

Minutes of the meeting held on 16th November 2020 via Zoom

Present:

Revd Tony Rindl – Chair (TR)

Roger Courtney (RC)

Peter Dean (PD)

Tilly Elliott (TE)

Margaret Greenstreet (MG)

Cathy Honeyman (CH)

Abie Idris (AI)

Victor Kitange (VK)

Pat Moore (PM)

Alison Saunders (AS)

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

- 1. Opening Prayers** AS opened by commenting that whenever we meet as a PCC, with the responsibility of sharing in the mission and leadership of St Mary's, we come needing great wisdom. AS read from Proverbs chapter 1 verses 2-3 and in chapter 2 we find where this wisdom comes from, it's from the Lord. AS then opened with prayer.
- 2. Apologies for Absence:** Received from Helen Baldwin (HB), Joshua Brocklesby (JB) Jane Carter (JCa), Joanna Cooper (JCo), Clinton Dan-Jumbo (CDF-J), Ivor Jones (IJ), David Scourfield (DS)
- 3. Conflict of interest.** None declared

4. **Approval of PCC Minutes 19th October 2020.** Approved by Margaret Greenstreet (MG). Seconded by Roger Courtney (RC). All who had been present agreed that they were a correct record.
5. **Matters arising:** VK has been in touch with Jacky Faria and circulated some documents which should be helpful for those new to the PCC. TR reminded the PCC that RC summarises the previous PCC meeting in the monthly newsletter.
6. **Correspondence:** None received
7. **Committee Reports**
 - a. Finance. PD circulated a report to the PCC prior to the meeting. PD stated that at the end of October (83% of the year) general fund income was at 78%. More significantly below budget than last year although he had removed the Edna Stafford legacy of £10,000 from the general fund.

Expenditure is well below budget at 66%. At this point in the year PD warned that there are some elements of expenditure that occur at the end of the year eg insurance for the minibus. He has tried to anticipate all of these in the end of year prediction column of the draft 2021 budget spreadsheet.

While the church has been open, we have seen some donations coming in from members of our congregation who don't have online access and would never set up a direct bank to bank payment.

With the preschool the current situation is very positive:

- Income £54,670 - 85% of budget
- Outgoings mainly salary £38,434 - 66% of budget

Even after a rent payment for the centre preschool have made a surplus for years. 2018 £8,299 and 2019 £6,677. They are on track to equal or exceed their budget surplus of £4,745 for 2020. During the first lockdown while they were closed, Herts County Council funding continued. The outlook for 2021 is however bad. Present numbers are below 50% of previous levels and unless this improves one would expect the county funding to come down proportionally. PD estimates 75% of previous roll numbers would be required to support the current staff bill and break even.

Brightwell Road is quiet at the moment, but works are needed and this should be included in the budget for 2021.

With the budget PD predicted the remainder of 2020 and said that there may be a deficit of £5K, even though there was a surplus at the end of October.

TR thanked PD for his very clear report.

CH asked why there aren't so many children registered with the pre-school and PD commented that preschool is voluntary and COVID may be causing some parents not to want to send their children to pre-school, or parents may be on furlough.

TE asked how people know about pre-school and MG said that at the moment it is by word of mouth.

There was a detailed discussion on the figures at the end of October compared with the end of year projection, in order for the PCC to fully understand the situation.

- b. **Buildings:** RC produced the following report prior to the meeting:

Church Refurbishment

- 1) Our architect is seeking to complete the remaining 'snagging' matters so that the 'retention' sum owing to the contractor can be paid. He has also produced designs for replacement handrails at the north porch similar to those that were lost during the refurbishment works and is obtaining estimates for their fabrication and installation.
- 2) The DAC will be considering the proposed design for the 'manifestation' on the sliding door (ie the design on the door that is required for safety reasons) at its meeting on 19th November.
- 3) Peter Dean and I are reviewing the works necessary to complete the wifi installation in the church and office.

Other church works

Our architect has asked a structural engineer to advise on the works in the bell chamber. They will be visiting the church on 20th November.

Church Centre Roof

The contractor's final invoice has been received. When this has been paid, we will receive the warranty documentation. Some small expenditures are still outstanding. These will bring the total ex-VAT cost of the works to around £116k, slightly in excess of the original £110k budget estimate.

- c. **Staffing Committee.** The committee has not met since the last PCC meeting.
- d. **Pre-School.** AS reported that one of the staff members, Magda, submitted her resignation before half-term, with her last working day being Friday 20th November. Adriana, having volunteered at pre-school for two years, has now started her two-year apprenticeship.

A matter was discussed of a confidential nature which has been excluded. Please contact either Alison Saunders or Peter Dean (Churchwardens) or Rev Tony Rindl (Vicar) if you would like more information. The matter has since been resolved.

TR commented that he has previously questioned the wisdom of the way the pre-school has been set up and the relationship with the PCC. Also to what extent is it consistent with the mission and ministry of our church. We need to tighten up the contractual agreement that we have with the pre-school and how we manage the pre-school accounts. TR would like to see a separation of the pre-school accounts and the PCC accounts. AS agrees. RC says that there is a memorandum of understanding which sets out the relationship between the pre-school and the PCC but noted that there is no separate pre-school reserve. It was always set up to be a part of the church as a Christian preschool. AS said that it has evolved into something that it was not originally set out to be.

TR said that there are updated guidelines from the Diocese for church centre lettings for both casual lettings and formal lettings. Pre-school is a formal letting, ie a regular letting. In the guidelines it stresses the legal requirement that any agreement is in writing. This is an opportunity for us to formalise our arrangements, but we must be aware that this is a complex area that needs detailed consideration. TR said that he believes that the present arrangement is not robust enough.

TR asked the pre-school committee to present to the PCC a mid-term plan of how they see it developing and a robust review of how they operate today. This should be presented to the PCC in January. MG commented that this would mean a meeting of the preschool committee before Christmas.

AS and MG to report back to the PCC in January with a proposed plan for the preschool and, if necessary, call for an extra PCC meeting to discuss.

e. **Missions.** This group has not met

8. **Proposed Schedule of Works Church Centre.**

RC circulated a paper to the PCC. This includes estimates for the works. The flooring could be done at Christmas and the lighting and replacing the ceilings during the half-term holiday.

The estimated cost is £35,856 We would be paying approximately £7K for the VAT and this can be claimed back.

Estimates for flooring and installation of the cooker are all in line with what RC got 2 years ago. The estimate for ceilings is much higher than we were previously led to believe, and RC recommends getting additional quotes for this work, and if the PCC agree, the Standing Committee will review and approve the quote.

Some funds have already been granted for these works: £18,277 which leaves a gap of £17,579 We could appeal to the congregation for this money, but at the moment we also need an increase to general giving. There is sufficient money to release from the development fund.

RC asked the PCC if we should include creating the children's toilets as these would need to be done before the new floor is down. TR said that it would be an improvement to the church centre to have children's toilets. TE agreed.

TR is fully expecting to ask the congregation for contributions to this project and that this is a really good opportunity to ask for help with the funding. TR also said that any appeal for the church centre must not reduce the giving to the general fund. The PCC agreed to underwrite the cost with the money from the development fund, but are looking for the appeal to raise the funds.

MG said that the work should go ahead whilst the building is not being used much. With the works done, we should be able to hire it out more

PD reminded the PCC that at the last meeting the PCC said that we should not make major financial decisions without ensuring that the funding is available. RC says that there is sufficient funding in the development fund for these works. PD is concerned that we haven't got a recent estimate for the AV system, bearing in mind the changes since COVID, as it may now be more than the £50K already earmarked. There was a detailed discussion on the funding and all agreed that there was enough funds in the development fund to underwrite this project.

The PCC:

- 1) Accepted the estimates for works to the flooring, Pre-School entrance and kitchen
- 2) Agreed that the ceilings, lighting and fire alarm system should be renewed, but to remit to the Standing Committee the acceptance of an estimate for ceilings and lighting
- 3) Agreed that the source of assured initial funding will be from the development fund.
- 4) Agreed an appeal should be made to the congregation, and to remit to the Standing Committee and/or Finance Committee to bring forward proposals for its nature and timing.

Proposed by Roger Courtney (RC), seconded by Alison Saunders (AS) and all agreed

9. Budget 2021

On reviewing the proposed budget drawn up by PD, TR said that we seemed to be looking at a deficit budget of £51K and all agreed that this is a very high figure.

PD reviewed the proposed budget in detail with the PCC and asked for comments. TR said that the budget is a good representation of how much it costs to run the church. After a lengthy discussion, TR said we should all look closely at the figures and consider if there are any other pots of money that could be used as this is the rainy day that we have been saving some of the money for.

TR said that the lead chaplain has not yet been appointed and is unlikely to be appointed before the start of 2021. The lead chaplain works 25% for St Mary's and TR said that this role is important for the role of our church to help with our ministry.

TR thanked PD for all his hard work on the budget.

10. **Vicar's Report.** TR reported that there has been one Sunday service in church. Running the zoom service in church with a small congregation attending went really well. When the restrictions begin to lift TR said that we now know what we need to do to run this type of service. TR is considering what we can offer for Christmas. Reflecting on Josh's ordination which was a simpler service with fewer people and yet was so meaningful, TR believes that whatever we do in church/zoom, attendees will feel a connection with Christmas and the real truth and meaning of the event. TR said a huge thank you to Josh for his work with the live streams as well as Peter, Cath and Alison for their hard work in bringing these services together.

Yesterday TR attended the on-line interfaith pilgrimage and it was a really good event. This will be available as a U-Tube video and TR will give the congregation the link when it's available.

TR informed the PCC that he is stepping down as Rural Dean at the end of this year.

11. **Health and Safety Issues / Safeguarding.**

New members of the PCC must be DBS checked and should contact Claire Edwards. Also all connect group leaders and deputies should be DBS checked.

12. **Any Other Business.**

Nothing to report.

13. **Closing Prayer.** The meeting closed at 22:50 with a prayer from TR.

Date of next meeting: Monday 18th January.