

## DRAFT MINUTES

### 2014 Special General Meeting (SGM)

The Church of St. Augustine of Canterbury, Wiesbaden

Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2014

Meeting was held in the church of St Augustine and commenced at 12:45.

1. Call to order by Fr. Chris, determination of quorum (36 members present at the beginning of the meeting, total of 41 members signed the attendance list, see enclosures)
2. Opening prayer, Fr. Chris.
3. Change in agenda  
External audit and discharge of former Vestry, officers and Treasurer to be deferred until the audit is completed and has been presented.
4. Presentation of and agreement to the revised budget for 2014  
Treasurer Jim White: Presentation: 3 x hand-outs. Revised budget was compiled by the Financial Management Committee (FMC), Fr. Chris, and the Treasurer Jim White.  
Main points:
  - Vestry already agreed to revised 2014 budget in their 19 April 2014 Vestry meeting
  - Regular payments of € 100 per month have been received from Peter Schuppenauer (repayment of embezzled funds)
  - Pentecostal Community to increase their contribution towards running expenses, utilities bills of the church
  - Item "Risks" is dependant on how the Bishop's Judgement concerning payment to the Rev. Litwinski is carried out
  - Repayment of Convocation and Endowment Fund loans not included

Questions from the floor:

**Q: What percentage of pledges have been fulfilled?**

A: 75 – 80 % (approx. 3 – 4000 € per month)

**Q: What is the status of the loan from the Endowment Fund?**

A: 10.000 € was made available in 2013 to bridge a liquidity gap in the current running expenses of the church. Terms agreed: loan would be paid back within 2 years at interest rate of 2% p.a. A loan is compatible and legally acceptable within the framework of the Endowment Fund regulations.

**Q: What is the current bank balance?**

A: Approx. 15.000 € (significant percentage is made up of Organ Fund money, but this is in theory is a loan and is repayable)

**Q: What is the purpose of the Endowment Fund?**

A: (Wolf-Dieter) To be used for major and urgent repairs of church building plus use in emergency situations. Prior to using any EF monies there must be Vestry agreement and a 2/3 vote of members.

**Q: *What happens to Endowment Fund if the church closes?***

A: The EF balance reverts to the Old Catholic Church in Wiesbaden (stipulated in the church's by-laws), but only in the case of dissolution of the congregation.

Additional points brought up by Wolf-Dieter: 2 risks in the revised 2014 budget: 1) the pledge deficit, 2) the settlement of the Rev. Litwinski claim.

Comments: Fr. Chris - Treasurer's estimate of pledge figure is conservative. In addition the increase in the Pentecostal contribution is not reflected in the revised budget, but will increase and improve budget calculations.

No further questions.

***Motion: Raymond Hodgkinson - Approval of the revised 2014 Budget, 2<sup>nd</sup> Darl Cord. Vote: 3 abstentions, 33 in favour.***

Thanks extended to the Treasurer, Jim White, and his team for their work compiling the revised budget.

5. Vestry Forum (Q & A session)

**Q: *What are the plans for future expansion and fund-raising?***

A: (Elaine White, Fund-Raising Committee). Many individual and joint projects underway including fund-raising, walk, Kaffee Klatsch, flea market.

**Q: *Wendy: How does the Vestry plan to tackle those members that resist pledging because of the church's uncertain future?***

A: Fr. Chris – the Vestry are discussing and planning closure on the Rev. Litwinski's claim in order to move on. In addition, response to the telephone pledge-campaign has been positive.

**Q: *What are the consequences of Bishop Whalon's letter dated June 18, 2014?***

A: Richard Nelson, Senior Warden: Vestry voted in May to stay in the church building and sent a delegation at the beginning of June to Baden-Baden to meet with the Bishop. Presentation of both group's reports (alternative home and staying in the building). The Bishop's latest letter is a response to that meeting. Bishop's basic message is that the Rev. Litwinski's claim has to be settled before the congregation at St Augustine's can move on. Settlement of the claim is linked to staying in the building. Brief update on this morning's Vestry discussion on the Rev. Litwinski claim. Vestry will attempt to approach the Rev. Litwinski personally with a view to an out-of-court settlement. Next court date is scheduled for 24<sup>th</sup> September 2014. Inaccuracies in the Bishop's letter concerning his offer of mediation/negotiation were pointed out. After the AGM in February there were no attempts at mediation on the part of the Bishop, who then engaged and is paying for a lawyer to represent the Rev. Litwinski's claim.

***Q: Is the Presiding Bishop aware of this situation?***

A: Richard: yes.

Richard referred to the letter he sent to Bishop Whalon three weeks ago on behalf of the Vestry. In this letter Richard, after thanking the Bishop for his support in sending Fr. Chris to Wiesbaden and for the Convocation's financial support, asked for the Bishop's personal involvement and intervention in the problems facing our church. No response or acknowledgement of Richard's letter has been received from the Bishop to date.

***Q: Fr. Chris asked everyone to consider "What is most important long-term?"***

A: Fr. Chris wants to keep congregation together and sees this as an important part of his mission at St Augustine's.

Further comments on the status of Fr. Chris' employment:

Richard: Convocation paid Fr. Chris' salary for the first three months (March-May). Vestry asked for one month extension (June). Granted by the Bishop, St. Augustine's to pay his basic expenses, not full salary. Further extension of two months requested but initially refused by the Bishop. Bishop finally agreed to a two-month extension after Fr. Chris intervened. (This takes Fr. Chris to the end of August). Fr. Chris offered to stay on with us until the end of Sept under the same very modest conditions.

***Q: What does it mean when the Bishop says he is resorting to Canon Law?***

A: Richard: If the Vestry refuse to obey the Bishop, he has the authority to drastically reduce the status of the church within the Convocation, to dissolve the Vestry and appoint his own committee in their place.

Comments:

Chris: Canon law has already been invoked and set off the whole process.

Valeria: Bishop must not be seen as our enemy.

Raymond: perhaps it would be appropriate to thank the Bishop for his support in sending us Fr. Chris.

***Q: Jillian: Why not report the good state of church building to the press?***

A: Fr. Chris: once things are settled, not timely yet.

***Q: Is the Bishop's decision final and binding?***

A: Richard: yes.

***Q: Wendy: Why don't we break with the Episcopalian church and return to the Anglican church?***

A: no answer offered.

***Q: Paul: Has the Church of England been approached without members' knowledge?***

A: Richard: There has been contact with the Church of England only concerning the use of the building (suggested by the Bishop at the February AGM). A long-term lease is needed. Richard will distribute relevant copies of correspondence to parish members.

***Q: Madeline: What has the Alternative Group suggested?***

A: Greg: option to worship in the Bergkirche. Report is at the back of the church. Final recommendation: Vestry voted unanimously to stay in the current building.

**Q: Valerie: Has the situation of the Pentecostals been considered as a factor in each group's report?**

A: Richard: impact on Pentecostals included in report.

Comment:

Gloria: if we move, the "Englische Kirche" as a congregation will disappear and lose all support within the Wiesbaden community.

**Q: Raymond: if we can't manage here, how can we manage somewhere else?**

A: Andy: whole financial situation must be reviewed before considering moving

**Q: Wolf-Dieter: was former Vestry ever made aware of the impending consequences of the Rev. Litwinski invoking Canon Law? Did the Vestry at that time understand the situation fully?**

A: Jim White, Vestry member at that time (September 2013). No specifics were discussed at the meeting which was chaired by Bishop Whalon.

**Q: Susan: Were there Minutes or notes of that meeting?**

A: Jim White, Richard Nelson: There were no notes, no Minutes of that meeting. It was a closed meeting and the Bishop forbade any Minutes to be taken.

Further comments:

Fr. Chris reported on his research on awards made under Canon Law.

Wolf-Dieter: a *fair and compassionate* judgement by the Bishop is what can be reasonably expected by the congregation.

Dorothee: we need to look forward and concentrate on reconciliation rather than dwelling on past events.

Richard: requested the congregation's continued support and thanked all present.

No further questions.

General thanks offered to Richard and the Vestry.

Meeting adjourned at 14.15

Fr. Chris: Concluding Prayer and Blessing.

Minutes:

Vestry Secretary

Susan Pinnells

21<sup>st</sup> June 2014

Encs:

Attendance List

Bishop Whalon's letter of June 18, 2014