

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 April via Zoom

Present:

Revd Joshua Brocklesby (JB)
Roger Courtney (RC)
Peter Dean (PD)
Tilly Elliot (TE)
Margaret Greenstreet (MG)
Cathy Honeyman (CH)
Alison Saunders (AS)

Minutes taken by AS

- 1. Opening Prayer.** Josh started the meeting quoting some words from Isaiah 61 verse 3 which had been in the canticle during morning prayer: “they shall be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of his word to display his glory”. This image had reminded him of the tree next to the church in our logo and the fact that St. Mary’s is the only green space in the centre of the town. We as a congregation are called to be like a forest for all to see, somewhere that gives life to those around it, somewhere that gives shade and protection to those in need, and something that is sure and strong and deep rooted, planted by God to display His glory. He shared this in the hope that we could take this to see how individually and as a church we can we be called oaks of righteousness planted by the Lord for God’s glory in Watford. He then prayed using some of these ideas and asking the Holy Spirit to help us recognise in others and ourselves the gifts we have been given to administer the business of St. Mary’s as a PCC.

With the agreement of all those present PD handed over the chair to JB

- 2. Apologies for absence** (or not present): Rev. Tony Rindl (TR), Clinton Dan-Jumbo (CD-J), Jane Carter (JCa), Joanna Cooper (JCo), Abie Idris (AI), Annafrida Kadzura (AK), David Scourfield (DS).
- 3. Conflict of Interest.** JB reminded us to declare any conflict of interest if any should come up during the meeting.

4. **Approval of Minutes 21st March 2022.** Tilly asked for clarification about completing the form for the Register of Interested Parties. PD confirmed that this needed to be signed by everyone whether or not they had anything to declare. The approval of the minutes was proposed by RC, seconded by PD and agreed by all present.

5. **Matters Arising:**

- **Register of interested parties.** PD said that this exercise needs to be taken seriously. All do need to respond. Before sending it to Myers Clark he will check information given against the charities register and if he feels anything is missing he will contact individuals to check.
- **Repair of monitor and other IT issues.** PD reported that following an initial meeting with JB, RC and DS they decided to discuss the upgrade with “Creative”. JB said that a further meeting should be arranged in a week or two to take this forward. PD also reported that he has wired in as many IT points as he can to reduce the cost as far as possible. The photocopier has been moved into the office corridor and he can now get a signal through to the different areas of the church and meeting rooms apart from the Church Centre beyond the lounge. Further ideas for the upgrade will be discussed at the next meeting.
ACTION: Meeting to be arranged with ‘Creative’ asap.
- **Churches Together.** Now that the busy Easter weekend is over JB will contact Brian and Jackie Mee as requested.
- **Pay Policy / National Living Wage.** PD reminded us that we approved our pay policy during the last meeting. The national living wage goes up each April so we need to look at the Pre-School staff to make sure we are paying them at the correct rate. PD has already contacted Natalia, the Pre-School manager, this morning to reassure her about this . He also told us that some of the Pre-School staff have opted out of the pension scheme, but legislation requires us to opt them back in every 3 years when they can then opt out again. This is to encourage them to consider joining the scheme at regular intervals. This includes any of our staff who are earning enough to be in a pension scheme but have chosen not to be.
- MG pointed out that so far there has been no further action following the email from CdaC concerning work with children and families that had been read at the last PCC meeting. PD pointed out the affordability problem.
ACTION: AS to make sure that this is included on the next agenda.

6. **Correspondence.** None

7. **Committee Reports:**

- **Finance – 2021 Accounts.** PD has forwarded the February accounts that HB has prepared. After two months into the year (17%) our income is only 13% which is worryingly low. Expenditure is a bit below at 16%. Congregational

giving is also below the level it was this time last year. PD will follow this up with HB and Richard Watson. It could be related to delays of payments being made during the hand-over to AK. The other issue is the 2021 accounts. We are not at a point where we can sign these off because the independent assessor needs to have seen the whole report and we are still waiting for Tony's contribution. However, Myers Clark having looked at the accounts, have come back with a number of questions, mostly related to wanting to see completed paperwork. They have not queried HB's numbers. RC asked what the process is for getting the vicar's report. TR has indicated that he will do the report but we should have a contingency if this is not done, as in a vacancy when the CW's would write a report. In answer to RC's questions PD agreed that we are now aiming for a brief meeting after the morning service on 22 May for approval of the accounts and Annual Report.

- **Buildings RC**, having circulated his report, updated us on progress. The electrical report on the Church Centre revealed items requiring attention. He has also commissioned an inspection of the Cloisters Office, which needs to be done every five years. Work on the children's toilets will probably need to wait until the school summer holiday, although some of the preparatory work, such as re-locating the cleaners sink, can probably be done during term time. A date for this still has to be arranged.
Brightwell Road. Nothing to report.
- **Staffing Committee.** No meeting so nothing to report.
- **Pre-School.** The meeting scheduled for 26 April has had to be postponed. The new date has not yet been confirmed. The Pre-School staff are extremely grateful to RC for obtaining a very substantial grant of £10,000 towards the cost of installing the children's toilets.
- **Missions.** A meeting has not yet been arranged.

8. **Deanery Synod.** There has been no meeting since the last PCC meeting. PD reported that the Rural Dean is on sabbatical leave and was pleased to join us on Easter Sunday. PD reminded us that a deanery review of the Parish Share is taking place at the moment and that it had been the wish of the PCC that we put together a case why our share factor should be lower, which determines how much we pay the diocese. In order to justify this we really need to put together an analysis of any of the membership lists that we have. Pam Rastall has suggested this is something she may be able to help us with. Any changes that might result from this could not be implemented immediately and would result in other parishes having to pay more to fulfil the deanery obligation. CH asked why the deanery share could not be adjusted to reflect the parishes within it. PD responded by saying that the review is only by the deanery and any further decisions would need to be taken by the diocesan Finance Committee. AS reminded the meeting that there is a deadline towards the end of May by which we have to submit information for the review. It was agreed that AS, PD and JB should discuss this further at the end of the next staff meeting.

ACTION: AS, PD and JB to discuss after the next Monday staff meeting.

9. **APCM.** AS felt that the immediate priority must be to get on with approaching potential replacement churchwarden and PCC members in Tony's absence. PD challenged us to bring together the needs and priorities we have as a church with the talents we have in the congregation as we continue to work on the MAP process. CH questioned how well the leadership represents the congregation as it needs to reflect its increasing diversity. PD encouraged those present to let us know of anyone they feel would be useful to have on the PCC. RC pointed out that it is important that anyone approached should have a clear understanding of the commitment involved so that they can make a full contribution. It was recognised that family commitments make it difficult for some to give this commitment.

ACTION: Potential CW and PCC members to be approached.

10. **Policy Reviews:**

- **Equal Opportunities.** PD reminded us that we had already reviewed and approved this policy at the January PCC meeting, but the file name had not been updated to clarify when the next review becomes due.
- **Statement on Domestic Abuse.** RC said that as a result of a Current Affairs Connect Group organised last autumn with a representative from the Watford Women's Centre, where there had been a lot of input, this policy has been largely overtaken. This had been passed on to Cath. He has a draft statement on safeguarding and domestic abuse dated October 2021, which was a proposal for consideration. He felt that the statement on domestic abuse needs to be reconsidered in the light of that update. Some posters had been provided to put up in the ladies toilet which he doesn't think have been put up. There were also some posters to put up on the church notice boards. CdaC was doing a more general review at the time and had brought some papers to a PCC meeting. As a result RC felt that we do not have a current statement of domestic abuse that reflects these inputs.

ACTION: PD and AS to discuss this with CdaC.

11. **Curates Report.** JB and all the staff have been very busy since the last meeting. All the Easter services had been excellent culminating in 150 attending the Easter Day celebration. It was good to see new faces as well as many who we hadn't seen for a long time. It was the PCC's wish that thanks should be expressed to JB and CdaC as well as all the staff and churchwardens for the extra work undertaken during TR's sick leave. JB said that it had been a great team effort.

12. **Health and Safety Issues / Safeguarding / Fire Safety.** PD had added fire safety to the agenda as he recently met two representatives from the local fire station in church who said that a fire safety check is due. He has arranged for this to be carried out on Wed. 4 May. This will also be an opportunity for them to advise us about any issues.

13. **Any Other Business:**

- **Climate Group.** Nothing to report at the moment. Once TR is back a meeting will be arranged so that what has been up to now an informal group will become more formal.
- **CH** expressed her thanks to Josh for giving the congregation information about Rosemary Harpur's funeral service on 26th April and for including her and her family in the prayers. She reminded us that Rosemary had been on the PCC.
- **TE** expressed concern about the current arrangements for flowers in church. As there is no longer a team responsible for this she would like a group to get together to discuss how to move forward. She wondered whether to consider reinstating a rota for people to sign to provide flowers to commemorate an anniversary or to remember somebody, or to be content to provide flowers for Christmas, Easter and special occasions such as Remembrance Sunday. AS felt that with the limited number of people with the talent and enthusiasm, we shouldn't be too ambitious. However, we should make it known that people are welcome to provide flowers for personal occasions and to offer help with arranging them if necessary. She thought TE would be the best person to get a group together and that a short article for St. Mary's News would help to inform the congregation of the possibilities. The question of accessibility to the kitchenette and someone to take responsibility for the key was also discussed. AS also thanked TE for the tremendous amount of time and effort she had put in with her helpers to provide such magnificent displays for Easter.
- **JB** explained that there will soon be a new area on the website only accessible for PCC members. In that area will be all the papers from previous PCC meetings and those for current meetings.
- JB also explained why this extra meeting had been on Zoom and that barring further restrictions future meetings will be in person. The next full meeting will probably be on 20 June, but there will need to be a short one after a morning service, probably on 22 May, to approve the Annual Report and Accounts before the APCM on 29 May.

14. Closing Prayer. The meeting closed at 9.00pm with the Living God's Love prayer.