

# AINSDALE METHODIST CHURCH

## General Church Meeting and Coffee Morning 25<sup>th</sup> February 2023

**Present:** Rev Patrick Evans (Chairman), David Radcliffe, Sue McBride, Stephen Hardiman, Peter and Jan Holmes, Brian and Barbara Biglands, Gill Hemmings, Frank and Cynthia May, Peter and Ann Musker, Lesley Goddard, Brian Davey, Dot Butler, Gill Hulme, Doreen Goulding, Carol Gadd, Ann Howard, Richard and Margaret Atkins, Ken Summers, Martin Maynard, Brenda Pomfret, Jane Maude.

**Introduction:** After a prayer Patrick reported that Church Council are considering the future of our building and our work in Ainsdale. He showed pictures of the past which demonstrated our changes over time demonstrating our willingness to adjust and our development of good community space. In a previous meeting we have examined our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. These were once again summarised.

### **Strengths**

Community links

Location of our buildings in the village and their flexibility

Our unity of fellowship and openness of mind.

### **Weaknesses**

Our elderly age profile

Engagement with young people

Shared presbyters

Communications particularly by social media.

### **Opportunities**

Good ecumenical relations within the village.

Community partnerships with local organisations such as ALL and the Horticultural and Civic Societies.

Circuit Administrative changes

### **Threats**

Finance

Acquiring volunteers

Increased governance and bureaucracy

### **Recommendations:**

Develop space for community use

Develop our relations with the URC and consider a merger.

Share governance with the Circuit in order to meet legal obligations. We could merely have a single set of trustees (Church Council) for the whole Circuit. The problem with this may be that we lose our local and individual control.

Initiate a feasibility study to look at potential future use of our buildings, benefits of our location and how the public view our contributions to village life and our potential to increase these. A grant of £10,000 may be available from the Methodist Church to produce the study. Any development should not affect the Garden of Remembrance.

### **Quinquennial Review**

Frank May reported on the findings of the Review. Necessary structural work was needed on the wall ties in the church and this cost was estimated at £20,000. The stonework at the front of the church needed taking out and replacing with the pointing using lime based mortar. This

would help to slow the deterioration of the wall ties. The interior of the church had been painted with damp proof paint which needed to be stripped off and lime based or clay based paint used instead. Last time the painting cost £8,000 so is likely to be more now.

Some asbestos exists in the porch roof and signs should be put up to warn anyone working in the area not to disturb it. The church boiler room has asbestos dust which needs to be removed and no estimate for this is available as yet. The electricity report has already been completed at a cost of £1,000.

### **Project 200**

Brian Davey reported that this project was to secure the future of the church up to its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He produced plans which he had drawn up proposing to knock down the existing church and rebuild. A new plant room would use ground source heat pumps instead of boilers complemented by solar panels on the roof. This would make energy cheaper and greener. There would be a small sanctuary area which would lead into a larger flexible room space which could be used either for worship or community or conference use. We would try to preserve the stained glass windows to use in the new build. Brian was willing to volunteer to guide this project. Thanks were expressed to Brian for his work.

Lesley reported that three quarters of the public want churches to exist in their communities according to a survey by the Methodist Recorder and we need to look forward not back.

**Finance** Peter Musker's reports attached

### **Discussion and Proposal**

Patrick explained that the meeting was consultative only and not decision making but he asked groups sitting together to discuss the possibilities and give their opinions.

The following points were brought out:

We are papering over the cracks and it is worth considering building new.

If we extend rentals a limiting factor is the Methodist Church's view on no alcohol but it may be possible to get certain exemptions to this.

If we function as a village hall more than a church there could be more opportunities to get grants. The sanctuary would have to be flexible but we could keep the name AMC.

There was support for the feasibility study involving the whole community.

We need to check that the building is not listed as of historical interest.

Preference to renovate not decimate and we should compare the costs of both options

Churches need to be realistic about finance.

For those who want to keep things unchanged we could establish the cost of essential work and approach a developer willing to invest in the plot of land, using some of the investment to carry out repairs. After an agreed term, say 10-20 years, close the church and hand the property to the developer. The future of the Memorial Garden could not be guaranteed.

Changes have worked in other communities and generated income. A mezzanine floor could be considered in new plans

Community work does not necessarily mean an increase in congregation. We have to be flexible about the ways we use our available ministers.

We have to be multipurpose and flexible if we are to get financial support such as lottery fund money.

If we get grants and then have to close the grant may have to be partially repaid.

**Patrick asked for a show of hands in favour of having a flexible church building and involving other groups and the URC in discussions. The majority of the meeting agreed.**

The meeting closed with a prayer at 12.25pm.