

Parochial Church Council of St Mary's, Watford

Minutes of the meeting held on 17th May 2021 via Zoom

Present:

Revd Tony Rindl – Chair (TR)
Roger Courtney (RC)
Peter Dean (PD)
Tilly Elliott (TE)
Margaret Greenstreet (MG)
Cathy Honeyman (CH) (from Item 18)
Abie Idris (AI)
Alison Saunders (AS)
David Scourfield (DS)

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

- 1. Opening Service.** The meeting began with a service of Holy Communion led by the Vicar for which the readings were Eph 1:15-23 and John 17 :6-19
- 2. Welcome to new members:** Tony welcomed Annafrida Kadzura (AK) in her absence and noted that Margaret Greenstreet and Joanna Cooper had been re-elected. It was noted that not all places for elected members on the PCC had been filled but co-options during the year were possible.
- 3. Apologies for Absence:** Received from Jane Carter (JCa), Joanna Cooper (JCo), Cathy Honeyman, Clinton Dan-Jumbo (CDJ), Annafrida Kadzura and Revd Joshua Brocklesby (JB).

Post-APCM business items

- 4. Trustee responsibilities and conflict of interest.** TR noted that the PCC was established as a charity and all PCC members were trustees of the charity. Everyone present had received a copy of the booklet setting out their responsibilities as trustees and he would arrange for AK also to receive it. He went on to remind the Council that Conflict of Interest was a standard item on each meeting agenda; everyone had a responsibility to declare a personal interest in any of the matters under discussion.
ACTION: TR to send Trustee booklet to AK.
- 5. DBS Checks:** TR reminded the Council that the church's safeguarding policy and procedures required all PCC members to be DBS checked. He would arrange for AK to be contacted about this.
ACTION: TR to arrange for AK to be DBS checked.

6. **Confidentiality:** TR reminded members that discussions in the PCC were confidential at least until the minutes of a meeting had been approved. Further, particularly sensitive information was at times recorded separately from the main minutes.
7. **Elections:** These concerned the following posts:
- a. **Vice-Chairman:** PD (Proposed AS, Seconded DS) Elected unanimously.
 - b. **Treasurer:** TR noted that AK was considering taking on this role but because of other commitments could not do so immediately. In the interim, Helen Baldwin (HB) was continuing to act as Treasurer. The Council expressed its appreciation to AK in being willing to take on the responsibilities of Treasurer and its thanks to HB for continuing to serve in this key role.
 - c. **Secretary:** TR noted that Jacky Faria (JF), assisted by Pam Rastall (PR), acted as PCC Secretary and dealt with all correspondence from the diocese etc. The Council agreed that these arrangements should continue.
 - d. **Minutes Secretary:** AS reported that there had been no response to the request for a volunteer from the congregation to take on this role. There had, though, been a suggestion that JF or PR take on the role as part of their duties. TR responded that this would have budget implications at a time when the financial position was difficult and he would much prefer to see a volunteer in the role. AS commented that she had identified someone whom she thought would be suitable. Meanwhile, she thanked the PCC members who had offered to prepare minutes and would draw up a rota for future meetings.
ACTION: TR/AS to follow up the possibility of appointing a Minutes Secretary from the congregation. AS to draw up a rota for future meetings.
8. **Election of Standing Committee:** TR explained that this included the Vicar, Churchwardens, Treasurer and one other PCC member, who has been RC as Chair of the Buildings Committee. This membership was proposed by AS and seconded by MG and Council gave its approval *nem con*.
9. **Periods of service of new members:** TR confirmed that AK would serve until the 2024 APCM and could then be re-elected for a further three-year term. The periods of service of other elected members were:
- To 2022 APCM: RC, JCa
 - To 2023 APCM: IA, DS, CDJ
 - To 2024 APCM: MG, JCo
10. **Committee structure and membership:** TR noted that he had approached members of the congregation with appropriate expertise to join the Finance Committee and hoped that they would do so. PCC members should seriously consider serving on one of the committees.
11. **Dates of PCC meetings 2021-2022** TR confirmed the following dates: 21st June, 19th July, 20th September, 18th October, 22nd November, 17th January, 21st February, 21st March. DS commented that it would be helpful if committee meetings could be scheduled also.

12. APCM

- a. **Receive minutes.** The Council received the draft minutes of the APCM on 25th April without comment.
- b. **Matters arising** There were no matters arising.

Regular business items

13. **Approval of Minutes – Meeting on 19th April 2021.** Proposed PD, Seconded RC. These were approved as a correct record.

14. **Matters arising:** None

15. **Correspondence:** TR informed the Council of an issue which had arisen concerning the next pilgrimage to Israel, now postponed to 2022. This was not a PCC responsibility but he wished members to be aware of it.

16. Committee reports:

- a. **Finance.** PD referred to his report which at one-third of the way through the year showed income at 36% of the forecast annual figure while expenditure was at 28%. The shortfall in expenditure meant that the year-to-date balance was a surplus of £1.9k. It was too early to judge the impact of the Appeal but several one-off donations had been received and there had been discussions over new Standing Orders. RC commended DS on his message concerning the appeal at the 10.30 service on 2nd May; the Council concurred. The finance report was noted.
- b. **Buildings.** RC commented that he had not prepared a written report since there was little to report. Further discussion of access arrangements to the clock gearboxes had taken place and we were in sight of a final proposal for the Diocesan Advisory Committee. Significant and unavoidable expenditure seemed to be required on the boiler in the Church Centre flat. It might be possible to effect a repair which, with associated works that were required, might cost £1000 but if this was not possible the boiler would need to be replaced at a total cost of perhaps £2000. The Council noted the position. PD commented that David Newby, who had maintained the church boilers since installing them in 2011, was shortly to retire; dealing with the boiler in the flat might be his last contribution to St Mary's. He had served us well for ten years. RC concurred.

TE reported that she had investigated suppliers of curtains and blinds for the Church Centre – blinds were probably more suitable for the Pre-School area. These would need to be of 'contract' quality to meet fire safety requirements. Suppliers did not carry samples of such material and these therefore needed to be ordered. Having taken measurements and obtained a spare carpet tile as a colour reference, she had arranged appointments to discuss requirements. The Council noted TE's report and thanked her for progressing this matter.

- c. **Staffing Committee.** The Committee had not met. One item of confidential business was discussed following the closure of the main meeting.

DS commented that with the expectation that the present Children and Families Worker (CFW) would not be able to continue in post after June 2022 there would at some time be a need to consider her replacement. TR responded that this would have to be considered in the context of the financial position. But there were other considerations also; while the present CFW had been responsible for many excellent initiatives, there was a risk that having such an appointment reduced the incentive for members of the congregation to contribute to Children and Families activities. So the present CDW would be giving much attention to succession planning and developing volunteers from the congregation in order to strengthen the church's ministry.

In further discussion, TR stated that JB would be able to investigate his next position from September 2021 onwards with the expectation that he would move on around mid-2022. But because the timing was subject to uncertainty it would not be possible to arrange for a successor to start in 2022.

- d. **Pre-School.** MG reported that 20 children were now attending Pre-School. Of these, 10 would be leaving in September; four children were on the waiting list for then. Two banners promoting the Pre-School were now in place. AS introduced the Business Plan that had been prepared but because PCC members had had little time to examine the plan it was agreed that discussion would take place at the next PCC meeting on 21 June. This would be after the next Pre-School Committee Meeting on 14 June which will include a discussion of the Business Plan. TR invited members to comment on the plan prior to the meeting. The Council noted that there were indications that the Pre-School's application for a post-Covid grant would be successful.

17. Mission Action Plan (MAP). TR said he was aware of comments to the effect that nothing had happened concerning the MAP but in fact it had been taken forward conceptually in parallel with the many activities that were happening to restore more normal activities within the church. He reiterated that it was not to be seen as a detailed prescription for the next three or five years, but as a set of compass bearings to guide our development over that time. The previous plan had set three broad goals and in his view these had been largely achieved, but these had not included many important activities that had also taken place in the period of the Plan, such as evangelistic initiatives.

His preliminary thinking concerning the next MAP led him to propose the following three themes:

- 1) *Parish*. From the work that JB had done, we knew that the age profile of the population of the parish differed considerably from that of the congregation, with a much higher proportion of younger people. We therefore needed to find ways of engaging with that age profile and to consider how our services and other activities might better meet their needs and perceptions. Social media were clearly important in engaging with this demographic.
- 2) *Profile*. We needed to be visibly present in our community. This included enhancing our physical present, for example through a new North Entrance, but also our Web presence, our accessibility and how we welcome people. Again, social media were very relevant.
- 3) *Partnership*. The principles of ABCD (Asset-Based Church Development), developed by Tear Fund and others, provided a model for our thinking on how we should relate to others. The starting point was not an assessment of what we thought we needed for mission but an assessment of what we had which enabled us to contribute to building up the community and advancing the Kingdom of God. Moreover, everyone in the community was made in the image of God. Each had their own plans and purposes and where we had a common vision we therefore needed to get alongside them and partner with them. We should think about the role that the church building could play in that, but also we should be identifying where God was at work in our community and seek to strengthen his presence.

These themes would help us to identify our purposes and to learn what God was calling us to do, continuing the role that St Mary's had played as a Town Centre church for 800 years.

TR continued that he saw the PCC as the main 'keeper' of the MAP, responsible for its development. But others would contribute to that process. He wished to use the Connect Together sessions over the summer and early autumn to explore the three themes, with perhaps a further half-day session around November. Bishop Michael had agreed in principle to come to the church for a session in the autumn. In view of the timescale for returning to normal church activities, he did not see the need for a faster programme. JB would lead the first Connect Together, in June, drawing on his previous material concerning the parish.

In further discussion, TR said that he thought the process should be 'curated' by a Working Group of PCC members. It was important that the PCC should be fully in support of what was done and he considered that members of the congregation not on the PCC who wished to contribute should do so through the Connect Together discussions and maybe through becoming members of the PCC (since there were vacancies). The Connect Together sessions would be recorded and group discussions in break-out rooms could be noted by the leaders of those groups. He agreed with the suggestion that this was a process that initially was like a seed, but with careful attention and suitable feeding it would develop into a healthy and fruitful plant.

DS commented that if the intention was to start in June there would need to be preparatory work before then.

The Council noted the intentions set out for the MAP and the process of preparing it.

ACTION: TR to establish a Working Group for preparation of the MAP

18. Vicar's Report. TR focussed on the future timetable for re-establishing activities in the church. He commented that discussions with fellow clergy indicated that St Mary's had appropriately responded to the loosening of restrictions – our present arrangements were about right taking into account our situation and resources. He would encourage families to be present in church for the 10.30 service on 23rd May which would be Worship for All and if this meant that more than 30 people were in church he was sure that they could be accommodated. After that, assuming that restrictions were lifted as planned on 21st June, he expected a gradual return to church with a change from 'in church plus Zoom'; to 'in church plus live-stream' during the summer when numbers attending had risen. He thought that we would be effectively back to normal operation in September but not necessarily before then. The series of sermons on the Gospel of John that he and JB had been delivering on Wednesday lunch-time would continue for a further four weeks and after that he expected that the mid-week service would be live-streamed rather than being in part pre-recorded.

In subsequent discussion, the following points were made:

- The timescale for bringing the Church Centre back into use needed to be considered. Its occupation by the Watford and Three Rivers Refugee Project would need to cease or be considerably changed. Probably, normal use would not be until September.
- With the change from Zoom to live-stream, the potential for social interactions amongst members of the congregation on a Sunday would be lost. Interactions after services would be encouraged if coffee were to be available in church. TR acknowledged this and commented that probably this would be through use of the facilities in the church rather than the Church Centre.
- Children's activities needed to be part of the 'return' process. TR commented that the CFW was looking into the possibility of 'Forest Church' and considering a Summer Club.

In response to a comment, TR noted that the appointment of DS as Lead Chaplain from 1st July or thereabouts would strengthen the links between the Chaplaincy and St Mary's. He expected activities in the Town Centre, including Street Angels, to recommence and looked to being able to make better provision for visitors who came into the church, in the form of counsel and support, in association with the Chaplaincy.

20 Health and Safety Issues / Safeguarding. There was nothing to report.

21 Any Other Business.

- In response to a comment, TR acknowledged that the new system for making PCC papers available to members had presented problems for some members and he would ask JB to look particularly at the implications for users of Apple computers. In the interim, papers would be available through email also. But the new arrangements would become the preferred way of accessing papers.

- AS noted that this was the first meeting since TR and Cath da Costa had announced their engagement and offered congratulations and good wishes on behalf of the PCC. TR thanked the Council and said that he hoped the wedding would take place in 2022.

22 Closing Prayer. The meeting closed at 9.45pm with The Grace.

Extension of Contract for Children and Families Worker

The Vicar having withdrawn from the meeting owing to a conflict of interest, PD took the chair.

AS introduced the item, giving details of the current contract and need for an extension. PD gave details of the financial commitment needed. Following discussion by the PCC PD proposed that the CFW's contract be extended until 30th June 2022 and AS seconded. This was approved unanimously. AS said she would inform TR of the Council's decision and arrange for a suitable letter to be sent to the CFW.

The meeting ended at 10.05pm