

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2021 via Zoom

Present:

Revd Tony Rindl – Chair (TR)

Roger Courtney (RC)

Peter Dean (PD)

Tilly Elliott (TE)

Cathy Honeyman (CH)

Ivor Jones (IJ)

Victor Kitange (VK)

Pat Moore (PM)

Alison Saunders (AS)

David Scourfield (DS)

Margaret Greenstreet (MG)

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

- 1. Opening Prayers.** DS read from 2 Cor. 1:3-6 reminding us that just as the church in Corinth faced many of its own challenges so we have often found ourselves out of our comfort zone during the past year of pandemic. He reminded us that at such times it is important for St. Mary's to provide a point of stability not only for our congregation in providing opportunities for worship and teaching, but also to our town community in outreach and by supporting organisations in the town. St. Paul reminds us to praise God in difficult times and that God will give us comfort which we can then share with others. DS also pointed us to Isaiah chapter 40 which reminds us that when we do this “the rough ground will become level”.
- 2. Apologies for Absence.** Received from Helen Baldwin (HB), Revd. Joshua Brocklesby (JB), Jane Carter, Joanna Cooper (JC), Abie Idris (AI), Clinton Dan-Jumbo (CDJ).

3. **Conflict of interest.** TR reminded us of the importance of declaring conflicts of interest especially around discussions of a financial nature.
4. **Approval of Minutes 22nd March 2021.** Proposed by MG; Seconded by DS and approved by all present as a correct record.
5. **Matters arising.** All these will be covered later in the agenda.
6. **Correspondence.** None
7. **Committee reports:**
 - a. **Finance.** There is now a spreadsheet from HB for March which completes the first quarter of 2021 (25%). HB has included sheets to give summaries which some may find helpful. Income is a little below budget at 23%, but expenditure is also down at 21%. This follows a similar pattern to last year, but it is still early days. Further down is an analysis of the General Fund reserve which is at 168% ahead of our policy, but it also comes with a warning that if we do not manage to increase our income this year this situation will not be maintained. Pie charts are also included to illustrate income and expenditure. More detail is shown in the transaction tabs. PM commented that at this early stage we are looking to run at a deficit of approx. £20,000 which is better than our earlier forecast, although it is too early in the year to give an accurate picture. TR commented that the lower than anticipated expenditure is a trend he has noticed over many years and if we are not spending what we have we are probably not fulfilling our mission. However, we must not spend recklessly. CH felt we were trying to be realistic in moving the church forward to become a more progressive church and asked what the difference is between using our money wisely and trusting God to provide. TR responded by saying that we need to be good stewards of what we are given in partnership with God. It is important not to lose sight of what we believe we should be doing in our ministry and if we are seen to be doing this well people will be encouraged to give more generously. We need to keep a fine balance between being prudent and getting on with the work. If we are not doing the work we can't expect God to provide for us. IJ commented on the level of reserves and DS suggested we don't rely on the current forecast, but should err on being pessimistic with regard to the projected deficit. TR agreed, saying that it is difficult to predict either income or expenditure as neither are linear - both vary at different times of the year. We need to balance managing the deficit with getting on with what we should be doing. PD also mentioned that HB had included a donation report to show money given in our restricted fund for a specific purpose. We need to use this money appropriately. Liz has researched the best source for the new cooker and we will be aiming for it to be delivered during the half term week.

Brightwell Road. The electrical wiring condition report has been done indicating work that must be done and things that ought to be done. The estimate arrived this morning and RC and PD have given the go ahead to have

all the work done tomorrow as the less urgent matters did not make a significant difference to the cost.

- b. **Buildings.** RC circulated a report prior to the meeting. He added that the adjustment needed to the sliding door has been done and is now working well. He enquired how we wanted to proceed to finish off the decoration in the Church Centre – the link corridor and the porch to the double doors leading from the lounge. RC has a quote which would have to be taken out of General Fund as we have now spent all the funds for the Church Centre. RC also mentioned that there is a problem with a small area of the floor in the pre-school area. The manufacturer of the flooring has accepted responsibility and that section will be replaced at a convenient time for the pre-school. RC asked if we would like to go ahead with the estimate for the decoration or whether we want to appeal to the congregation for volunteers to do it. AS felt it would be good to get the job done professionally straightaway and there was general agreement with this view. TR would like to ask someone from New Hope who had decorated the Cloisters office before asking Robert to do this work. AS asked if replacing the curtains would be the next project. MG suggested blinds could be an option although the view was also expressed curtains were more suited to the room. After some discussion TE kindly volunteered to take this forward to see what might be suitable.

ACTION: TR to approach the person who did the decoration in the Cloisters Office.

TE to start the process of investigating suitable options for curtains / blinds in the Church Centre.

- c. **Staffing committee.** Job descriptions for Jacky Faria, Pam Rastall and Liz Allan had been circulated prior to the meeting as requested at the last meeting. RC commented that he was unclear about the role that Liz is expected to take with regards to maintenance issues. TR envisages Liz as being ever watchful and to note anything that needs repairing or replenishing, which is then reported back to the staff meeting on Monday, or inform RC if there is anything major that needs attention. He asked if Liz, having observed a problem, will then contact the person to rectify it as this isn't happening at the moment. TR responded by saying this would be the aspiration, but that Liz probably needs more induction into doing some of these things which also involves budget considerations. RC agreed to see how things progress. TE was concerned that when she had needed some cleaning materials urgently, she had found it difficult to locate what she was looking for. TR promised to follow this up with Liz at the next staff meeting to make sure there is adequate signage and colour coding etc. DS asked whether Liz's role would include promoting the hiring of our facilities to outside organisations to help generate income. TR responded by saying that although an element of training may be needed, he would envisage Liz, Jacky and Pam working together as a team using their individual strengths together with Josh's experience in advertising. PD also stressed that the staff team work together very well as a flexible unit to get the jobs done rather than keeping strictly to what is written in their job description.

ACTION: TR follow up with Liz at a staff meeting re. maintenance communication and cleaning cupboard signage.

- d. **Pre-School.** AS reported that numbers are now more encouraging with 19 children registered out of a maximum of 24. There is also one child with special educational needs which apart from providing us with more funding also means that we can employ Mudy for four days instead of three. Cath da Costa (CdaC) and AS had a video call last Tuesday to continue the work already discussed by the committee on the business plan. Cath had also talked with Natalia and agreed that we would have to make one member of staff redundant. We discussed various options, including keeping that staff member on until the furlough scheme ended. Cath and Natalia will arrange to meet with the member of staff to be made redundant once the options have been clarified. Cath is working on a business plan in tabular form to cover the next three years for approval of the pre-school committee before circulating to PCC. We are building our plan under the following headings: Advertising / Promotion; Staffing; Facilities; Curriculum; Finance / Budget; Connecting with the Community (e.g. Women's Centre). The emphasis will be on how to develop a more distinctive Christian ethos. One way will be to build the curriculum around a particular value each half term which would be ongoing each year. Values considered so far are: Friendship / Sharing; Forgiveness; Love; Respect; Honesty; Perseverance. The idea will be to introduce these ideas using a Bible Story, hopefully using some members of St. Mary's congregation. Frances Collins has suggested using material from 'Open the Book' published by the Bible Society. Pre-School staff would then carry the same themes forward in other aspects of the curriculum using stories, songs etc to reinforce ideas, using ideas from other religions or secular sources. The aim will be to circulate the finished plan for scrutiny by the new PCC in May. PM questioned why there is a need to make a member of staff redundant and was concerned that correct procedures are followed in this process. AS responded by saying that it had been a situation Natalia has faced for some time, that she is over-staffed. The member of staff to be made redundant did not have the required qualifications for certain aspects of the job and had failed to respond to help and encouragement offered in order to gain further qualifications. CdaC is following this up with Eileen Roby and Richard Watson to make sure we follow correct procedures. TR confirmed that this member of staff had qualifications in other areas of expertise and that it would be good for her to move on as she had shown some frustration with the work she is doing. CH enquired if there have been any further thoughts about linking with St. John's School. TR said that a new head has been appointed and he hoped this might provide new opportunities in the future.

ACTION: AS to circulate the final business plan in time for the new PCC in May.

AS to follow up with the pre-school committee to review the possibility of linking with St. John's once the new Head is installed.

- e. **Missions.** The following resolution had been circulated prior to this meeting.

Resolution to PCC from Missions Group.

**"Our recommendation to the PCC is that during 2021, unallocated mission giving is divided equally between our partner missions:
Andrew Leake – Argentina with CMS; Mano Emmanuel – Columbo**

Theological Seminary – Sri Lanka; Meninadanca – Brazil; New Hope – Watford; Sandy and Kirsten – Middle East; Tear Fund; Watford Schools Trust; Watford Town Centre Chaplaincy; CPAS - our patrons”.

(The missions group feel that the time has come to remove Kapteintkjies Daycare Centre in South Africa from the above list as the main link has moved away from Watford and it has not been possible to find a replacement.)

The resolution was proposed by PD, seconded by CH and agreed by all present.

- 8. Annual Report and Accounts.** The final Annual report was circulated before the meeting. PD said that the report has changed very little and the accounts have been scrutinised by the independent examiner (IE). The IE had explained that furlough payments do not need to be shown as reduction of salary expenses but as a grant so this has been moved in the monthly accounts that HB prepares. PCC now needs to formally approve these. PD proposed AS seconded and they were approved by all present. The letter of representation is another document that needs to be signed on behalf of the PCC. This was also approved. A management letter has been received from Myers Clark indicating that we are required to put together a register of related parties to show that we are doing everything in accordance with the law. We need to confirm that we will do this before Myers Clark sign off our accounts. TR said we could give this assurance but it needs to be brought to the attention of the new PCC in May. He also thought it would be worth checking this with the diocesan registrar. PD also noted a matter that Marcus Jones brought up at the last APCM concerning financial controls which is recorded in the minutes in October and will come up as a matter arising at the APCM next Sunday. PD feels that one way we can improve on our procedures is to make sure that when we approve an appointment or any major expenditure we have a clear written resolution recorded in the minutes that proves it has been approved by the PCC. RC commented that he didn't see this as a response to the original point, which was that the PCC had agreed an appointment without being told how much it would cost. He feels we need to give an assurance that whenever a decision is taken which will have significant financial implications the PCC should know what it will cost. At the APCM we need to give an assurance that we have taken note and that this is what will happen. PD pointed out that we can't always predict exactly what the cost will be, especially in the case of appointments. IJ said that it was important to have the most realistic figure before us before agreeing significant expenditure. TR agreed that moving forward we can take note of what was said at the last APCM and act accordingly in the future.
- ACTION: Contents of the management letter to be brought to the new PCC in May.**

9. Budget 2021

The programme for the appeal to the membership for increased planned giving

DS has put together the draft appeal letter based on the discussions with a small group that met after the last PCC. They felt it is important to pitch the appeal so that people are aware of what others are being asked to do as well as themselves. They

came up with the 50 x 15 catchphrase to get people's interest and have made some minor adjustments to the wording following an email exchange. It is now a matter of deciding how and when to present this to the congregation. TR expressed his appreciation for all that DS and JB have done. He is happy for it to go out electronically on Tuesday 27 April. PM asked if page 3 is also going out and DS confirmed that it doesn't need to be included as it was essentially information helpful in creating a pie chart. DS agreed to circulate the appeal to TR, PD and AS in the final form we want it to go out on Tuesday 27 April. VK highlighted that the word 'urgent' is used presumably because money is required to deal with the forecast budget, but pointed out that there is an ongoing need for increased giving to balance the books in the future. DS agreed that this is the case. RC asked if this is meant to be a letter and if so who "we" is referring to. TR confirmed that he will sign on behalf of the PCC. RC also enquired about instructions concerning informing people how they can respond. TR envisages a one-off mailchimp, which will include the letter and everything needed to respond electronically. TE asked about the process for responding electronically for those who are technically challenged when it comes to responding online. PD agreed that we need to include instructions about how to complete an online pledge form and to include a form for setting up a standing order, although many people will be using internet or mobile banking to do this and using the information which is already given in the regular mailchimp. He also confirmed that a gift aid declaration can now be made by email. TR assured everyone that everything will be put together to make it as easy as possible. It was agreed to ask Pam to circulate everything to all PCC members after the staff meeting on 26 April and to give 24 hours for responses if anything isn't clear before it goes out via mailchimp, which will probably now be on Wed. 28 April. VK asked if the appeal also relates to the Mission Action Plan (MAP). TR replied saying he hopes that the next MAP will be just as robust and equally successful as the last one. He hopes it will include some of the elements that were not included in the last one such as work with the children and families and development of the evening services, but this will take discernment and time to develop. The MAP is only as good as the outcomes resulting from it i.e. how successful it is. DS said he felt it is also important to emphasise the appeal verbally during a church service and promised to work with JB to do a presentation during the service on 2 May. He invited others to join him in this. TR said he would be very happy for this to happen as he has already paved the way during sermons reminding people of their responsibilities, so it really needs to come from the PCC. TR asked DS to urge people to check their spam email in case the information has ended up there. TR confirmed that JB will also put everything on the website. RC reminded TR that printed copies would also need to be available in the church.

ACTION: Appeal letter with full instructions about how to respond to be sent to PCC for approval before being sent out via mailchimp on 27 / 28 April. Hard copies to be available in church. DS to liaise with JB about giving a presentation in church on 2 May.

10. **Further thoughts on MAP process and outreach strategy.** TR began by saying this now needs our attention. He was encouraged by the feedback given during a meeting with the Connect Group leaders following the end of the Lent course, particularly as two

of the later sessions asked people to have a vision for St. Mary's post lock-down and post pandemic. There were some important points made on various issues such as social justice, climate change and the environment etc. All the comments have been collated and will form the basis of our thinking. Other areas of our thinking will be based around the Asset Based approach to Church Development (ABCD) – an approach to mission based on what we have rather than what we would like which is being carried out by TEAR fund in Africa. We need to draw on a wider audience than just the PCC in producing the next MAP, but it is PCC's responsibility to put the MAP together so anyone concerned about our next MAP and the direction the church is moving in needs to be on PCC. It is not so much about the details of everything we want to do, but more about changing some of the culture in our church and setting the compass bearing to take us in the right direction.

11. **Vicar's Report.** TR was very pleased with the way Easter went including the Lent course. CdaC and JB provided us with creative liturgy on Palm Sunday and during Holy Week on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Given the continuing circumstances we had a very good service on Easter Sunday which reflects what we have been doing as we have gradually been able to welcome more people back to church for services. He has said to the staff team that we cannot continue to drift with the current hybrid situation of having people in church as well as on zoom. He would like to see the emphasis more on people in church and less on zoom. We need to be strategic in the way we encourage people back in manageable steps where everyone feels comfortable and their needs are catered for. As from the first weekend in May we will have live music in church. Anthony and Richard have agreed to provide this within the limitation of the current restrictions. He is also delighted that we are getting some new people coming in. He reported that we have a wedding coming up on 8 May. The marriage laws are changing in the way weddings are being conducted in the Church of England. The marriage service remains much the same, but ways of recording them are changing and he and JB have been on training in preparation for this. Registers as we know them have been dispensed with and certificates are handled by the Registrar, although clergy act on their behalf on the day. Further legislation changes in July relating to EU nationals. Looking to future aspirations and realising that we will be losing both JB and CdaC, TR would like to introduce the idea of interns, which would be in addition to students from the London School of Theology. He is hoping JB will speak to the PCC about his experience of this scheme with a view to one joining us in 2022, although we probably need to start the process later this year. In his capacity as chair of the trustees of the Watford Town Centre Chaplaincy he is delighted to announce to the PCC the appointment of DS as lead chaplain. He is looking forward to working with him and continuing the close relationship between the chaplaincy and St. Mary's. He will take up this post at the beginning of July. He would also like to announce, that following his BAP (Bishop's Advisory Panel), DS has been recommended for training for ordination. CH asked about the process for replacing JB when the time comes for him to move on. TR said that the earliest we could have a new curate would be in June 2023 so we would be asked to make representation quite soon. AS then brought up the renewing of CdaC's contract as the current one ends on 31 August this year. This was drawn up before we knew that CdaC would be starting ordination training in September 2020 and at the same time reducing her hours with St. Mary's. After some discussion it was agreed to put this on the agenda of the next meeting to have time to 'cross the t's and dot the i's'. It is important to reassure CdaC as soon as possible of her continuing employment with St. Mary's through to June 2022 when she will be moving on to her first curacy.

ACTION. Renewal of CdaC's contract to be put on the May agenda.

12. Health and Safety Issues / Safeguarding. Nothing to report.

13. Any Other Business. RC enquired about the mechanics of the APCM asking if there will be written copies for him. He was reassured that there would be. RC kindly agreed to do the report on the fabric to include the terrier. As this is their last PCC meeting TR thanked Victor, Ivor and Pat for all their thorough preparation and challenging contributions during their terms as PCC members They will all be missed, but particularly Pat and Barry who will be moving away from the area.

14. Closing Prayer. The meeting ended at 10pm by saying the Grace

Date of next meeting. Monday 17 May tbc.