

Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th January 2022
via Zoom at 7.30pm

Present:

Revd Tony Rindl – Chair (TR)
Revd Joshua Brocklesby (JB)
Roger Courtney (RC)
Peter Dean (PD)
Tilly Elliott (TE)
Margaret Greenstreet (MG)
Cathy Honeyman (CH)
Alison Saunders (AS)
David Scourfield (DS)

In Attendance: Pam Rastall (PR) – Minute taker

- 1. Opening Prayers:** led by TR. He began by quoting the first few verses of Psalm 133 reminding us that the following day was the beginning of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU), which he believed should be given more prominence. He recalled being bemused when he arrived in Watford that there were two Churches Together groups and a Christians Across Watford, representing Christian unity in the town. When the CT groups were formed it would have been too large to meet as one group across the town with so many churches but now to attend a CT meeting there is plenty of space which reflects to some extent the importance of Christian unity among the churches today. St Mary's is well represented by him and Brian and Jackie Mee. When he raised this at the Clergy Chapter, they said they had more important matters to attend to than CT which he finds a worrying development. We live in a world where Christian values are being devalued, people ridiculed for their faith and the moral compass eroded. When we are divided and speak with different voices this adds to the confusion. When we speak with one voice, we are far more likely to be heard – we need to reclaim the one voice. He urged members to take the WPCU seriously: attend the services if possible and set aside time to pray for unity. He prayed for a spirit of unity for the meeting this evening, that members may be united in their approach and respect for one another.
- 2. Apologies for Absence (or not present):** Jane Carter (JCa), Joanna Cooper (JCo), Clinton Dan-Jumbo (CDJ), Abie Idris (AI), Annafrida Kadzura (AK),
- 3. Conflict of Interest:** TR noted his conflict of interest if any matter concerned the Children and Families Worker or the Watford Town Centre Chaplaincy.

4. **Approval of Minutes 22nd November 2021:** TE stated that under item 9 *Lone Working* she didn't just ask about first aid boxes and whether they are complete but was more concerned about the set up for, for example, clearing up after someone had been sick ie notices regarding the location of buckets, rubber gloves and mops; what to do if someone is seriously ill. But also, first aid boxes: are they checked; are they adequate? TR will ask the Facilities Manager to look into this. Following this addition, it was proposed by TE that the Minutes be accepted as a correct record. This was seconded by AS and agreed by all present.

ACTION: TR to talk to the Facilities Manager

5. **Matters Arising:**

- i. **First Aid boxes** (see above)

- ii. **Register of Interested Parties:** PD to make this a priority as the information is needed for the Independent Examiner.

ACTION: PD

- iii **Monitor and AV issues:** TR suggested the photocopier needs relocating from the office into the corridor then a small working party of PD, RC and JB can set up a programme of work which can be brought to the next meeting, expecting the work to be completed in 6-10 months.

ACTION: PD, RC, JB

- iv **Outside Noticeboards:** RC had raised this with the Heritage Officer as we are changing our design. He mentioned to the Officer the Council's free-standing board on the north side of the church, asking whether it could be moved as it obscures the one attached to the church wall. He is awaiting a response.

- v **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with WTCC:** TR said WTCC trustees met this afternoon and are happy with the MOU and Letting Agreement. It is now up to the PCC to ratify. The Letting Agreement is straightforward; within that is an honouring of St Mary's financial support of the Chaplaincy. DS, RC and TR met last week for the final corrections to both documents. DS & TR both noted a conflict of interest. PD asked, on the Letting Agreement, why it commences on 1st January 2022 with the first payment to be made on 31st March 2022; rent is usually paid in advance. DS said it was an historic arrangement. PR said payment is made in the first month of each quarter by standing order. PD said the papers had only arrived by email that afternoon and he had not had a chance to read through them; other members agreed. It was therefore proposed by TR that a decision on both papers be deferred to the next meeting of the PCC.

ACTION: to go on Agenda for February PCC

Noted documents often arrive too late so there is a need to adopt a procedure that we receive documents at least a week in advance of PCC meetings.

- vi **Safeguarding Reporting and DBS Checks:** TR said we are in a holding position. Cath Da Costa (CDC) and Jacky Faria (JF) are currently working together. JF has emailed those who need to renew, or obtain for the first time, their DBS check. CDC will receive documentation from each one in church as necessary. TR was asked

about a Safeguarding Officer; he has two or three people in mind and is confident we can find someone by Easter.

ACTION: TR to approach people who might take on the role of Safeguarding Officer.

vii **Church Centre Curtains:** TR offered a huge thankyou to TE for undertaking the replacement of the curtains – a wonderful job finding the high-quality, patterned curtains.

viii **Waste Collection:** PD mentioned that there is now a non-recycling waste collection bin and a mixed recycling bin outside the doors to the Church Centre. We are paying for a fortnightly collection, but they appear to be collected weekly. The waste food bin has not yet arrived. Once the Church Centre is in use again JF will discuss with users a payment towards the cost of the bins – especially noted for Market Research. Appropriate notices for the bins will be discussed at a staff meeting.
ACTION: TR to bring to staff meeting.

ix **Notices in the Lounge:** to be discussed at a staff meeting.
ACTION: TR to take to staff meeting.

6 **Correspondence:** none

7 **Committee Reports:**

a) Finance – PD reported that the 2021 End of Year Accounts were still a moving target as new items appeared. The deficit for the year looks to be £33,000+ better than the £38,000+ forecasted. Now only marginally above our Reserves Policy requirement, which needs keeping an eye on. It is expected there will be a decrease in the Reserves requirement as the year progresses as the salary commitment drops. Designated Funds – the Finance Committee recommended the following resolution: that the PCC resolve to keep £22,000 in a designated development fund to cover outstanding works on the AV system, church IT network and bell tower, transferring the remaining surplus development and church centre refurbishment funds back to the general fund as advised by our independent assessors. Those funds are £74,000 less £22,000; it is expected that there will also be a grant of £40,000 from the Church Lands Trust to update the AV system. There followed a discussion about the remaining surplus in the fund of £52,000 – comments made:

- TR - money donated to the development fund, how can we reconcile with the donors that the excess is now being moved to the general fund?
- PD - money donated specifically for the development fund has been spent; PCC had previously transferred money from the general fund to the development fund and it is this that is to be returned.
- RC – did PD find out if designated funds are part of our reserve for these purposes?
- TR – we could keep them in a designated fund then re-assign if required.
- DS – deficit for this year brings us slightly above the reserve level. Forecast for 2021 came in slightly less but with that £33,000 it's just resting on our reserves so another projected deficit in 2022 will take us well below the reserves therefore the transfer of the money in the development fund will help us, but it

will mean that for two years running we have bailed ourselves out and we won't have the money to do it again, so we need to look at both income and particularly expenditure (staffing?) or we will enter 2023 in a very difficult position.

- TR – yes, all true, how do we put it straight? Still wants an answer to RC's question about designated funds.
- PD – independent assessor advised we should transfer it to the general fund unless we have a specific reason for keeping it in the designated fund.
- TR – the north extension is still something we are aspiring to do although we will need to raise more funds from grants, legacies, etc.
- RC – large deficit this year, forecast for similar this year yet we have nothing from the Finance Committee about what to do other than transfer money from the development fund; no suggestions for an appeal; no options for income or expenditure. The development fund is a strategic investment fund, largely the product of legacies originally designated for the refurbishment of the church. We are at the start of the MAP process looking to the future and the initiatives we might want to take so not a time to lose a strategic investment fund. Our focus should be on the management of operational expenditure and securing the proper income for it. If we transfer the money, it would be gone in two years. It is not a viable proposition to move money around because the independent assessor says we should and if need be, we will tell him we are going to spend it on x or y. The real task is to get the finances straight and put ourselves on a sound position for the future.
- TR – thanked RC. He hopes the MAP process will include the work on the north entrance. To start the process of how to deal with expenditure over income, TR asked JB to talk about deanery allocation of parish shares.
- JB – contribution to the diocese is by share factor combined with the membership figure to give an amount. Currently in the deanery, St Mary's has a share factor of 1.7 which is the highest possible alongside Bushey and St Luke's as traditionally St Mary's had a wealthy congregation, but this is not what the parish is like now. New members are not of the same wealth demographic as those who have recently moved away so St Mary's needs to raise this within the deanery. It should not have the same share factor as St Luke's and Bushey; numbers may be similar but that is not the case for wealth distribution. If St Mary's contribution comes down the money needs to come from other churches in the deanery, but the issue needs raising.
- TR – it is an important conversation which needs to happen. We may need to go cap-in-hand to the diocese. When we lose CDC, we may not be able to replace her; you may argue about the odd extra hours in administration – but this is the cost of the ministry we offer at St Mary's. Want to keep the development fund separate. Would love to do more but we are constrained by the reality of the situation. We could go to the diocese and say this is where we are, please advise, please help.
- AS offered to go with TR to the diocese – she said in the last 10/15 years the change has been very significant.
- TR – he is pleased the congregation is more representative of the people we serve. We need to provide the diocese with accurate and clear reporting of our

financial position; need to agree clearest and simplest way of reporting this and go with the real picture.

- DS – said it’s for all of us to hold ourselves accountable. In the February 2021 meeting of the PCC, it agreed some things to happen to mitigate against the deficit and we haven’t held ourselves to account on that as the majority of that work hasn’t happened. Do we look at that again for 2022?
- TR shared bullet points from Minute from February 2021: Recommendation 1 – setting timetable for the MAP; R2 – strategy about priorities for action; R3 – framework; R4 – working group; R5 – Finance Committee and reporting.
- TR – said the MAP process takes discernment; it shouldn’t be pushed through because of concerns around finances. The MAP is there to help with direction of travel; it won’t tell us more in terms of expenditure needs (other than suggesting we spend more, not less). If we had worked to last year’s timetable, producing a MAP by April, we might not have included anything about climate change or our planet. Navigating our way through the pandemic, putting on the best services we can, ensuring our people are looked after, making all the adjustments, were important rather than the MAP. The strategy is too top-heavy dependent on the MAP which we can’t produce in five minutes.
- TE – asked if it is possible to have a little group throwing around all sorts of ideas around raising income; sometimes something grows out of it. Is this a reasonable idea?
- RC – said that was the R4 idea – a group looking at income; then whittle down the ideas to those which look practical. He also said R1 didn’t say produce the MAP by April but produce a timetable by April. The planning process is bound to give some ideas for future financial needs.
- TR – it is good to establish a timetable for this year.

8 **MAP Update:** TR reported the proposed date for PCC Away Day is 26th February and is to include others not on the PCC. Will look at 3 Ps of Parish, Profile and Partnership but also look again at our purpose, as +Michael encouraged us to do. Once we have established and owned our purpose then we can go legitimately cap-in-hand to diocese and elsewhere and say this is what we want to do, this is how much we have, and this is how much we need. The Away Day is critical. We need to establish working groups for the three Ps and our response to climate change but also to re-examine our purpose – blank sheet and come up with ideas. Followed by two months of kicking things around then come back together and produce a MAP by early summer. This is more doable now we are moving out of pandemic.

Back to Finance:

- TR – said he flagged up in September the need for forecasts and budgets and we are now in January. What is the Finance Committee going to do?
- PD – said the diocese has asked deaneries to look at their parish shares. This should have occurred in 2021 but was delayed so is going to happen rapidly. An action item, quite urgently, is to look at how to present our position to the deanery. PD is interested to know JB’s relevant ideas. PD may have a conflict of interest.

- TR – suggested PD and JB get their heads together about how to present this to the deanery; need to see trends over last few years around income and usual Sunday attendance etc.
- PD – said we need to raise our income and issues around expenditure which reflects what we should be doing.
- TR – said one question around expenditure is how much we are paying in parish share?
- DS – asked if we still get a grant from the Longland Trust if we don't have the curate?
- PD - the Trust has money which it can give to us to support a curate but if we don't have a curate, they don't give us the money, but equally we don't spend the money, so it balances out. We contribute to the diocese for Josh's accommodation; if he is not living there the diocese will let the property.
- DS – asked about the increase in the cost of the cleaning contract
- PD – said the increase includes inflation from April and work is now back to pre-Covid levels.
- TR – asked how are to take it forward?
- PD – stated he had the impression that the PCC don't wish to accept the recommendation of the finance committee.
- RC, TR and TE agreed.
- TR – said we will not transfer the money until we are further on in the MAP.
- DS – said no decision this evening
- TR – continued to say he has no answer to Roger's question about the reserves. If it's about protecting our liabilities, staffing, wages, etc we have the option to transfer in the future.
- AS – agreed best not to do it now if we can do it at another time in the future. Could we transfer part of it not all of it?
- TR – asked if we can we get a definitive answer from the diocese rather than the independent assessors? Defer decision until then.

ACTION: PD to find answer from the diocese; PD & JB to look at how to present changes in St Mary's parish share to the deanery.

PD continued reporting on Finance: AK has been added as a bank account signatory. Although the bank has not asked for a resolution, it is felt important for PCC to agree one, therefore: **the PCC resolves to add AK as a signatory to the main bank account with Barclays and authorise her to apply for online access to administer this account. Proposed by PD, seconded by RC and agreed by all present.** PD said there is also a need to review the account to remove names and also add another signatory; also, to review deposit accounts with CCLA. PD had prepared a forecast for 2022 with four assumptions as laid out in his report. He wants to put in a stretch target for congregational giving. As it was received late in day, so go away and any input before next meeting. TR asked what we hope to achieve at the next PCC? PD said we need to agree a forecast and how to increase our income or reduce our expenditure. RC asked if TE's suggestion should start now? TR was happy for that to happen. Willing members for that group: TE, RC, CH, TR. TE and RC to discuss and suggest a daytime date, to be held via Zoom.
ACTION: TE and RC to discuss

Brightwell Road – nothing to report.

- b) Buildings: RC said it was all in his report. PD said the last Quinquennial Inspection was in December 2017 which suggests there will be one in December 2022. RC agreed this is a budgetary matter although it could slip into 2023; the Inspection needs to be arranged. RC will give a forecast of costs to PD. PD said a 5-year electrical inspection still hadn't been completed from a year or two back. RC reported that we could commission a full electrical inspection which would cover some of the same ground as that for the new circuits in the church or we could commission an inspection of the church centre which would be cheaper. RC and PD to discuss this bearing in mind the budget and urgency. PD mentioned the increasing damp problem in the office which needs looking at. TR said this needs to be included in programme of works as suggested earlier in the meeting. TR congratulated RC on getting the grant for the floodlights.

ACTION: RC to give forecast cost of Quinquennial Inspection to PD; RC and PD to discuss electrical inspection

- c) Staffing Committee: PD and AS have spoken to Ray Northcott because people had expressed concerns that we were asking too much of him. They proposed to Ray to end his commitment as caretaker as of the end of March. This is catered for in budget. We will need to look at unlocking and locking for evening bookings. AS added that he is released of all duties as of now.

- d) Pre-school: AS reported all had started as expected this term. They have appointed a new member of staff, Level 3. The AGM is on 8th February.

- e) Missions: nothing reported

- f) Deanery: no meeting since the last PCC meeting; the next one St Mary's is hosting on 9th February, face to face.

9 **Policy Reviews:**

Lone Working: CH had spoken to the Facilities Manager who is happy with the situation as is. She questioned where would a panic button would be answered if we were to have one? Should the answer be to ring the police? CH mentioned the issue with a drunk man in church last week, causing concern both for herself and for the Facilities Manager. CH didn't think anything else needed to be added to the policy having given it a great deal of thought. AS suggested we stick to what we have and use our common sense – be prepared and be on the lookout. TR had in mind a hand-held panic alarm giving a loud noise. TE said in mean time making sure people aren't in church on their own; more volunteers are needed in church. TR said we need to ratify the Lone Worker Policy around the point of personal alarms, section 3.1.6 – unless something else is practical and workable we will offer a hand-held alarm. This needs to be provided as policy says it is. PD there is one in the office, but it needs checking. The alarms will be available for both employees and volunteers.

ACTION: hand-held personal alarms to be available for staff and volunteers

Safe Use of Images: RC had checked the latest diocesan guidance, and they are no more up-to-date than we are. Two options: wait until something forthcoming or adopt on basis of what we know until policy comes up for further revision. AS suggests we pass as is until the next review. CH suggests something said at the beginning of services or increase size/prominence of notice in weekly leaflet. TR to think through.

ACTION: TR to think through response to Safe Use of Images policy

Equal Opportunities Policy and Grievance and Disciplinary Policy: AS had read through both and couldn't see that any changes were necessary. AS proposed acceptance. RC had read both and didn't think any changes required but added that both were quite sensitive subjects - are there any legal changes as they are 3.5 years old? AS said no legal documents were quoted in either. TR said it was all very general; he felt if there were major changes, we would be aware. Both policies were agreed by all present.

10 Vicar's Report:

- He took part in two tree planting ceremonies: one in memory of his father and the other in Cassiobury Park for a Watford resident, both of whom were Kindertransport children.
- He told of news from former ordained members of St Mary's and congratulated Kate Carter on her move to a new parish in Grays in Essex; and was very pleased to hear that Ash David is engaged - he wished them both well in these significant changes for both of them.
- He had attended Woodhall Lane Junior School Christingle for Year 5
- St Mary's had hosted a Christmas Concert for the Purcell School
- St Mary's had hosted the Alms Houses Christmas Lunch
- St Mary's had hosted the Girls Grammar School Christmas Service
- St Mary's had hosted a Memorial Service for people who have died of Covid; around 70 people attended; held jointly with the hospital chaplaincy
- Despite lockdown restrictions we had a very good Christmas - Jill Watson led a good Christingle Service; the Choir were excellent for the Lessons and Carols Service; there was great imagination and creativity on 26th December with Marcus' sermon and monologue; the December Worship for All involved lot of Connect groups with Leah Watson doing a great job on that; DS did well with the Christmas Day service; into New Year, Phil did an excellent Worship for All, and there was a good Encounter service in the evening
- In 2021 TR did an inspection at the Boys School of the religious character of the school. St Mary's has an historic relationship with the School, where TR is ex officio on both the Governing Body and the Foundation Committee. Part of that Committee's role is to appoint Foundation Governors. Historically nominations have been received from Oxford, Cambridge and London universities but they are now not so forthcoming. He suggests maybe St Mary's might be in a position to nominate a Foundation Governor preserving the link with St Mary's and the religious association. Future Vicars may not be as willing to be associated with the School, but to have St Mary's Governors would strengthen the link. Looking around, he thought one or two people on PCC would make excellent Foundation Governors. He would be happy to hear from anyone who would be willing, or who would suggest names to be approached and asked members to please think about it.

He suggested someone with a background in accounting, management, HR, legal or education would be a great asset but also bring a Christian ethos and values.

12 **Health and Safety Issues / Safeguarding:** TR thanked CH for raising the issue over the drunk gentleman in church last Wednesday which had been discussed in relation to the safety elements at the staff meeting this morning. He suggested the best way of making people in St Mary's safe is to have more people in there and less opportunity for someone to be caught alone and in a dangerous situation. The incident is recorded, and the Facilities Manager is OK.

13 **Any Other Business:**

- RC said he didn't see any *publicity about Christmas services* outside the church. TR said he thought there had been a poster on the west door. RC said there was a notice on the north door specifically about the Memorial Service on the 12th December but nothing to say what was happening for Christmas services. TR said this was an oversight; we had focussed on social media and the website, but we need to advertise for the casual visitor walking past; hope next year to have free-standing noticeboards. AS said the Facilities Manager did arrange a display inside the west porch for anyone coming into the church; it was in the shape of a Christmas tree.
- *Climate Change* - RC said there had been an informal Zoom discussion following Andy Roby's presentation on COP26. There is a lot of desire that the church should be seen to be doing something. An outcome is that Andy has dropped a note to TR asking for a group to be convened in support of whatever the MAP is doing to embrace climate change. TR replied that it needs to come under the PCC and MAP process. He was disappointed that the meeting went ahead; discussions need to come formally within MAP process, and he hopes the formation of a group will be an outcome of the PCC Day. He welcomes the fact that it is being taken seriously.
- TR, with his Interfaith hat on, is working with Herts County Council (HCC) in *developing a covenant between HCC and faith groups*. They are working with one denomination or faith group at a time to come to a covenant agreement with the county, working on an issue or project. One possibility would be to work together on addressing climate change.

14 The meeting closed with the **Living God's Love Prayer** at 10.20pm.

Dates of next meetings:

21st February 2022

21st March 2022