

Rivington Unitarian & Free Christian Chapel
Congregational AGM 21.03.2021
Minutes

Due to COVID-19 restrictions the meeting was held on Zoom. Some members were contacted by telephone prior to the meeting.

Those present: Alison Whitaker (chairman), Frank Ascroft (treasurer), Peter Bearon, Judith Crompton, Diane Fairclough, Paul Fairclough, John Green, Linda Green, Mary Horrocks, Janet Lythgoe, Carol Worsley, Vince McCully (Lay Person in Charge)

In attendance: Mary Frodsham

1 Welcome and Prayer: Alison Whitaker welcomed everyone to the meeting and Vince McCully said a short prayer.

2 Apologies: Jacqueline Dagnall, Chris Martin, Chris Oldham, Jacquie Kershaw, Tim Kershaw, Richard Horrocks, Geoff Newey, Iris Wharton, Rev Frank Williams

3 Minutes: The Minutes of the last AGM had been circulated by email and post after the meeting. They were accepted as a true record.

4 Matters Arising: Bookplates - the names of the people who have made donations have been filled in. The bookplates will be put into the hymnbooks once the Chapel is open for services again.

GA meetings - the 2020 meetings were cancelled shortly after our last AGM. This year's meetings are being held on Zoom. AW will look into registering for the meetings.

5 Chairman's Report: (this had been circulated by email prior to the meeting)

Shortly after the last AGM, the country went into lockdown due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus, so things at Chapel were very different from a normal year. Services, events, weddings and naming ceremonies had to be cancelled or postponed, though a funeral with a very small group of close family members was able to take place. Back in February there had been one naming ceremony, and in September, a couple who wanted a very small wedding were able to get married.

Services during the rest of 2020 were mainly online using Zoom. Several of these were collaborative efforts with contributions by members of the congregation. It has become customary to unmute and join in the vesper in a glorious out-of-time cacophony! In the Autumn, we were able to hold five services in the Chapel, when it was good to see people again who had not been able to access Zoom. It proved possible to stream those services via Zoom, though the connection was rather intermittent due to the weak phone signal in the Chapel.

Many thanks to Peter Bearon for ploughing through the various versions of the Government legislation and guidance to produce risk assessments to cover the different stages of lockdown and tier restrictions. Producing these is a legal requirement if the Chapel is used for services or other purposes.

For various reasons, the number of Chapel members has fallen slightly and now stands at 23. In October, we were sad to hear of the death of Dennis Crompton. Over the years, he had served the Chapel in a number of roles: Committee member, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Minutes Secretary, delegate to the GA meetings and the MDA, Chapel keeper and Publicity Officer.

Following the decision at the last AGM, the application for registration to conduct same-sex marriages was submitted in April 2020. There were a few hiccoughs along the way: due to COVID-19 the processing of the application was delayed, and then we had to make some amendments to the wording of the marriage service and resubmit forms due to a discrepancy in the dates. However, we heard in January that our application had been successful, and so the Chapel is now 'registered for

the Solemnisation of Marriages for opposite sex marriage & marriage of same sex.' There are ceremonies planned for later in the year, subject to COVID-19 regulations.

Thanks to the Committee and members of the Congregation for their support over the last year. Thanks in particular to Mary Horrocks, who is standing down from the role of Rites of Passage Coordinator, for all she has done over the last five years.

6 Secretary's Report: VM reported that he has continued to receive information from Natasha Stanley, the MDA. The GA had sent out voting forms and candidate statements for the election of Executive Committee members, as there were more candidates than the number of positions needing to be filled. These had been distributed.

7 Treasurer's Report: (The statement of accounts and Independent Examiner's notes had been circulated by email prior to the meeting)

Income - £14,881.12. Expenditure - £9,606.23. Excess - £5,274.89. Assets stand at £48,037.94.

The Chapel had received a number of grants from the MDA towards covering the loss of income incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic.

AW reported that it was announced at the MDA meeting held the previous week that further applications for financial assistance can be made if needed.

It was proposed that the accounts should be accepted. Proposed: Peter Bearon, seconded: Paul Fairclough. Carried unanimously.

8 Election of Officers: There was only one nomination for each of the posts of Chairman and Treasurer, so AW and FA remain in post.

Secretary: there were no nominations for secretary, so VM will remain as correspondence secretary and other secretarial duties will be carried out by members of the Committee as necessary.

9 Election of Committee: There were four nominations for the seven places on the Committee, so all those nominated were elected – Jacqueline Dagnall, Diane Fairclough, Paul Fairclough and Mary Horrocks.

At this point, VM was asked to leave the meeting.

10 Election of Lay Person in Charge: The motion was put that VM should remain as Lay Person in Charge. Proposed: Judith Crompton (with acclaim), seconded: Paul Fairclough. Carried unanimously.

VM returned to the meeting and was informed of the Congregation's decision.

11 Re-opening of the Chapel for services: There was some discussion about when people thought they would feel comfortable about attending services in the Chapel again. Most thought that they would prefer to wait until they have received both doses of the COVID vaccination. It was also felt that it would be good to wait until services could be free of some of the restrictions that currently have to be in place. It was agreed that we should aim to have a service in Chapel on Sunday 6 June. Until then services will continue online.

PB suggested that one possibility would be to have one service per month in Chapel and one online, if there were still a number of people who felt unable to attend in person. Any decision on this can be made nearer the time when we have more idea about where the lifting of restrictions is up to.

12 Publicity: We need to appoint a successor to Dennis Crompton, who acted as the Chapel's Publicity Officer for many years. JC suggested that Jacqui Kershaw would be an ideal person for the role. AW will approach her to find out if she would be willing to do this. Meanwhile, there is very little to publicise, so we can just make sure that Facebook and the website are kept up-to-date.

13 Website: AW thanked PB for his work on putting the new Chapel website together. She also thanked those who had contributed photographs. Photos are still needed for the Naming Ceremonies section. VM will contact families whose photos have been on Facebook to ask if they would be willing for them to be used on the website. PB pointed out that most of the content so far

has been put together by him and AW, so he would welcome any suggestions for things that could be added. He could also give access to other people so that they could add their own content, but this would require prior knowledge of how to use WordPress.

13 Rites of Passage: AW thanked MH for her work as Rites of Passage Co-ordinator. FA had previously suggested that Chris Martin should be approached to see if he would consider taking on the role, as he had been interested in training to be an Authorised Person for the registration of marriages as a deputy for FA. CM has expressed an interest, but has yet to make a decision. In the meantime, enquiries about ceremonies will be dealt with by AW and VM.

14 A.O.B. JC suggested that we should arrange a Chapel meal when we able to do so. PB suggested that we could have an online 'afternoon tea' following the service on Sunday 16 May, which will be the Chapel Anniversary.

Judith Crompton thanked AW for the way the meeting had been conducted.

15 Date of Next AGM: Sunday 21 March 2021