



The Church in Abingdon



Report of the Governing Body for the Year Ended 31 December 2018

Nature and Purpose

The forerunner to the Church in Abingdon (CiA) was The Abingdon & District Council of Churches. The CiA was formed in 1988 when the Ministers and Congregations of eight churches signed THE LOCAL COVENANT and in that Covenant they agreed:

- to work together to proclaim the gospel and encourage neighbourly care;
- to pray for unity and yet to value the spiritual traditions of all the churches;
- to share the ordained ministry and Holy Communion according to the disciplines of each denomination

Subsequent to the original Covenant, five further churches have become part of the CiA.

Mission Statement

The mission statement of the CiA was developed in February 1992 and is:

- to bring a fresh global vision of hope through God's love to the people of Abingdon, offering them good news of forgiveness, reconciliation and new life through Jesus Christ;
- to rediscover, live out and present the gospel through our fellowship and worship, unity and diversity;
- to express this message through relevant words and actions in the community and by cooperating with others to identify and meet specific needs so that lives are changed, the Church grows and our local community increasingly reflects the values of the Kingdom of God.

Governance

The current governing structure of the CiA has been in place since July 2007, and was reviewed by the Governing Body in November 2015. Based on the decision of that meeting, the following adapted structure was accepted in February 2016:

The **Governing Body** comprising:

- all staff members and one lay representative from each church
- an Administrator (employed by the CiA and non-voting)
- the CiA Treasurer and a Finance Committee to assist them, appointed by the Governing Body.
- a Minute Secretary (non-voting if co-opted)
- the quorum required for meetings and decisions of the Governing Body will be 10 members, representing at least 5 of the 13 member churches.

Representatives from any CiA Task Group may also attend when required. The Chair shall be appointed from among the Governing Body at the AGM each year. At the AGM in Feb 2018, it was decided to have a 'rolling clergy Chair' as no clergy member was able to take up this role for a full year. Hence, clergy volunteered to act as Chair for date-specific GB meetings, according to their availability, and to hold this role until the next date-specific GB meeting. It is hoped that this will be a temporary measure.

The Governing Body should meet at least four times per year and in addition as required. In a case where a decision is required without sufficient time for the Governing Body to gather, a virtual decision can be taken by agreement, with electronic responses collated by the Administrator.

The Governing Body will:

- be the main decision-making and action group of the CiA;
- advance and develop strategy for the ongoing mission of the CiA;
- accept and approve the financial accounts of the CiA;
- set the annual budget of the CiA and monitor it to ensure proper use of all monies. The budget will be set to maintain, at year end, a reserve sufficient to cover all agreed salaries and associated costs, but not exceeding a full year's expenditure of the CiA.
- review and give oversight to special community projects and other CiA-supported groups, ensuring that monies received from churches for these purposes are distributed accordingly.

The first meeting of the Governing Body each year will be the Annual General Meeting, which will be open to all.

An **Executive Team** consisting of:

- the Administrator
- the CiA Treasurer/member of the Finance Committee
- the Governing Body Chair (see above)
- an additional voting member of the Governing Body elected at the AGM each year.

This team will not have a fixed pattern of meeting but will be available for consultation as needed by the Administrator, making decisions virtually (for example, by email) in most cases.

The role of the Executive Team will be:

- to enable decisions to be made between Governing Body for the work of the CiA to continue as agreed;
- to ensure the decisions of the Governing Body are implemented, according to previously agreed protocols;
- to support the Administrator in his/her work and act as a sounding board where clarification of tasks agreed by the Governing Body is needed;
- to work with the Administrator in preparing for Governing Body meetings, thereby ensuring that the Governing Body is able to discharge its responsibilities efficiently;
- to make urgent decisions as required between meetings of the Governing Body, with three member votes constituting a quorum for decisions to be taken;
NB: The Governing Body will set a limit on the financial costs of decisions taken by the Executive Team between GB meetings, this is currently £200.
- to call an extraordinary meeting of the Governing Body when an urgent decision is needed, which is beyond the remit of the Executive Team.

The **Staff Group** comprising:

- all the employed and voluntary leaders in the CiA member churches, including the Administrator.

Staff members will take it in turn to lead the monthly staff meetings. The Staff Group will generally meet monthly except August. The Staff will also attend meetings of the Governing Body.

The Staff Group will:

- pray for the town, CiA member churches and the mission of the CiA;
- offer mutual support through prayer and deepening relationships;
- engage in Bible study and theological discussion;
- feed ideas, suggestions and concerns to the Executive Team/Governing Body via the Administrator/Governing Body Chair.

Review of the Activities of the CiA

1. **Member churches and staff:** The life and work of the CiA has continued through 2018, both in the worship, mission and ministry of our individual congregations and in our life together. It has been a difficult year for the clergy as several members (CM, IG, NW, PS) have had to take time out for health issues and so clergy numbers have been considerably reduced.

There have been a few changes in the clergy and church staff over the year:

- Paul Goodliff left Abingdon Baptist Church
- Jane Baun left St Helen's Church
- Keith Dunnett became the incumbent of Christ Church
- Divisional Envoys Ken and Wendy Clark continue to serve The Salvation Army in Abingdon from Friday to Monday each week with no new permanent Commander appointed yet.

The Governing Body has seen a few changes in lay members from various churches – Peachcroft, Salvation Army.

In addition, Abingdon Baptist Church closed for refurbishment in April 2018. During this time, the congregation joined Trinity for worship once a month, and the rest of the time they met at Carswell School. The church is due to reopen in Feb 2019.

2. **Task groups and associated projects:**

The CiA has continued to support a number of community projects and working groups that concentrate on specific areas of cooperation. These include:

- 35 Ock Street continues to act as a hospitality centre for the community offering a café and a listening ear, and meeting rooms for local groups and agencies, including family support work, local charities, CiA- supported groups such as Back to 35 (in liaison with Age UK) and Archway (for those with loneliness issues), as well as the work of the Abingdon Baptist Church.
- The Abingdon Bridge, which celebrated its 25th anniversary this year, continues its work of providing support, advice and guidance to some of the most vulnerable young people in the community. It has transformed from a drop-in centre to a strategic organisation with highly experienced youth workers and counsellors who work tirelessly to meet the changing needs of Abingdon's young people.
- Abingdon Street Pastors have continued to care for, listen to and support people of all ages out in Abingdon town centre on Saturdays nights. Early evenings continue to be fairly quiet but the situation often changes and the behaviour of some people deteriorates after drinking in pubs and clubs. Abingdon Street Pastors work closely with Thames Valley Police and other agencies for the benefit of everyone. In March 2018, a new administrator, Grace Williamson, was appointed. Grace also took on the role of coordinator when Dorothy Baldwin stood down in November 2018. More Street Pastors and Prayer Pastors are urgently needed to join the team - full training will be given to volunteers who are able and willing to give a few hours of their time once every month.
- The Christian Aid group in Abingdon organised many activities over the year, including carol singing in the market square, a new year sponsored walk, a market square sale and the house-to-house collection in Christian Aid Week, themed evenings and much more. The total raised, by members and friends of the churches in Abingdon during 2018, for the work of Christian Aid with the poorest people of the world was about £9780. Apparently, Abingdon is one of very few places nationally where the work of raising awareness and collection funds for Christian Aid goes on throughout the year. Most places just focus on Christian Aid Week.
- The weekly Christian Forum column in the Herald series of newspapers was disbanded in November, when the paper was streamlined and various columns were ceased. From March 2019, this column will find a new outlet, appearing in the Abingdon Round & About monthly magazine. The column continues under the direction of the CiA Administrator Debra Mcknight.
- The Church Twinning group continues to build links between the churches of our twin towns.
- The Passion Play Committee organised several fundraising events in preparation for its next production in 2019.
- Desire has been running for 14 years and is a group for youth workers and volunteers across the Abingdon area and villages. It goes into the three secondary schools in Abingdon and runs lunch clubs in each school every week. Desire also go into Abingdon and Witney College during 'Freshers Fayre' in September to advertise the youth work that happens in Abingdon and to encourage students to think about faith. Annually, Desire run one school's outreach event, thanks to the funding from CiA
- Experience Easter, organised by Trinity Learning, which has been taking place every year since 2010, ran again in 2018, enabling children from local schools, as well as adults, to explore the Easter story through reflective activities.
- There was no Alpha launch in 2018 for various reasons but it is hoped to plan one in 2019 – probably September. However, Christ Church hosted a large supper and all churches were invited to join. Various Alpha courses took place across the town – see <http://www.abingdonalpha.org/courses.htm>

for full details.

- 2018 has seen more growth in the work of Prayer Spaces in schools. This growth has only been made possible with our amazing helpers and the financial support from CiA as we have been able to continue to buy things for our Abingdon resources area and so have not been restricted by the availability of the Oxford equipment.

Ten schools in the Abingdon area were visited in 2018: Rush Common (4th PS), Caldecott (6th PS), Dunmore (2nd PS), Thameside (6th and 7th PS), Long Furlong (4th PS), Radley (2nd PS), Thomas Reade (2nd PS), Larkmead (1st PS), St Nics (14th PS), St Helen's/St Katharine's (1st PS). The Manor Prep is booked for its 3rd PS in 2019 and St Edmunds will be having its first.

3. **Communication:** The CiA News and website have continued and grown under the direction of the CiA Administrator Debra Mcknight, and the Christian Focus magazine under the direction of the editor, Ben Jeapes, with assistance from Margaret Langsford and others.

4. **United activities 2018**

January

Christian Aid had their annual New Year's Day walk starting/finishing at St Helen's Church following a figure of 8 and raised £1524 for Christian's Aid Christmas Appeal.

Prayer Spaces went into Rush Common School.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was marked by three events.

- The Annual Quiz, which was hosted by Christ Church, was won by St Michael's while St Helen's Church won the round to be hosts of the next quiz. £182.50 was raised for Asylum Welcome.
- A United Service was held at St Helen's Church, led by Revd Mary Williamson. There was an exhibition of CiA task groups after the service, along with refreshments. £229.41 was raised for the Hurricane Appeal through UNICEF.
- Midday Prayers took place each weekday at St Nicolas' Church, led by clergy from CiA member churches using the material for the week from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. Attendance varied between 14 and 23. Refreshments were on offer for those who wanted to stay behind after the short service for fellowship.

February

CiA AGM was held at The Salvation Army headquarters.

Christian Aid organised a 'bucket collection' at Tesco with twelve collectors and raised £317.61 for Christian's Aid Christmas Appeal.

Prayer Spaces went into Caldecott School.

Desire took in two teams from Youth for Christ – the 'stance' team (dance group) and the 'sense team' (a band) - into Larkmead School.

CiA Lent Lectures took place at Abingdon Baptist Church. The speaker was Paul Goodliff who led a series of lectures on spirituality and art. A collection on the last evening raised £162, of which £100 was given as an honorarium to the speaker, and the balance went towards expenses for Fun in the Park/South Abingdon Play Day.

March

A shoe cleaning event took place again on Maundy Thursday in Abingdon Market place, led by Clare Simpson of St Edmund's Church and Ed Evans of Abingdon Community Church, assisted by volunteers from both churches. This event was quieter than previous ones, probably due to the weather and that children were still in school.

On Good Friday, there was a procession of witness through the town followed by a service in St Nicolas Church led by Revd Mary Williamson.

The ninth Easter Experience took place at Trinity Church, hosted by Trinity Learning, and many of the Abingdon schools brought children to find out what Easter means to Christians. Over 200 children from six schools visited over the two days, including a class from Kingfisher School. There were more enquiries from adult church-goers this year. This event involved 30 volunteers from ten churches and four denominations.

Prayer Spaces went into Dunmore School and St Helen's/St Katharine's School.

April

The Women's World Day of Prayer was to be marked with services at Peachcroft Christian Centre, with the material this year coming from the Christian women of Suriname. However, due to bad weather, the service was postponed from 2/3/18 to 27/4/18. A shortened service was also taken into Bridge House. A central decision was also made to rename this day the World Day of Prayer. The Abingdon Committee is currently without members and the way forward locally is under discussion.

Abingdon Passion Play organised a fundraising quiz.

May

Christian Aid week included a sale in the market square, raising £326, as well as the door-to-door collection, which raised £5297, a lower than usual total in part resulting from fewer collectors being available this year. As in 2018, there was no united service but individual churches marked the event by holding services and other activities, including the commissioning of the house-to-house collectors. The total raised during Christian Aid week totalled £6813.86.

June

Various churches worked together to represent the CiA at Abingdon's Fun in the Park event, offering various children's activities – craft, cake decorating, Messy Church, face painting and refreshments for free, while giving information about all the churches.

Christian Aid organised their mid-summer walk along the Thames starting/finishing at All Saints Church. Sponsorship and donations totalled £269.

Prayer Spaces went into Thameside School.

TAB AGM took place at Radley Church Hall.

July

The Vineyard Church led in supporting the South Abingdon Play Day event in Southern Town Park – a free & fun event for families in the South of town.

Church Twinning organised a visit of German Christians from Schongau, Bavaria.

August

Church Twinning organised a visit from Colmar, France.

September

Prayer Spaces went into Long Furlong School.

October

Pastor Ed Evans led the Michaelmas fair service in town, accompanied by the Abingdon Town Band. More people than ever were reported to have attended.

Prayer Spaces went into Radley School and Thomas Reade School.

November

A special remembrance service took place at the memorial in Abingdon to celebrate the 100th year of remembrance of World War I. There was a great turnout and various connected activities took place across the town.

The Annual Bereavement Service was organised in conjunction with local funeral directors. It was held at St Edmund's Church, led by Father Jamie. A donation of £180.35 was sent to Sobel House.

Prayer Spaces went into Larkmead School and St Nics School.

December

Several activities, mainly oriented towards children, were hosted at St Nics again as part of the Abingdon Extravaganza.

Christian Aid organised carol singing at the pre-Christmas Farmers' Market with supporters from across the

churches, accompanied by 12 Abbey Brass players. £217.24 was raised for their Christmas Appeal. This was supplemented by donations from collections made in churches, totalling £639.26.

Prayer Spaces went into Thameside School.

Finance

The agreed policy on the General Fund is to limit the retained balance to a maximum of one year's expenditure, but maintain an amount that covers all agreed salaries and associated costs for the year ahead. The balance at 31 Dec 2018 was £5739.28.

The expenditure for Community Projects is normally funded by church donations indicating that only a small balance in hand is necessary. It was agreed to keep the commitment unchanged at £6400, as detailed below, for the three years 2018-2020, although some projects had increased their funding requests. The only new project is Thrive.

- The Abingdon Bridge £2000 a year for their work with disadvantaged young people
- DESIRE youth network £1000 a year to help run schools weeks and larger events
- Abingdon Street Pastors £1000 a year to fund their ongoing help for people out at night
- Experience Easter £750 a year to help school children and their teachers explore the Easter story
- 35 Ock Street £500 a year to support their work as a meeting place for church and the community
- Back to 35 £150 a year for their work providing a place for retired people to meet
- Thrive South Abingdon £1000 a year for their work reaching out to young people alongside other youth organisations in the area

Requests for member churches contributions will be issued in April and grants will be paid out in May.

There was also a request for a one-off grant of £1000 in 2018 for the Passion Play 2019 production. It was agreed that this would be collected separately from the community grant monies and as an additional contribution from churches, as they felt appropriate.

Officers

We would like to record our thanks to all our officers in 2018, for all the work that they have put into this aspect of their Christian work:

Debra McKnight	(Administrator)
Linda King	(Treasurer)
Revd Rebecca Peters	(Rolling GB Chairs)
Revd Steve Millard	
Revd Keith Dunnett	
Pastor Ed Evans	
Sandra Pike	(GB Member elected as member of Executive Team)
The Finance Committee:	Ruth Baker
	Margaret Langsford
	Brian Mansfield
	Celia Smith
	(in addition to the Treasurer and Administrator)

February 2019