

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF LUXEMBOURG CHURCH COUNCIL

Wednesday 12 July 2017
7.30 pm, Centre Jean XXIII, 52 rue Jules Wilhelm, L-2728 Luxembourg

MINUTES

Present: Tania Buhr (Secretary), Gabriel Chelladurai (Treasurer), John Dimond, Gerd Gebhard, Catriona Gillham, Victoria Hodgson, Simon Norcross (Churchwarden), Isabel Page, Philippa Seymour (Churchwarden) and Evelyn Sweerts (Lay Pastoral Assistant)

1. & 2. Welcome & Bible reading and prayer

Evelyn Sweerts, who explained she was chairing the meeting as part of her ordinand training, opened the meeting at 7.40 pm with a reading from Colossians 3, v. 1-4 and v. 12-17, and a prayer.

3. Apologies for absence – Lynn Barclay, Moira Hogg and Nik Legge.

4. Approval of Minutes of last meeting (14 June 2017)

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2017 were agreed to be an accurate account of the proceedings.

5. Action Points Review and Matters Arising

Action Points Review: nothing to discuss;

Matters arising: item 4: Gerd Gebhard said that in future if minutes of meetings needed to be sent to the bank for the purposes of certification, the relevant extract should be sent rather than the full minutes;

item 9, second paragraph: Isabel Page said she would not have voted in favour of the future Chaplain's salary being fixed as it was at the last meeting if the information which Gerd Gebhard had circulated by e-mail after the meeting had been made available earlier.

6. Approval of draft minutes of the 2017 AGM – for posting on the website

The draft minutes of the 2017 AGM, held on 26 April 2017, had been circulated to the Council prior to the meeting; the draft text, following slight amendment, was duly approved for the purposes of posting on the Church website (for approval at the 2018 AGM).

It was agreed that an e-mail would be sent to everyone on the electoral roll saying that the 2016 accounts had now been finalised and audited and would be sent to them, on request to the church office.

7. Churchwardens' Report

The Churchwardens reported as follows:

i) Locum arrangements: Victoria Hodgson and Moira Hogg were thanked for the considerable amount of work they had put in to clean the clergy flat between occupants; locums were being sought for the Advent and Christmas period;

ii) 20 August 2017: as the Churchwardens, Evelyn Sweerts and Lynn Barclay would all be away on this date, other Council members attending church that day were asked to make sure everything went smoothly and to welcome newcomers;

iii) Sound system in the chapel: various people were looking into this matter; Nick Jones would be invited to the September meeting to report back;

iv) Convention/Luxembourg government subsidy: Chris Lyon had been reminded of the need to finalise the draft letter addressed to the Prime Minister, but had not replied; the Council instructed the Churchwardens to remind him again, with a deadline, and if they did not hear from him to ask the Archdeacon to sign and send the revised letter;

v) Recruitment of next Chaplain: the originals of all the recruitment documents had been handed to the Archdeacon on 25 June 2017 and electronic versions sent to him, but no further news had been

heard;

vi) Rental agreement Assistant Chaplain's house in Howald: Simon Norcross had spoken to the estate agent and established that the landlords, from whom nothing had been heard for some time, would reply to his queries about the repair bill in September 2017;

vii) Possible half-day retreat: Evelyn Sweerts had proposed holding a short retreat for Council members, rota organisers and some other people involved in running things in order to reflect on the recruitment process and the locum experience; a retreat would be a chance to talk in a different environment and to take stock of the interregnum, which could be viewed as a gift to the congregation, offering a breathing space to discover who we really were; there was general agreement to hold a morning retreat on Saturday 18 November 2017.

8. Treasurer's Report

Gabriel Chelladurai presented the receipts and payments account for January to June 2017, drawn up by Chris Vaudrey, as Gabriel still did not have access to the bank account (but that was due to happen the following week). Everything was in line with the budget, and there continued to be a deficit.

The audited accounts for 2016 had been duly submitted to the Government by the end of June 2017, and a formal acknowledgement of receipt had been received from the Government.

The Treasurer would in future send copies of invoices to the *fiduciaire*, which would pay the bills twice a month; it would also draw up the monthly reports for the Council and the annual balance sheet. Gerd Gebhard and John Dimond said they would like the format in which the monthly reports were presented to be modified, and Gerd Gebhard agreed to set out details of the preferred format in an e-mail.

The money left over from the collection for Phil Harvey's leaving present would be paid to him in cash.

9. Ministry report – Lay Pastoral Assistant

Evelyn Sweerts said the Christian classics book club had been advertised and would start in September 2017; the proposed Taizé service could perhaps be a joint event together with the Catholic church and might be held in the Centre Jean chapel; from October onwards, Amanda Taylor Aiken would be running monthly 'Philosophy for Children' sessions, based on Bible readings, with the Junior Church children.

10. Te Deum – review

It was felt that the music had been very good, the preaching admirably brief and the event as a whole good for relations with other religious groups. Some confusion as to whether or not invitees were to be part of the procession could perhaps be avoided in future by stating on the invitation that the procession would be for Anglicans only.

The Churchwardens had received invitations to a few of the Te Deum services held by other religious communities and had attended some of them. In future, if such invitations were open, they could be circulated to the congregation so that other people would also have an opportunity to attend and thus help to build up relations with other groups.

11. Discussion of a paper by Isabel Page on the property situation in Luxembourg and its implications for our property holdings, particularly the new flat in rue Jules Mersch which is due to be completed in September 2017

This paper had been circulated to the Council prior to the meeting. Isabel Page, a licensed estate agent in Luxembourg, had written the paper to summarise the situation (as at May 2017) and to prompt discussion.

From research, Luxembourg government policy on the property market seemed to be geared more towards speculative investment than home ownership. In September 2016, the Luxembourg Government had been issued a warning on medium-term vulnerabilities in the residential real estate sector. According to IMF data, house prices have grown around 22% faster than incomes, and advertised prices have increased by an average of 7% in the last year, seemingly placing Luxembourg in a property bubble. Although no mortgages exist on its properties, a bubble-burst might have an impact on the overall financial health of the Anglican Church, which owned two apartments,

one for clergy housing and one intended as an office. As the Church finances are currently running at a deficit, the possibility existed that we might rely in future on renting out our properties to help cover that deficit, and we may also have to rent a house if the new Chaplain required space to accommodate a family.

Discussion of this whole issue ensued. Simon Norcross said that, as we were property owners, for the sake of good governance we needed to be proactive about our property management.

Philippa Seymour pointed out that the main reason for buying the two flats was not financial investment but to ensure that we had our own accommodation for a chaplain and office premises if necessary. The new flat would be ready in September 2017; at that stage we would still not know who the next Chaplain would be, so we would need to wait until the new incumbent had been appointed before deciding what to do with it and whether to rent it out as a flat/office. In the meantime, whilst no decision as to its future use could yet be made, a working group could look into this matter.

Isabel Page considered it important for the Council to discuss and establish what kind of policy the Church should follow in the management of its finance and investments. As the property assets were made possible by the generosity of past and present congregations, she also considered we should be raising awareness of policy and risk. We should also ensure the congregation had transparency on these matters and our thinking about the wider issue of governance.

Evelyn Sweerts suggested drawing up guidelines for financial policy and governance. Simon Norcross said that although we should generally avoid making significant policy changes during an interregnum, we could nevertheless reflect and put ideas down in writing to show to the new Chaplain once in post. Such ideas could also be presented to the congregation. In his view, strategy policy discussions needed to be prepared and facilitated by someone who knew the subject; Isabel Page volunteered to do so. Rather than establish a new working group, Isabel suggested we hold these talks together. John Diamond proposed we adapt the current Council meetings to accommodate these discussions, with a view to drawing up some policy guidelines by January 2018.

Simon Norcross had been trying to establish whether VAT would be payable on the new flat or whether our status as a church would entitle us to a zero rate of VAT. Evelyn Sweerts offered to e-mail a contact she had in the VAT department to find out.

12. Presentation by Nik Legge on governance

As Nik Legge had been unable at the last minute to attend the meeting, his presentation was postponed until the next meeting.

13. Fun and Fundraising Group report

After a year of fundraising events since it was set up, the Group considered that all the events had fulfilled the remit of being enjoyable for both participants and organisers, involving people who were not regular members of our church, and raising money for good causes. All of them, however, could have been better attended. There was still some work to do in persuading church members and the wider public in Luxembourg that many of the enjoyable elements of the much-regretted Church Fair were present in these other events and they should support them. The Group had built up experience and involved some new people in organising various types of event and the aim for next year was to build on these foundations, running broadly the same events again and seeking to expand each one to bring in more people and more money. In all cases, more effort needed to be put into publicising our events, particularly in other English-speaking churches.

The Group had reviewed the Sports and Fun Day and discussed ways in which it could be even better next year, and it had also looked at some points for improving future events (Saturday 23 September 2017 for the Treasure Hunt and Sunday 4 February 2018 for the Arts Festival).

Philippa Seymour added that the amount of money raised by the events had not been high (roughly €3 000 for the Arts Festival, €700 for the Treasure Hunt and €1 000 for the Sports Day), but the events were easier to run than a full-blown Church Fair, so the following year should go more smoothly. Also, a different person had been in charge of each event, so the burden had been shared.

14. Communications Group report

The Communications Group had met on 19 June 2017 and discussed various ongoing matters and possible dates for events in the autumn. It had decided to buy a printer for the locum if and when one was requested (this had already been done, at the current locum's request); to send out a press release, at the appropriate time, for the next Te Deum service and the Harvest Festival and to advertise these services on the Facebook page, and to set up a parish Dropbox account.

15. Any other business - none

16. Dates of future Council meetings

- Monday 18 September 2017 at 7.30 pm, Centre Jean XXIII (**NB: change of date**);
- Wednesday 11 October 2017;
- Wednesday 8 November 2017;
- Wednesday 6 December 2017.

17. Closing prayer

Evelyn Sweerts closed the meeting at 10.06 pm, the Council joining together in saying the Grace.