

**ANGLICAN CHURCH OF LUXEMBOURG  
CHURCH COUNCIL**

Tuesday 19 May 2015  
7 pm, the Vicarage

**MINUTES**

**Present:** The Rev'd Chris Lyon, Tania Buhr (Secretary), Gerd Gebhard, Victoria Hodgson, Moira Hogg, Simon Norcross (Churchwarden) and Philippa Seymour (Churchwarden)

**1. & 2. Welcome and prayer**

The Chaplain, as Chairperson, opened the meeting at 7.15 pm with a prayer.

**3. Apologies for absence**

John Dimond, the Rev'd Andy Markey (Assistant Chaplain), John Overstall, Felix Rusere (Treasurer), Evelyn Sweerts and Paul Townend.

**4. Introduction: purchase of office/meeting accommodation and Chaplain's accommodation**

Since the previous Council meeting on 6 May 2015, there had been developments on the property issue which had prompted the Chaplain to call another Council meeting at short notice. He, the Churchwardens and John Overstall had met the previous evening (18 May) to discuss how best to proceed and to try to formulate a recommendation to put to the 19 May Council meeting. A number of documents had been circulated to Council members by e-mail prior to the meeting and some more general points (for example, about the role and responsibility of the Church Council) had been clarified. Some of the Council members not able to be present had expressed their views to the Chaplain by e-mail and/or indicated that they were willing to trust a small group of people who had been engaged with this whole issue for a longish period to make a decision.

**5. Theology of Church and buying property**

The Chaplain explained that the whole question of suitable accommodation was not just about his own personal comfort or about buying a property in better condition than the Vicarage. The Church had, for example, just been offered a house to buy not far away. He felt, however, that this was not the way forward: the church was about people being able to express their own faith and we needed a place where people could do this and do the work they needed to do; having office/meeting space and clergy housing together limited the growth of the church, as use of that space was tied to the clergy's willingness and availability. It was also not restful for him to be living in office space, nor was it private. It was therefore better to have segregated accommodation and the Council needed to be intentional about this.

**6. Résumé of last meeting**

At the 6 May Council meeting it had been decided not to buy two flats (one for office space and one for the Chaplain) in a planned new block of flats (Résidence ISATIS), as they were too costly.

## 7. New potential property identified

Evelyn Sweerts had then done some research and found a flat for sale at 33 rue de Mühlenbach for €200 000 less than the ISATIS flat that had been under consideration for the Chaplain's accommodation. The sale price was €518 000, it had three bedrooms and an area of 86m<sup>2</sup>; the Chaplain, Philippa Seymour and Simon Norcross had viewed it and considered that it corresponded to our present needs. It was available immediately and the seller wanted to sell it quickly.

## 8. Issues

The Council then discussed various issues regarding this possible purchase.

Suitability: it suited us now, but should we be looking to buy something that would also suit future needs (i.e. a Chaplain with a spouse or a family)?

Location: It was situated in rue de Mühlenbach, and was thus very central, and it backed onto woods.

Timing: the Chaplain would be able to move this summer, which would be more convenient than in the autumn.

Risk: there was a risk that the Vicarage sale might fall through and, if we had obtained a bank loan to pay for the new flat, we might be in the position of having that loan to repay and two properties to keep, in which case we would have to sell the flat (two lots of removal costs, transaction and registration costs would thus be forfeited). However, Simon Norcross pointed out that we would save a lot by the Chaplain moving shortly into a purchased flat, rather than having to rent (we had budgeted €100 000 for this).

Price: We would have to take out a loan as we would not have the money until the Vicarage sale went through. Our advisor, Alain Devresse, regarded €518 000 as a good price, there was a risk we might lose the deal if we tried to negotiate for a lower price.

Relation to purchase of ISATIS 007 flat (i.e. the flat being considered for office/meeting space): the ISATIS developer was pressing us for a decision. He was now offering two parking spaces and two cellar spaces too. If we bought the 007 flat (for a maximum price of €785 000) and the flat at 33 rue de Mühlenbach the total cost would be around €1 303 000. The Chaplain considered we could try to raise a loan for the 33 rue de Mühlenbach flat on the basis of the value of the Vicarage (and put a '*clause suspensive*' into the '*compromis de vente*' making obtaining a loan a condition) and then get a separate loan for the 007 flat. The '*compromis de vente*' for the 007 flat would also have a '*clause suspensive*' making obtaining a loan a condition of purchase. Having two flats would be a good long-term investment. The 007 flat was suitable because it was on the ground floor (necessary in order to obtain permission for office use rather than residential use), it could be reconfigured internally as it was not yet built, it was central and easily accessible, it had parking available and would be easy to sell again later. Any decisions about where we might eventually obtain a church building of our own (if offered an existing, redundant church building by the Ville de Luxembourg) were still a long way off.

## 9. Situation regarding the Vicarage sale

The Church had heard that day that the developer had been granted an '*accord de principe*' from the Ville de Luxembourg for the sale of the Vicarage. We still had to wait for the more detailed approval. This was good news and made it more likely that we could obtain a bridging loan.

## 10. Decision regarding flat purchase

Simon Norcross suggested that, as we had relied on Alain Devresse's advice before, we should continue to do so and ask him to check up on whether we needed to pay registration fees, to explain what the '*accord de principe*' for the Vicarage meant in practice, to give us

his risk assessment and to negotiate the price for the 007 flat down to a maximum of €785 000.

The Council **unanimously agreed** to buy the flat at 33 rue de Mühlenbach for €518 000 plus registration fees (if any), conditional upon a bridging loan clause in the '*compromis de vente*'. Agreement to this effect had also been indicated by John Overstall, Evelyn Sweerts and Paul Townend, not present at the meeting.

The Council **unanimously agreed** to buy the 007 flat in the Résidence ISATIS for a maximum of €785 000 plus any registration fees payable, subject to a positive risk assessment from Alain Devresse and subject to the inclusion in the '*compromis de vente*' of a '*clause suspensive*' that the developer first obtain an '*accord détaillé*' from the Ville de Luxembourg for the sale of the Vicarage and another '*clause suspensive*' that we obtain a bank loan.

## **11. Any other business**

On the question of finding a new Music Director, the Chaplain said that, as Edward Seymour was being very active in this respect (he would invite three potential candidates to meet the choir), he would let himself be guided by him, but ultimately it was for the Chaplain to decide. He proposed the same budget as for Dana Luccock, i.e. €1 000 per month gross.

The Chaplain reported that, due to pressure at work, Felix Rusere had said he wanted to resign as Treasurer; he was willing to continue until the Church Fair. We therefore needed to look for another Treasurer.

## **12. Closing prayer**

The Chaplain thanked the Council for their presence and input and closed the meeting at 9.10 pm.

NB. Next meeting: Wednesday 3 June 2015 at 7 pm for food, with the meeting to start at 7.30 pm.