

(draft)

## Immanuel Church Chichester

### Annual General Meeting

#### Sunday 16 April 2023 at Bishop Luffa School

The meeting was led by Chairman of Trustees, Peter Bradley, and Senior Minister, Paul Collins, with a total of 42 people attending (41 members and one clergy). After an informal start with cheese and wine, the formal discussion began at 6.15pm and ended at 7.30pm.

Summary of discussion:

1. **Welcome and introduction** - Peter Bradley welcomed all those attending, read from Psalm 46 and prayed (The Lord Almighty is with us, an ever-present help. Be still and know that I am God). Peter summarised the wide range of activity and engagement that is undertaken through Immanuel Church and emphasised that although a lot of activity is led by planned programmes and services, much of the kingdom work is undertaken through individual members hearing from God and getting engaged with neighbours and local charities – introducing Jesus to those around us. Also, through our small groups we challenge ourselves and encourage each other to grow to be more like Jesus.
2. **Apologies for absence** were received from Martin and Penny Willard, James and Jacky Kingsley, Brian and Claire Watts, James Turner, Liz Dyson, Victoria Pollock, Jo Osmond and Sheila Page.
3. **Minutes of the AGM on 24/4/22 and the General Meeting on 2/10/22** were each accepted as a full and accurate record.
4. **Matters Arising from the minutes:** none.

Peter explained that there was a very high level of support received for each of the candidates for election, well in excess of the 60% required. There are 93 on the new register of members, it is noted that there are 20 new members, replacing 20 who are no longer registered. 58 (68%) of the members voted, all using online voting.

- 5 **Results of Elections for Leadership Team** - Shane Morton and Monica Cooper were re-elected and Claire Watts was elected to serve alongside the continuing leader Carol Grove. Our clergy, Paul Collins and James Nickols, also serve on the Leadership team. Justin Osmond stood down after serving for many years. Peter thanked Justin for his commitment and wisdom in serving in this way for many years and presented a gift voucher as a token of thanks from the congregation.
- 6 **Results of Elections for Board of Trustees** - Peter Bradley was re-elected and Chrissie Bacon elected to serve alongside the continuing trustees Bethia Nickols, Jon Allin and Grant Pollock. Paul Collins also serves on the board of trustees. Jill Riley stood down after serving for six years. Peter thanked Jill for her passion and tireless work and presented a gift voucher as a token of thanks from the congregation.
- 7 **Deanery Synod Representatives** - Paul explained how churches can influence national church policy through the synodical structure and requested nominations for attending the Deanery Synod on behalf of Immanuel. Both Penny Willard and Jules Allin volunteered, and were accepted as representatives.

- 8 **Safeguarding update** – Annette Lawrance-Owen reminded the meeting of the need for volunteers to complete the relevant Safeguarding training, as without it we are not employing best practice and without trained helpers we are potentially opening opportunities for harm to be done to the more vulnerable members and attenders of the church. She also explained how she would be helping our teenage group to begin conversations about safeguarding, getting support and what makes teenagers more vulnerable. She requested that if anyone was concerned that something did not feel right or are worried about a person or situation then to please report it through herself, Paul Collins or the Diocesan Safeguarding team.
- 9 **Health and Safety update** – Peter reminded the meeting that we are all responsible for the safety of ourselves and of those around us and highlighted a number of the activities that take place to ensure the health and safety of those attending meetings and events which are run by Immanuel Church. He also reminded the meeting that if a fire alarm sounded during a meeting in the school building, then all are to leave calmly by either of the two access doors and to congregate on the grassed areas, ie off the road way, away from the building.
- 10 **Financial Report:** Justin Osmond (Senior Leader) presented an overview of the current year and looking ahead. The annual report and audited accounts had been made available on the website. He explained that although the church was not a business, it needed to manage its finances in a business-like way, and ensure that the church operated in a sustainable fashion. He explained that the plans for staffing, the increases in salaries and pension contributions, inflation on costs of venue hire and our ramping-up of payments to meet our full Parish Share commitment all have to be met from voluntary giving. To meet these increasing costs the aspiration is for a growth in the number of members who contribute, and for increased giving. Whilst there is currently a large surplus in our bank account it is anticipated that this will fund our projected deficits over the next few years.

A large thank you again to David Grove for all of his work as church treasurer and for all of his help in making financial decisions.

- 11 **Questions** – At this point there were no questions arising from any of the above items. Peter thanked Paul and Connie Dixon for their time and commitment in their roles and for going above and beyond in serving the church, often being the first to arrive and the last to leave meetings. The meeting was reminded that they would be leaving at the end of July, that plans are being put together for their replacements and that there would be an opportunity in the coming months to thank them formally and to send them on with our blessing.
- 12 **Church Ministry Report and Questions** – Paul added to the thanks by saying how much he has valued the work of many people, especially Richard and Jill who spend a lot of time supporting him and ensuring that our web site, which is our shop window, is up to date and informative. He also reiterated the value of having David Grove as treasurer.

Paul then gave his view on the state of the CofE and in the particular the decision making and current status of the response to the report, Living in Love and Faith. The House of Bishops currently proposes to allow a prayer of blessing for individuals in a same sex relationship (note – this is NOT a blessing or a ceremony for a same sex marriage, the church’s position currently remains that holy matrimony is a marriage between a man and a woman). Since the announcement in February there has been a considerable kickback – from progressives who don’t think the proposals go far enough and from traditionalists who think that this goes against a fundamental belief in God’s plan for marriage. Paul’s view is that the strength of

response from many sectors will result in stagnation of the proposals and that the changes to the prayers may not actually go ahead. All three of the Bishops in the Chichester Diocese are traditionalist and would not want this to go ahead. Immanuel Church Leaders and Trustees have decided by a majority decision also not to support this and have joined others in the Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship and nationally in saying funding could be withheld from the national church if it were to go ahead. It is important to note that the CofE has not changed anything yet, only made proposals which have led to significant opposition.

Pauline - what would Immanuel church do if it went ahead? It is difficult to answer this as it depends on many things.

Peter – have there been any sanctions placed on the two Bishops who leaked the discussions when they were in a confidential stage? Very little can be done as they have not broken any laws.

Jeanette – do those who have already left Immanuel know this? There is a lot of misrepresentation in the press, but they have spoken with Leaders and Trustees and come to their conclusions. Paul would be happy to speak more on this if they wanted, but they do not appear to want that.

Simon – is it worth setting aside some time for the congregation to wrestle with this? Paul would be willing to do this but recommends that it be led by some clear thinkers and theologians.

Paul also reflected more widely on life in Immanuel Church. We have got through covid. We are starting to build back strong. The numbers attending Sunday services is increasing. A 5% growth year on year would quickly give us capacity problems in the school. Leaders are looking to develop our approach to disciplining and personal growth, and the continued mission of the church (starting with the journey of invitation, from curry nights through to Alpha). He is very pleased to see all of the efforts going into these evangelistic events. Thank you for all of your work.

13 **Any other business** – none raised. Peter closed the meeting with a prayer of thankfulness for all that God is doing.