st March-2nd April). The committee was informed that the application had been successful.

6 Property matters

- (i) *Maintenance and Projects*

Trevor spoke to his report (Annex A) which covered the following areas:

- (a) Footfall – this had been calculated for May 2014 (for no special reason) and noted that 1072 people had attended meetings and conferences. This figure did not include: attendance at Sunday Worship, the meetings of the Leeds Christian Fellowship Church, Saturday meetings, or café customers.
- (b) An overview of general maintenance and list of non-maintenance work undertaken since our previous meeting
- (c) A list of key tasks that need to be part of a scheduled programme of works over the next 3-years divided into three phases: within 12 months, within 24 months and within 36 months. Costs have not been determined.
- (d) Major projects and future planning – this asks a number of questions which can be summarised in one: What do we really want to do with this building?
- (e) Staffing – how do we deliver these future plans and ensure that the building is maintained and clean at all times? To do this, we must have the correct number of staff with the desired skill sets. Currently we have two caretakers, a part-time bookkeeper and the Conference and Property Manager.

A case can be made for a receptionist who could also act as host to the larger meetings, for a part-time early-morning cleaner, and for increased hours for our caretakers. At present Oxford Place Church provides people to sit at the Welcome Desk on some days (there are insufficient volunteers to cover every day) and the appointment of a receptionist might make this unnecessary. This would have to be discussed with the Church.

- (f) Updates and other considerations:
- IT – a single laptop computer is inadequate for the administration and bookkeeping work, the telephone and wi-fi is not of sufficient quality to meet the needs of those using our meeting and conferencing rooms.
 - A Fire Safety Policy is now in place, a Health and Safety Policy is almost agreed, work has begun on assessing the risk relating to the building and various activities.
 - Training – First Aid, Fire Marshal and Fire safety training is scheduled for September
 - Quinquennial inspection of the building is imminent.
- The meeting discussed this and agreed that the next inspection be arranged as soon as is practical so that scheduled work can be planned with the knowledge of the the Quinquennial Inspection Report.*

(ii) *Property Consents*

In the interval between the last Leeds Mission Interim Management Committee (February 2013) and the first meeting of this committee some of the necessary listed building consents (agreed in February 2013) for the development of the rear entrance (Minutes 2013-10-03 Item 10 (iii)(c)) had not been obtained – specifically the permission to erect some railings on the north side of the rear steps which would become a hazard once the ‘coal bunker’ had been removed. This was now in hand.

[TP]

(iii) *Security of monies kept on the premises*

- (a) Since our previous meeting some money belonging to Nurture had been improperly removed from the office safe. Nurture did not wish to take this further as police involvement might not be welcomed by their staff.
- (b) As a consequence of this event the Mission no longer takes responsibility for the safe-keeping of cash that does not belong to the Mission.
- (c) To reduce the risk of a similar event taking place, the CCTV system has been enhanced. Any such incident would now be recorded. In addition Nurture now have a safe, and the glass window to the office has been more secure.

7 Financial Review

Bernard spoke to the two papers he presented: Financial Review (Annex B) and Budget and Projection (Annex C) which gives the figures underpinning the review:

- (i) *General Overview* – There is now only a single set of accounts covering all the work of the Mission. At any time between 7.30am and 9.30pm (Monday-Thursday) one of the caretakers is present in the building. A large proportion of the maintenance work previously requiring outside contractors is now dealt with by the caretakers.
- (ii) *Batcliffe Drive Manse* – After significant refurbishment the manse is now let at £945 per calendar month with the present tenancy finishing about a year from now, allowing sufficient time to prepare the manse should a new minister be arriving in August 2015. If that were not the case, the present tenants would be pleased to extend their tenancy. Surplus income from this property will be credited to the Manse Maintenance Fund.

(iii) *Budget 2014/15*

- (a) *Income* – At present three rooms (available for letting) are vacant, and likely tenants may not be prepared to pay the current rents. An existing tenant is looking to reduce their space.
- (b) *Reserves* – In addition to the manse Maintenance Fund the Mission keeps the General Reserve and the Future Maintenance Reserve. It was proposed that the treasurer be permitted to transfer up to 10% of the income from tenants and lettings to the Future Maintenance Reserve provided the amount transferred does not put the balance of Income and Expenditure into deficit. This was agreed.
- (c) *Assumption* – The last winter was mild, the budget assumes that the next will be harder.
- (d) *Outreach and Mission* – In discussion the fact that there is no heading for expenditure on mission was raised. This was included under the Sundry Expenses heading. The meeting asked that a specific heading for Outreach be included in the budget. (Bernard provided a modified budget to recognise this category subsequent to the meeting – Annex C)

(iv) *Projections 2016-2020*

These have been prepared in part to support an application to the District Advance Fund for a grant to support the work of a minister after 31st August 2015. The projections assume that no such grant will be forthcoming. Also, they do not include any provisional cost for any major maintenance or refurbishment work.

(v) *Risk Assessment*

The proposed budgets and the five-year forecast would be significantly affected by:

- (a) Loss of one or more tenancies
- (b) Failure of the Chambers lift prior to planned replacement
- (c) No grant support for the minister from September 2015
- (d) An increase in inflation from the assumed figure of 2.0% to, say, 2.5%.

(vi) *Resolutions*

The committee were asked to agree the following:

- (a) Budget for the year to 31st August 2015 (with the amendment requested in item 7(iii)(d) above).
- (b) The increase of 2.5%² in the charges to tenants (in accordance with the terms of the lease) and already agreed with the tenants.
- (c) Projections for the years 2016-2020 to support the application to the District Advance Fund (Item 7(iv) above).
- (d) Appointment of Hentons LLP as auditors for the current year.

After a short discussion about the possibility of going to tender for the auditors and an agreement to deferring further consideration of the matter to next year as Hentons – having audited the accounts in recent years – were familiar with our situation, the committee agreed all items.

² The figure of 2.5% is based on the increase in the Retail Prices Index (RPI).

8 Realistic Dreaming

Jenny spoke to her paper Leeds Methodist Mission – The Future (Annex D)

- (i) John Wesley said: Go not to the places that need you, but those who need you most.
- (ii) Th meeting was reminded of *Our Calling* – to Worship, to Learning and Caring, to Service, and to Evangelism.³

(iii) *Ministry through the Building*

- (a) What does it mean to be a church in the city centre? Are we doing what we want to be doing? What might generous discipleship look like? Why do we continue to maintain a building? What do we mean by 'All are welcome'?
- (b) What does the condition and appearance of the building (inside and outside) ? There is nothing in the Chambers to indicate it is (part of) a church.
- (c) Is the café in the right place? Do we need a café?
- (d) How do we **build** on the connection with Oxford Place Methodist Church without being constrained by the reaction of one stakeholder?
- (e) Oxford Place is not a typical Methodist church. Is our committee structure the right one? Do we need 'sub-committees'? More flexibility? Who (on this committee) know the building well?

We already have a small group which looks at Conferencing. It was suggested that another such group could be formed to help manage the building and monitor finances. It was agreed that we should build up these and similar small teams over the next twelve months.

(iv) *Ministry through people*

- (a) Diaconal ordination – examination: to assist God's people in worship and prayer; to hold before them the needs of the world; to minister Christ's love and compassion; to seek out the lost and the lonely; and to help those you serve to offer their lives to God.
- (b) Diaconal ordination – declaration: support the weak; bind up the broken; gather in the outcast; welcome the stranger; seek the lost. So minister care that you make glad those whom you help in their need. Let the concerns and sorrows of others be as your own.
- (c) Issues that some assume the Mission will engage with: justice (inequality, poverty, debt, welfare reform, loneliness, refugees); interfaith; evangelism; chaplaincy.

(v) *Ideas for the future*

- (a) Maintain a sacred space. Pray for an in the city. Integrate spirituality and project work.
- (b) We have had a few significant Christian events. How might we host more in partnership with the district and other denominations.
- (c) Person-to-Person (our listening service) may have outlived its utility. People ring up rather than drop in. An alternative might be a service helping people to fill in on-line forms, provide debt advice, additional food provision, ... Is this mission?

³ For more on 'Our Calling' and the Priorities for the Methodist Church see Appendix 1 at the end of www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf08_02_General_Secretary_report210808.doc

- (d) Support for the 'recovery community' through a Recovery Café (possibly working with Spacious Places⁴) providing a safe space for those recovering from addiction. It was suggested that a small group be formed to look at this.
 - (e) The Bradford Courts Chaplaincy team interfaith and and volunteer-led covering every day, rather than clergy only with irregular cover. Could the Mission work in partnership in others to provide chaplaincy to the courts. (A conversation with Faith Forum⁵ has been started.)
 - (f) Do we need to offer more to the city? Develop better links with other Christian ministry in the city? Create new city and town centre partnerships? City and town centre ministers do not easily fit into the circuit structure. New ministers need to be properly and appropriately inducted.
 - (g) Continue to work with existing partners – this is key – possibly through groups such as the City Centre Churches and Leeds Churches Together in Mission. Form active partnerships with other circuits in the city. Initiate interfaith work, noting that other faiths see only a Christian community rather than the different denominations. Interfaith work needs to be done ecumenically. Leeds is reputed to be the 'most multicultural' British city outside London. It is not always obvious which of the many faith communities within a particular faith should be approached.
- (vi) *Improving the life of the minister*
- (a) Serving under both the Chair of the District and reporting to this Management Committee can cause significant tension. It is not clear if the minister can speak (with authority) on behalf of the district.
 - (b) Being the minister at Leeds Mission is a lonely station. There is a need to belong to a team of some sort where the minister can find spiritual encouragement, feel accountable, be provided with cover when absent or help when overwhelmed, discuss and reflect.
 - (c) Clarity is needed in the mission priorities for the minister together with support in discerning how they might be achieved, and what can be put on one side. A clear understanding of the resources that are available is required, including how the building may be used by the minister and the church.
 - (d) It must be made clear what areas are not the responsibility of the minister, particularly in respect of the building and its use. On the other hand information on future plans, finance and their implications for the work of the minister must be made available.
 - (e) The minister needs to recognise that some mission is better carried out by others in the city.
 - (f) Having a realistic appraisal of what is achievable helps.

4 Spacious Places is an established addiction charity: www.spaciousplaces.org.uk

5 Leeds Faith Forum: www.leedsfaithsforum.org

9 The Stationing Process

We need to work closely with the Chair of District and the Lay Stationing Representative throughout this process. The stages are

1. Recognition of the possibility of extending the current invitation of Deacon Jenny Jones which ends 31st August 2015.
2. At any time in the process the Deacon may indicate that she would not accept a further invitation should one be offered in which case we move straight to Step 9.
3. A small group consisting of Madeleine Andrews, Sarah Cave and Peter Whittaker will lead the process. (Sarah Cave has been, until recently, the Lay Stationing Officer for the Leeds District and she will act as consultant to the group.)
4. The group will consult some of the people with whom Jenny has been working. (It must be understood that the situation here at the Leeds Mission is not typical. For example, Jenny's is a district appointment, not a circuit appointment, and there is no congregation to consult, so consideration must be given to who is consulted.)
5. Members of the Management Committee will be consulted in the following way. Any member can approach either Madeleine or Peter before the beginning of August, to discuss the appointment by email or telephone or in a private meeting.
6. After the consultation, the group will circulate a statement with a recommendation and ask for approval of the recommendation from each member of the committee by email to the Secretary. If a consensus has *not* been achieved in respect of the recommendation, a meeting of this committee will be called giving 14 days notice. (It is hoped that this will not be necessary.)
7. If an extension is agreed with Jenny then the District Policy Committee will be informed and the process ends. (An extension may be for one or more years up to a maximum of five years. Further mutual understandings may be attached to the invitation.)
8. If an extension is not agreed – for whatever reason – then the following step (Step 9) will be taken. In which case the committee will be consulted and encouraged to participate.
9. A profile setting out the role of the Deacon in the Mission project will be produced to allow application for a replacement. At the same time it will be necessary to confirm that it is Diaconal Minister that we would be seeking for the next phase rather than a Presbyter. (Changing to a Presbyter is not excluded.)

Whether an extension is agreed with Jenny or this process provides an opportunity to look at what needs to change and what should remain the same.

10 Conferencing matters

The question as to whether the marketing leaflet had been finished and distributed was asked. The committee was referred to item 6 of the Conferencing and Room Hire Report (Annex E).

[TP]

11 Reflection on the meeting

The question was asked when do we get the opportunity to discuss all the ideas presented to the meeting. Do we have to wait until our October meeting?

All the papers presented to the meeting, including Conferencing and Room Hire Report (Annex E) and two related papers (Annex F and Annex G) which were not discussed due to lack of time, provide a foundation of information to underpin what we decide to do in the future. The committee has been working for less than a year and having reached where we are is an achievement. The establishment of small groups (mentioned in item 8 (iii)(e) above) should provide opportunities for more detailed discussion of ideas and proposals.

We have a story to tell and we need to learn how to tell it to Methodism, to tell it ecumenically, to tell it to the city 'out there', to tell it to those who use our building.

12 Dates of future meetings

- (a) The next meeting is fixed for 7.30pm on 15th October 2014 at Oxford Place Centre.
- (b) A 'Doodle Poll' will be created in the next few days to find a good date for the meeting scheduled for late January.

13 Close

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