

The Chapels Society ~ Minutes of the 23rd Annual General Meeting

1) The 23rd Annual General Meeting of the Chapels Society took place at Sidwell Street Methodist Church, 60-64 Sidwell Street, Exeter on 9th July 2011. The President, Christopher Wakeling, took the chair at 11.15am and called the meeting to order. Apologies for absence had been received from Rod & Margaret Ambler, John Anderson, Alan Beith, Clyde & Noreen Binfield, Ray & Margaret Honey, Rosalind Kaye, Frank Kelsall, David Oldham, Alan Rose, Edward Royle and David Watts.

2) The minutes of the 22nd Annual General Meeting, held in Bayswater United Reformed Church, Newton Road, London on 3rd July 2010 were unanimously adopted by the meeting and signed by the President as a correct record.

3) The President drew members' attention to the *Annual Report and Accounts for 2010*. He noted his view that most of the work carried out by the Society was handled by the Society's Officers and that the role of President was a modest one. He therefore invited the Honorary Officers to speak about the Society's activities during the year.

The Hon Secretary (Sara Crofts) commented that there had been a variety of different types of casework which had come to the Society's attention over the last year. She had provided guidance to a number of people with regard to funding and how to tackle repairs and had also been asked to consider whether the Society might support an application to list the C20 Stowmarket URC Church. As the C20 Society felt that the church did not merit listing this had not been pursued in the end. She had also been involved in trying to ensure that a number of chapels at risk were not allowed to deteriorate further. The Society had contacted the local authority to raise concerns about the condition of Whitefield's Tabernacle at Kingswood, Bristol and also Dukinfield Old Hall Chapel. Looking to the future she reported that the Society had recently secured its own domain name and work on designing and building a new website would begin later in the summer.

The Hon Editor (Chris Skidmore) remarked that it had been a fairly quiet year in terms of publications. *Chapels and Chapel People: Miscellany 2* had been launched at Gee Cross Chapel, Hyde on 19th June and had sold steadily. Favourable reviews had been received from Dr Leonard Smith and the Baptist Quarterly magazine. He reminded members that the *Newsletter* belongs to the membership and he encouraged people to send him snippets of news, articles and other items of interest.

The Hon Visits Secretary (Tim Grass) gave a brief summary of the previous year's visits. Members of the Society had ventured to Buckinghamshire in April, London's Notting Hill in July and Rugby in October. All three visits had been very successful and hugely rewarding for all involved. Much of the success of these visits could be attributed to the dedication and enthusiasm of the visit leaders who deserved a great deal of thanks for all their hard work. He also mentioned the recent weekend visit to the Isle of Man which had taken place in glorious sunshine. A packed timetable of interesting and stimulating visits had been enjoyed by all. Still to come in 2011 would be the visit to Reading in the autumn whilst the plans for next year's visits to Bewdley, Harrogate and London were progressing very well indeed.

The Hon President noted that the introduction of a day conference in 2010 had been a successful innovation with a high turnout. This was something he hoped to repeat and noted that it was likely that the Society would host a conference on chapel seating early in 2012.

As the Hon Treasurer (David Watts) was not able to be present due to his ongoing recovery from recent knee surgery the Hon President presented the Society's Accounts to the AGM. Since the publication of the *Annual Report* there had been a few minor amendments to the Accounts as a result of discussions between the Hon Treasurer and the Independent Examiner. These essentially related to a slight difference in approach with regard to accounting periods and did not affect the overall balances. Copies of the updated Accounts had been tabled for members' perusal. The Hon President asked if members wished to ask any questions about the Accounts but there were none. The adoption of the *Annual Report and Accounts 2010* was therefore proposed by Andrew Worth, seconded by John Ellis and agreed nem con.

4) Membership subscriptions.

The Hon President introduced the proposal from the Hon Treasurer and the Council that membership

subscriptions should be raised from 1st January 2012 to the following levels: Individual members - £15; Two members at one address - £20; Full-time students - £8; Life members - £300; Corporate members - £20; Individual overseas members - £20. An explanation of the need for the rise had been sent to members in a short paper enclosed with *Newsletter 47*.

The Hon President confirmed that the Society was not in imminent danger of bankruptcy but was certainly living beyond its means. A number of costs had risen in recent years and although the Council accepted that the current financial climate made the current proposal somewhat unpalatable, they had felt that there was no viable alternative. He also noted that four of those members sending apologies had written in support of the subscription rise and asked the assembled members for their views. Andrew Worth spoke in favour of the rise noting that the process of considering the subscription levels had started under his tenure as treasurer. He also commented that the logistical challenges of implementing a rise in subscriptions meant that it was not something to be taken lightly and was perhaps long overdue. No-one spoke against the motion and so the proposal to implement the suggested rise in subscriptions was proposed by Robin Phillips, seconded by Chris Skidmore and agreed nem con.

5) The President explained that the Society currently has five elected members of Council each serving three-year terms and that no members of Council were due to stand down in 2011. There was however one vacancy on the Council for which one nomination had been received. This was Jean West, who was proposed by Colin Baxter and seconded by John Turner. The meeting unanimously agreed to elect Jean West to the Council. Of the current Council members Alan Petford (until 2012), David Quick (until 2012 and then eligible for re-election), Christopher Wakeling (President until 2013), Paul Gardner (until 2013), Roger Thorne (until 2013) and Alan Rose (until 2013 and then eligible for re-election) were willing to continue serving.

As all of the current Officers were willing to stand for re-election the President asked if the candidates listed below might be approved en bloc. The meeting unanimously agreed to elect all four officers.

- Secretary: Sara Crofts – proposed by Christopher Wakeling, seconded by David Quick
- Editor: Chris Skidmore – proposed by Alan Petford, seconded by Tim Grass
- Visits Secretary: Tim Grass – proposed by Paul Gardner, seconded by Alan Petford
- Treasurer: David Watts – proposed by Sara Crofts, seconded by Chris Skidmore

6) Independent Financial Examiner: The nomination of John Bussey was proposed by Chris Skidmore and seconded by Paul Gardner. The meeting agreed Mr Bussey's appointment nem con.

7) There was no other notified business.

8) The President drew the meeting to a close by thanking the membership for supporting the subscriptions rise. He was pleased to note that membership numbers appeared to be on the rise but commented that the Society could not be complacent as there was still a need to bring in new members. He was particularly keen to attract younger members and hoped that the introduction of a reduced membership fee for registered students and the move towards producing a regular journal would help in this respect. He extended sincere thanks to the Society's officers for all their hard work during the year and reminded members of the importance of the work that the Society does. He asked that everyone might go out and proselytise for the Chapels Society.

The President concluded by thanking everyone for attending the AGM and wished them an enjoyable day of visits in Exeter. He also expressed warm thanks to Roger and Roslyn Thorne and the Society's hosts at Sidwell Street Methodist Church before closing the meeting at 11.50am.

Attendees:

Anne Anderson, Angela Baxter, Colin Baxter, Stella Bond, Christopher Buckwell, Tony Coates, Sara Crofts, Peter Daniel, David Dawson, John Dearing, Mary Ede, John Ellis, Paul Gardner, Jim Gay, Joan Gay, Tim Grass, Roger Holden, Frank Law, Richard Pedlar, Barbara Phillips, Robin Phillips, Chris Skidmore, Christopher Stell, Roger Thorne, Roslyn Thorne, Chris Wakeling, Marianne Wakeling, Jean West, Peter West, Andrew Worth.

Guests:

Revd Andrew Brazier, Ruth Law, Revd Iain McDonald, Julie Witherall