



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE HEART OF ENGLAND BAPTIST ASSOCIATION WHICH WAS HELD ON SATURDAY, 22ND APRIL 2023 AT THE ASSOCIATION OFFICE, 480 CHESTER ROAD, SUTTON COLDFIELD, WEST MIDLANDS

Present: 38 people from 22 churches in Membership with the Association attended the meeting.

1. Opening

- 1.1. Revd Neil Le Tissier, Regional Minister, welcomed all to the new Association Office and prayed for the meeting. Karen Martindale (Association Administrator) confirmed that the meeting was quorate. Neil pointed out that one person from each member church should have a voting slip for the resolutions.
- 1.2. Apologies were received from eight churches.
- 1.3. The Minutes of the AGM in 2022 were tabled and were approved.

2. Worship

- 2.1. Revd David Ellis, Regional Minister, led worship.

3. Thanks

- 3.1. Neil expressed thanks to God for the new office space and the hope that it would be widely used for the work of the Association and the Kingdom. (Noted photographs would be taken for the Association social media platforms and there were no objections.)
- 3.2. Neil gave thanks for the commitment of Mr Simon Lee who had served as HEBA's Surveyor for 50 years. Note this is the end of our relationship with the firm Shaw Gilbert & Froggatt, which was initially appointed before 2nd World War. John Knight (Moderator of HEBA's Trust Working Group) also commended Simon. Noted further that a panel of surveyors were now available to advise churches.
- 3.3. Thanks were also expressed to all of those who volunteer for the Association on Working Groups and in other ways, offering practical help and support. Anyone feeling led to volunteer should speak to Karen Martindale.

4. Board of Trustees

- 4.1. The meeting acknowledged those trustees appointed electronically since the last AGM Revd Terry Lockyer & Mrs Mercy Otieno (who had been elected as Treasurer).
- 4.2. Neil thanked the outgoing Moderator of the Board, Revd Duncan MacLean, for his service over almost six years and the Meeting recognised the new Moderator of Board, Mrs Judith Miller. Noted that, in keeping with the Articles of Association, the Moderator is elected as a trustee by the members, but appointed Moderator by the Board.
- 4.3. Thanks were offered to all trustees for their willingness to serve and the guidance and leadership they gave and the Meeting offered prayers for them.

5. Message

- 5.1. The text of Duncan MacLean's message will be available, with the Minutes, on the Association website.

6. Review of the Year

- 6.1. Revd Adrian Argile, Regional Minister Team Leader, looked at 2022 through the lens of HEBA's values under the following headings (Appendix 1 below and PowerPoint on website):
- 6.2. Our Aim is Growing Healthy Churches.
- 6.3. Companionship – HEBA's foundational value.
- 6.4. Generosity - This is as much showing and encouraging generosity of spirit as well as finance.
- 6.5. Diversity – a report on the Justice Hub appeared later in the Agenda.
- 6.6. Learning – Focus is on ministers and church leaders
- 6.7. Innovation – Focussing on encouraging all churches to be innovative

7. Finance

- 7.1. The Treasurer, Mrs Mercy Otieno gave a presentation (Appendix 2) which acknowledged the finance teams that had served in the past and also the current team. The Annual Report and financial statements would be shared with the churches as soon as they became available.
- 7.2. Questions from the floor led to a discussion about the relationship between the healthy finances and underlying deficit and the treatment of grants.
- 7.3. **Resolution: That the Directors will review the terms of Macintyre Hudson, Auditors.** This was discussed and those present noted that, while there might be a cost associated with such a review, it was a matter of good governance. The resolution was adopted.
- 7.4. **Resolution: That following the review, the trustees appoint them or a suitable replacement to complete the audit of 2023 in 2024.** The resolution was adopted.
- 7.5. The meeting thanked the finance team for their work.

8. Prayer in Groups

9. HEBA Justice Hub

- 9.1. Judith Miller was chair of the Justice Hub and explained how the Hub came to be, what it was for and the constituent parts. Her presentation is on the website.
- 9.2. She described the calendar for the HEBA Year of Women's Justice (2023) and put the Big Question: How to make justice part of HEBA's DNA?
- 9.3. The priorities for the Hub 2023-2024 were outlined:
 - 9.3.1.1. Increase number of Justice Church Representatives (Meeting in June '23)
 - 9.3.1.2. Develop Young People's Justice Task Group (Advice group meeting in June '23)
 - 9.3.1.3. Enabling Deaf Community inclusion
 - 9.3.1.4. Communication - Improve the way we communicate the work of the Justice Hub and how we engage with our churches.
 - 9.3.1.5. Resources – continuing to provide and signpost
 - 9.3.1.6. Women's Year of Justice
- 9.4. Thanks were offered to Judith and the people involved in the Hubs

10. Staff News

- 10.1. The Administrator commended the Staff Team, noting that Sue Coates had retired from the post of Finance Manager and Tom Russell was serving as Interim Finance

Manager. She asked for prayer for the whole team as they sought to serve not only the churches of HEBA, but the wider Baptist family.

- 10.2. She reminded the Meeting that individuals could sign up to be on an email communications list and also about the Baptist Assembly, which would be held in Telford 16 – 18 June 2023.

11. Priorities Going Forward

- 11.1. The Regional Minister – Team Leader, Revd Adrian Argile gave a presentation (Appendix 3. PowerPoint on website), describing priorities for the year, starting with developing a strategy to reduce the deficit.
- 11.2. Noted a suggestion from the floor that HEBA could develop an intranet for churches to share good practice.

12. Prayer in Groups

13. The Meeting closed with worship.

KAM

Appendix 1 Review of 2022

Our Aim

Growing Healthy Churches:

Stimulating and assisting our churches in their God-given task of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ

For us, the churches are on the frontline, and we want to fan what God is doing in them and through them. We aim to support and encourage all churches in every way possible.

Worth noting at the end of 2021 we moved offices and it has taken a year to establish ourselves in this place. The staff have moved to hybrid working.

Wednesday is staff day when usually the staff are in the office.

Companionship

This is our foundational value. All we do comes out of relationship with ministers, leadership teams and churches.

This is what the churches requested a number of years ago.

Two churches closed

- Kinsham – wasn't currently in membership with HEBA, but a Baptist church we have had long standing relationship
- Croxton – an independent Methodist church that has been with us for around 20 years

We had one amalgamation Emmaus and George Road BC, Erdington are now 'Connected Life Church'.

24 ministers moved from their churches in 2022; 11 into retirement

- Much of our time was helping churches adapt to world post covid

- Supporting churches in a pastoral vacancy
- Walking alongside to help with a variety of challenges

On a positive note, 8 Ministers commenced new roles.

We invited our retired ministers to 3 gatherings.

Spiritual encouragement – preaching; leaders’ meetings; church meetings; away days; vision days; church weekends

Practical advice – trust matters; governance; safeguarding

Relational support – where things go wrong; guidance in dealing with issues

Baptist Family connection

- Variety of groups – i.e. CYF; young adults; mission forum
- CLT (Core Leadership Team (Judith and me)
- BU Council (RMTL + Moderator + ANO)
- Associations Network – ensure we don’t reinvent the wheel
- Financially – HM giving

Generosity

This is as much showing and encouraging generosity of spirit as well as finance.

Connecting churches up with each other and sharing ideas with one another.

- Eco-church
- Ministers acting as moderators
- Supporting churches in need

Diversity

You will hear of the work of the Justice Hub later. They have done a fabulous job in inspiring us all. Focus on gender, race and disability and 2022 we focussed on disability. Do check out our website for resources.

Fanning the Flame – a programme for 3 of our women ministers to receive mentoring and opportunities

Ecumenically the Regional Ministers connect across denominations in their areas. There is a growing togetherness and towards the end of 2022 we held the first ‘West Midlands Summit’ of regional leaders.

Connection with traditional Denominations, plus Charismatic, Pentecostal, others

Learning

Focus is on ministers and church leaders

- Safeguarding training
- Symposiums – 2 held in 2022

- Ministers' Conference – 80 attend in 2022
- Spurgeon's offer 'Equipped for Ministry' modules
- Staff and trustees have regular training days

Innovation

Focus is on encouraging all churches to be innovative – that is to step out and do something you haven't done before.

Examples:

- Renew Well Being
- Community fridge
- Growing eco awareness
- Community engagement

Simon Jay, who runs an Urban Expression community in Oldbury connects with and supports our pioneers. HEBA supports 3 pioneer situations financially.

Appendix 2 - Finance Report

We present to this AGM a brief report on the draft accounts of the Association for the year ended 31st December 2022.

The annual report and financial statements are being prepared and will soon be going through audit.

Once audited and signed off, they will be circulated to churches in due course.

Looking back at 2022:

To set the context for our financial performance, it's worth reminding ourselves that a deliberate policy decision was made in previous years to invest in people to support ministers and churches (you can see this through our Regional ministers team structure and the work they do). And we agreed to fund this through our reserves.

Like many of our fellow associations, 2022 had it's financial challenges and our performance was impacted by: **1. Increased costs due to inflation 2. A reduction in overall HM funding**

Our overall outturn for 2022 is an underlying deficit of c£250,000. This is the outworking of the proactive policy to invest in people and it is in line with our budgeted figures for last year.

We had some highlights too:

- awarded grants in excess of £150,000 to 34 churches, organisations and individuals
- our staff continue to provide strong support, resources and assistance to churches – a direct benefit of investing in people
- our investment funds have produced strong and stable dividend performance, generating a return of over £100,000
- successfully relocated our offices from Selly Oak to here and the space has been serving us well

Overall, the Association's finances remains extremely healthy at this point with total net assets of around £2.9m.

As trustees we are fully aware that the underlying deficit needs to be addressed in future years if we're to remain financially stable.

Looking forward to 2023 and beyond:

There's no respite in sight with the financial challenges in 2023 for the country as a whole and for us. Cost pressures continue, Home Mission funding continues to diminish and our cost base remains high.

We are forecasting a deficit of over £300,000 for this year and potentially future years.

Our level of reserves allows us to bear these losses in the medium term but we have taken the opportunity to review the structure and cost base of the association in order to continue supporting our ministers and churches in a cost-effective manner.

We give thanks and praise to God for what He has enabled the association to do up to now and especially for the lives that have been impacted by the missions and ministries we have supported over the years.

Appendix 3 - HEBA Priorities for 2023

HEBA Values

HEBA values remain the same

'Growing Healthy Churches' – stimulating and assisting our churches in their God-given task of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Companionship

HEBA's foundational value – remains our key focus.

- Spiritual Encouragement
- Practical advice
- Relational support

Finance

- Reduce the large budget deficit

Justice Group

Develop 3 Justice Hubs – Gender, Racial Equality, Disability

- 2023 focus on gender
- Focus on involvement of young people
- Develop church representatives

HEBA Structure

- Review our structure in 2023 to ensure that we are fit for purpose

Communication Strategy

- Update and renew communication strategy

Other

All Things Baptist – Document sent to all churches

Help to create a greater understanding of what it means to be in a Baptist Church

END.