

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF LUXEMBOURG

CHURCH COUNCIL

Wednesday 13 April 2016
7.30 pm, Centre Jean XXIII, 52 rue Jules Wilhelm, L-2728 Luxembourg

MINUTES

Present: The Rev'd Chris Lyon (Chaplain), the Rev'd Andy Markey (Assistant Chaplain), Lynn Barclay, Tania Buhr (Secretary), John Dimond, Gerd Gebhard, Victoria Hodgson, Simon Norcross (Churchwarden), Isabel Page, Philippa Seymour (Churchwarden), Evelyn Sweerts, Paul Townend and Chris Vaudrey (Treasurer)

1. & 2. Welcome & Bible reading and prayer

The Chaplain, as Chairperson, opened the meeting at 8.10 pm by reading from Mark 6, v. 30 onwards, and saying a prayer. As it was the last meeting that Paul Townend and Evelyn Sweerts were attending, after having served three years on the Council, he thanked them for their work.

3. Apologies for absence

Moiria Hogg and John Overstall.

4. Minutes of last meeting (16 March 2016)

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2016 were agreed to be an accurate account of the proceedings, subject to the following rewording:

- item 5, 'Matters arising', re item 9d, to read: 'the Churchwardens had written to the developers of the Vicarage site formally pointing out the fact that the deadline for signing the deal had expired';
- item 9c, second sentence, to read: 'the Churchwardens had written to the developers to point out that the due date for signature had passed';
- item 10, latter part of the first sentence, to read: '...he had suggested to the Finance Committee that we should not hold a Church Fair this year';
- item 15, to read: 'On 8 March 2016 a meeting had been held with members of the 9.30 am congregation at which there had been a full, frank and very useful exchange of views and a better understanding of the issue had been reached.'

5. Action Points Review and Matters Arising

Action points review: the Assistant Chaplain was seeing to the production of the Advent, Christmas and Epiphany service booklets; the Chaplain had arranged a date in May to speak to the Charities Committee.

Matters Arising: the Chaplain was due to have a meeting with the Vicar-General on 28 April to discuss the Konvikt building and the stair carpet.

6. Ministry Report

The Chaplain reported as follows:

- a) Processes and procedures: no further action on the arrangements for setting up the services;
- b) Newcomers: no further action on linking the Junior Church forms with the contact forms;

- c) First Sunday Group: at the last service there had been a problem with projecting the words of the songs owing to a computer malfunction, and some uncertainty about the use of the new First Sunday service booklets;
- d) Te Deum: the venue for this event had been changed to the Konvikt Chapel; the date originally planned (16 June 2016) might also be altered;
- e) Music Director: the Chaplain had signed the contract for the Music Director, with effect from 11 October 2015; he thanked Gerd Gebhard for his work on this matter;
- f) Church service times: no further action taken;
- g) Crèche rota: this needed attention before September; it would be good to have not only young parents but also older people involved.

7. Treasurer's Report

Chris Vaudrey presented a receipts and payments account for January to March 2016. This showed a net shortfall of €23 635, and the current account was down to €6 253. The situation would look better once the sale of the Vicarage had gone through. The Council accepted the Treasurer's report.

The annual accounts for 2015 were not yet ready, but would be submitted to the Finance Committee before the AGM.

It was suggested that it might be a good idea to write and thank people who started to donate regularly to the church.

8. Search for a new Treasurer

Chris Vaudrey confirmed that he would be stepping down as Treasurer at the AGM on 20 April 2016; nobody to replace him had yet been found. The Finance Committee would meet to decide how best to proceed.

9. New premises - update

a) dismantling/recycling of the Vicarage: the Chaplain still had some of his own furniture in the Vicarage which would be removed in due course; for the rest of the furniture and fittings, which belonged to the Church, the plan was to set a date, advertise it and ask those who wished to take items away to make a donation; Chris Vaudrey said inventories had been made of the furniture and fittings in the Chaplain's new flat and a similar inventory would be made for the Church office;

b) Jules Mersch flat: these premises were now under construction; we were moving towards signing the deal; the necessary '*procurations*' had been drawn up and sent to the Bishop, who had already signed two out of the three; it was not yet known whether we would have to take out another bank loan;

c) Sale of the Vicarage: the Vicarage had 'red spot' stickers in the window, which meant that the Ville de Luxembourg must have agreed to the development of the site; however, a date for signing the '*acte définitif*' had still not been scheduled; it was felt best to contact M. Kripler first before taking the step of putting this matter in the hands of a lawyer.

10. Church Fair

The Chaplain had announced the cancellation of this year's Church Fair in a congregational e-mail on 31 March 2016 and this news had also been reported in the press. To date, six e-mails had been received from the congregation in response, expressing regret at the decision.

11. Environmental Policy

Philippa Seymour circulated a paper setting out a draft 'Environmental Stewardship Policy' for the church. Following a Diocesan questionnaire about the Church and the environment she and Simon Norcross had thought our Church needed some form of written policy. After some discussion as to the exact wording, the Council agreed on the following text, based on their proposal:

'Anglican Church of Luxembourg - Environmental Stewardship Policy

The Church Council undertakes:

1. to consider the environmental implications of its decision-making;
2. to use as little energy as possible in any buildings the Church owns or uses;
3. to encourage, and where possible facilitate, the use of public and/or low-energy means of transport to and from Church activities;
4. to eliminate waste as far as possible in all Church activities;
5. to raise awareness of environmental issues among our congregation, their families and others with whom we are in contact;
6. to reflect our concern for environmental issues in our giving.

The Clergy undertake to include environmental concerns in worship and teaching to adults and children.'

The Chaplain thanked Philippa Seymour for drawing up this proposal.

12. Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

The Chaplain circulated a paper entitled 'From raising money for charity to working with others for a fair, sustainable world' (see attachment). He said our mission was not so much about getting people to come to church but more about encouraging dialogue and getting people to see things differently. He felt very strongly that although what we had been doing for the past 40 years had been good, it was time to move on and start doing things differently. We should give up the idea of 'charity', as charity made the giver feel virtuous but involved the recipient feeling like a child; we needed to treat people as adults, bring them into the world economy in a manner that enabled them to stand on their own feet. The aim was to move from 'charity' to 'justice', and from doing things 'for' people to doing things 'with' people.

He wanted to create (from within our church membership) a Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) working group as an umbrella organisation, to rename the Charities Committee as the 'Grants and Donations' Committee, to keep the Environmental Footprint Group, and to create a third group dealing with human rights (including migration, refuge, asylum and economic displacement). The JPIC group could also involve people from our wider community.

Philippa Seymour agreed these were good ideas but nevertheless wanted to point out that the word 'charity' should not be denigrated, as big organisations such as Oxfam and ActionAid had decades ago abandoned the 'top down' approach to charity and sought to work with, rather than for, recipients.

Simon Norcross said that this was a complex issue and too large in scope for one Council meeting; he suggested that the Chaplain could run a course in the Church to explain his ideas in more detail.

13. Congregational meeting

A meeting would be held at the Centre Jean XXIII on Wednesday 25 May 2016 at 7.30 pm to discuss future activities.

14. Any other business

Philippa Seymour asked whether the pew sheets could advertise support for a petition being circulated by ACAT Luxembourg entitled 'ACAT Italy's appeal to the Minister of the Interior – Unaccompanied minor refugees', aimed at protecting unaccompanied child refugees arriving in Italy. The Council agreed.

Evelyn Sweerts asked whether the bottlecap collection was to be continued and it was agreed that it would.

15. Dates of future meetings

- Wednesday 11 May 2016 at 7.30 pm (7 pm for food beforehand)
- Wednesday 8 June 2016;
- Wednesday 6 July 2016;
- Wednesday 14 September 2016.

AGM: Wednesday 20 April 2016 at 8 pm in *Centre Jean XXIII in the Salle de conference*.

16. Closing prayer

The Chaplain, having thanked Paul Townend and Evelyn Sweerts for providing the food, closed the meeting with a prayer at 11 pm.

The Chaplain's paper (agenda item 12):

From Raising Money for Charity to Working with Others for a Fair, Sustainable World.

Introduction: an honourable tradition.

For many years the Anglican Church of Luxembourg has given 10% of its income to good causes, which have been nominated by members of the church, and "vetted" by the Charities Committee, a group of church members appointed by and answerable to, the Church Council.

The Charities Committee has established policy guidelines and criteria by which charities are selected for support, and their accounts and activities investigated by the Committee before any donations are made. Committee members have been serious in doing due diligence, a process which can be time-consuming and sometimes frustrating, but which we have felt to be very important in maintaining the confidence of donors and contributors of every kind, within the church and beyond it.

That we raise money for charity in this way has been a very important part of our self-understanding as a church. We have given over 10,000€ per year for many years, which, though minuscule in relation to the world's need, is not negligible in the life of our church. People have worked hard, and worked well, to heighten awareness within our community of a diversity of need, and to raise money in order to make a practical difference in some way to the plight of the poor.

But in a rapidly changing world it is time to develop a new model of practical work as a church. I am proposing some fundamental changes to our understanding of our role as a church, to what actually do, how we do it, and who we do it with.

From "For" to "With", from "Charity" to "Justice".

I propose:

1 To move away from the concept of raising money **for** good causes and consciously commit ourselves to working **with** others for a fair and sustainable world.

2 To definitively cease to speak of charity, and to speak instead of justice and human solidarity.

Charity perpetuates dependency, sometimes unconsciously. It can confirm donors in their self-image as virtuous, and the recipients as of lesser worth.

Charity often conceals systemic injustice, perhaps in respect of the source of the money which is being given (the legacy of slavery has contributed greatly to Western economic advantage), or perhaps in respect of the perceived need that generated this charitable gift.

Charity can be demotivating for the recipients, and distorting of individual and local economies.

Natural disaster, war and epidemic disease call for immediate financial support. We should not think of this as “charity”, but as simple human solidarity. There will always be a need to show solidarity with others, and we should be generous in our contribution in this cause.

3 To end our practice of asking the congregation to nominate charities or good causes, and instead to invite them to participate in three essential areas of activity, which are of increasing concern world-wide, and which often have a specifically religious dimension, which makes them a particularly important object of our living out of the gospel.

- a Development projects of the kind we have supported for many years (so no change in this respect)
- b Raising awareness of environmental issues (Developing the Orthodox theme of Creation in September, as adopted by the Council of European Churches in 2007)
- c Engaging with issues of human rights and human dignity, in particular refugees issues, slavery and human trafficking, legal, economic and religious equality between men and women, children’s rights, gender equality issues.

4 To maintain unchanged our spontaneous support for disaster relief work, and our contributions towards the Bishop’s Appeals in Advent and Lent.

Our engagement

I propose that we should engage:

1. To develop a clearer understanding of the role of the Gospel in the world today.
This will require us to be more focused than we have been on life before death. We need to have a proper theology of the role of the church in the world, and a much better awareness of the ethical and cultural issues in a time of rapid change. This is becoming increasingly important as religious commitment and identity are growing stronger and more volatile throughout the world.
2. To be more aware, as a church, of what is happening in the world.
We need to develop a more critical awareness of our society’s place within the world, and actively engaged with movements for change, especially which are represented here in Luxembourg with whom we could work more closely.

3. To be more cohesive and coherent as a church in our prayer and in our shared learning.

We have many people who are very experienced in development issues, others who are passionately committed to a fairer world, others who give time and energy to practical projects locally and worldwide, a few who work very closely with government agencies, banks and private enterprises on environmental and justice issues. We should facilitate our learning and co-ordinate our church's approach to all these issues, which are often very inter-related.

4. To express a clearer message to our community and to our wider society about life together on this fragile planet

We could sponsor public debate and discussion of critical issues which are key to our spiritual, cultural and economic life together. We could make it easier to engage as a church in practical activities which build bridges between ourselves and other communities.

Practical steps

The paradigm shift is probably the most important step which we can take. One of the most important roles that the church has in society is to model new ways of thinking and behaving. The new problems we face require above all new ways of seeing, which lies at the heart of what the Gospel is about. Thinking, speaking and behaving in a new way is very challenging, but it is also extremely practical in its effects.

People work best when they can focus on what they are passionate about, but we need more at least one more passion. I propose that we should continue to have a committee which deals with our **Grants and Donations**, as well as an **Environmental Footprint Group**. These two groups are structured in different ways and serve different purposes, but each does what they do very well. I would like us to create a third group which deals with **Human Rights** issues (which includes migration, refuge and asylum as well as environmental displacement, amongst many others).

We should co-ordinate our separate activities in each of the above areas within a Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) working group, because the issues we are dealing with are very often inter-related and looking at them together would give us a much better perspective than we have at the moment. I suggest that the Church Council establishes such a group from within the church membership, including the GD committee and the EF group, and inviting members who have a particular expertise to participate and offer their wisdom so that the church can make the engagement described above, and can communicate that engagement more effectively. The Chaplain would appoint a Convener of the JPIC group with the approval of the Chaplaincy Council.

We should ask the JPIC group to be in close contact with ecumenical and government agencies in Luxembourg, as well as with NGOs if appropriate.

We should ask the JPIC group to suggest a focus for our concern and activity as a church over a period of perhaps 5 years, and charge the G&D committee to investigate suitable projects which match that focus.

We should ensure that those who lead the intercessions are involved in JPIC issues.

Chris Lyon 13 April 2016