

# 12 Month Plan

## High Street Methodist Church

### 2018 - 2019

Dear Friends,

#### **From Great to Even Greater Things**

This document provides an overview of the great number and scope of this church's activities. In every area our motivation is to see lives, relationships and communities transformed by God's great love for all. To do all that we already do requires a great team of people working in harmony together. The Leadership Team, who have put this 12 Month Plan together, on behalf of the stewards are responsible for supporting the Church Council in their oversight and co-ordination of this huge undertaking, and we owe them a great debt of gratitude for serving us so very well.

At this year's Big Day In this March, we launched our Greater Things initiative. We believe that God is calling us, not to rest on our laurels, but to continue to develop our ways of working in order to become ever more effective in all we do. This is not to suggest that our impact is not already great!

Our recent congregational census indicates that over the period of a single month in-excess of 500 adults and 160 children attend our two main Sunday morning services alone. Each and every week hundreds more connect with us through our Wesleys Café and our other many and varied outreach programmes. In order to sustain all of this requires a great army of volunteers filling rotas that contain 350 names.

Our premises have the greatest possible central position within our town, and also have great potential for ongoing improvements to ensure they are made ideally suited to support our growing mission to the 92% of Harpendonians who do not yet attend a church.

In recent years we have established our site as a host venue for a number of new ventures undertaken in partnership with other churches and agencies in the town. Day by day a whole range of different people receive faith, hope and very practical love here.

We are joined by newcomers practically every week, and over the past five years well over a 100 have become new members and are now part of our expanding church community. Over that same time period we have begun the process of improving our systems of leadership, organisation and communications to ensure we become more effective in enabling an ever greater number and variety

of people to encounter God, be equipped as God's people and to go out into the world to share in extending God's kingdom.

Despite its length, this document is neither comprehensive nor definitive, but rather provides a good indication of our priorities for this coming year. The pace at which we pursue each priority must be sensible, and we must be careful not to outrun our capacity or resources. Nevertheless, this document is the basic road map by which the Leadership Team will seek to guide our ongoing development through this year.

Many organisations today talk in terms of "WINS", by which they mean "What's Important Now". The Leadership Team currently have three main WINS, which have already been agreed by the Church Council. These are:

**To undertake a review of our pastoral system** – this is being led by our new Pastoral Secretary Maggie Grand.

**To undertake a review of our pledged giving system** – this is being led by our Gift Aid Secretary John Harris.

**To progress plans to enhance our premises for our mission** – this is being led by a sub-group of the Leadership Team.

As an essential and integral part of the pastoral and giving reviews, the Church Council have already agreed that we will transfer much of the personal data we currently hold for our members and friends onto Church Suite, which is a cloud based system that will better enable us to keep our records up to date, to help us to ensure every individual receives appropriate pastoral care, to improve communications and to keep us fully compliant with the new data protection legislation.

As the existing WINS are achieved, new WINS will take their place, and it is currently envisaged that these will include (in no particular order) :

Strengthening our Safeguarding team and searching for people with the right gifts and graces to take on the new roles of church Safeguarding Officers – one for children and another for vulnerable adults.

Establishing separate worship teams dedicated to supporting the development of our two main morning services.

Developing a new "Connections" team, for streamlining the pathway from first-time welcome through to fully-engaged membership.

Reviewing all we do, and the way we do it, in the light of our forthcoming Diversity and Inclusion policy.

Enhancing and expanding our online and social media presence, and exploring how we might create an effective online community.

Exploring the introduction of regular sermon series for Sunday worship to enable key topical themes to be explored by the whole church in a far more consistent way, perhaps developing related study materials for home groups.

At the same time as doing all of this, we will continue to manage the change that comes as various personnel come to the end of their term of office and hand on to their successors. In 2019 we will be saying farewell to Deacon Angie Allport and we will be supporting the Circuit as it prepares the profile for her successor. We will also be saying “well done good and faithful servant” to our long-standing Treasurer John Bristow. We recognise that such changes as these always require great care and planning to ensure a smooth transition.

As we seek to move from great to even greater things it is important to remember that we do not do so in our own strength alone. Instead, we seek to be inspired, guided and empowered by the Spirit of God, and seek continually to allow God to work through us. As the Apostle Paul puts it in Philippians 1.6: *‘I am confident of this, that God who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.’*

Thank you for partnering in this ever-greater work of God.

Mark Hammond

## ➤ **Pastoral Ministry**

We have appointed a new Pastoral Secretary (Maggie Grand) who will be looking to move forward the review of our pastoral system. We are continuing to explore options for an alternative membership database, which is data protection compliant and also fits in with our giving strategy.

### **Our priorities for this plan are to:-**

- a) work on the database
- b) look at who is in a home group and who is not to identify the gaps in pastoral oversight
- c) improve the pastoral care of the 9.15 congregation as this has been as an area of weakness
- d) work towards presenting proposals to the September Church Council meeting.

## **Holy Communion**

With Deacon Angie Allport leaving High Street at the end of this twelve month plan, we will be planning for fresh leadership and support for our home communion team come September 2019. This will include the purchase of a new home communion set.

## **Diversity and Inclusion**

Being an already diverse Christian community, we are keen to continue developing as an appropriately inclusive church. The Church Council have already asked the Leadership Team to develop a Diversity and Inclusion policy for High Street, and this year a working party will be formed to draft this for Church Council agreement, and be responsible for the ongoing monitoring of its implementation and operation.

## ➤ **Encountering God**

### **Newcomers Team**

Over the last year we have created and implemented the use of a welcome bag. The newcomers teas have been working well being run three times a year to coincide with membership services. We welcomed two new members to the team.

### **Our priorities for this plan are to:**

- a) Ensure the welcome packs are kept up to date and given out to every newcomer. This will include purchasing more bags and restocking those items which go in them.
- b) Continue with the three times a year pattern of membership services and newcomers teas.
- c) Continue to seek additional team members especially as we have gained two and lost one this last year.

## **Worship and Music**

Over the last year the Choir, New Creation, Junior Choir, Worship Group and Praise Band have continued to use their gifts to lead and enhance our many different acts of worship. We have created a new group of musicians to assist with the leading of worship at the 9.15 service.

### **Priorities for this plan are:**

- a) To continue to use our gifts and contribute to the various acts of worship at High Street.
- b) To recruit more members for the Junior Choir.
- c) For the Choir to continue in its main aim and function of leading the singing in church services, as a key element in continuing to cherish both our varied acts of worship on Sunday mornings and the variety of our evening services that meet the needs of the preacher and the congregation. The choir welcomes all new members but would be particularly interested to hear from sopranos.
- d) For the organists to continue exploring how we can encourage and train up young organists for the future.
- e) For the worship group to seek to develop an additional group of musicians and worship leaders to help with the leading of the evening contemporary worship.
- f) To review the style and format of our 9.15 Informal services and to consider the development of a more consistent approach from week-to-week.

## **Stewards Team**

This year the stewards team initiated a review of evening services through the Worship Team.

### **Our priorities for this plan are:**

- a) To continue to work with the Worship team to complete its consultation with the evening congregations.
- b) To increase the team to 12 people and maintain it at this level.

## **Worship Leaders**

A new worship leader has begun training this year.

### **Our priorities for this plan are to:**

- a) Establish a pattern of worship leaders meeting together for prayer, encouragement and idea sharing.
- b) Actively seek those with gifts of worship leading to grow the team.

- c) Make available any worship training events to worship leaders within the specified training budget to ensure that our worship leaders are best enabled to fulfil their ongoing commitment to further development.

## **Prayer**

There have been three 24 hours of prayer, each with a different focus - personal spiritual development, the life of HSMC, and our town. The sick, the bereaved and world issues continue to be prayed for at the midweek prayer gatherings. The prayer tree is maintained and linked to home intercessors. The prayer booklet has been updated and is available for all in hard copy or to download. High Street joined with other churches for the global Thy Kingdom Come initiative in May.

### **Our priorities for this plan are to:**

- a) Review our entire pattern of scheduled prayer.
- b) Complete the set up and establish the running of a prayer room. This will include beginning periods of praying 24/7 in the new prayer room and spreading the vision to other Christians in the town to join in.
- c) Look at our various prayer meetings and events with a view to clarifying their objectives and content and possibly renaming them to give clarity and encourage growth. This will include an evolving of the 24 hours of prayer from the current format. This will also include ensuring the website and leaflets are up to date.
- d) Establish a pattern for ongoing training and accountability for the prayer ministry team.
- e) Trial a monthly prayer diary of the life of HSMC as an additional prayer tool to the annual prayer booklet which all the teams will contribute to updating annually.
- f) Consider a regular prayer retreat being made available to church members (at their own cost).

## **The Gathering**

In the last year, we have partnered with 'Count Everyone In' instead of 'Livability' as worship for people with special needs is only one aspect of the latter's work whereas it is the sole focus of the former. We received £500 from the other Harpenden churches for this ministry, but this cannot be assumed as an annual donation. Attempts to grow the team ecumenically and in-house have proved unsuccessful, but we have improved our publicity arrangements.

### **Our priorities for this plan are to:**

- a) Continue recruiting to extend the team
- b) Run a 'Count Everyone In' training course in November

- c) Subject to growing the team, possibly explore taking the worship to 'Stairways' and 'Meadow Acres', as attendance from these places is dependent on their being enough staff to bring people to High Street.

## ➤ **Equipping God's People**

Our key aims for 2018-19 are to continue building and equipping disciples of Jesus Christ. Strengthening the role of Home Groups is key to this, as are the range of training opportunities on offer.

### **Alpha Courses**

We ran two Alpha Courses in conjunction with Churches Together in Harpenden, in September and January, with around 50 guests attending in total. The plan for the future is to run Alpha as a Churches Together initiative, hosted at High Street and led by people from as many churches as possible.

#### **Our priorities for this plan are to :-**

- a) Continue to develop Alpha for all those seeking to come to faith in Christ, or who wish to review and renew their faith, and to encourage all church members who have not yet done so, to attend.
- b) Run two Alpha Courses, one in September and one in January, both to be run ecumenically with other churches in Harpenden. As on all Alpha Courses, these events will form the basis for training and developing further leaders with the resources and skills in helping to lead Alpha Courses. Our budget figures are for High Street's share of the larger Alpha running costs, and we would look to other churches to contribute their share of the total.

### **Home Groups**

We have made further progress in developing the ministry of Home Groups, with particular emphasis in the area of the new Pastoral Review process. The Leadership Team and a small working party are exploring how best to raise the profile and effectiveness of Home Groups in the life of the church.

#### **Our priorities for this plan are to :-**

- a) Strengthen the role of Home Groups, and to raise their profile in the life of the church.
- b) As part of the broader growth in discipleship, continue to encourage everyone to belong to a Home Group.
- c) Equip and encourage Home Group leaders and members by holding one event each year to bring together our current leaders, and those with an interest in leading.
- d) Explore opportunities to link with local training resources, in particular Cell UK, who have many helpful resources that may be of value in developing the ministry of Home Groups.

- e) Help existing groups to review their current range of activities and to review the effectiveness, frequency and timing of groups to enhance their impact in the busy Harpenden community.

### **Parenting Courses**

As mentioned in last year's plan, we have changed from running these courses annually to operating on a three-year basis. The next courses therefore will run in September 2019 (primary years) and January 2020 (secondary years).

### **Marriage Course**

The Marriage Course was held after Easter for the first time in recent years, with around ten couples attending.

**Our priorities for this plan are** to run the Marriage Course on Thursday evenings during the Summer Term, with this possibly becoming a regular event in the church calendar.

### **Theology School**

The recent programmes were successfully concluded in the early part of this current year. There are no plans to run them again in this year's programme. We are looking at running The Bible Course, by the Bible Society, which we hope will run from the autumn.

**Our priorities for this plan are to** investigate the possibility of connecting more with the Home Groups, possibly by way of providing better coordinated teaching materials for groups to use.

### **External Events**

Both Spring Harvest and Soul Survivor were popular, successful and well supported. We had a group of over 90 at Spring Harvest, with the hope that we can sustain this kind of number at future events. Other members have also independently attended Focus, run by HTB, New Wine and Greenbelt. We do not currently plan to take an organized group to these events, but may consider it in the future.

**Our priorities for this plan are** to continue to encourage a large group from High Street to attend Spring Harvest and Soul Survivor during the year ahead.

### **Resources Centre**

The Resources Centre continues to be well used, with a broad range of materials being borrowed by people from the wider community in Harpenden.

**Our priorities for this plan are to :-**

- a) Continue to offer the existing free lending facility of Christian books and other material to HSMC and the community.
- b) Develop the materials on offer to meet the ongoing and changing opportunities.

## **Additional Courses**

Last year we were invited by officers of the Connexional Learning Network to explore the scope of jointly running a course called IGNITE, a discipleship course consisting of 6 modules of biblical teaching that runs in small groups or in churches. We have had initial exploratory meetings, and in the light of all else that is going on at this time we have decided not to proceed with IGNITE at this stage.

## **➤ Extending God's Kingdom**

Most of the activities in this plan, offer amazing 'value for money' as their financial costs are minimal and much of what is undertaken is either self-funding or generates income. Their success lies largely with the commitment of those volunteering their time and energy. It is our hope that by considering what Greater Things each of us can offer we can, through the following activities, continue to lead and staff the extension of God's Kingdom from High Street.

### **Building Blocks**

Over the next 12 months we plan to continue to strengthen Building Blocks Creative on a Wednesday afternoon and Building Blocks carers and toddler group on a Thursday morning.

**Our priorities for this plan are to** increase the number of volunteers on the team with a view that this will allow us, a year from now, the possibility of exploring if there are any new opportunities for working with parents/carers and toddlers.

### **Christmas Carnival**

The 2017 carnival was another great success, building on existing elements and introducing new ones. High Street's contribution to the day was widely praised on social media for the warm welcome on offer. The 'Journey' enabled over 800 people to witness the Christmas story.

**Our priorities for this plan are to :**

- a) Continue to communicate the Gospel with people at the Christmas carnival, to bring people onto the church site, to share God's love and to love our town generously.
- b) Encourage people to use the church space during the Carnival for rest and conversation and increase the number of church members available to talk and pray.
- c) Make the most of the opportunity to publicise what the church does throughout the year and, in particular, tell people about Alpha courses.

### **Mentalk**

The group typically attracts around 12 regular people who have a meal together, with others just dropping in for a drink on their way home. It appears that the group continues to fulfil an on-going need for this type of fellowship; some men who don't attend church regularly (or at all) are coming along and feeling comfortable. Men from across the full age spectrum are getting to know (and value)

each other. It also seems an effective way of linking men from both service styles: informal and traditional.

**Our priorities for this plan are:**

- a) The group has a new member who has recently joined our church and has experience and a heart for men's ministry. He has agreed to take on the main responsibility for developing the programme and engagement from September, with Mike Bramwell moving into a support role. There is excitement about what changes may be implemented and who may be impacted by them. We look forward to reporting on developments later in the year.
- b) The contacts made through the ecumenical Alpha course have led to links being fostered with the Harpenden's Men's Group. These are at the early stages and we will report back once we have had the time to assess and monitor any potential opportunities.

**Shoppers' Lunch**

During 2017/18 a committed group of volunteers has continued to provide regular lunches to members of the community. The monthly meals offer an ideal opportunity for both church members and non-members to enjoy food and friendship together. The lunches are predominantly enjoyed by the elderly, many of whom live alone and enjoy sharing a meal with others.

**Our priorities for this plan are to:**

- a) Seek to enlarge the team so that the workload can be spread and absences easily covered.
- b) Actively seek those who may be willing to take a 'lead' role - initially working alongside the existing leaders but, over time, taking on the baton of responsibility for shopping and cooking.

**Outlook**

This popular group for the retired is now in its 36<sup>th</sup> year and is currently enjoying an upsurge in attendance, some of whom do not worship at High Street. Recognising the group as 'ageing' the leaders are keen to encourage younger retired members to attend.

**Our priorities for this plan are to:**

- a) Encourage Church Council members to attend the meetings and experience, first hand, what the group provides.
- b) Fully utilize Church communications (in particular the fortnightly notices) to better publicise meetings and speakers on a wide variety of topics: some religious but many on wider topics of interest.

## **Wesleys Café**

Wesleys will continue to provide a comfortable, friendly and affordable coffee shop which makes a significant contribution to church funds. Working behind the counter builds friendships between volunteers and with customers. The café also allows significant funds to be raised for other charities on Saturday mornings and offers an informal meeting space for church groups such as Outlook and Just Come.

### **Our priorities for this plan are to:**

- a) Continue to provide opportunities for work experience for young people with special needs, for example via our link with Watling View School.
- b) Continue to seek and encourage new volunteers.

## **World and Society**

In the last year, we have reviewed the charities policy and Church Council has agreed that we partner with 'All We Can' and seek nominations for just one local charity to support with effect from the 2018/19 Connexional year. We have allocated the stewardship fund of £10,000 to various charities. We are also looking to extend the Share scheme to provide food bags for those families whose children miss school meals during the summer holidays.

### **Our priorities for this plan are to:**

- a) Raise awareness of all the charities supported through High Street including the development of the W&S page on our website.
- b) Identify and, if necessary, seek to recruit champions for those charities supported through envelope appeals. And review how envelope appeals are conducted.
- c) Consider, as part of the annual review of the Charities Policy, whether we recommend to Church Council discontinuing support for those charities which do not have a champion.

## **Outreach – a welcome for all**

Shoppers' Lunch, Outlook and 'Cakes and Carols' continue to provide some form of outreach to the elderly. This past year has also seen the establishment of a new group, 'Just Come', which now meets on alternate Tuesdays to Outlook and offers opportunities for friendship in an informal social space.

Book Café also offers a welcome to all, meeting monthly to discuss a piece of contemporary fiction and look at the issues raised over an informal cup of coffee. Arrangements are made for Harpenden Library to hold copies of the book.

### **Our priorities for this plan are to:**

- a) Continue to encourage and support these outreach groups, seeking ways to publicise their activities to those who may not yet be familiar with them.

- b) Review the full range of these and the other possible ways in which we either reach outwards or welcome inwards. We will then explore how these might be developed to become even more effective in helping transform lives, relationships and community, as per our overriding Vision.

### **Community links and life beyond HSMC**

The 2017/18 year has been significant for HSMC's engagement with the wider community. We have continued our links through SHARE with the Harpenden Trust and the Children's Centre. Deacon Angie's chaplaincy has continued and strengthened with both the staff and management of Sainsburys. The Willow Court residents have benefitted from a choir run by church members and we have worked with other churches and organisations in the town as appropriate. One of the key developments has been the re-establishment of the Citizen's Advice Bureau in Harpenden which now operates from HSMC every Monday and Thursday morning. We have also recently started to host the local police force's regular 'surgery'. HSMC also plays a central role with the other churches in Harpenden and with local primary schools by co-ordinating the distribution of the Year 6 Leavers books "It's Your Move" to the majority of children in the area.

#### **Our priorities for this plan are to:**

- a) Continue to support the Citizens Advice Bureau as they re-establish themselves in the town.
- b) Seek ways to continue and grow our relationship with the Children's Centre during an unsettled period with a new service provider.
- c) Engage with the local police force in hosting a regular 'surgery' for local residents at HSMC.
- d) Continue to encourage people to share their stories as appropriate, recognising that many work/volunteer to extend God's kingdom without a specific HSMC label.
- e) Continue to play a central role in ordering and distributing the Year 6 Leavers books from Scripture Union via our Ecumenical partners in and around Harpenden.

### **➤ Children's Work**

As well as running an exciting programme of Sunday morning sessions, we have sought to build relationships with families by encouraging more parents to help and holding family events. We have invested in a second laptop for use in the seminar room so that more sessions can be split into two age groups. We have introduced Children's Church Connect, a training and social event for helpers which will be held twice a year.

#### **Our Priorities for this plan are to:**

- a) Continue to provide high quality sessions for 0-11 year-olds parallel to both main Sunday morning services.
- b) Work with other churches in Harpenden to put on a Holiday Club and Light Party and to host X:site 3 times a year.

- c) Build relationships with families by regularly serving coffee for parents in the hall between services and holding social events such as quiz nights, picnics and carol singing.
- d) Make full use of the new church management system for managing all our data, rotas, registration and communication with parents and volunteers.
- e) Produce a handbook for volunteers and hold two training sessions for them.
- f) Arrange visits and social events to help the transition from Children's to Youth sections.
- g) Make more use of our puppets.
- h) Ask one parent from each family to help out in the hall once a term and to continue seeking to recruit more regular volunteers.
- i) Further explore the need for a Children and Families Worker by logging the hours and activities of the Children's Church Team for a period of time in order to produce a detailed job description.

## ➤ Youth

We have benefited from having two part-time youth work volunteer trainees in 2017-2018, in addition to our full-time (James) and part-time (Ruth) youth workers. Highlights have included residential trips away and at home, improved communication of the termly programme and the establishment of a Youth Forum. We have seen increased youth participation in the running of Sunday morning church on 'take over Sundays'.

### **Our Priorities for this plan are to:**

- a) Continue to provide JAM and Insight on Sundays and to encourage young people to attend FUEL and Soul Survivor worship events.
- b) Take groups to Soul Survivor Summer Camp and organise a weekend away for JAM and Insight.
- c) Hold more 'lock in' sleepover events on our premises.
- d) Continue to run FNC (Friday Night Club) as a social event with a 'God Slot' and to develop the Wednesday drop-in into a Bible study/discipleship group.
- e) Continue to host The Haven and provide pastoral care for young people.
- f) Make best use of our One Programme placement person in developing further integration of young people into the life and work of the church. eg more 'take-over' Sundays.
- g) Implement the new church management system for holding data, organising registration and communicating with young people and volunteers.

- h) Investigate and as appropriate promote the Mission Adventure programme offered by YWAM.
- i) Continue working with STEP (taking lessons) and Christian Union clubs in local secondary schools.
- j) Continue sending the youth team to appropriate conferences and training events.
- k) Approach people who have shown an interest in supporting JAM to try and recruit more helpers.

## ➤ **Property**

### **Introduction**

This sets out the plan for the year as relates to the property at HSMC. It includes the deliverables under the Long-Term Property Plan. It also includes on-going maintenance to the buildings and services. It does not include any aspect of the church development options currently under discussion.

### **The aims of Property Team**

To support the delivery of the vision and mission of HSMC.

To ensure that at all times the building is maintained and operated in a way that is compliant with Methodist and wider regulations.

### **2017/18 reflections**

In August 2017 the Parlour was restructured and redecorated. A kitchen unit was installed alongside new wifi and conference facilities. This has resulted in a brighter and more streamlined room which seems to be welcomed by all who use it.

Despite the renewal of the heating system a few years ago, some felt that the church was not as warm as they would have liked. Following a review of the installation it was realised that there was insufficient airflow through the convectors in the church to enable them to operate as designed. The in-house team designed and installed a bespoke solution to have maximum impact in a short time frame over the winter. This will be concluded this summer/autumn.

The old Resources Room had been used for two years by 2:67, but following their decision to move to larger premises it needed to be refurbished. This linked with a desire to have a prayer facility in central Harpenden. The property, youth and prayer teams are working together through May and June to bring this to fruition.

Last summer we used a contractor to clear gutters, valleys and down pipes on the north side of the church. Since then the in-house team has maintained that and the similar structures around the buildings to ensure that we have efficient rainwater management.

The Quinquennial inspection of the buildings in August 2018 confirmed that the buildings were in very good repair. A few items needing attention were noted.

### **Assumptions**

That the Hall will be redecorated during the summer by contractors. Also, the foyer will be redecorated by the in-house team.

### **People**

We will maintain a caretaking team of two to provide cover and resilience. They are overseen by the Property Manager. The Property Manager reports to Peter Black and manages the property and team from day to day.

The team has been ably supported by several volunteers from the church. Additional support is required to enable us to remain open and secure for church use and lettings, as well as covering for staff holidays. We are always looking for new volunteers.

### **Planned objectives for this plan are to :**

- a) Replace the Hall floor: It is in a poor state due to the impact of years of use and more recently the need to renovate it by aggressive sanding following building works when the hall was reconfigured.
- b) Skim and re-seal the main church and foyer floors. We will need to consider whether this work would be better undertaken as part of the more comprehensive future improvement scheme for the Church referred to elsewhere in this plan.
- c) Anti-fouling: To protect the ornate windows to the west and south of the church by netting the tracery sections. Manchester has indicated informal approval.
- d) Hand rails to assist with access to the main doors. We are tying up loose ends with Manchester to gain the necessary approvals.
- e) Re-decorate the Choir Vestry, Ministers Vestry and toilet. The objective is to brighten it up and fix some damage above the choir vestry window. Re-carpeting is not thought to be sensible given the possible impact of the development plan.
- f) Re-furbish the ladies' toilets.

### **Long Term Property Plan**

This will be reviewed during the year in light of experience and updated as necessary.

## **Ongoing repairs and maintenance**

In the last year John Mannington has been much valued for his ability to resolve property issues quickly, effectively and cheerfully. This will undoubtedly continue this year and we will also contract external specialist support as required.

## **➤ Lettings**

It is important to effectively balance maximising income from our premises with availability for church use; however, we are pleased to have increased our forecast of income during the last year without adversely affecting church use.

### **Our priorities for this plan are:**

- a) To continue to work with church groups and hirers to balance use of the premises.
- b) To continue working with HCC, who currently use the rear rooms during the week, to increase their use of our premises. They will be using the LX for extra activities, and we will look to forge a closer relationship with them, as well as liaising with our Youth Team that no problems of shared space occur.
- c) To no longer take new external bookings on Thursday evenings to allow room in the building for church courses such as Alpha and Marriage.
- d) To continue to market and let available rooms and times, including the seminar room, conference room, Hall, Wesleys and small room. Most available Hall times are now full.

## **➤ Communications**

The last year has been a busy year with many new projects. One of the main projects was the Greater Things initiative, and the associated booklet into which many people contributed. We have revamped the communications we have with newcomers to a new pack that includes eye-catching leaflets about all areas of the church and some other goodies to welcome people to our Church. These leaflets have also been made available in the foyer and proving to be remarkably popular.

While our message of good news does not change, the way we communicate it inevitably does. In today's digital multi-media age, many communications are spread through the use of videos and photography. As well as being shown in services and meetings, these are then spread using social media and the internet. For most people under the age of 40, this is their primary way of staying in touch with charities and other organisations. It is also now the primary source for young people to first learn about Christianity. Where we have made videos before, they have been very well received with increased uptake and awareness - however the church doesn't currently own any of its own equipment to produce these.

We would like to greatly improve our ability to create such communications for the future, so we propose to purchase quality still and video cameras and associated equipment that will allow us to engage more effectively with a new generation and pass on information to our current membership.

Recent communication events attended by High Street members have hit home how little even the basics of Christianity is known by the general public. We can no longer expect that people walking past even know why this church exists. Inspired by the energetic evangelism of early Methodists, we would like to start to look at changing some of the messages of our communications away from an insular approach, and towards a more general evangelistic tone. For example, away from advertising our particular service times and towards gospel message of good news, with an invitation to find out more. We have started doing this with our external posters, and will look to gradually increase this to our Social Media and online presence too.

With such a busy church as High Street, inevitably we do need to prioritise our communication - a full list of things going on would quickly form an encyclopedia-like tome that would be read by very few people. Feedback on our communications and publicity is always welcome, and whilst we know we cannot always please everyone, we do try to ensure that all of High Street's activities and events are communicated in the way that works best for them.

**Our priorities for this plan are :**

- a) To increase the amount of colour notices and flyers to keep our publicity eye-catching and relevant. We will create more large posters and banners for outside the property to communicate with a larger non-church audience.
- b) To purchase and utilise new video production equipment so that we can produce more multi-media communication for use both in services and online. Most growing churches are making heavy use of this technology, and most young people and children are surrounded by it on a daily basis, and so have come to associate with it. We do not want our message of good news to go unnoticed because it is not being delivered in the format of the day.
- c) We will continue to update and maintain our website which we are greatly heartened to receive so much positive feedback for. We are aware of several newcomers who found out about us and decided they wanted to visit after reading about us online and listening to the sermons online. We are expecting that this will be the last year the current website format is useful, and so we will be laying the groundworks for a total re-build and redesign in 2019-2020.
- d) During this year, our telephone and internet provider contract will come up for replacement. We have spent much effort separating our IT requirements away from being locked in to the current provider so that, for the first time in many years, we will be free to easily change provider if a better quote can be provided by an alternative provider.
- e) We have extended our church wifi network to the vast majority of the main building. We would like to build on this to extend the network to the LX using a new physical data connection. We would also like to investigate a second line to physically separate our public and staff networks for maximum security.

## ➤ Finance

See separate finance report attached.

## ➤ Giving Initiative

Following difficulties in getting a full giving review 'off the ground', John Harris kindly volunteered to take forward a working party with the aim of increasing our levels of pledged giving. The group is made up of John Harris, Ian Campbell, Lewis Cox and Charlotte Ballard Scott. It has been concluded that there is no quick fix or magic bullet to increasing regular giving, which has been the subject of endless reviews over many years. It is more about a sustained gradual approach getting the basics right. This year's pledged giving renewal has been planned by this group to include updating the letters and leaflets, creating a new page on the web site incorporating the Giving Leaflet, stewardship commitment form, bank standing order form and Gift Aid Declaration and adding the giving leaflet to the range of other information leaflets in the welcome pack. Rev Mark Hamond preached on giving on 10 June Rev Dennis Stamps preached on Greater Things on 17 June.

### **Our priorities for this plan are :-**

- a) To keep the focus on pledged giving and to review the outcome of this year's pledged giving renewal.
- b) To ensure that there are twice yearly sermons/focus on giving, as well as the stewardship renewal campaign. This will be in March (around the time of the Big Day In) and September (at the start of the Methodist year).
- c) To continue to communicate the expectation that individuals on certain key groups within the church (Church Council, Stewards, Leadership Team) are on the pledged giving scheme.
- d) To review whether the bag collections during the services should be changed and updated, particularly at the 9.15am.
- e) To develop a strategy for encouraging legacies.
- f) To make full use of Church Suite when it becomes available to enhance our ability to communicate.

## ➤ Feasibility Study

Much work has gone into the selection of the appropriate architect to work with HSMC and the Leadership Team are now looking forward to working with the selected architect team. The Leadership Team will be working to continue to implement Church Council's resolutions (from 7 November 2017). The sub group will be liaising with the architect in developing designs to RIBA stage 2 for Phase 1 and to RIBA stage 1 for Phases 2 and 3. The Leadership Team will report to each Church Council as to progress.

## ➤ Conclusion

This is our third annual plan and, as with the previous plans it is not intended to be an exhaustive list of everything we intend to do or achieve but a blueprint of what our priorities are. These are the

priorities of the Church, not just the Leadership Team. Our priorities may change as we go through the year but this is a road map against which we should check any change in priorities.

As this is now our third annual plan, the Leadership Team intend over the course of this year to review how this annual executive plan is to be put together and presented in future years.

We are very grateful to the numerous volunteers and staff who work tirelessly and with enthusiasm to help us, as a church, achieve our vision. Once again, we encourage everyone to pray that we all have the courage to take the steps necessary to grow in faith and expand to serve future generations.

Attached

- Financial report
- leadership team list

## Harpenden Methodist Church

### Finance Report for Church Council – 17<sup>th</sup> July 2018

The consideration by Church Council of the Executive Plan for 2018/2019 provides an opportunity for the revised forecast for 2017/2018 and the first draft budget for 2018/2019 to be presented within the context of such Executive Plan. Co-ordinators on the Leadership Team have consulted with the budget holders below them and budget requests for the funding of existing and proposed initiatives have been included, without variation, in the attached budget. Comment on significant increases in funding requirements have been included in the commentary of the mission section concerned.

This report reviews financial performance for the first three quarters of 2017/2018 against the approved budget and the February forecast then, as is customary, provides an updated forecast, based on the cumulative actuals to Quarter 3, for the full year. The now familiar 'traffic lights' analysis and commentary is also provided.

The report also provides, with regard to the 2018/2019 budget, a commentary on the main financial variances to that year within the current Five Year Plan as presented visually to the 'Big Day In' April and approved by Church Council in January this year.

An updated Five Year Plan will be prepared, once the 2018/2019 budget is finalised, for consideration by Church Council in November alongside the final budget for next year.

#### **1. 2017/2018 February management accounts – Schedule 1**

##### **1.1 Quarter 1 - 3**

Cumulative operating surpluses (before Funds transfers), at £38.0k, are £19.9k better than budget with £15.8k of this improvement resulting from increased income and the balance from cost savings. Main points for Council to note are:

##### **1.1.1 Income**

- To date, pledged giving is £10.2k higher than budget following but accelerating the trend established in the first half year. Since September, 8 new pledged commitments have been received, of which two are significant. These new commitments have outweighed lost donors. See below for full year implications.
- Lettings income has stabilised the upward trend established in Quarter1 and is £2.1k better than budget for the year to date with new hirers contributing to this improvement which is most welcome. HCC have returned to using the rear rooms for 5 days a week so the risk of notice being served has abated - see below
- Overall gifts and donations are up on budget, particularly Building Blocks.
- Investment and sundry income is below budget and it expected to be so for the full year. No income is now being assumed from Traidcraft contributions
- The Tyzack legacy was finally received in November at £17.4k (including some accrued income) and TMCP Model Trust Direction has been received.

### **1.1.2 Expenditure**

Costs for a number of budget cost centres are better than budget and overall cumulative expenditure is £4.2k below budget.

Specific points to note are:

- Costs of the ecumenical Alpha courses were over budget to Quarter 2 but have, as expected, now reverted to budget – no further courses are currently planned in 2017/2018.
- All youth expenditure categories, with the exception of training courses (timing issue) and re-equipment (higher re-flooring costs) are below budget, particularly activities. (See full year comments below). This latter category of expenditure is always difficult to predict, with accuracy, by quarter. Overall Youth costs are £3.0k under budget in the year to date
- Operational salaries continue over budget but at a reducing rate. In the year to date, this is partially to the Living Wage Foundation award at 01/11/2017 increasing to £8.75 per hour (budget £8.65) but also due to a heavier use of Auxiliary Worker agreements at a higher hourly rate due to the need to allow for holidays etc.. The recruitment of a second employed Operational Assistant is now not expected until early in 2018/2019.
- Repairs are under budget due primarily to the release of the contingency as not fully utilised partially offset by the cost of re-furbishing the 267 room as a Prayer Room
- An overspend in audit fees is expected in the full year and impacts adversely in the year to date by £0.8k. See below for details.
- Communication set and AV consumables are both materially over budget in the year to date but assurance has been received from Lewis that overall communication costs will return to budget for the full year.

Generally overhead costs have been well controlled to date.

### **1.1.3 Funds transfers**

As at 01/09/2017, the three remaining internal organisations were closed as independent financial entities and their operations and residual bank balances transferred into the General Fund.

Other than this unbudgeted fund movement, all other fund transfers follow the now forecast transfers for the full year on a pro rata basis (see below)

## **1.2 Revised Full Year forecast 2017/2018**

Conversations have taken place with all budget holders to ascertain if any revisions are required to the last forecast for 2017/2018 in the light of performance in the year to date. These revisions have now been fed into the third revised forecast shown in Schedule 1.

Whilst the full year Residual Surplus is in line with budget, the Operating Surplus, at £27.2k, is projected to be £30.1k better than the deficit of £2.9k budgeted for the full year. Increased funds transfers (see below) reduce this operating surplus to the residual surplus of £3.5k.

### 1.2.1 Income

Full year income is now expected to be £21.0k better than budget which is very encouraging.

- Pledged income has been reviewed by John Harris and I and the trend is certainly materially upwards on the budget of £175k for the full year, as evidenced by the strong performance in the year to date. The full year forecast has been further increased to £188k to reflect this continuing improvement as 'trailed' in my last report. Even this may prove conservative. This improvement in no way invalidates the importance of the new Giving initiatives as is clear from the current Five Year Plan but the efforts to date are clearly reaping benefits. A fresh prediction of longer term trends will be included in the revised Plan when it is compiled in the Autumn but trends are positive
- Gift Aid has returned to the budgeted 84% based on actuals for the year to date
- Lettings are now reviewed each quarter by hirer with Lewis and a new forecast prepared for each existing hirer for the full year. No allowance is included for potential new hirers so this forecast should be robust.
- A new agreement has been reached with HCC for them to, in addition to the two licences already in place covering the rear rooms and the vestry, use the LX for three days a week between 0830 and 1600 Monday to Wednesday. The Youth Team are happy with this proposed arrangement which does not adversely affect their operations. This new licence, which expires along with the existing two licences in December 2020, will produce £9k in a full year and £2.3k in 2017/2018
- As mentioned above, the loss of Traidcraft income will reduce the attainment of the budget for investment and sundry income – marked down by £900.
- Donations, including Building Blocks income, have been increased to reflect the trend in the first nine months where this is currently expected to continue. It is to be noted that general donations are down on budget

### 1.2.2 Expenditure

Appropriate husbandry and good financial discipline is being maintained by budget holders and total General Fund expenditure is now projected to be £9.9k below the original budget and £4.6k below the last forecast. This is mainly, but not exclusively, as a result of the deferment of the pigeon project (see below).

- Prayer Team costs have been increased by £700 to allow for the equipping of the new Prayer Room in the old 267 Room. This unbudgeted cost is funded by a transfer from the Mission Development Fund (MDF). As budgeted, the repairs budget allows £1500 for the attendant refurbishment works. Encountering God costs are still well under budget due to savings in other cost centres, notably training
- The Finance Committee considered, at its June meeting, the overall performance now expected for the full year and decided to increase the donations to Methodist Funds for

2017/2018 from the budgeted £11k to £13k and this increased provision has been included in the revised forecast. **Church Council is asked to note this increase and to authorise the Charities Committee to allocate these funds as they are fit.**

- Most Youth Work costs, which have been reviewed by line with Peter Black, are now not expected to return to budget for the full year but to follow the trends established in the year to date. Activity costs have been re-forecast based on expenditure to date plus the expected costs relating to identified activities in Q4, particularly Soul Survivor and this produces a full year saving of £2.35k on this cost centre. Expenses for volunteer workers have been much lower than budget to date and this trend has been extrapolated for the full year. Admission fee income which has been under-budgeted based on the actuals to Quarter 3 is now expected to be £400 better than budget in the full year. Re-equipment costs are forecast to be £200 over budget due to the need to replace part of the flooring in the LX. Overall, Youth Work costs are now expected to be £4.6k below budget.
- Operational salary costs are now assumed, by Peter Black, to be marginally below budget in Q4. This is mainly because Georgi is on unpaid leave for most of the final quarter and the replacement resources are less expensive overall.
- Repairs have been reviewed item by item with the Property Steward and a new detailed forecast thereby prepared. The original contingency of £3.9k has been reduced to £1.0k based on current plans and the items to be funded by the MTPF are as per the new longer term property plan. However, the pigeon rectification project (budget £5k) has, yet again, been delayed until the next financial year.
- The Finance Committee have agreed, subject to Church Council approval, to re-appoint Hicks as auditors for 2017/2018 (see below) and the audit fee has been agreed at 2016/1017 levels (£3600 plus VAT). However, to ease the transition to a new Treasurer, an alternative methodology is being researched that will enable the auditors rather than the Treasurer to produce the statutory accounts. A fee of £1000 (plus VAT) has been agreed for this work which will impact 2017/2018.

The big 'unknown' is the professional costs in the current financial year for the Development Project which was approved at the special Church Council meeting in November (to a maximum of £50k) but the timing is imprecise. Currently these costs are not in the forecast but their impact would, in any case, be funded (as agreed) by the MDF so will not affect the General Fund reserve ratio. Bearing in mind that we now sit in July and the architect has not yet been appointed, I do not now expect any such costs to impact the current financial year.

### **1.2.3 Funds transfers**

Funds utilisation is now lower than the original budget, because a) the delay in the pigeon project has reduced the transfer from the MTPF and b) lower Youth Work costs require a lower (by £5k) transfer from the historic restricted funds to balance to the annual net budget.

Funds transfers from the General Fund to designated funds have been varied to utilise the increased Adjusted Operating Surplus of £56.1k which is up by £21.5k on budget.

- An additional £10k has been transferred to the MDF.

- An additional £3.8k has needed to be transferred to the MTPF following a re-assessment of the longer term property plan. This increase will persist into the future - see new longer term property plan.
- An additional £7.25k has been transferred to the designated Youth Work Fund

Finance Committee have approved these funds transfers **and Church Council is asked to note them.**

Unrestricted reserves ratio at 31/08/2018 is estimated at 42.5% which is considered acceptable in terms of our assessment of future risk and the cyclical designated funds are considered adequate to fund forward liabilities as they fall due.

### **Church Council is asked to note the Quarter 3 management accounts and the revised 2017/2018 forecast**

#### **2. 2018/2019 First Draft Budget – Schedule 2**

In line with the objectives laid down in the Executive Plan, a first draft budget is attached. This has been prepared based on inputs from budget holders although some estimates have been prepared by the Treasurer. It is anticipated these estimates will be refined over the summer, particularly regarding the results of the annual stewardship renewal campaign, and before the final budget is approved in November as is our normal custom. Key budget assumptions are shown at the foot of the budget schedules. Please note that, at present, the first draft budget figures have not yet been lifted into the final draft column but comparisons are currently shown against the latest estimate (see Schedule 1) for 2017/2018 and also against the 5 Year Plan.

The key underlying tenet of this budget is one of routine development of mission and operational activities in line with our approved strategy and the Executive Plan. It is assumed that the major financial impacts (costs and funding) of the development project will not be felt until later in the 5 Year Plan. **In any event, it is agreed that the development project will not commence, in terms of full 'roll-out' until the costs thereof are fully funded.** There will, however, be professional costs (currently capped at £50k) in 2018/2019 for the refining of architects plans etc. but these will be financed by the Mission Development Fund. The final budget will include a provision for these costs.

#### **2.1 Income**

The main influences on income budgets for 2018/2019, which are £5.0k lower than 2017/2018 (legacy effect) but £25.8k better than the 5 Year Plan are:

- Pledged giving income is projected to stay broadly consistent with 2017/2018 with a 3% assumed uplift. However the new Giving Team is planning a number of new initiatives and it is hoped that the summer 2018 stewardship renewal campaign and their gradual introduction will produce higher benefits than this.
- Lettings have now stabilised so providing there is no material additional church use (not assumed) then the budget of £26.5k should be secure
- The hire charges under the two existing HCC licence agreements for the rear rooms and the vestry continue to be paid on a 5 day a week basis for the rear rooms/vestry and they have reverted to utilising the rooms for the contractual 5 days a week. More importantly and as

stated above, they have now agreed to utilise LX for 3 day a week a hire charge of £9k per annum with effect from 01/06/2018. The five year plan assumed, now incorrectly, that they would issue notice on the existing licences wef 01/03/2019.

- No legacy income is assumed and this reduces income compared to 2017/2018 by £17.4k

## 2.2 Expenditure

Overall expenditure is materially high than 2017/2018 (by £39.6k) but lower than anticipated in the 5 Year Plan (by £18.5k). Most but not all of the causes of these variations are a result of cyclical repair costs.

Specific points to note are:

- An approved proposal for the 2017/2018 Circuit Assessments, based on the new formula developed in 2016, sees the High Street contribution rising by £1502 to £133126 in 2018/2019 based on an underlying increase of 1.5% increase in Circuit costs. This relatively modest increase masks considerable change in the composition of the Circuit's costs
- Increases in Encountering God costs are primarily re-establishing budgets not spent in 2017/2018
- Increases in Equipping God's People cost are a result of higher budgets for Alpha and Spring Harvest plus new activities. (for detail see the Executive Plan)
- Increases in Extending God's Kingdom costs include higher costs for the Christmas Carnival, the Passion Play and other new activities. The donations to Methodist Funds have been maintained at £13k (for detail see the Executive Plan).
- Youth activity (and therefore expenditure) has been budgeted at a higher level than 2017/2018 but lower than both the 5 Year Plan and the longer term strategy for 2018/2019 agreed at Church Council and approved by the Circuit/District. Whilst the Circuit has approved a £10k grant in each of the three years, the District has awarded £5.0k for 2018/2019 reducing to £2.5k for 2019/2020. The failure to spend to approve levels, whilst creditable, may jeopardise the District grant when we apply for it in the autumn.
- Additionally a training programme has been agreed for both 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 for key staff and this involves costs of £3600 in 2018/2019. Grant support of £2100 was received in 2017/2018 to help finance these costs and an application has been made to secure a similar grant for 2018/2019 but the outcome is not, as yet, certain. A combination of historic grants, agreed Circuit and the reduced District grants means expenditure is substantially covered but the amount to be funded by historic grants increases to £7k.
- The maintenance elements of the repairs budget have been set in line with earlier experience but the overall repairs budget assumes £38.2k of expenditure on cyclical costs, particularly on the replacement of the Hall floor and the implementation of the pigeon rectification plan deferred from 2017/2018. These costs are funded by the MTPF. Although very substantial, the repairs budget, as currently framed, is some £15.3k lower the 5 Year Plan.
- Audit and accountancy costs include the fee suggested for the auditors to produce the statutory accounts – cost £1.2k

- The saving of £5.0k in comparison to the Five Year Plan on AV development costs is because this expenditure, whilst still in the budget, has been capitalised.

### 2.3 Funds Movements

The operating deficit revealed by this budget, at £17.4k, is worse than 2017/2018 (a surplus of £27.2K) by some £44.6k but materially better than the Five Year Plan. The main causes of the variation to 2017/2018 are the lack of any legacies (£17.4k) and an increase of £29.5k in cyclical repair costs funded by the MTPF.

Further utilisation of historic and new restricted Youth grants means that the adjusted operating surplus is budgeted at £42.8k.

Of this, it is proposed to transfer £10k to the MDF, £10k to the designated Youth Work accounts and the normal transfer of £11.5k to the MTPF

Finance Committee recommend, when the next iteration of the Five Year Plan is produced, thought is given as to the adequacy or perhaps over-adequacy of the Youth Work funds

These transfers will leave the General Fund reserves ratio at 43.8% for 2018/2019 and the Finance Committee feels this properly reflects the risks to income (giving and lettings) but sufficient cover is deemed to exist. This will be carefully monitored by the Finance Committee.

**Church Council are asked to approve this draft 2018/2019 budget for finalisation in October**

### 3. Other issues

- Appendix A contains the process that Scott Prentice (Chair of Finance Committee) and I have been through to review our audit representation. This review was completed by end May and the recommendation put to the Finance Committee to re-appoint Hicks was agreed at their meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June and **Church Council are asked to approve the re-appointment of Hicks for 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 on the terms secured**
- Progress continues to be made in the appointment of a new Treasurer. The Treasurer designate, Margaret Woods, has now met the Treasury Team and attended her first Finance Committee. Working sessions to 'educate' her on the current systems have also now been undertaken with me and a progressive programme of induction is continuing with attendance first at Finance Committee meetings, then Leadership Team meetings and finally Church Council meeting by mid-2019. Her acceptance of the appointment should hopefully be confirmed at the July 2018 meeting with a final handover in autumn 2019. To that date, I will continue e as Treasurer. Work is ongoing with Margaret (who is not an accountant but is highly financially literate), the Treasury Team and the auditors, to discern the best systems for us to use post my retirement – either our existing Excel-based system or perhaps a proprietary financial accounting system like Sage. There are no costs involved in this assessment process but there would be licence fees should we move to such a proprietary system. **Church Council is asked to note progress on this important exercise**
- In preparation for Margaret's' appointment and taking on the role, it is clear that the one aspect of the Treasurer's current responsibilities that she would struggle with is the production of the annual statutory accounts – a technical accounting exercise for which she,

understandably, does not have the requisite skills. In conversation with the auditors, they feel that our current format of statutory accounts is more than is needed from a regulatory perspective and therefore could be reduced. I am working with Hicks to produce a 'stripped down' version based on the signed 2016/2017 accounts and will let Church council have this before the July meeting. **I am hopefully that, with further verbal explanations, Church Council will approve said revised formats for use in producing the 2017/2018 accounts.** This will ensure that when Margaret is 'on board' a similar process can be followed but I will 'hold' her hand' for 2018/2019 as well.

- A formal licence has now been entered into for the new hiring of the LX to HCC (see terms above) and **Church Council is asked to note that this licence has been signed and that all the requisite approval has been secured.**
- Lewis and the Treasury Team are working on an updated banking facility, possibly PayPal, for use in electronically processing ticket sales for events. A proposal will be presented to Church Council for approval in July providing an appropriately controlled facility can be secured. The paper will be circulated as soon as possible before the meeting
- The implementation of new Data Protection regulations (GDPR) is being worked on by the Leadership Team, with detailed input from Anne Fletcher and the Treasurer, and will utilise policy templates now developed by TMCP. A policy submission will be circulated for the Church Council meeting
- Whilst the architect has not yet been appointed and there are unlikely to be costs on the Development Project in 2017/2018, these will start to be incurred in 2018/2019. Leadership Team are commencing the process of preparing an operational and financial Business Plan, including fundraising, to show the benefits and the costs of the proposed works. It is hoped that this will be available for the November Church Council meeting.
- We agreed that we need to review the bank mandates to ensure that controls and signatories are appropriate. This has been deferred to 2018/2019 as timing is not considered critical by the Finance Committee.

John Bristow  
15 June 2018

## Appendix A

### Review of auditors 2018

As instructed by Finance Committee and recommended by the Charity Commission John Bristow and I have undertaken a review of auditors. Our recommendation to Finance Committee is that the church should continue to employ Hicks as its auditors.

At the outset, John and I agreed that it would be best to focus on firms with a local presence to ensure ease of access. Preliminary contacts established that many local accountants did not offer auditing services but we were able to find five which did. We approached all of these, providing copies of our accounts, procedures and governance processes and inviting them to tender. One declined and another failed to respond.

John and I then interviewed the three that did respond:

Fenlon & Co (based in Wheathampstead) were the cheapest but were very much a one-man-band and we did not feel comfortable that they had the depth of resources to provide the level of service we were seeking.

Miller & Co (based in Luton but with an office in Harpenden) had adequate resourcing but was by some way the most expensive.

Hicks & Co quoted an acceptable price for audit (3600 pounds) and we know they have the resources to provide the level of service we seek. Furthermore, they have indicated a willingness to assist us in moving to a simpler format for the annual accounts and to take on production of the same at a cost of 1000 pounds per annum, which we consider reasonable.

Neither of the other firms was forthcoming in this latter respect.

The proposed fee from Hicks has been confirmed for both 2017/2018 and 2018/2019. The audit fee proposal is in line with current levels. Clearly the accounting fee is additional but with the retirement of the existing Treasurer is considered essential as it will allow an efficient transition to a new Treasurer.

A session has been tentatively arranged with Hicks in early July to establish the mechanisms to prepare data internally to allow them to effortlessly extract it into the simplified style of statutory accounts. It is intended that the proposal to Church Council on 17<sup>th</sup> July will also ask for their approval to moving to this simplified version with effect from 2017/2018 whilst, of course, maintaining regulatory requirements on presentation. This will ensure that the exiting Treasurer can manage the transition. Management information for Finance Committee and Church Council will not be varied as a result of these changes

Finance Committee is asked to recommend to the Church Council the re-appointment of Hicks & Co as our auditors.

C S Prentice  
Chairman, Finance Committee - 6 June 2018

## **Leadership Team 2018-2019**

### Administrative posts

CHAIR – Richard Atkins

DEPUTY CHAIR – Charlotte Ballard Scott

### Key Office Holders

PRESBYTERAL MINISTER – Rev Mark Hammond

DIACONAL MINISTER – Deacon Angie Allport

SENIOR CHURCH STEWARD – Beulah Richards

CHURCH TREASURER – John Bristow

COMMUNICATIONS – Lewis Cox

OPERATIONAL CO-ORDINATOR – Peter Black (property steward)

### Mission Co-ordinators

ENCOUNTER GOD – Sally Hammond

EQUIP GOD'S PEOPLE – David Thomson

EXTEND GOD'S KINGDOM – Louise Schlich

CHILDREN AND YOUTH – Pamela Atkins