



HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

COUNCIL REPORT – August to October 2024

Council reconvened after the summer break on Monday 26th August. During this period we have welcomed two new members. You may remember that Michael Gunton, our Treasurer, announced his intention to stand down at the end of 2024. At our August meeting, Council was pleased to be able to ratify the appointment of I.J. Aghanya as Treasurer, with effect from 1st January 2025. I.J. is already working with Michael on the handover and he has been co-opted onto Council with effect from 1st October. I.J. will work with Council on preparing the 2025 budget for presentation at the next AGM. Eleanor Catterall, our MES (MInistry Experience Scheme) intern also attends Council as a non-voting member. Eleanor joined us at the end of September. Eleanor is a UK citizen, so as a result of Brexit, she cannot stay in Switzerland for more than 90 days in a 180 day period. She will be with us until Christmas and will then do a three month placement in the UK before returning to us next spring to finish her program. If you have not already met her, do introduce yourself to her at one of the Sunday services.

Deep Dive into our 2024 Priorities – The Environment

In line with our Vision & Strategy three-year plan, Council had agreed four priorities to work on in 2024. Each of these priorities will be the focus of a dedicated Council meeting. At the September meeting Council considered our Environmental work to protect God's creation. As you know, we have achieved the A. Rocha Bronze Award for ECO churches and are working towards the Silver Award. The awards are a framework to help change behaviour to make us more ecologically friendly as a community. Some practical suggestions were agreed such as, holding a children's clothes swap after the October All Age Service, asking us all to stop bringing plastic bottles into church and putting up notices prompting us to switch off lights when not required. Some additional follow on activities were a practical session on ideas of how to mitigate our environmental impact, open to all, run by Anita Urassa on Monday 30th September and a workshop for young people and their parents on the care and management of the church garden run by Mark Faber. At our October meeting, Mary was able to report that she had submitted our application for the Silver Award – so watch this space. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Mary who keeps us focused on environmental issues but there are plenty of opportunities for each of us to get more involved.

Communications.

September saw the launch of our new website. The new site presents so much better, is easier to navigate and is more compatible with social media. Emily shared some statistics from the first 30 days of the new site with Council at our October meeting. Google searches are up an amazing 31%. This means people are finding our events and services (such as rental opportunities) more easily. During that period there were 1,297 sessions, with 668 unique users. When you think that our congregation is around 200, this clearly illustrates what a powerful tool for reaching out to the wider community a good website is. Council is profoundly grateful to Emily Banzet and Nicholas Hacking for the hours of dedicated work they have put into the new website. You may remember that we did benefit by volunteering to be a pilot site for the Diocese to develop a chaplaincy website model. However we could not have volunteered or brought the project to such a successful conclusion if we did not have Emily and Nicholas working our end of the project. If you haven't yet visited the new website, I would encourage you to do so. I personally am regularly looking at the events calendar to

tell me what is going on and checking up on dates and times. It is also now very easy to register for an event directly from the calendar.

New Sound System

The new sound system from Lemavisio was described in some detail in the last Council Quarterly report. It was finally installed during the last week of October and was used for the first time on Sunday 27th October. The quality of the sound from the new speakers is better and more consistent in the church. We are now in a period of fine tuning and learning to use the new system to its best effect. We are very thankful to the anonymous donors who have generously met over half of the costs of the new sound system.

Reports from our Churchwardens

Our Churchwardens, Mary Talbot and Aylwin Zabula regularly report to Council on all the work they do to keep us up and running. Aylwin is our IT consultant. In this role, his work may not always be that evident to the congregation but over the years our IT systems have become crucial to our administrative and communication systems. For example, the launch of our new website was delayed as Aylwin was ill and we had no backup. We are thus very pleased that Anthony Kugaima has come forward to work with Aylwin and provide a backup. I suspect that Mary's work is more visible. What you may not know is that Mary is our prime mover in encouraging rental of our church and hall. She reported to Council that at the end of September rental incomes for the year are at CHF 19'000, which though not quite at our very challenging budget for 2024, is up from almost nothing in 2023, so a real achievement. She has also valiantly taken on the task of putting together a plant manual for the church, which will provide information on all of our church equipment and who to contact if repairs or maintenance are required.

Reports from our Chaplain

Daphne provides regular reports to Council. Council congratulated Daphne on the meaningful and varied worship programme this autumn. On 22nd September, a special service was held for the UN summit for the future. On 17th November a special service is planned for the opening of the UN COP 29 meeting. We are grateful to Glen, our Curate, for bringing us together with these UN initiatives and providing an opportunity to bring the issues of the day before God in worship. During Creationtide, which runs from 1st September to the Feast of St Francis on 4th October), there was a full programme reaching out to all parts of our congregation. Sermons (almost all available on our website) focused on the environment and our stewardship of God's creation. Our worship naturally provides the foundation for our efforts to protect the environment. We also offered two courses, one on Advocacy (3 sessions) on how we can be more effective in our work for causes dear to our hearts and "Climate Fresk" a kind of audit of our lifestyles.

Council has also rejoiced that Elizabeth Brown was licensed as a lay reader by the Archdeacon on 6th October.

Finances

We have been giving monthly updates to the congregation on our finances. In the last few months we have had a most encouraging story to tell. Thanks to a number of generous donations from you, our congregation, we were showing a surplus of CHF 6'059 at the end of September. Michael Gunton shared with Council that this has never been the case for all the time he has been Treasurer. We are immensely grateful to you and give thanks to God that so many of you share what you have been blessed with, with our church. If we continue with a good level of giving until the end of the year we may be in the fortunate position of showing a positive balance, which could be banked in our general reserve, which provides savings for a rainy day.

Stewardship

The Stewardship committee met in September and reported back to the October Council. Stewardship Sunday 20th October, provided an opportunity to give thanks for all God's goodness to us and to reflect on our response. An innovation this year was a one page flier – "A year in the life of Holy Trinity" – highlighting some of our activities, by number. For example, did you know that our Youth Group and Junior Church run a programme covering an impressive 48 weeks a year? Our Stewardship committee continues to focus on ways to foster membership of our Pledge/Tithing scheme and we are also planning to produce a leaflet on Legacies to the church in the New Year. In the meantime, if you need any information on this topic, please contact Daphne.

Our Youth Programme

Going into the summer period Council was concerned about the lack of volunteers and leaders, especially for our Junior Church. We were much relieved when at our August meeting, Carol Brown reported that three new helpers had come forward and two more potential helpers were identified. By October there were 9 people on the Junior Church team who had completed their Safeguarding Training. On this basis, Junior Church was able to resume in September, though the rota remains tight so new volunteers are still most welcome. Over the summer Glen and Angela Ruffle worked on putting together a new syllabus for Junior Church. They worked on resources provided, without cost, from a church in Canada. Angela has provided lesson plans, along with the resources needed which should make it less time consuming for Junior Church leaders to prepare effective lessons. Armel and Carol Brown have also put in place a process for parents to register all young people attending our Youth programme. The vitality and growth of our Youth Programme is cause for much rejoicing for us all. Providing a spiritual home and guidance for our young people surely lies at the core of God's purpose for us. We all have a role to play to make sure our young people, children and families feel welcomed and included in all our activities.

Building Tomorrow

Regular Council meetings have been concerned with the finishing touches to Phase 1 – the church renovation. You may have noticed that the bare patches in the wainscoting have been filled in at a modest cost of CHF 700. Council also approved the revised budget for the choir furniture which is being built by Luke Hughes in the UK. For the choir stalls the budget originally approved by Council in 2023 was CHF 120'000, whereas the cost is now going to be CHF 251'000. The increase being due to a number of factors, not least the cost of materials.

On Saturday 19th October, Council convened for a special meeting to work in depth on understanding the final costs of Phase 1 and working on the scope, costing and funding of Phase 2. The tracking of costings and funding of Building Tomorrow is complex and we are most grateful to Michael Gunton who has executed all the accounting for the project which has entailed hundreds if not thousands of transactions. When we launched our appeal for Building Tomorrow in spring 2023, we assumed that the overall cost of the project, including both phases, would be CHF 7 million. The actual costs for Phase 1 have come in at CHF 3.5 million, representing CHF 270'000 above budget. Part of this overrun is the increased costs of the choir stalls (see above) and the remainder is in increased "internal" costs. The internal costs are those which are not managed through our architects, such as the new tables and chairs we bought, the loss of rental income which we credited to our operating budget to break even in 2022 and 2023 and the costs of our internal project manager, Mark Charles. The project management costs were accurately budgeted, the overrun came from the other elements. The lesson learnt by Council and the Building Tomorrow Committee was that for phase 2 the "internal" budget must be better planned from the beginning.

Turning to Phase 2, Council had the opportunity to explore the plans for the full Phase 2 project, digging down to create a second basement level and fully renovating the current hall. Mark also shared some computer simulations of what the new spaces would look like. I think most of us were

filled with a sense of excitement of the potential of the project and the opportunities it would open up for developing our church activities and reaching out to the wider community – not to mention providing more rental income for the future. However, right now our attention needs to focus on costing and funding. The estimated costs from our architects, dating from earlier this year, plus our estimates of the “internal” costs come to CHF 9.3 million. It is worth noting that the “internal” costs for phase 2 need to take into account that we will be without our hall for the duration of the building works and so will need to find alternative space for our youth groups, social events and other activities which cannot be accommodated in the church. Given our current level of funding from our sponsors there is a funding shortfall of over CHF 2 million. We have already made an application for further funding to the Lotterie Romande and will be going back to our major sponsor. We are also actively looking for other sponsors. We are planning to share with you, in the coming months, both the scope of Phase 2 and progress on obtaining the funding, without which we cannot break ground!

As you can see it has been a very busy autumn and we have much work ahead of us. We are grateful for all each of you do to support your Council and the work of Holy Trinity. Please contact me, or any other member of Council to ask questions or comment on the contents of this reports.

Ursula McGregor

2nd November 2024

Secretary to the Council