

Immanuel Church, Chichester
General Meeting held on 15th October 2023
At Bishop Luffa School Hall

The meeting was led by Chairman of Trustees, Peter Bradley, and Senior Minister, Paul Collins (PC). Thirty-three people were present. The meeting started at 6pm and ended at 7.20pm.

Summary of discussion

1 Welcome

After welcoming those present Peter Bradley opened in prayer and reflected on Psalm 33:–
v18 . . . the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him, on those whose hope is in His unfailing love.

v20 . . . we wait in hope for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. In Him our hearts rejoice for we trust in His holy name.

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Peter and Jenny Evans, Grant and Victoria Pollock, Monica Cooper, Tim and Annette Lawrance-Owen, Lee and Emma Nancarrow, Graham and Maggie Causley.

3 Finance

Peter explained that Immanuel Church (IC) currently has about £88,000 in the bank. Our planned expenditure this year is lower than expected due mainly to staff vacancies, whilst our income is on target. We are also still on target to meet IC commitments to increase our giving to the Chichester Diocese to the full level of the Parish Ministry Costs by 2025, as was planned when we changed to having a CofE employed minister.

4 Staffing and Volunteers

Paul and Connie left IC, and their IC employment roles, during the summer. They are settling in to their new lives in Ireland and send their love. Their departure left several positions vacant.

Administrator – following advertising and an interview Shane Morton was appointed to this part time role (2 days per week). This is a temporary contract for 6 months. This contract period will give the new leadership team time to consider the scope of this role for the future.

Worship Team Leader – Josh Collins is currently leading on this, with the support of Peter Bradley. Both on a voluntary basis.

Children and Youth - this part-time post (3 days per week) was advertised in early summer but no appointment was made. Shane and Emma Derbyshire, as leaders with responsibility for Children and Youth, are leading a great team providing the very valuable children and youth classes on Sundays and the occasional event outside of these times.

Our records show that a total of 81 people are currently registered to serve on volunteer teams within IC. Of these, 66 are signed up for one or more sessions within September and October alone. Thank you to all who give their time, which enables the church to operate in the way that it does and also reflects the commitment of the congregation to the aims and values of our church.

Q Is the money that is held by the church invested?

A Yes. Some in a Monmouthshire Building Society account and other funds with HSBC.

5 Minister's update

Rev Paul Collins gave an update on a number of areas.

5.1 Church of England

The debate on prayers related to Living in Love and Faith has caused quite an upset across the whole of the CofE. Several Bishops have been tasked to review the proposals to date, they have very quickly concluded and will report back to the general synod in November. The proposal still appears to be messy and will likely continue to be divisive. PCis to attend a meeting with the diocesan evangelical fellowship, along with Bishop Ruth, to discuss options for response. It is noted that a number of churches are currently restricting giving to the national church as a result of the direction that the Cof E is taking on this issue.

Diocesan finances are a concern as they continue to operate at a deficit of over £1m per year. Proposals for cost savings will be developed during 2024., though savings are likely to lead to a reduction in support for parishes in the future. It is noted that the Parish Ministry Costs are likely to rise by over 3% for 2024 (of which 61% goes to the upkeep of clergy).

5.2 Chichester Deanery

All parishes have been requested to submit Mission action Plans, which IC has done with an emphasis on sharing resources. As an example of our plans, Penny Willard is to lead on delivery of Parenting Children courses at Rumboldswyke School, working in partnership with St Georges Parish church. St Wilfrid's Parish church have recently advertised for a part time minister (the balance of the role being the chaplain for Bishop Luffa school), once appointed we would be expecting to work closely with their minister in the school and the local area. Note that a number of other schools are considering, or are in the process of, joining the Bishop Luffa Learning Partnership, which will open up further opportunities for joint working.

5.3 Immanuel – considering the 3 top ministry priorities, as follows:

Children and Youth

Paul again thanked all of those volunteering their time to delivery these ministries – from Sunday morning creche to Conker Club and all ages up to Deeper. Leaders and Trustees consider that in the current climate it would be financially irresponsible to appoint a full time Childrens and Youth worker. ICare now in discussion with St Pancras Parish church with a view to developing a full time Youth Leader role which would serve both churches and who could be involved in a city-wide Youth initiative, which would encourage youth already in churches as well as being an outreach opportunity.

It has now been confirmed that Lou Collins will serve her curacy at St Pancras church. This will start next year and should further enhance the opportunity for joint working.

Q Would a joint Youth Worker role result in joint meetings or a separate youth stream in each church?

A A bit of both is envisaged, with the added possibility of city wide work across all denominations.

Q Connie arranged Maycamp attendance for our youth alongside those from other churches. Is that going ahead again?

A Yes, that is the intention.

Discipleship Pathway

Claire and Jules have developed our approach to Life Groups, hence the current Sunday morning teaching series. We are starting to move towards calling them Grow Groups, to reflect the intention that they should lead to personal and numerical growth. The aim is to instil in the small groups the key values, not to give a flow chart of specific steps to follow and things to do, which will include being missional and discipling. Not all groups may sign up for the missional approach initially and that's ok, but the intention is that we move towards this. New groups are now being set up and church members are encouraged to attend one of the existing or new groups. Members of the congregation can, if they wish, 'look into' a new group to see if that is right for them.

Q Will the process of who attends which group be managed (eg to achieve a healthy mix of people in a group.)?

A Leaders would prefer to have a light touch approach, rather than being dictatorial about which group individuals should attend.

Q Would it be possible to offer this 'new group trial' every now and then?

A This could be considered. Lets see how this goes.

Q Experience has shown that it can be difficult and painful for a large established group to have to split to create 2 smaller groups. How can this be managed?

A This is why principles matter. There is a difference between being pastoral and making disciples, the latter includes the tough love of sending people out (as Jesus did with his disciples). We need to include in our small groups the expectation that mission and group multiplication is an aim.

Q In our small groups we have followed material produced for prayer and for fasting. Will there be material produced for the next season too?

A At times there will be encouragement to follow set material, but often not. If you need material for a small group to follow, we have access to a many different types, so please ask if you need some.

Q Will there be small group leader meetings?

A Yes. Dates to be advised.

Q Have you considered time-limiting the groups (to help attenders understand that change will happen)?

A It is an option, but I am not sure it would fit with our missional aim (eg there could be a problem if relationships were being formed with friends or neighbours and a forced change was made to the group and so disrupting those friendship links). Though it would be a useful tool in a large church to help more people to get to know each other.

Invitation

PCoften watches new people arrive and see the welcome they get from multiple people – well done to all involved in ‘the welcome’. PCand Carol are discussing how we help enquirers move from fun and relational events to Alpha and what these steps might be.

PCadvised that we will be moving out of the church office as of mid November. The need for the space has changed with the changes in staffing and it is considered not to be the best use of finances at this time. If office space is required in the future then it would be possible to hire space then.

6 General questions

Q Is there an update on how we can help support the refugees at Chichester Park Hotel, either individually or as a church?

A The minister from St Peters Parish church, Westhampnett, is taking the lead (with support from St Pancras church) and requests that individuals do not approach the hotel directly but come through St Peters or through Sanctuary (the existing refugee charity in Chichester). A meeting is arranged with all the church leaders to discuss a combined approach and information on how to give support will be circulated. (Note – warm winter clothing is needed and financial donations can be made through the Sanctuary web site.)

Q Have we considered doing outreach on Minerva Heights, as it is a very large new housing estate on our doorstep?

A We made representations a couple of years ago and have been told that it is in St Wilfrids Parish and to let them do it.

Q At New Wine camp we heard about Transforming Lives for Good – TLG is a charity which equips volunteers to help children who find learning difficult. Is it possible to set up a local programme for ICmembers to get involved with?

A It sounds as though both Bishop Luffa and Rumboldsyke schools would be very interested in enabling this sort of support to be made available. Due to the scale of the training and organisation required it is probably a church partnership thing (eg several churchs being involved). To be progressed.

7 Close

Peter Bradley thanked everyone for coming.