

## Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) for St Mary's Church, Watford

Sunday 21 May 2023 (approximately 30 minutes)

Vicar Rev Tony Rindl thanked everyone for attending and opened in prayer.

Father God we pray that as we discuss matters concerning your church, we pray that through the power of your Holy Spirit, you will direct us in our thoughts, in our proceedings, that we may humbly come before you the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the One who is so gracious to us. And we pray that as we meet today, we too may exercise the grace, Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer. Amen.**

**Recording the meeting** so the Minutes can be written up later. If anyone objects to anything they are saying being recorded, please say so. As soon as we've got the Minutes, the recording will be deleted.

**Election of Churchwardens** (Tony Rindl)

Peter John Dean – proposed by Stevie Trudgill and seconded by Liz Allan

Eileen Roby – proposed by Peter Dean and seconded by Juliet Scourfield

We have no other nominations.

It was agreed to elect both Peter and Eileen. Tony thanked both for their willingness to serve.

**Churchwardens Reply**, (Peter Dean)

I was delighted to hear that Eileen felt pressed by God to consider standing as churchwarden. It is a privilege as well as a challenge to serve St Mary's in this way. I ask you to be supportive of Eileen for a little while as she grows into the role and finds her feet. I have given her the cue that she has a bit of a get-out until formally sworn in at the end of June or beginning of July, by the newly appointed/in post yesterday Archdeacon of St Albans, the Venerable Charles Hudson. At this point I particularly want to thank Stevie and Alison for their work as deputy wardens over the past year. I am pleased that you have agreed to continue in this role for another year.

This was agreed by those present.

**Appointments of the Wardens of the Hamlets of Oxhey, Cassio and Leavesden** dating back to times of old. (Tony Rindl)

Those proposed are David Clemas, Graeme Bateman and Caroline Jones.

It was agreed that they will continue as wardens of the hamlets.

**The Annual Parochial Church Meeting**

Apologies for absence – Roger Courtney and Pam Tomlinson

**The Minutes for the APCM 2022** were approved by David Clemas. Seconded by Alison Saunders. The Minutes were accepted.

**Matters Arising** There were no Matters Arising from those Minutes.

**Report on Numbers entered on the Electoral Roll** (Peter Dean)

Thanks to Pam Rastall in the office for putting these details together.

The total on the Electoral Roll at the 2022 APCM was 140. Five have been removed from the Roll following their death and there are two new editions, making a total at the moment of 137. There have been a few Electoral Roll forms handed in, in the last week or so, these can be added in the very near future.

### **Those to be elected onto the Parochial Church Council (PCC) (Tony Rindl)**

Eileen Roby – proposed by Marcus Jones and seconded by Ivor Jones

Martin Whittick – proposed by Peter Dean and seconded by Alison Saunders

Roger Courtney – proposed by Gill Watson and seconded by Rachael Watson

Daniella Clinton – proposed by Peter Dean and seconded by Eileen Roby

These four nominations were agreed.

### **Election of the Deanery Synod (Tony Rindl)**

Peter Dean and Tilly Elliott had been proposed; the meeting agreed to elect them. In addition, Cathy Honeyman is ex-officio on the Deanery Synod by virtue of being a member of Diocesan Synod.

### **The Election of Representatives to Churches Together in Watford (Tony Rindl)**

We are proposing that Jackie and Brian Mee continue in that capacity. This was agreed.

### **Report on proceedings of the PCC in 2022 (Peter Dean)**

It has been a busy year. Finances have been a challenge for us this year. A lot of PCC time was taken up with that. People are referred to the Annual Report for more information.

### **Finances (Peter Dean)**

There was a significant delay in getting to a position where we knew the outcome of 2022. Annafrieda who had taken on the task of Treasurer last year had a number of family personal problems and had to step down. I am very thankful to Jacky in the office to have taken over and a few weeks ago got the books complete to the end of 2022. But we are not yet in a position to present to you audited accounts and therefore we have sought the permission of the Bishop to defer these to a later date. However, 2022 worked out to a deficit of £46,500 which is depleting our reserves. The good news from last year was the increase in income from premises letting. I had conservatively budgeted for £3,500 because getting lettings into the church centre was being delayed after our development by covid coming along. However, what we achieved last year in comparison with a budget of £3,500 was £24,000. A significant improvement due to a lot of effort by Liz, and time she spent with people using the church premises as a whole, bringing them in, making sure they had the facilities they needed. So I'm very thankful to Liz for that.

I have to admit that financial support from our congregation was well below the stretched budget that had been set. And indeed it is little above the figure of 8 years ago. It is challenging for us, although of course we do recognise that it is hard times for everyone. Despite that, looking forward to 2023 our current budget is only showing a deficit of £23,000 in comparison with last year. Last year at the APCM Andy Roby asked the question, 'how many years can we keep going with a deficit like this?' The current answer is about 18 months before we breach our reserves policy. Our reserves policy is that we keep available cash in the bank equal to 2 months operating costs plus a month's salary costs. So there are potentially some hard decisions for the PCC to make as it seems there are little extra cuts we can make without affecting our mission, what we want to do as a church.

Finally, I want to particularly thank those who have helped get us to where we are, Jacky Faria in the office, Richard Watson who does a lot of work for us, doing our salary, Gift Aid claims, and obviously as an accountant is of great use as an advisor to us. Even Graham Bateman who was treasurer many years ago and is still dutifully doing the banking of cash. We've also still been greatly helped by Helen, she was our treasurer for so many years and has such book-keeping experience and expertise that she has been a great help.

Charlie Luckhurst who takes our Minutes for Finance Committee meetings and also does things like submitting the forms for reclaiming VAT on work done on the church buildings.

### **Any Questions?**

(David Scourfield's question) It's not clear on the Agenda where this question lies, but it does relate to income and the Budget. I appreciate what has been said by Tony and Peter, and the resource in people being available and personal circumstances. In my mind the Budget situation with continued deficit has been ongoing for at least 3 years and also over at least the last 4 years we have not progressed or finalised what was a Mission Action Plan, and might be now the ABCD. And I guess it's a question of governance by all involved in the church, and you mentioned mission at work. Does everybody understand what the mission is of St Mary's and how budgets can be set? With the priorities of that mission in mind, it seems there's a gap in both the governance of that and therefore the communication to the wider church.

(Tony Rindl's reply) I think you were on the PCC when Bishop Michael came and others were invited to the Away Day, and when we looked in more detail at the Asset Based approach to church growth. Given the substantial deficit that we have experienced in recent years, we have to more and more look at that as being the compass bearing in terms of the direction of travel. So it has been about encouraging partnership work, much of my time is spent building up relationships with groups and Liz has done a fantastic job in encouraging them to use our resources. So it is about using what we do have, rather than worrying about what we don't have, is the approach different way of looking at it. I think yes we are a bit behind with the Mission Action Plan and I think we've been a bit hijacked because of the concern, rightly so, about the finances, but I'm keen to, in the autumn, to revisit the ABCD and start to prioritise. One of the other things was our common concern around climate change and that's progressed as well. So it's not that we've sat still. And don't forget we've had pandemics and the aftermath of all of that as well. We haven't stood still. But I would still say the greatest resource that we have that hasn't been utilised as much as it could be, are the skills that are around in this church today and the experience that is around the room today and we need to join voices to use that, because of finances we can't pay for a family and children's worker to do the work, certainly not full time so we have to look at things differently. We are beginning to do that, but we need to do that with more focus on that in the autumn.

(Val's question on behalf of Wednesday Fellowship) I've heard there's a possibility of the minibus going. If the minibus goes there'll be no more Wednesday Fellowship because I'd only be able to get here in fine weather. When I took over there were 3 people, I've now got a list of 16, and more of them use the minibus. So far this year I've paid in £240 from people who come to church or to Wednesday Fellowship. I've got 3 outings coming up, one to Dunstable, one to Ricky Lido, one in October which will all be £10 a head and I'm pretty sure I'll have a full minibus. I'm doing everything I can do to try and support because it used to be, 'oh put a pound in the pot for the minibus' that isn't realistic. So I've been working on getting more money for the minibus, but everybody who uses the minibus should pay something towards it. And if everybody did it would be far better. So I just ask please, the elderly people need something to go in a friendly manner, to mix and have some company and something to look forward to. So please think of our case.

(Rosemary Clemas) The minibus is a valuable commodity, especially as Val says for the elderly people, but a few of us have been on an eco-friendly weekend to know how to save your planet and save the climate. We had an excellent speaker Dr Ruth Valerio, she showed us how we could get our churches involved, and of course one of the things is to cut emission and so therefore how many people can you move in the minibus, one vehicle one load of emission. By the way I'm quite willing to help with funding of the minibus, we need the minibus to stay, what we need is more people in the church.

(Peter Dean's reply) David Hedges has for many years now put time and effort into driving the minibus. This is one of the things where it would be useful to have other volunteers. I stand alongside David in thinking I'm not getting any younger.

(Tony Rindl's reply) I think we recognise the value of the minibus. I think that if we can find imaginative ways in which we can finance the minibus then I'm more than happy to do that. But the PCC are charged with having to manage the accounts in a responsible way, and so looking for ways in which we can save money and this is one of those that has been floated by members of the PCC. So if we can find imaginative ways of funding it, or people stepping up with generosity then I'm happy to encourage the PCC to re-examine this. I would say though that if some major expense occurs where some part needs to be replaced on the minibus then again we might need to look at this because it is expensive. It is £3-4,000 a year to keep the minibus running so it is quite a substantial amount of money. But I do recognise how important the minibus is to those who use it. If we were to get rid of the minibus then we would have to find alternatives for sure, but Rosemary's comment about reducing emissions and so on, I hear that and take that on board as well. So we will go back and rethink.

**Appointment of Auditor** we defer to the autumn. (Tony Rindl)

(Peter Dean) The PCC raised whether we could reduce costs. Strictly we have an independent assessor. We are not big enough to require a full audit. I'm not in a position to propose anyone other than Myers Clark at the moment or re-appointing them. Although we have been looking at alternatives. Since we are going to have to come back to present formal accounts to you, I propose that this is also deferred until that point in time.

**Deanery Synod** (Peter Dean)

The year started with a meeting in this church at which the speaker was the then newly appointed Diocesan Secretary David White, giving the Deanery insight into the Diocesan office and the central support it can offer. This year also saw the Deanery review the parish shares or the contribution spread between the different churches across Watford. That exercise actually resulted in a saving for St Mary's of some £3,000 per annum. I can't give you an exact figure because what was revised was a factor that's used in the calculation, other factors are the income that's needed to fund the diocese. The other factor that produced a reduction in our parish share for this coming year is the fact that we no longer have a curate, because we had to contribute to his housing costs while he was with us.

We ended up cancelling a few meetings this year, with covid behind us maybe we'll be able to catch up in this next year.

**Report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church** (Peter Dean)

Fabric refers to the building. Just at the beginning of this year 2023, we had what's called the quinquennial inspection when a qualified architect looks for any problems. We came off reasonably well with no massive very expensive surprises.

The goods and ornaments of the church refer to things that are not fixed. Things like the communion silver, and we've added to our inventory over the last 2 years, this lectern, the communion table, another lectern that have been made out of the oak from the old pews and therefore its appropriate with that history for them to be added on to the list which potentially the new Archdeacon of St Alban's will be here in the summer to go through and check with myself and Eileen.

**Any Other Business** (Tony Rindl) No Other Business

The date of the next APCM will be Sunday 19th May 2024.

The Bishop kindly gave us an extension until September 2023 for the items we have deferred.

**Close of meeting – The Grace was shared**