

## Minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2021 via Zoom

### Present:

Revd Tony Rindl – Chair (TR)

Revd Joshua Brocklesby (JB)

Roger Courtney (RC)

Peter Dean (PD)

Tilly Elliott (TE)

Abie Idris (AI)

Victor Kitange (VK)

Pat Moore (PM)

Alison Saunders (AS)

David Scourfield (DS)

Clinton Dan-Jumbo (CDJ)

Margaret Greenstreet (MG)

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

### 1. Opening prayers

CDJ read Isaiah 41:10 “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand”. NIV (CDJ read from NKJV). He used the example of the athlete Derek Redmond who, at the 1992 Olympics, pulled a hamstring muscle when leading his race only a short distance from the finish. His father, seeing him struggling but determined to limp to the end, left the stands to help him but allowed him to cross the finish line unaided. CDJ used this to remind us how God is our loving father – when he sees us in pain or struggling he will come to our aid, put his arms around us and will help us to

the finish line. He concluded with a prayer asking for God's help and direction during the meeting.

2. **Apologies for absence** were received from: Helen Baldwin, Jane Carter, Joanna Cooper, Cathy Honeyman, Ivor Jones.
3. **Conflict of interest:** TR reminded everyone of their responsibility to declare any conflict of interest in any matters discussed during the meeting. None declared.
4. **Approval of the Minutes 22.02.21** Proposed by RC; Seconded by MG. All who had been present at the meeting agreed that they were a correct record.
5. **Matters Arising:**
  - **Cooker:** This had been further discussed at a staff meeting. PD has given details of the cooker we have in mind to Liz Allan to see if she feels this is still the best model. RC offered to be available to receive delivery if Liz is not around and confirmed that Dave Newby will install it. TR would like this to be done as soon as possible now that the old cooker has been removed and the space cleaned ready for the new one. He also made the point that it needs to be delivered to the kitchen area not the lobby as they will have the means to transport it easily. TR promised to move it forward at the staff meeting on Monday. PD also reported an urgent need for the dishwasher to be serviced, which is in use by pre-school and giving trouble.  
**ACTION: TR will take this up at the next staff meeting.**  
**PD to arrange for the dishwasher to be serviced.**
  - **Treasurer:** TR acknowledged that we need to escalate the search for a new treasurer to replace Helen Baldwin
6. **Correspondence:** PM has written to AS and PD resigning from PCC as she will be moving away from the area.
7. **Committee Reports:**
  - a. **Finance:** PD talked through the February accounts that had been circulated by HB. Two months represents 16.7% of the year. Our income and expenditure both stand at 13% so although our income is below budget our outgoings are also less than we might expect. Any lines showing expenditure above forecast is not necessarily significant as for some items there is only one payment during the year. Others have quarterly payments e.g. photocopier, but many are now linear with payments made monthly. VK asked for clarification. PM noted that we have spent £3000 more than we have received so far. PD reminded us that last year both our expenditure and income were affected by Covid while the church was shut. On the one hand we received some furlough payments on the other we have not received

income from lettings and this situation is still ongoing. It was generally agreed that it is too early in the year to draw any conclusions.

**Brightwell Road:** PD reported little movement. An electrician is going there to do an electrical condition report on 25 March, which is a new requirement this year.

- b. **Buildings:** RC had circulated a note prior to the meeting to note progress on all current building matters. He was pleased to report that the VAT reclaim scheme is going to continue which will benefit us quite considerably as this includes routine maintenance expenses. MG had heard that the sliding door was very noisy and AS confirmed this so RC said he would get in touch with those who installed it. The manifestation on the new sliding door is now in place and AS reported that it is clear and looks very good. TR added that he was very pleased with the new floor in the Church Centre. AS made a comment that now the Church Centre is looking very smart with the new ceiling and floor completed and with redecoration well underway, we should seriously consider new curtains or blinds for the windows as the current ones are very old and looking particularly shabby which will spoil the overall appearance.

**ACTION: RC to pursue the problem with the sliding door.**

- c. **Staffing Committee:** TR reported that part of Liz's furlough has been removed. She is currently working 5 hours on Wednesdays. Referring to the item in AOB in February, requesting information about hours of employment and job descriptions for church staff, TR asked PD if he could report on this. As this was a matter for the staffing committee rather than PD and had been overlooked TR promised to circulate this information with the minutes of this meeting.

**ACTION: Details of Job Description and hours of work for JF, PR, LA to be circulated with minutes.**

- d. **Pre-School:** AS reported that a meeting had been held via Zoom on 2<sup>nd</sup> March at the request of the PCC, specifically to look at the constitution and to consider a business plan for the pre-school moving forward. Natalia the manager was unable to attend at short notice but had submitted ideas which she and Cath had discussed. MG was also unable to attend but has contributed some very useful ideas. Having looked at the constitution we considered that little change was needed other than a few grammatical corrections and to state the lower age for admission which is now at two years. However, we recognised the need to address the problem of how better to implement one of the stated aims which is "To maintain a distinctively Christian ethos, whilst accepting children from a wide range of cultures, races and religions and respecting this diversity". A revised constitution had been circulated to PCC for approval. With one further grammatical correction, adoption of the revised constitution was proposed by TE, seconded by MG and agreed by all present.

More time is needed to produce the business plan, but there has been a productive discussion relating to advertising and ways to make the Christian ethos more visible.

RC enquired whether the emphasis has been on the promotion or the Christian Ethos or both. AS replied that both had been discussed equally and that we were proposing to circulate the business plan in time for the next PCC meeting. PM asked if there has been any increase in the numbers of children attending. AS replied that numbers were much the same as last year – 12? In reply to PM's enquiry about advertising MG responded say that Natalia has made a first attempt at designing a banner and that MG has put an advertisement on the Centre Club Facebook page. More work is needed on the pre-school website. PM felt that it was important to work on increasing the numbers and it would be useful to have a monthly update. MG hasn't heard if there are more children waiting to join after Easter or in September. VK asked about the unique selling points of the pre-school. In response MG said that it was the high ratio of adults to children and AS added that the central location was important as well as the Christian ethos. VK enquired about the staff capability and TE asked if taking in younger children meant that they required more attention. This is true, but the current staff ratio is sufficient so we don't need to recruit more staff and our staff meet the necessary qualifications.  
**ACTION: Business Plan and update on numbers of children to be circulated before the April PCC**

- e. **Missions:** AS promised circulate a list of missions currently supported by St Mary's. It has been suggested that the time has come to remove Bonnievale pre-school from the list of supported missions as our main link has moved away and there is no-one willing to take over. However, individuals can continue to support this pre-school in South Africa through church in order to take advantage of gift aid. To remove Bonnievale from the list requires PCC approval. AS will circulate a formal proposal to action this.

**ACTION: AS will circulate a current list of missions supported and a proposal for the removal of Bonnievale.**

- 8. **APCM Report and Accounts:** RC requested a copy of the annual report in Word format rather than as a PDF to make it easier to make comments and note corrections. TR agreed to action this and asked everyone to have a look at it and to make comments by Monday 29 March. PD reminded us that the annual report needs to be made available for the rest of the congregation prior to the APCM and RC also said that it needs to go to the Independent Examiner. TR considered it would be fine if available for the congregation by 11 April. PM suggested that it would be good to have a photograph of the church showing it as it is now with chairs socially distanced etc, rather than pre-lockdown, to give it some reality. JB suggested a screen shot of Zoom would also be good. There was general agreement and TR said he would try to take some photos. when he is in church. TR reminded council that we need to find a replacement churchwarden for AS and a treasurer to take-over from HB. He also pointed out that some PCC members are due to retire this year: JC, IJ, VK and MG and we need to consider who to approach to replace them. PM has also resigned as she

will be moving away. RC asked which of these are eligible to stand again. MG said she is willing to continue. IJ is also probably eligible to be re-elected.

9. **Budget 2021:** DS requested a progress report following work that had been done recently by the group that had met to discuss a strategy for generating income and launching an appeal. TR responded by saying that he has already raised the issue both in his weekly mailchimp and in the March St. Mary's News (SMN). He felt that a continual reminder would help the message to get through to the congregation but was aware that many people may not be reading SMN now that it is online. There will be a more concerted effort after Easter leading up to the APCM and he is looking for the team to come up with the necessary pie charts etc to help the congregation visualise the projected deficit as he felt words alone are not enough. We need to be as specific as possible in explaining why we are in the situation and what we are asking for. DS explained that he had done some work at the beginning of March around the potential requirements and what we would be asking for, including some analysis of the range of planned giving. He had calculated that if there were 50 more people who could give by standing order at £15 per month it would give us an extra £10,000 annually. If we then asked the same of those who are already giving by SO that would give us £20,000 altogether which would go a considerable way towards closing the deficit. He felt that by launching a 50 x £15 campaign during April it would help the congregation to understand what we are asking from them in readiness for an appeal. In answer to a question from TE he added that it would be helpful to give people an idea of how much £15 a month or £4.25 per week might equate to e.g. two cups of Costa coffee or a bottle of wine, so they can see how by cutting back a little they could afford to do this. TR agreed that the general principle is a good one, but we need to be cautious about how we present it to avoid any misunderstanding or creating undue pressure. Not everyone will be able to afford £15 especially if they are only giving £15 per month already, but others would be able to give more. TR then moved on to consider who might come up with the pie charts and the marketing. Ideally we should think about having it ready by 11<sup>th</sup> April so that people have the information in their minds two weeks before the APCM before asking for pledges. DS offered to put the wording together but would seek help with pie charts etc from others. PD offered to look at producing pie charts as he has the necessary data. RC asked if there would be a communication going out with the mailchimp newsletter. TR thought it would be an additional communication to the normal newsletter – an appeal letter – sent via mailchimp most likely on 13 April. He also felt something should be included in the April SMN. He recognised that the target group are more likely to read the mailchimp rather than SMN now that it is online. Appeal letters will also need to be sent to those who cannot access the mailchimp and also could be uploaded onto the website. RC asked what should go into the April SMN. TR wanted the message to go out to as many as possible, but appealed for another PCC member to prepare this article as he had already mentioned it in the March SMN and will be writing about Easter. JB enquired about the thinking behind doing this before the APCM. TR replied saying he was happy to use JB's expertise and to be persuaded otherwise but he felt it was about

having a discussion and asking questions, engaging as many people as possible and getting them to take responsibility. By flagging up the seriousness of the situation he hoped more people would attend the APCM on 25 April, which due to practicalities would probably be after the service and also on Zoom. JB said there was something to be said for not doing anything before the APCM to create a shock factor prior to making the appeal which could be repeated the following week for the benefit of any who had not been present at the APCM. JB will continue to think about it and liaise with DS. TR feels we need something to alert the congregation to the scale of the problem before the APCM and to encourage them to attend the meeting to hear more about the situation. Maybe the first Sunday in May would be the time to focus on a response which could be incorporated into worship. RC asked if there had been any response to what TR had written in SMN. TR wasn't aware of any, but PD reported that an extra £480 had come in during the two weeks that the church had been open for services. RC pointed out that we are not at the start of the year and any delay in confronting the congregation would put back any response and reduce yield. TR said he is happy for us to collate all our information and get ourselves into the position of being able to go to the congregation confidently to explain the situation. We need to go with all the answers to the questions and he would like to push it from now on. PM stated that it is very important that when we do have an appeal we share the results with the congregation and provide them with actual figures about how much we have received, how much we have spent and how much we have over i.e. actual figures rather than budget. We need to be very careful about what we say and how we present it as anyone looking at the figures will not be easily convinced by the scale of the projected deficit when they see that we made a surplus in 2020 and the figures up to February do not suggest a deficit of £36,000 by the end of the year. TR asked PD when we would receive the March figures because by the end of the first quarter we should have a better idea of the deficit we might expect. PD said we probably would not have this information before two thirds of the way through the month. DS agreed that we should not be over pessimistic but at the end of the day we need to start to build a sustainable income. TR agreed and urged a decision about what we are going to do and when. RC would go with using the time between Easter and APCM to lay out the appeal, which can be reinforced at the APCM and continued into May. He felt that if there hasn't been any response so far to the clear statement in the report of the PCC meeting or TR's articles, a lot of communication still needs to be done. TE agreed that after Easter would be the best time as she felt that there would be a greater emotional response - the high point of the church's year when people are reminded of what Christ has done for them. VK also felt that we should build on the momentum leading up to the APCM. TR agreed explaining that the agenda of the APCM is largely set by Canon Law - certain functions have to be addressed and it should be an opportunity to reflect on the life of the church and its activities as well as thanking people for their contributions. TR would like to use this Tuesday's letter to alert people to our financial concerns with a link to the PCC report and TR's response in his article in the March issue of SMN - to urge people to stop, look and hear what we are saying. He would like DS's team to look to 18 April to come up with pie charts etc. DS suggested

that we could do something towards the launch of the appeal on the 18<sup>th</sup> with possibly something included in the service on the 25<sup>th</sup> so as not to encroach on the APCM. This would leave the service on the first Sunday in May to give more prominence to giving. VK felt that it is important to convey the message that it is not an appeal to get us through the year but more about achieving a sustainable income. TR agreed but added that it is more than that as it also is about responsibilities we have as members of St. Mary's and what we give in service not just money; also about how we deal with diversity and how we get the different groups integrated. MG reinforced what PM had said earlier about being positive and grateful for people's generosity, acknowledging their response to appeals that had helped us to get us through last year. It is always good to start on a positive note before sharing the negatives.

**ACTION: DS to draft an appeal letter**

**PD to work on pie charts etc.**

#### **10. Vicars Report:**

- TR reported that the Dorothy Longland Trust has met and agreed to continue the ongoing support for our curate, JB.
- He also reported that he, JB and CDC had been part of a Zoom meeting with Bishop Michael, together with other clergy in the diocese and members of Tear Fund operating in Africa to learn about 'Asset Based approach to Church Development' (ABCD) It had been a very useful seminar which we could continue to reflect on. There was much to learn from the practitioners in Africa where resources are limited. They start from what they have and what they can do rather than what they would like to have and do. He felt it could influence our approach to mission and ministry. He will probably say something about this at the next Connect Together.
- TR hoped that everyone who has been part of the Lent course will come together on 7 April to share thoughts and ideas about what we believe God has been saying to us about his purposes and his mission for St. Mary's. The course has been going well with a large number participating. He felt it would dovetail well with what the Bishop talked about and that there is much we can learn from our brothers and sisters in Tear Fund.
- TR and JB have also taken part in 'Unconscious Bias Training' about engaging with diversity and seeing blind spots when working in areas of prejudice. This was useful and it was good to be reminded about how we do things. Although he felt we managed them well there is always room for improvement.
- TR had accompanied Fabian Hiscock, someone he has known through his work as chaplain of the Sea Cadets, who has been walking 10,000 steps every day in aid of CAFOD. They walked from St. Paul's Langlebury to the RC church in Abbots Langley via Bedmond. TR wished to commend the work Fabian had been doing to support CAFOD's Lent campaign - a sister organisation of Christian Aid. 10,000 steps represented the distance many have to walk each day in order to get fresh water.

- TR has recently been in contact with someone he first knew 25 years ago as a troubled teenager while organising Christian camps in inner city Birmingham. He is now CEO of a charity in based in Uganda, “Rejuvenate the World” and is also a curate in Birmingham. Part of the project he is involved with in Uganda is a cooperative producing coffee on a grand scale. He contacted TR and a lot of other church leaders to ask if this is something we may wish to support. TR asked in principle if this something we might buy into in readiness for when we are next allowed to serve coffee in church. We would have to negotiate prices etc and he would like to advertise it using posters in church to show where the coffee comes from and why we are supporting it. It would be a way of showing that we are partnering with other churches to build God’s kingdom, whether locally or abroad. A number of those present were happy to support this idea.

**11. Health and Safety Issues / Safeguarding:** AS asked if we need to do anything further about testing the fire alarm regularly. It was noted that we have a legal obligation to test the fire alarm every week. The system has been updated and we now have a detailed logbook to record things in. PD confirmed that he and Liz had looked at it last week and Liz did a first test last Wednesday.

**12. AOB:** AS mentioned that she had an email earlier in the day suggesting that it might be possible to have a limited number of choir members in church on Easter Day. TR hoped that it might be possible to have a small group from the choir in church to provide some live music and will contact Anthony to see what can be arranged.

**13. Closing Prayer.** The meeting was closed by saying the Living God’s Love prayer

**Meeting closed at 21.35**

**Date of next meeting:** Monday 19 April 7.30