

## Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021 via Zoom

### Present:

Revd Tony Rindl – Chair (TR)

Roger Courtney (RC)

Peter Dean (PD)

Tilly Elliott (TE)

Margaret Greenstreet (MG)

Cathy Honeyman (CH)

Abie Idris (AI)

Victor Kitange (VK)

Pat Moore (PM)

Alison Saunders (AS)

Josh Brocklesby (JB)

Ivor Jones (IJ)

DS Scourfield (DS)

*Minutes taken by DS. All present agreed that the meeting could be recorded to assist preparation of the minutes.*

### 1. **Opening prayers**

IJ opened in prayer, reading Philippians 4:8

*"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things.*

IJ explained that this is one of his favourite verses. It is too easy to consider what is bad in the world, but in this verse and passage Paul encourages us to fill our minds with what is good, such as the NHS, and friends on zoom. Thinking about what is

'true' and 'noble' also forces us to ask how we can bring both goodness and righteousness into the world at this time.

IJ offered a prayer for the work of St Marys in this coming year. TR thanked IJ for his thoughts and prayers this evening,

2. **Apologies for Absence:**

Received from: Jane Carter, Joanna Cooper, Clinton Dan-Jumbo, Helen Baldwin

3. **Conflict of interest.**

None declared

4. **Approval of PCC Minutes 17th November 2020.**

Proposed by AS and seconded by VK. All who had been present agreed that they were a correct record.

5. **Matters arising:**

None arising

6. **Correspondence:**

None received.

Resolution: TR raised the need for the PCC to pass a resolution:

- o to suspend public worship in St Mary's church up to at least the end of February 2021, and for the PCC to review the suspension at its meeting in February meeting.

TR explained that at this moment in time it is anticipated the closure would be extended but this would be subject to consideration of the on-going Covid situation and Government advice. It is hope that we will be able to revert to the blended arrangement (in church/Zoom) at the earliest but safest opportunity.

TR proposed. PM seconded All present agreed.

TR also highlighted that the next APCM would take before the end of April 2021. Report authors were to note that reports would need to be prepared in the next month or two, in good time for the meeting.

7. **Committee Reports**

a. **Finance.** PD had circulated a report to the PCC prior to the meeting.

PD advised that the accounts produced by HB up to and including December 2020 looked more promising than previously thought. Some checks had been made on pre-school rent payments and also regarding the Watford and Three Rivers Refugee Partnership (WTRRP), which had revealed the double entry of a receipt of £3,000. This matter has been rectified but the reduced income needs to be considered in relation to the final surplus/deficit budget position as of 31/12/20.

PD advised that a provisional agreement had been reached with WTRRP for the use of the room at the back of the south aisle as an office. The rental payment of £250

month would equate to £3,000 pa but in effect half of this amount is returned to WTRRP in the form of a donation. This process of full payment and return of monies (through donation) was useful to WTRRP in showing their full costs when the organisation made applications for grant funding.

PM indicated that whilst she was happy with this arrangement the PCC needed to be careful regarding future rental income derived from the church premises. TR advised that historically the church was looking to gain approximately £150 month for the rental of this part of the church. Thus, the agreement reflects previous expectations and reflects the true cost and value of the rental space.

Resolution:

- That the PCC agrees with the WTRRP a rental payment of £250 per month for the use of the room at the back of the south aisle, for their office needs.
  
- That the PCC agrees to refund the equivalent of £125 per month to WTRRP in the form of a donation.

PD proposed. Seconded by AS. All present agreed

PD advised the meeting that he was aware of several outstanding items that would need to be accounted for within the 2020 accounts and that he would be working to clarify these over the next few weeks. In particular, the cost of the Independent Examiners Fee would not be realised until work had been completed for the APCM, but the sum would still need to be accrued to the 2020 accounts.

PD turned to the Pre School, and the spreadsheet from MG which, he said, was very useful. At the end of 2020 the Pre-school finished very well. The Surplus was provisionally £15,710 but this needs to be double checked. The account was ahead of budget due to the fact that Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) had continued to pay through lockdown, even when the Pre-school had been closed. This was because the payments were based on child numbers rather than whether the school was open or closed. In answer to a question from DS, PD advised that there was a very low risk of HCC seeking a refund. MG also concurred the PD's assessment of the refund risk and also stated that the HCC had reduced the level of payment based on reduced child numbers.

PD considered the papers which has been circulated referring to Brightwell Road and advised of the difficulties in getting quotations for the necessary work which were due to issues relating to the tenants and property agents, LPM. The PCC was advised that the Standing Committee met on 11<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020 to discuss the matter and the outcome was that the tenant would be asked to nominate a contractor. The

contractor and the schedule of works/costs would still need to be signed off by the Standing Committee prior to engagement.

PM raised the fact that 2020 was HB's last year as Treasurer and asked who the replacement Treasurer will be and who is updating the accounts? PD advised that HB will continue to do the accounts up to the APCM in April 2021. No progress on a replacement made. TR noted that the need for a Treasurer is a need that needs to be addressed very quickly Alison reminded the PCC that HB had done a comprehensive Job Description which could be made available.

**ACTION:** TR agreed to circulate the JD to the PCC and put an appeal out on future Mailchimp.

TR asked about Finance Committee meetings. PD advised that he had had a meeting pre-Christmas with DS and DS advised he was willing to set up a meeting to take matters relating to the budget forward.

**ACTION:** DS to work with PD to set up a monthly meeting to be scheduled in good time for each PCC. TR indicated his support for this.

The meeting moved to Item 9 (Budget) to allow a natural continuity of discussion.

- b. **Buildings:** RC had produced a report which was circulated prior to the meeting: He outlined the latest position regarding the Church Centre in relation to flooring, ceilings and lighting, and the cooker. Overall committed expenditure stood at around £31,000 with some £29,000 being available for the works from grants and donations. Thus, there was still a gap between the expected cost and the amount raised. His would be a call on the Development fund.

**Post meeting note:** RC informed PCC members that the figures presented to the PCC had understated the sum available for the Church Centre works by £5,000. This sum was approximately £34,000 and thus was greater than the cost of commissioned works.

RC also raised the possibility of redecoration in the Church Centre, the lobby, corridor and stairs, and the provision of new flooring and ceilings. The PCC agreed that the 'high level' decoration in the lounge, lobby and corridor for which estimates had been obtained should be commissioned.

- c. **Staffing Committee.**

The committee had not met since the last PCC meeting.

PM advised that she would like clarity regarding who was on the payroll at St Mary's, their hours of work and their roles and responsibilities.

**ACTION:** TR agreed to inform PCC on these matters prior to their next meeting in February 2021.

The meeting considered the arrangement with Watford Town Centre Chaplaincy (WTCC) and the previously agreed part payment of the cost of a Lead Chaplain. TR indicated that the role of Lead Chaplain formed a strong connection between the church and WTCC.

IJ asked for clarity over the existing Memorandum of Understanding between St Mary's and WTCC in respect of the finance of the Lead Chaplain role, whether there was a need for a contract of employment and the percentage of work the Lead Chaplain would do for St Mary's. TR advised that these issues would need to be looked in relation to what roles the any new WTCC Lead Chaplain would perform for St Mary's. TR advised that the vacant role would be advertised in the next few

months. TR further advised that there was a meeting of WTCC Trustees the following week (w/c 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021).

TR asked the PCC for their agreement that he could conduct his discussions with WTCC on the basis that St Mary's would, in principle, support the sharing the role and cost (as per the previous arrangement which saw the Lead Chaplain role split, with 30 hours for WTCC and 10 hours for St Mary's) and subject to future considerations of the overall budget.

The PCC agreed that TR could proceed on this basis but that the arrangement would be considered, at the appropriate stage, by members of the PCC Staffing Committee, in relation to any change to the Memorandum of Understanding or contract (as suggested by PM)

All present agreed to this approach.

**ACTION:** That the PCC is updated on the latest situation regarding the Lead Chaplain at its meeting February 2021 meeting.

d. **Pre-School.**

AS advised that the Pre-school reopened on 18<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020 and that two members of staff have been furloughed as from Jan 2021 The Constitution of the Pre-school would also be revised and the matter would be reported back to PCC in February 2021.

**ACTION:** AS/MG to update the PCC at its February 2021 meeting.

e. **Missions.** This group has not met.

TR spoke of the need to consider 'giving' in relations to God's overall mission. If we are asking other to give to us, then we need to consider what God is asking us to give to others.

8. **Proposed Schedule of Works in Church Centre - Update**

RC had circulated a paper to the PCC.

This was considered under Item 7B

9. **Budget 2021**

The PCC discussed the 2021 budget, prepared by PD, with a suggested amended budget coming from work that PM had undertaken. PD's initial budget suggested a £51,000 deficit at year end. PM's alternative budget would reduce this deficit to £25,000.

Members of the PCC considered various aspects of the budget, seeking answers to various questions:

- *The overall budget position: comparing 2020 and 2021.*
  - How the position of a small surplus in 2020 could turn to a large deficit in 2021? How could these different year end positions be reconciled? (TR). PD and RC referred to the fact that the 2020 budget included a sizable donation and a surplus from the Pre-school. The proposed 2021 budget is a 'Covid' budget with reductions in staff

expenditure likely but also one that predicts reductions in income from the congregation and from rentals of church premises.

- IJ asked about the need for over-arching vision for St Mary's (through either the Mission Action Plan (MAP) process or other strategies) to underpin discussions about future cost cutting and income generation. TR advised that detailed strategy was not easy to do in the current Covid climate and that it was impossible to predict where our efforts are needed. He advised that Lent is planned to be a time in which the church can focus on where we are and where we hope to be during 2021. Whilst the MAP process will be picked up during 2021, the focus would be on recovery.

- *The level of Reserve*

The meeting discussed this, and the consensus was that this need to be clarified prior to any budget being agreed. Aspects that specifically needed clarifying related to

- What constituted 'the reserve'?
- What was the current level/value of the reserve?
- What is the minimum level of reserve that we are required to hold?
- *Pre-School* (contributions by PM, RC, MG, VK and RC). Clarification of:
  - The actual surplus/deficit when taking account of rental income (RC/MG)
  - The positive impact of the furlough grants for staff on salary expenditure (RC/MG)
- *Congregational giving*

The meeting considered the impact of Covid/lockdown on the potential level of giving in 2021. Obviously, plate collections would be significantly reduced if lockdowns continued. It was acknowledged that planned church giving had been static for several years (PD). The meeting considered whether a further 'appeal' to the congregation would be beneficial, but the consensus was to hold off on any specific requests/appeals until more information was gathered on the range (the monetary value and number) of existing giving and within the context of the wider budget considerations.

- *Rental income.*

PM suggested that the focus for income generation should be from rental of church facilities and that the church should develop a strategy for enhanced rental income.

- *Reduction in staff costs*

TR advised that the staff costs met the overall mission aims of the church.

- *Other costs*

The budgets put forward by PD and PM addressed a number of smaller changes to costs (service sheet costs were a matter raised by AI) which would continue to be looked at again before the budget is agreed and then forward throughout the year.

RC- suggested three strands for further consideration on the budget:

1. Clarity over the reserves position
2. Review the budget in relation to current financial position.
3. A plan of action for addressing the prospective deficit, which he had assessed could be 60k and not £50k or £25k.

DS said that was willing to work with PD, RC and any others (PM included) on matters raised by the PCC, in order that these matters could be clarified for the PCC meeting in February 2021. The meeting agreed that further information was required before the 2021 Budget could be approved and that further strategies for income generation and cost reductions be identified.

ACTION: DS to schedule a meeting with PD, RC, PM and others to further consider the 2021 Budget with a view to presenting the February 2021 PCC meeting with a further revised 2021 Budget.

10 **Vicar's Report.**

TR acknowledged that St Mary's did well during the Christmas period in relation to its scheduled church services and was very pleased with all the efforts that went into these. Thanks were given to the Choir, the Watson family, Waleska and Effrain, and to Josh for his technical input. TR said that he was also pleased that the WTRRP was using part of the church space to pack food parcels.

TR advised that he had stepped down as Rural Dean after six years and that the Rev Dr Peter Waddell (of St Lawrence, Abbots Langley) had taken on the responsibility.

TR commented that the 'Worship for All' on Sunday morning (17<sup>th</sup> January 2021) was outstanding, given the contribution of all of the children who took part in the service, who were growing in their confidence. TR also gave credit to the work Cath had done for this service and for her continued work with children and families. TR also felt the 'Call to Prayer' on Saturday (16<sup>th</sup> January 2021) was very powerful. He asked that PCC members support these events, as part of their leadership roles. We came before God in Prayer and in doing so we also recognise the gifting that Valeria King has for prayerful intercession.

11. **Health and Safety Issues / Safeguarding.**

No issues

12. **Any Other Business.**

IJ asked that the minutes of the October and November 2020 PCC meetings be uploaded on the church website. TR indicated that the minutes would be double checked for confidential information and then be uploaded.

TE asked if the literature for new members of the PCC could be circulated?

**ACTION:** TR asked VK to follow through on this query

CH commented that she really appreciated the Call to Prayer which was well organised and well thought through. She made an offer of help with any similar future events. TR thanked her for her offer of help.

13. **Closing Prayer.**

The meeting concluded at 10.05pm with the sharing of the Grace.

**Date of next meetings:** (note – these dates have been revised from those previously circulated)

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2020

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020

**END**