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## Parochial Church Council

Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 October 2022 at 7.30pm

Present:

Tony Rindl (TR) - Chair  
Peter Dean (PD) – Churchwarden  
Lesley Gray (LG)  
Margaret Greenstreet (MG)  
Cathy Honeyman (CH)  
Dave King (DK)  
Roger Courtney (RC)  
Gill Watson (GW)  
Marcus Jones (MJ) - PCC Secretary

### **1. Opening Prayer**

GW opened the meeting with a reading from Galatians 5.22-26 and a prayer.

### **2. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Anniefrida Kadzura (AK), Tilly Elliot (TE) and Clinton Dan-Jumbo.

### **3. Conflict of Interest**

None declared.

### **4. Approval of the Minutes of 12<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

4.1 MJ referred the meeting to the paper he had circulated *Church Lands Trust: Amendment to section 9.23 of PCC Minutes September 2022*. MJ explained that he had been contacted by Graham Bateman (GB) on behalf of Church Land Trust (CLT) seeking clarification about the PCC minutes following the report in September's St Mary's News regarding funding for the AV. In summary, GB was concerned to ensure that the minutes fully reflected the complex funding arrangement between the PCC and CLT. He and GB had agreed a footnote to be added to that section.

4.2 TR asked MJ why he had shared unapproved minutes with GB. MJ replied that, as stated in paragraph 3 of his paper, he had disclosed only the relevant two sentences of section 9.23 of the minutes which had been necessary so he and GB could resolve

the problem. TR said that a minor amendment was also required to section 9.23 itself.<sup>1</sup>

4.3 MJ proposed that the footnote be added and this was unanimously approved. MG then proposed that the minutes be accepted, was seconded by DK and approved unanimously.

## 5. Matters arising

### (i) *Charity Commission: 'connected' persons*

5.1 PD reported that he had not yet sent in the relevant form to the Charity Commission notifying them belatedly about the PCC's employment of Daniella Danjumbo. He added that such forms also had to be completed for David Scourfield, a previous member of the PCC employed by Watford Town Centre Chaplaincy at the time, and for MG's niece, recently employed by Pre-School.

5.2 MJ reminded the PCC that this action point had been outstanding since July.

**ACTION:** PD to complete forms for the Charity Commission.

### (ii) *Hardship Fund: Publicity*

5.3 MJ reported that the PCC's initiative to encourage better off members of the congregation to donate to the Hardship Fund was being publicised each week in the Sunday notices and MailChimp.

## 6. Correspondence

### (i) *Timely circulation of correspondence received*

6.1 MJ referred members to the minutes of the September meeting of the Standing Committee when he had explained that under the Church Representation Rules the PCC Secretary has charge of all documents relating to the current business of the PCC. He had advised that this included emails pertaining to PCC business. He had asked TR and PD to ensure these were sent to him as soon as possible for circulation to the PCC to enable members to make fully informed decisions. He was pleased to report that TR and PD had undertaken to do this and expressed his thanks to them.

### (ii) *Annual Statistics for Mission*

6.2 MJ said he had also received from the Diocese a request to submit by 31 January St Mary's *Annual Statistics for Mission* for 2022. TR explained that among other things, this included details of church attendance. He undertook to complete it with assistance from Pam Rastall and others.

**ACTION:** TR to complete *Annual Statistics for Mission* by 31 January.

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<sup>1</sup> Secretary's note: After the meeting TR and MJ agreed that the reference to CLT should be deleted and the relevant sentence amended to refer to 'funding' without further detail.

## 7. Safeguarding

7.1 TR reported that two members had not yet responded to Jacky Faria's (JF) request that they undertake the mandatory safeguarding training. The assistance for those that had requested it had been postponed to allow LG to undertake her own training as Safeguarding Officer, which was due to take place in the near future.

7.2 TR asked MJ to advise the PCC when its policies required review.

**ACTION:** MJ to prepare a list of PCC policies with review dates in liaison with the Church Office.

## 8. GDPR

8.1 Some members were concerned regarding a recent complaint about an alleged breach in GDPR regulations by St Mary's.<sup>2</sup> However, others gave assurance that it was a relatively trivial incident which, if reported to the Information Commissioner, would simply be noted.

## 9. Committee reports

### (a) Finance

#### (i) Financial Report

9.1 PD referred to the *Report on Analysis & Expenditure* circulated to members that morning. In response to questions, he confirmed that while progress had been made, the figures were still some months behind and anomalies remained.

9.2 Members put a number of other questions to PD regarding the finances but in several instances he was unable to provide the requested information due to the lack of up to date, accurate figures. However, he had undertaken some preliminary analysis of the bank statements over the last four months looking at the increase in donations following the appeal. He had made a projection that suggested there might be an overall increase of around £9,500 per annum in congregational giving. He could not say whether this was consistent with, above or below the estimates earlier in the year.

9.3 PD said he had undertaken some analysis based on a report of general fund income and expenditure over the period 2015-19 prepared by Helen Baldwin (HB), circulated to the PCC two years ago. He had attempted to extrapolate figures for 2020 and 2021. He explained that in 2015 income from regular congregational giving was £94,599 and that, by time the refurbishment was completed in 2019, this had dropped to £82,678. By 2020 giving had increased to £93,222 and in 2021 to £99,865. However, the latter was only 5.5% above the 2015 level<sup>3</sup>. He said the PCC

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<sup>2</sup> See paragraph 12.3 of the Standing Committee minutes of 28 September 2022.

<sup>3</sup> *Secretary's note:* PD did not have the opportunity to explain the figures for 2021 at the meeting but they are included above for completeness.

should then have focussed on developing regular congregational giving rather than on one-off appeals which did not increase overall giving.

9.4 There was a long discussion regarding the urgent need for the PCC to have up to date, accurate figures about the financial situation so that it could take informed decisions. There would be serious implications for the ministry of St Mary's if the PCC could not resolve the present difficulties: every month that this lack of data persisted meant that the choices available to the PCC for reducing costs would become fewer and harder. It was recognised that PD had an enormous amount to do as warden and that the PCC was expecting too much from him. As his role in the Church's finances was not normally part of the warden's job, he should be released from this so that he could perform an even better job as warden. There was agreement that the PCC must have a clear estimate of the end of year deficit and that its finances had to be re-structured. This included having up to date data on income, including congregational giving, and expenditure. TR indicated that JF could be moved from her present role and appointed book-keeper, which she had indicated she would be happy to do. It was recognised that this might involve incurring costs on additional software.

9.5 TR proposed that:

- (1) JF be appointed as book-keeper with immediate effect with the aim of ensuring a transition of the day to day finances to her by the end of October, in liaison with AK and Helen Baldwin under the overall supervision of PD.*
- (2) The Finance Committee, including Richard Watson, to then look into the best way to estimate a figure for the end of year deficit and report this to the PCC in time for its November meeting.*

9.6 It was recognised that there could be practical difficulties: for example, resolving whether the software would be for single or multiple users; and that changing software and bank signatories was not a rapid process.

9.7 TR's proposal was seconded by MJ and approved by the PCC with one abstention (PD).

**ACTION:** TR and PD to arrange this transition.

9.8 PD advised that the Standing Committee had requested figures on minibus expenditure and income from users.<sup>4</sup> He reported that over the last seven years the average cost to the general fund had been £2,091 per year. Prior to the pandemic, the minibus was used by Arthritis Care with David Hedges driving as a volunteer and insured to do so. This resulted in some extra use and income although this ceased with the arrival of the pandemic. PD, supported by TR, hoped that it would be possible for the minibus to continue to be funded as a support to the congregation and even the wider community. However, PD pointed out that there was currently only one main driver and more volunteers were needed.

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<sup>4</sup> *Secretary's note:* The Standing Committee requested up-to-date expenditure and income for the minibus. See paragraph 2.20 of its minutes of 14 July 2022 and paragraphs 9.1 and 9.2 of its minutes of 28 September 2022.

9.9 There was discussion about the need for timely reports, given the very late circulation of the *Report on Analysis & Expenditure*. TR and MJ explained that under the Church Representation Rules there was no deadline given for the circulation of papers before the meeting. However, the agenda was required to be circulated seven days in advance of the PCC's meeting and it was best practice for this to be followed in the case of reports, correspondence and other papers. In any event, these should be circulated to the PCC at the latest by the Friday before the meeting.

9.10. TR reminded the PC that he had asked the Archdeacon for a Diocesan expert to advise us generally about our accounting because, as the Independent Examiner had advised, it was very complicated.

*(ii) Standing Committee - PCC Expenditures 2022-3*

9.11 MJ reported that he had circulated the minutes for the September meeting of the Standing Committee. Some progress had been made in that the Committee had identified further savings of £4,000. However, it had not been possible to reach agreement on some larger items of expenditure, including cleaning contracts and the minibus due, in part, to the lack of up-to-date figures discussed earlier. A report had been requested from Liz Allen (LA) to identify savings from the cleaning contract and this was expected to be available to the PCC in time for its November meeting.

9.12 TR and PD said that office staff had explained that there were risks to addressing the questions the Standing Committee had requested regarding the cleaning contract. The contractors tended to respond to needs and carried out cleaning in more areas than they were actually contracted to do. If questions were asked, the contractors might revert more strictly to the terms of the contract.

9.13 It was pointed out that the exercise was not about asking questions directly to the contractors but about examining and reviewing the contract, including the standards set out therein, the service as it was actually undertaken and then considering whether the PCC is getting value for money and whether better value might be obtained by other means. TR and PD undertook to advise LA accordingly.

**ACTION:** TR and PD to clarify to LA as above and to ensure a full report, addressing the issues set out in paragraph 8.3 of the Standing Committee minutes of 28 September 2022, is circulated to the PCC by 31 October.

*(iii) Paper: Proposals for reducing expenditure*

9.14 RC introduced the paper from him, TE and MJ: *Proposals for reducing expenditure this year and in 2023*. He expressed his thanks to PD for having taken on the chair of Finance Committee when no-one else would. He explained that this paper came about because the Standing Committee could not fulfil its remit from the PCC to make recommendations to the PCC on reducing expenditure. It was an attempt to keep things moving in the face of the Standing Committee's lack of progress. It set out possible reductions in expenditure for the rest of 2022 and for 2023 Its proposals were based on what was known and what we reasonably anticipated next

year could look like. Inevitably, there was some uncertainty but it demonstrated to the PCC where we might end up in 2023. He pointed out that as there had been decreases in staff in 2022 there would be a corresponding decrease in the PCC's reserves threshold and asked PD to estimate this lower figure. RC concluded that the paper invited the PCC:

1. To agree the measures proposed to reduce expenditure in 2022.
2. To reaffirm its commitment to having a balanced budget in 2023.
3. To consider the prospective deficit in 2023 and proposed mitigation measures.
4. To agree that final decisions on these will be made at its November meeting.

9.15. TR said that the paper was the view of RC, TE and MJ rather than the view of the whole Standing Committee; nevertheless, he welcomed it as a helpful contribution. He emphasised the impact if it were implemented as written and that he was therefore not prepared to implement it lightly. He clarified that he was not saying he would not implement it but rather that it could not be implemented because up to date figures were not available. He agreed with RC that reserves should be lower. He asked the PCC simply to accept the paper at this point on the basis that we would return to it when up to date figures became available.

**ACTION:** PD to update the figure for the reserves threshold.

9.16 Accordingly, on that basis, the PCC accepted the paper.

*(iv) Israel Update*

9.17. MJ explained that the Standing Committee minutes of 28 September set out the latest developments regarding the trip to Israel, including a further repayment made to Person C. He had circulated the correspondence from Person B dated 11 August requesting a refund with its related email 'chain' for information. He apologised to the PCC that this had not been circulated to the PCC in time for its meeting of 12 September when it had approved the refund, but he had not received it until 16 September. PD confirmed that Person B had been refunded and had acknowledged this.

9.18 MJ reported that he had circulated correspondence from Person A to RC and him requesting an opportunity to discuss what had happened so that the PCC were aware. He outlined ways of dealing with this, including he and RC meeting with Person A; but he emphasised that, in view of the Archdeacon's involvement, her advice should be sought. PD said that the Archdeacon had recently advised that members of the PCC should not meet with Person A and he considered that the decision to publish the PCC's full discussion about Israel in the September minutes should be revisited. There was further discussion, in which the PCC inclined towards transparency regarding the publication of the minutes. It was agreed that MJ would write to the Archdeacon setting out the PCC's options for responding to Person A

and seeking her advice on this and publication of the relevant part of the September minutes.

**ACTION:** MJ to write to the Archdeacon seeking her advice.

9.19 CH said she remained very concerned about the PCC's potential liability in respect of the Israel trip. This was not merely theoretical as she was aware of a particular church where PCC members had become personally liable as a result of actions taken by its leadership. After a discussion which reiterated several points previously made in September, CH's concerns were noted.

9.20 GW, who had been absent from the PCC's September meeting, said she had been disconcerted to read in section 9.12 of the September minutes the view of some members that Charity Commission rules could be discretionary. She did not share this view and stated that were it to prevail in practice, she would resign from the PCC. TR noted her concern and agreed that he should have been more careful about his wording in this respect.

### **(b) Buildings**

9.21 RC presented his written report. He said that following discussion about the floodlights in July and the Pre-School's offer to contribute to the cost in lieu of contributing to the cost of toilets, he had expected the PCC to accept that offer at its September meeting, from which he was absent. He had for several months been fending off requests from Watford Council for a report on how the PCC used the money, the last time with an assurance that all would be settled by the PCC in September; and there was a significant risk their £5,000 grant would be withdrawn. He considered that the PCC must decide either not to replace the floodlights or to accept the Pre-School's offer so that he could make progress and hopefully take advantage of the grant, even if the cost has risen. He counselled against further delay contrasting the PCC's treatment of this issue with the approval of funding for a new AV system. In that case, the PCC had approved expenditure of some £51,000 without having before it a written report that set out what was being proposed, why it was being proposed and what benefit the PCC would obtain from the system. In his view it was not appropriate for the PCC to make a decision of this magnitude without such a report which, he pointed out, would in due course be required to support the PCC's application for a Faculty<sup>5</sup>. He was supported by GW.

9.22 *RC proposed that funding for the floodlights be approved. This was seconded by MJ and agreed with two abstentions.*

9.23 RC further reported that the firm undertaking the work in the bell chamber, which specialises in church restoration, had agreed to carry out the minor flintwork repairs to the external office wall while on site for the bell chamber. Their representative had commented that it was only a 'couple of hours' work and so the cost would be modest.

9.24 *Referring to the Standing Committee's approval of the internal works to the office<sup>6</sup>, MJ proposed that these works and the external works, a cost of around £3,000, be funded*

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<sup>5</sup> Secretary's Note: See also section 14 of the Standing Committee minutes of 28 September 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Secretary's Note: See section 4(i) of the Standing Committee minutes of 28 September 2022.

*from the Payne legacy and be formally approved by the PCC. He was seconded by RC. This was unanimously approved.*

9.25. RC also reported that work to the Bell Chamber platform would commence in mid-October. TR and PD asked RC to make arrangements with the contractors to ensure that the bells were not out of commission for the civic service on 18 October or on Remembrance Sunday.

**ACTION:** RC to notify contractors about the need for bells on those dates.

9.26 PD explained that the Quinquennial inspection was due at the beginning of 2023 and expenditure was likely to be necessary as a result. He had asked RC to produce an estimate for the maintenance of the church building for 2023.

**ACTION:** RC to produce an estimate for the maintenance of the church building for 2023.

9.27 TR asked RC if LA had been invited onto the Buildings Committee in her role as Facilities Manager or in a voluntary capacity as a member of the congregation. RC confirmed the former.

9.28 MJ reported that the link for the congregation to indicate support for the New Hope Memorial Stone had been included in the weekly Mailchimp newsletter. TR explained this was now defunct.

### **(c) Pre-School**

9.29 MG reported that there had been difficulties hiring and retaining staff. Planned interviews had not gone ahead as the interviewees had withdrawn their applications. Moreover, a staff member who began her employment in September at the beginning of this term had resigned, having found a job offering her more hours and therefore more pay. Further interviews had been arranged for 7 October but the interviewees had not turned up. MG commented that the underlying difficulty appeared to be a lack of regular pay since staff were not paid during school holidays. A solution might be to even out pay over the year. GW said that ACAS had advised that this would lead to staff being paid less than the minimum wage each week and had advised against such an approach.

9.30 MG also reported that London Hearts, a registered charity which specialised in the supply of defibrillators and training throughout the UK had offered a grant of £300 towards the supply of a defibrillator. Pre-School Committee felt that this was a subject for discussion by the PCC as the defibrillator would most likely be used by other members of the Church and/or members of the public. Her report set out various options and costs. The subsequent discussion pointed out, among other things, the difficulty of identifying a suitable location for a defibrillator at St Mary's, since the obvious places were not sufficiently prominent when viewed from the High Street. However, TR undertook to speak with Peter Taylor to seek the Council's views.



**ACTION:** TR to seek views of Mayor/Council.

**(d) Climate Emergency**

9.31 RC introduced the Climate Emergency Committee's (CEC) Action Plan. Although the CEC had not met formally since the PCC's July meeting, the Climate Action Group had drawn up proposals for raising the profile of climate change within St Mary's and stimulating actions by individuals and the church to address the challenge that it poses. Developing these proposals had involved all members of the CEC and the resulting Action Plan, which set out a number of things to be done during the autumn, had their support. Some elements, such as the services on 25 September and 2 October, had already been actioned. The Plan was quite detailed and followed the structure of the EcoChurch assessment survey in proposing actions under four headings: teaching and worship; buildings and land; outreach and global engagement; and lifestyle. It was likely that St Mary's has met the EcoChurch Bronze Award criteria already and with a few more improvements could qualify for Silver, which we should aim for in 2023. The Climate Emergency 'Toolkit' endorsed by the Church of England proposes that churches should make a public commitment to action on climate change, and at some appropriate point St Mary's might do this, perhaps when we receive an award. Part A of the Action Plan contained wording that might be used for such a statement and RC invited members to send him their comments about the text.

9.32 The meeting noted the Action Plan, in particular, that in due course the PCC may be asked to endorse a commitment statement and that members should consider whether the text suggested for the statement in Part A appropriately reflects St Mary's position on climate change.

**ACTION:** PCC members to send RC their comments on the suggested text.

**(e) Missions**

9.33 The PCC considered the report of the Missions Committee submitted by Alison Saunders (AS). It explained that this is not a formal PCC committee but an informal group of three people (AS, PD and Caroline Jones) who had agreed to oversee support for mission at St. Mary's. It had recently met to review the list of missions St Mary's supported. These included Mano Emmanuel at Columbo Theological Seminary in Sri Lanka; Andrew Leake, working with and employed by Compassion International in Argentina; Meninadanca in Brazil providing safe houses for girls; Tear Fund; our patrons, Church Pastoral Aid Society; and New Hope, WTCC and Watford Schools Trust, all of which had current or historic links with St. Mary's. The report gave information about how St. Mary's supports mission. The PCC accepted the report. TR said that he would like the currently defunct Prayer Diary to be resurrected and asked PCC members if they might consider taking this on or if they could recommend someone in the congregation to do so.

**10. Staff: Annual pay increase**

10.1 It was agreed the PCC should postpone consideration of this until accurate up-to-date figures on finance becomes available.

## **11. PCC membership**

11.1 MJ said that with two members away on holiday the PCC was down to just half of its membership in September. Several members had not attended since the PCC's election in May. This was concerning because the PCC had much business to discuss. It needed a range of views to assist in decision making and sufficient members to implement them. It was agreed that MJ would write to those concerned and ask if they intended to attend meetings regularly in future.

11.2 MJ also said that the PCC required more expertise. Eileen Roby (ER) had expertise in HR and business and had indicated that she was willing to be co-opted to the PCC. *Accordingly, MJ proposed that she be co-opted. This was seconded by GW and agreed unanimously.*

**ACTION:** MJ to advise ER that she has been co-opted.

## **12. Deanery Synod**

12.1 TR reported that Revd Deborah Snowball, Vicar of St Mary's, Rickmansworth had moved to All Saints, South Oxhey.

## **13. Town Centre Chaplaincy**

13.1 TR said that invoices had still not been received for the Lead Chaplain's salary.

**ACTION POINT:** PD to chase up invoices.

## **14. Watford & Three Rivers Refugee Partnership**

14.1 TR reported that WTRRP was being invoiced regularly for use of the Church Lounge and was paying the PCC.

## **15. Health & Safety**

15.1 No issues were reported.

## **16. Vicar's Report**

16.1 TR explained that he had met the Connect Group leaders in September and among other things discussed how *Connect Together* might be revived. The view was that its title needed to be changed as it implied people had to be a member of a Connect Group to attend. Accordingly, the first Wednesday of the month will be called *CAKE – Come And Know Everything*. It will be a one hour meeting in three sections: TR will inform people about events etc in the coming month; a Connect Group will lead and share what God has been doing among us; and there will be a time of prayer. Importantly, cake will be provided! There had been a soft launch on 5 October with around a dozen people attending. PCC members said they had received good feedback about this and had themselves enjoyed the evening, especially its informality.

16.2 TR said he would be undertaking an inspection of Watford Girls' Grammar School shortly to ensure it was a 'school of religious character', as he had previously done for the boys' school.

16.3 TR had also had a Zoom meeting with Sunday School leaders and others. It had been agreed that the children should come into church at the beginning of the service to be greeted and prayed for before leaving for their activities. It was important that children were seen by the congregation to be a full part of the church and it might also have the benefit of attracting more volunteers at Sunday School. TR and the Sunday School leaders had also discussed whether the large legacy recently received might be used to employ another Children's/Youth Worker, possibly part-time, but no firm conclusions had been reached.

16.4 TR reported that on 8 October he had attended an excellent Diocesan training event for clergy and readers called Into the Deep where he had been joined by Cath da Costa, Ash David and Phil Macaulay. The individual sessions were based around Luke 5: Jesus calling his disciples to be his followers and to fish for people. The five speakers were:

- Lucie Shuker – Director of Research at Youthscape, who explored how young people encounter God in a world of standards, pressure and judgement.
- Isabelle Hamley - Secretary for Theology and Theological Adviser to the House of Bishops, who focussed on what God's justice might look like in the new waters we find ourselves in.
- Andy Croft – Senior Pastor at Soul Survivor, who looked at learning to fish, and the importance of drawing people into communities of love in a lonely world.
- Tina Hodgett – Pioneer Priest in Bath and Wells, who explored casting our nets on the other side, doing things differently in a pioneer context.
- Jo Kelly-Moore – Dean of St Albans, who encouraged participants to think about how they tell Jesus' story of love and hope as they 'fish for people', making the most of what we have as the Church of England.

16.5 TR said he had also re-started the Growing Leaders course with some of our young adults and had had an excellent introductory session.

## **17. Any Other Business**

17.1 The date of the next meeting was changed to 21 November (previously 14 November).

The meeting closed at 10.30pm with the *Living God's Love* prayer.

**Marcus Jones**  
**PCC Secretary**