



MILTON KEYNES MISSION PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of the Mission Partnership Assembly AGM which took place on **Tuesday 7th July 2020**
via Zoom

There were 61 Attendees:

Adrian Prisk	Ian Herbert	Nicola Martyn-Beck
Adrian Yardley	Irene Farr	Nicola Vidamour
Alison Drury (MKMP Chair of Trustees)	Jan Weatherley	Pat Kyd
Angela Miller	Jane Sellers	Paul Smith
Ann Beaton	Jean Mattinsley	Pauline Gray
Ann Harris (Minutes)	Jeff Newall	Ruth Gookey
Anne Jones	Jenny Bond	Ruth Iley
Barry Lotz	Jo Baker	Ruth Maxey
Carolyn Marshall	Jo Watson	Sharon Grenham-Thompson
Carolyn Sanderson	John Howard	Sophia Pond
Catherine Butt	John Robertson (MKMP DEM)	Stephen Norrish
Charmaine Howard	Judy Martin	Stephen Roberts
David Hart	June Holden	Steve Summerfield
David Lewis	Kay Dimarco	Stuart Kean
David Miller	Kim Weston	Sue Robertson
David Thom	Linda Kirk	Susan Jackson
Dawn Saunders	Lynn Castle	Tim Norwood
Don Mahon	Marilyn Mahon	Trish Rosewell
Douglas Sellars	Matt Trendall	Wendy Carey
Graham Smith	Mike Davidge	
Hilda Kirkwood	Mike Morris	

Apologies:

George Mwaura	Mandy Morley	Sarah Crane
Jan Forrest	Mary Borrett	
Jenny Mills	Sandy Grey	

Opening Worship was led by Sharon Grenham-Thompson

1. Business – Alison Drury

- a) Minutes of last AGM held on 10th July 2019 and last Assembly meeting held on 14th November 2019 – These were agreed and will be signed.
- b) Matters Arising
None.
- c) Mission Partnership Annual Report – This was published and distributed few weeks ago. We received a small amount of constructive feedback and have responded.
- d) Elections
 - Election of Trustees – MKMP is a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) and it has a trustee body made up of five ex-officio members who are the Presidents, the denominational area leaders, and up to eight elected trustees who are local people. The Presidents are:
 - Rev Helen Cameron
 - Rev Geoffrey Clarke
 - Rev Geoff Colmer
 - the Rt Rev David Oakley
 - the Rt Rev Alan Wilson.

MKMP are very pleased to welcome Geoffrey Clarke and David Oakley this summer as they have taken on new roles within their denominations and being members of MKMP's Presidents body is part of that. The elected trustees serve up to a three year term and they may serve three such terms before needing to stand down for a year. Under the rules of the CIO the trustee body needs to rotate a third of the body each year, so a third of the body has to stand down each year. This year, under that system, Stephen Roberts and Mike Davidge have each completed a three year term but they are eligible to stand again. Rev Dawn Saunders, who was not due to complete her term until July 2022, is moving from the area. MKMP wish her well and thank her very much for her contribution over the time she has been a trustee with us. There is another trustee vacancy. It is with great sadness that we have to report the very recent and relatively sudden death after illness of our trustee colleague Steve Chilcraft. Steve will be included in our prayers later this evening. Therefore there are a number of vacancies which have been advertised and completed nomination forms have been received. As fewer applications have been received than the posts available, these people are duly elected to the trustee body:

- Stephen Roberts (three year period)
- Mike Davidge (who would have stood down has kindly agreed to continue for a period due to the current challenges of the pandemic situation)
- Rev Nicola Vidamour (three year period).

Thanks are expressed to them all. They join the continuing elected trustees:

- Pauline Gray
- Rev Sharon Grenham-Thompson
- Rev George Mwaura
- Alison Drury

e) Appointments

- Treasurer – Adrian Prisk will continue as MKMP Treasurer for a further year. Very great thanks are offered to Adrian who has been MKMP’s hardworking, dedicated and excellent Treasurer for yet another year.
- Auditors – Mercer & Hole will continue as MKMP’s auditors for the coming year. MKMP are very happy with their work.

f) Representatives – Church and Partnership AGMs have not been able to take place this year so far due to the Covid-19 situation so all postholders stay in post until those AGMs take place. Thanks were expressed to all the MP Reps for the work they are doing and continue to do.

g) Ecumenical Oversight News – Tim Norwood, the current Chair of the Ecumenical Oversight Group, gave an update on Ecumenical matters. The EOG is the body which looks after the ecumenical legalities, the running of the various Partnerships and reviews of Partnerships. The big piece of work at the moment is the adoption of CIO status for the single congregation LEPs in Milton Keynes. This process has been going on for some time and is now at the stage where implementation is becoming possible. The deadline for this is next year. Presentations have taken place to the LEP Team Leaders and Lay Chairs, and also to some LEPs at a local level. First drafts of documents are currently being produced. Legal advice, which is a requirement of registration, is being sought at the moment. It is hoped to set up a session for that in September. Overall progress is being made but it is complicated.

h) Date of next Assembly: The date of the next Assembly is Wednesday 18th November 2020. The date of the next AGM is to be advised, likely mid/late June 2021.

3. **The World “After” Covid** – John Robertson

Covid is with us for the long term and we are learning to live with it. This is a series of discussions right across the city in different places and in different networks where people are struggling to work through what this might mean for the churches and how we approach the future. This is something everyone needs to talk about. It’s very easy to think of Covid as an interruption in our normality and we are all looking forward to going back to doing the things we are used to being able to do. But it isn’t simply an interruption, it’s a real disruption to who we are, our life together and the life in our communities. There will be a new normal and we’re not quite sure what that will be. We’re in an extended transition towards that, of which this step through lockdown at the moment is just one piece.

Experiences of lockdown and Covid-19 so far have been enormously varied. Some people have found it really quite pleasant. There’s been peace and quiet and they’ve been able to do some gardening and not feel as pressured as they might otherwise have done. For others there has been hardship, fear and isolation and for some there has been devastation in their lives and they have

suffered grief and a personal loss of that kind. So our experiences are enormously varied. And we are very aware particularly as we step out of lockdown that the horizons we are looking at are changing, they look different and they look mostly quite unpleasant. We are aware already of rising unemployment, it is clear that people are in debt. We are aware of growing gaps between the haves and the have nots. At the same time we've discovered online church and the capacity of the churches to step up to the plate on that has been quite phenomenal and we are all in that brave new world where that is a new and different thing and we're all quite excited about it in many ways. *The question becomes, whatever that horizon is, how do we address it? What sort of church should we be? What do we need to let go of? What should shape our lives? What should we look like. What should be prioritized?* All those questions become very very pressing very quickly.

So in order to look at some of that tonight we are going to ask ourselves three main questions. The first is we're going to look at ***Describing the Present*** and seeing where we think we are at the moment. The second is we'll look a little bit at the issues that we see are out there in our communities and in our churches, ***Discerning the Issues***, and the third we will start to dream a little about what the future might look like, ***Dreaming the Future***.

Describing the Present

Some of you very kindly responded to the survey we sent out and I asked you what have you been observing, what have you seen, what have you felt over these last few months and how has that been for you, and what have you seen out there in the world and in the church. What have you noticed.

The meeting then went into 1:1 groups to have a discussion about what people have seen, what people have observed and what people have felt.

Discerning the Issues

In the survey you were asked:

What are the two most pressing issues arising from Covid that you believe the churches should seek to address locally?

A fantastic range of answers were received and out of that two polls have been created.

The polls were conducted with the 61 people attending the Assembly.

Poll 1

What are the two most important internal issues for the churches to address this year? A vote then took place.

Online Worship	55%
Pastoral Care	55%
Finance	33%
Strategy	24%
Response to laity	14%
Age prof	10%
Leadership	10%

Notes: Aware of this big new field that opens up with Online Worship and what that might mean for us in the future. However we might go back into our buildings, that one is here to stay that is clear. Pastoral Care is clearly something that we've got to get right, particularly difficult to do as we go through lockdown and our people within the churches are having to address that set of stuff as well as the kind of missional pastoral care that we want to engage with the outside world, it's important we look after our people as well.

Strategy is also up there in the poll, and that sense of needing to really have a thought through way of addressing how we respond to this set of stuff. Listen and respond to laity – clergy colleagues please note, it's really important we listen to our laity. Concern about age profile, around the sense that for a lot of people their age and the fact that they may well be shielding might mean that they don't easily come back into church for some time and that can create some significant issues for us.

Poll 2

What are the two most important issues in the city for the churches to address this year? A vote then took place.

Loneliness and Isolation	53%
Mental Health	45%
Grief and Loss	31%
Racial justice	22%
Food Poverty	14%
Poverty	16%
Neighbourliness	8%
Employment	6%
Debt advice	4%
Exhaustion	0%

Loneliness and Isolation are top and this absolutely reflects what came out in the survey. It is something we've touched on in a number of these Assembly meetings over the last few years but clearly in this particular environment with the pandemic, that is one which becomes sharpened to a point where we really do notice it. It's right there amongst us, all over the place.

This is a really helpful snapshot of the way we are seeing things at the moment and where we think potentially we need to put our energy because that really is the next thing we need to move towards and how we go about the future.

Dreaming the Future

When I wrote the survey the parallel question I was asking in this area was what single word or phrase should best describe churches over the next year and I got back a number of interesting things, but two words stood out for me:

- Humility
- Hope

It struck me that those were two very insightful words that it would be good for us all to take note of because they put their finger on something which is very important for us as we go forward.

The meeting then went into breakout rooms to think about 3 questions:

1. What is God calling us to?
2. What should characterise the church of the future?
3. What will most impact *MK: a City Alive to God*?

Feedback:

Breakout Group 1 – Barry Lotz

1. Not to exclude people. Reaching out to our congregation and reaching out to others. Very reminiscent of what we are about normally. How is a gathered congregation different from an online congregation? One of the challenges we are facing in the current era is to be outward looking in a way we may not have been before. The issue of focusing on Sunday worship may be focusing too much in one direction.
2. Exclusion and inclusion. Be aware of those who are excluded and thinking particularly of those who are excluded because of Covid. Re poll - worried that the engagement with poverty appeared not to have been all that significant that people were worried and wondering if people at large are not coming to terms with the poverty and unemployment when furlough ends. If the members of the church appear to be doing rather well it's difficult to talk about poverty in those circumstances, especially the person who is struggling with that poverty.

Breakout Group 2 – Catherine Butt

- 1.&2. The call of God on us personally and on the church and the characteristics we would use to describe the church of the future are not necessarily any different if we had answered them before Covid. The call is still the same - To love God and our neighbours and to be faithful and passionate in prayer and worship. Question is how does that look different in practice now given our experience of the last few months? How we'd been particularly aware of who was able to access certain ways of worshipping and engaging and had maybe kept on asking that question thoroughly through the last few weeks in a way we want to continue doing into the future. Accessibility. A church that is humble and hopeful, authentic and faithful.
3. We would respond with similar answers regardless of what the circumstance is. Disciples who are made alive by the holy spirit and faithful to the call to follow Jesus, confident in sharing their faith in a relevant way wherever they are all that undergirded by prayer but also a sense of an opportunity evidenced by this evening where church can be unified and approach and reach out in a way that isn't competitive but is unified in a desire for transformation and impact.

Breakout Group 3 – Dawn Saunders

1. Not competing. Co-operating with one another. Not reinventing the wheel or doubling up on something going on nearby and that has perhaps become a little more obvious during lockdown. Some of what we're called to is about who we are and when we can't exercise those parts of who we are it's really challenging to then explore what that aspect of our being means and where we take that.
2. Unconditionally inclusive. With online worship there's no ability to huddle in the same groups as you do normally on a Sunday, there is no way of sitting in the same seat all of those clichés are taken away and as part of that it has been clearly noticeable people stepping up into roles they may have been afraid to offer to do or perhaps they weren't

good enough to do and have stepped up to those roles and we thought that was partly because although every person is affected differently by this, the cause is the same so there is a unity in what's causing this which has meant there has been more inclusion of people and we hope that will go forward. Surprised poverty hadn't come higher in the poll. If we deal with the isolation and the mental health issues that will help to facilitate helping in all the other things. Too much to address everything at once but the mental health, isolation and loneliness are intertwined and affect all those other things so maybe that's why those came out higher.

Breakout Group 4 – Kay Dimarco

1. People should listen.
2. More accessible by different means and just by being.
3. To go back to the future, start again with small groups and be more like Jesus in the community.

Breakout Group 5 – Sharon Grenham-Thompson

1. Everything is changing. We are still in a very unknown, uncertain, unstable situation and so we really need to give ourselves time and prayer to absorb and not rush into things. It's important as individuals and as collective bodies that we explore where we are on our discipleship journey as well. Acknowledge that this has been described as the second reformation. It's a massive change and a kairos moment. It could be so different, but how? These are the questions we need to take time to think about and ponder but as we're doing so it's important to realise there are still a lot of frightened people, a lot of anxious people for whom change is a frightening and anxious thing piled on top of all that has already gone before. We need to understand there is still that need for stability and for comfort and reassurance. Really what we're looking to do is to review, to renew, but to do so with respect.
2. One of the things that has really come out whether you are involved in church or not has been that taking things back to what's really important. Baking bread, spending time with the kids, moving from a job you hate. Simplicity, getting rid of all the stuff and that is something that has tended to characterize our lives as churches. Getting rid of some of that complexity of baggage and weight. Discovered in the last few weeks such a variety, so people have stepped up to the plate, tried new things. Creativity that should characterize what happens going forward, it's deeply of God to be creative. Kitchen table services showing that God is in all of our life in the ordinary. Rediscovering of discipleship in the every day. Simplicity, Creativity, Discipleship in the whole of life.
3. Unity. Unity across ministry, across churches, across lay and clergy, across roles, across expressions, across denominations. Ditching this competing actually being unified is going to be so important.

Breakout Group 6 – Jo Baker

1. Called to protect. Called to be community. Called to connect and to reach out. To bring together church communities. So that we can deal with those issues of poverty, racial injustice, isolation. Working together. We've become church without walls through becoming digitally online we've become more visible than we've ever been. Church of the future to maintain what we've achieved and move it forward into the future so that we are inclusive. "When the music fades and all is stripped away, I simply come back to the heart of worship." Challenging people Why do I go to church? What is church about? Raising those questions to people and that's really a big challenge in the future as church. Why are

we here? What is our purpose? A lot is being stripped away and it's how we take that and use that. Belonging and how as a church of the future we regain that sense of belonging not just for our own church people but also for people who have felt they have started to belong because they have been are joining us online. How do we include.

2. Working together. Who would have imagined you would get all of us on Zoom on one evening all talking, so many of us from so many different churches and expressions of church coming together. That working together is so important, it's vital for those issues.

Breakout Group 7 – Linda Kirk

1. Lots of people are feeling lost. Need to be with the people to find God where they are and not be seen as just a church that's defined by church services and building but let it be seen we're outside the four walls. That God has done more in the last three months than we could possibly have envisaged as being possible. But instead of asking people to come to us, we are now actually able to be in people's homes with them. And even more than that we've become a global church so that if we want we can join services in other countries. It's easier for casual enquirers to come to us in a virtual environment. It's less threatening, they can leave if it doesn't suit whilst not forgetting the people already in our congregations. We also need to embrace the fact that there's been an explosion, a dramatic rise in alpha courses and loving your neighbour groups.
2. Humility and Hope address something important. There's a lot of fear out there. Fear and uncertainty. Hope and Humility can counteract Fear and Uncertainty. Being people of hope helps us to address those fears ie of existence, eternal, the heavenly etc. Humility helps humankind see a very big lesson that we can't control the world. Perhaps we've got beyond ourselves in thinking we can control the natural environment, global poverty, need etc. Seeing ourselves as vulnerable, learning the lesson to care for the planet and each other. But in practical terms what will it look like? Let people know that we also have fear and uncertainty. But it's also about action as much as words. Don't just talk it, do it. Love, valuing relationships, loving in practical ways, both to animals and nature as well as ourselves. Valuing people for who we are and what we're made of. We're made in God's image.
3. Figuring out how we can embody the things that have been listed. Noted many of the things are interrelated. Debt very low in the poll results but if you get into debt, you might then come under mental health issues, poverty issues. They are all interconnected and they all need addressing. What is the greatest need? Humility is listening to others, don't presume we know what people need, listen to others and hear what they need, walk alongside them, be with them and take it from there, rather than presuming we know.

Breakout Group 8 – Lynn Castle

1. Being more active outside the church but also to not forget about being more online because the services we've had have been very popular and even the St Mary's Wavendon building is open for services now as well. It's also about working with community councils and local councils in mostly deprived areas so that people have got food parcels and things they need. But that's balanced with the loneliness and isolation. If people are isolated they might not either want to go out and help or feel they can't help as they might be putting other people at risk. So people have fear of transmitting the virus and that in itself can cause problems where they may want to and normally would help others they think they can't.
2. Being out in the community. That work that is now going on is really important. It's about looking at different ways of doing things as well. Because so many people viewed services, why are they choosing to look at them online when they wouldn't go into the church itself

and maybe it's because they can choose when they view the service if it's a recorded one. They can view it on their own at home rather than be around other people. They can fit it around the family life and commitments. They feel comfortable and secure. Somehow we need to find a way to make them feel that same way if they do come into our churches when they open. Churches are about building and being a community.

3. We have to remember we haven't yet seen anything like the worst effects yet. There's unemployment, homelessness, poverty and we don't know what kind of levels these things will rise to so we need to be aware and need to be thinking about what kind of things those situations might need. The practical care and willingness to go out into the community, we need to bridge the divide between the have and have nots. That is not an easy thing to do but we have to gradually build those bridges through neighbourliness, church led projects but those need to be localized and targeted and that means we need to know who and what our communities are and what they need. So even isolating people can help and once they realise that they may feel less lonely and isolated themselves and that will have a knock-on effect to the mental health of everyone. Everyone can help in some way.

Breakout Group 9 – David Hart

Looking to provide support practically and physically as well as online, there is still a need to be physically meeting with people. Online does attract new people to worship and to the churches but we need to make that physical way along with social distancing at the moment. This is breaking down barriers of parish and there are no longer parish boundaries. Need to be working together as churches and with other voluntary organisations to provide support to those in need particularly with the onset of austerity which may be something we've never seen the like of before so we can bring God's love to Milton Keynes

Breakout Group 10 – Mike Morris

2. We need to be a creative church going forward in all forms. Creative how we do worship together in a building and online. Concerns engaging people both online and offline but particularly with the online community how we help to form community online. Concern for those who have been excluded because of our online worship only and what we can do there.

JR noted a lot of common themes coming through. Sensing a real energy to want to address this future whatever it is and however it comes towards us, and that is really heartening to hear from people that there is a real willingness to get involved, to make something happen and to work together. That sense of unity that came out two or three times, cooperating with one another and wanting the best for one another together and working in that kind of united way is really key for us at the moment.

4. Closing Prayer

The meeting closed in Prayer.