

Rivington Unitarian & Free Christian Chapel
Congregational AGM 17.03.2024
Minutes

Those present: Alison Whitaker (chairman), Frank Ascroft (treasurer), Peter Bearon, Diane Fairclough, Paul Fairclough, Olive Fisher, Geoff Newey

Welcome: Alison Whitaker welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies: Judith Crompton, John Green, Linda Green, Mary Horrocks, Richard Horrocks, Iris Wharton, Vince McCully

Minutes: The Minutes of the last AGM had been circulated by email and post after the meeting. They were accepted as a true record. Proposed: Geoff Newey, Seconded: Peter Bearon

Matters Arising:

Notice board: The problem of transporting the notice board had been solved by having a new central section made to fit over the old board. New cork backing has made it much easier to push in drawing pins.

Missing emails from GA: using the contact@rivingtonchapel.org.uk email address has solved the problem.

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

In 2023, the Chapel was used for one naming ceremony and two weddings, one of which was the marriage of Vince's daughter Isobel. Vince officiated and Sheila accompanied Isobel into the Chapel.

Some services are still being streamed on Zoom, though fewer than last year as Vince's Presidential duties have taken him elsewhere on some of our service Sundays and participation has reduced. The Zoom joining details are now displayed on the notice boards in an effort to publicise that people can still be with us even if they are unable to attend in person.

The number of Chapel members remains at 21.

Once again the Chapel had a stall on the village green during Rivington Spring Festival and there was some live music indoors. For our Heritage Open Day in September we restricted the stalls to one area of the Chapel so that there was more space for visitors to look at the interior and appreciate the display on the building's history. Rev Phil Waldron from Ullet Road Chapel in Liverpool took our Anniversary service and we then enjoyed a meal at the Bay Horse. The Chapel hosted the Rivington Parish Council Carols evening and we rounded off the year with our own Carol Service.

It hardly seems possible that a year has passed since we found out that Vince's term as President of the General Assembly would begin in April at the 2023 Annual Meetings. Now there are only a few weeks left until he hands over to Geoff Levermore from Norcliffe Chapel in Styal.

Chris Martin, assisted by Geoff Newey, has continued to open the Chapel for visitors on the first Wednesday of each month.

Hannah Carolan, one of our organists, moved to Chester in November. Tanya Smalley is still playing for us on the 3rd Sunday services, and Margaret Wilcock, a member of Park Lane Chapel in Bryn has recently started to play for the 1st Sunday services.

We have continued to support Coffee4Craig and Chorley Help the Homeless with donations of food and toiletries, particularly following the Harvest Festival.

Many thanks, as ever, to the Committee and members of the Congregation for their support over the last year.

It was proposed that the Chairman's report should be accepted. Proposed: Diane Fairclough, Seconded: Olive Fisher. Carried unanimously.

Correspondence: AW has been receiving the 'uni-news' and 'People So Bold' newsletters from the GA, which she has forwarded to members with email addresses. There is also a quarterly 'Unitarian Leadership' newsletter which is intended for people in various leadership roles such as ministers and Committee members. This has a summary in pdf format which can easily be printed and circulated.

Treasurer's Report:

Income - £9,949.29. Expenditure - £11,193.93. Deficit - £1,244.64. Assets stand at £41,330.98.

FA pointed out that a grant from MDA of £2,000 to help cover increases in utility bills had helped to significantly reduce the deficit. He has been looking at deals for the supply of electricity as the current contract with British Gas expires in September 2024. There was some discussion about why the electricity bills should be so high given that the Chapel is used on only a few occasions each month. It was agreed that the Committee should look at the figures from 2023 for the various tariffs to see if any savings could be made. As the Trustees are now to be jointly responsible for paying the electricity bills this would need to be done in conjunction with their treasurer, PB.

FA said that the water bill had also increased significantly, so he would need to arrange for the Tea Rooms to increase their contribution.

AW reported that, after a long-winded and complicated process, the facility to view the Royal Bank of Scotland account online had been set up.

It was proposed that the accounts should be accepted. Proposed: Geoff Newey, Seconded: Diane Fairclough. Carried unanimously.

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 continue as the contact for correspondence with the contact@rivingtonchapel.org.uk email address as an additional contact. Other secretarial duties will be carried out by members of the Committee as necessary.

Election of Committee: The nominations for the Committee were Diane Fairclough, Paul Fairclough and Geoff Newey, who were duly elected unopposed. Peter Bearon was re-appointed as Independent Examiner.

Election of Lay Person in Charge: VM was unable to attend the AGM as he was on a Presidential visit to Golders Green Unitarians. AW had checked that VM was still willing to continue in the Role of Lay Person in Charge if the Congregation so wished.

AW reported that VM has completed the Residential requirements of the Advanced Worship Leader Training. He is still working on the required assignments and has to conduct some services that will be moderated.

The GA is currently working on the creation of a new Roll of Lay Leaders which those holding the Advanced Certificate will be able to apply for once they have completed additional training in Rites of Passage, Safeguarding and have a satisfactory enhanced DBS check.

It was agreed unanimously that VM should be asked to continue as Lay Person in Charge.

Motions for GA Meetings: The details of the motions had been circulated previously. AW reported that she had found out that the background papers were available online when she had attended a Zoom workshop about the motions the previous day [16th March]. As the background papers had only just been distributed to members, it was decided that, rather than having a detailed discussion about the motions at this meeting, members should have more time to think consider them. It will be possible to let AW know have any views or comments up to Wednesday 3 April.

AW reported that the purpose of the Zoom workshop had been to consider the clarity of the wording of the motions and the feasibility of achieving their aims if passed. The main points raised were:

Motion 1: the wording appeared to focus on the negative aspects of AI at the expense of the benefits.

Motion 2: the 'No More Deaths' Campaign was concerned mainly with preventing deaths in custody, but also about insuring that recommendations following inquests and inquiries are implemented.

Motion 3: The background papers suggest more possible courses of action than appear in the motion. If the motion is passed it will be the four actions in that which will be binding.

Motion 4: The limit on the number of motions was introduced in 2018. Motions have to be submitted at least 56 days before the Annual Meetings. Emergency Motions cover issues that arise after that point.

There was an additional administrative motion proposing that Dot Hewerdine [from Chorley Chapel] should be made an honorary member of the GA.

Social events: It was decided that we should hold our usual Anniversary Meal at the Bay Horse, Heath Charnock [subject to availability].

AOB: AW reported some changes following the adoption of the document produced by the Trustees detailing the Roles and Responsibilities of the Trust and the Congregation. These are:

1. the Trust will contribute to the cost of electricity,
2. the Congregational will contribute to the cost of maintaining the organ
3. money from fundraising events and donations will be split between the Trust and the Congregation.

Date of Next Meeting: Sunday 16 March 2025