

Draft minutes

**Immanuel Church, Chichester
General Meeting held on 7 November 2021
At Bishop Luffa School Hall**

The meeting was led by Chairman of Trustees, Peter Bradley, and Senior Minister, Paul Collins. Forty two people were present, including two clergy and two guests. The meeting started at 6pm and ended about 7.20pm.

Summary of discussion:

1. Welcome:

After welcoming those present and opening in prayer, Peter Bradley set the meeting in context: an opportunity to review the church's gradual return to activity after the Covid-19 lockdowns, and continuing caution whilst the virus was still active. He encouraged those present to ask questions of the Leadership team on the Church Vision recently presented.

2. Update on Church Finances:

Justin Osmond, one of the Senior Leaders, explained the faith-based approach to the church budget, which underpins the leaders' plans for the future, and the vision for 2021 to 2022. He invited those present to discuss the issues arising. He presented a series of slides which illustrated the leaders' approach, based on three possible patterns of income from donations for the next five years: (a) current level of giving plus inflation; (b) 2.5% increase in giving plus inflation; (c) 5% growth in church numbers, plus 2.5% increase in giving plus inflation. He explained a major part of the church's outgoings was the Parish Share (paid to the diocese to cover the costs of our senior minister and other diocesan support). Immanuel was not yet paying the full contribution; we had started paying £35,000 (in 2016), and had agreed to increase the amount year by year until we meet the full contribution in 2025; we are on track to cover this growing cost as agreed with the Diocese.

Justin explained a graph showing the combined effect of income and outgoings on the budget until 2025; for several years there was a deficit which was counterbalanced by the large surplus in the bank (currently over £90,000), arising largely from the funding put aside for the vacant Youth Worker post. Immanuel's policy ensures a minimum of three months' outgoings (ie £30,000) is kept as reserve funds, as a cushion against financial difficulties. He pointed out that the leaders' plan would only work if giving increased over the next few years (ie 5% growth in numbers plus 2.5% increase and inflation). The leaders had decided to cut the budget by planning for a part time Youth Worker instead of full time, but they aspired to a full time worker whenever this was possible.

Lee Nancarrow asked if the Vision included fundraising. Justin explained there were opportunities to bid for grant funding (eg for Youth Worker) but this was not written into the budget, due to the limited success rate.

Shane Morton asked how Immanuel was faring compared to other churches. Justin explained we were in a strong position, due to the large surplus, compared to others struggling with Parish Share. Peter Bradley added many churches which relied on income from renting out their church hall had suffered in the lockdowns. We didn't have the advantage of rental income from a church building, but in the lockdown we hadn't lost a major source of income.

Peter Sutton asked if it would be possible to share a youth worker with another local church. Justin explained this idea had been discussed but there were some practical problems ie competition for the worker on Sundays; another possibility was sharing a community-based worker but this had not been practical so far. Peter Sutton commented on recruiting a part time worker (in practice limited to a local person) and the national shortage of youth workers. Justin confirmed they were currently advertising, and would review the

plan. Jules Allin asked what growth in church numbers would be needed to support a full time worker; Justin suggested that by 2030 this would be possible, based on the 5% growth pattern. Richard Riley commented that the high cost of housing in Chichester would mean only someone living locally would apply for a part time job. Justin agreed, and added that the leaders had recently looked at providing office space to increase the attractiveness of the post.

Peter Bradley summed up by encouraging us to remember our generous God. He confirmed the leaders and trustees discuss and agree these plans together. He added that when the full time post was last advertised in 2019 there were only two applications; when we offered the job, the candidate turned it down due to the practical difficulties.

3. Safeguarding update:

Jo Osmond, Safeguarding Lead explained that for herself and Paul Collins the other Safeguarding lead, the main focus had been checking that everyone who needed DBS or safeguarding training was up to date. She was pleased that the recent appeal for more volunteers for youth and children's work had produced three new helpers. She commented on one side effect of growth in numbers: an increased need to be vigilant about safeguarding. She invited everyone to take the basic safeguarding course, which is available online, through the church's webpage: Safer Church. She thanked Jill Riley for help with admin. Peter Bradley thanked Jo for her work in a challenging role.

4. Greener Church:

One of the trustees, Jill Riley referred to the widespread concern about the climate emergency, and raised the question of how Immanuel should respond. She summarised the connections between the church's purposes and an active role in reducing the disastrous effects of climate change. She explained she had started to explore the subject on behalf of the trustees. This was bigger than re-usable coffee cups: it includes our individual lifestyles, getting involved with the efforts of our local community efforts and global communities, as well as worship and teaching. She suggested we need a group of people (including our young people) to start planning and making change happen. She invited anyone who was interested to contact her about working to become a Greener Church.

5. Update from Senior Minister and Leadership Team:

Paul Collins explained how the leadership team had worked on the church vision for many months, interrupted by the lockdowns, until it was presented recently. Key areas: supporting the transition for visitors to become members, starting with the welcome from the Car Park volunteer onwards. Becoming an invitational church with events as stepping stones from purely social events onwards. Equipping people to explain or defend their faith. Serving according to our gifts, not under pressure. Serving our communities: opportunities such as working with the school who identified the need for parenting courses- now provided by Immanuel (with a waiting list due to demand) and leading on to a marriage course. Aim to invite those parents to our Christmas events. How do we serve our community as a greener church? How do we serve the new housing development locally? Discipleship – not just as individuals but corporately – equipping in spiritual disciplines eg through Going Deeper (on website) ; spiritual formation as key to development and growth.

Questions. The leaders came forward to answer questions on the Vision with Paul. Tim Lawrance-Owen (Senior Leader) emphasised the amazing experience for them as a team in working through the vision process and waiting on God for direction.

Jon Allin asked what one thing would the leaders wish to see happening in 2025. Paul wanted to see the church *growing young*, so that it is representative of our local community in age ranges; blessing for all ages with roles for everyone. Shane commented that we need to see the 20s to 40s represented, not just under 20s.

Pete Lindars asked about introducing a non-Christian to church – what do we have to offer? Justin said the next Alpha was planned for the New Year. Paul said Alpha is a key tool, whether on Zoom or in person; he

thanked Eileen and Grant for running the recent course. Justin said as a relatively small church we were limited to running Alpha a few times a year, but could expand if the church grows. Paul discussed the idea of a spiritual journey: Belong – Believe - Behave (rather than belief coming first). This highlights the importance of life groups and social contacts in the journey.

Richard Riley commended the leadership team for upping their game in how well they had communicated with members on the vision. Paul credited Monica with her work in getting the message out.

Pauline Sutton asked about plans for outreach and returning to previous plans; in particular the huge needs of homeless people. Paul referred to the need to adapt to the effects of Covid-19, which has meant cutting out many activities. Now the winter was ahead, the Covid-19 risks were due to rise again which prevented Healing on the Streets etc. Justin spoke of the need to balance large events with individual relationships with non-Christians. Paul was willing to work with para-church organisations in sacrificial service eg helping homeless people, but wanted to avoid the issue of ulterior motives in merging evangelism with healing and service. James Nickolls suggested we may do different things in future, as there is room to develop.

Martin Willard asked whether Immanuel had thought of working with Chichester College (which was close to Bishop Luffa School, our new meeting place); eg supporting the Christian Union. Paul was interested in the idea and mentioned that Jenny Merritt had already been involved for many years.

Guidance: Monica Cooper explained the leaders had received the words and prayers from the prayer event in October to discern guidance for the church. There were several key points: communication; hospitality; abiding in God; God's joy in our worship.

Youth and Children's Worker post:

Paul Collins commented on the national shortage of youth workers. The leaders had decided to pursue the idea of recruiting a local part time person. They were also trying to bid for grant funding. He emphasised the continuing need to recruit volunteers for the children and youth team; this would not change if a full time or part time worker was appointed. He commended the six passionate volunteers currently working with the youth: Gary and Nimlet Chapman, Paul and Connie Dickson, and Lee and Emma Nancarrow. He thanked all the current volunteers and encouraged members not to be disheartened about the children and youth work.

6. Conclusion:

Peter Bradley closed the meeting with thanks to all those who had taken part.