

ST MARY'S, RIVERHEAD WITH DUNTON GREEN

MINUTES

Meeting of the Parochial Church Council

Tuesday 17 November 2020

8.00pm on Zoom

PRESENT:

Rachel Wigley in the chair

Alison Bull, Revd. Mark Bridgen, Daphne Harrison (LLM), Stuart Wigley, Ronnie Todd

Susan Allender, Simon Bull, Karen Forster-Pearce, Richard Gibson, Jane Ibbotson, Margaret Nicholas, Charlotte Rakhit, Barry Sharp, Bennet Smith, Sarah Stott, Ali Wakefield

1 Passage of Scripture and Prayers

The meeting opened with a bible passage and prayer.

2 Apologies

None

3 To Elect PCC Officers

a) Vice Chair (in the absence of a Vicar or Churchwardens) – Barry Sharp

Proposed: Daphne Harrison

Seconded: Rachel Wigley

All content

b) Hon Treasurer – Stuart Wigley

Proposed – Alison Bull

Seconded – Daphne Harrison

All content

c) Hon Secretary – Veronica Todd

Proposed – Daphne Harrison

Seconded – Sarah Stott

All content

4 To Elect Standing Committee

Consisting of:

Vicar, Lay Minister, Churchwardens, Treasurer, Secretary, Bennet Smith

All content

5 To Co-Opt Barry Sharp and Karen Forster-Pearce

Barry Sharp

Proposed: Charlotte Rakhit

Seconded: Sarah Stott

All content

Karen Forster-Pearce

Proposed: Margaret Nicholas

Seconded: Simon Bull

All content

6. To Choose Assistant Wardens (one year term of office)

Barry Sharp and Sarah Stott offered to stand again as Assistant Wardens to serve for a period of one year during 2020/21

All content

6 To approve Minutes of Meeting 15 September 2020

The Minutes were agreed by those present.

Subsequent to the meeting, it was pointed out that "Local Lay Minister" should read "Licensed Lay Minister".

The Minutes were amended accordingly at point 4 "Establishment of Joint Council for the West Sevenoaks Team Ministry" and "...Local Lay Minister..." was amended to read "...Licensed Lay Minister..."

8 Matters Arising

Church Fabric

The Treasurer reported that the church clock electronic timing mechanism has been installed.

Broadband has now been installed in church.

Someone has been to look at the mosaics behind the altar with a view to cleaning them and will send a quotation.

9. i) To Adopt the House of Bishops' "Promoting a Safer Church Policy;

ii) To Adopt St Mary's Safeguarding Policy;

iii) To Discuss Reflections on Church of England Report into Sexual Abuse

A copy of the above three documents had been sent to the PCC for their consideration prior to the meeting.

It was asked if those present were happy to adopt "The House of Bishops' Promoting A safer Church Policy".

All content.

The document was formally adopted.

It was agreed by those present that, as safeguarding has changed considerably over the past couple of years, the St Mary's Safeguarding Policy is no longer relevant and would be withdrawn. A new policy will be drawn up in the future, once we have a new Vicar. In the meantime we will refer everyone to the House of Bishops' policy which has a link on our safeguarding page on St Mary's website.

All content

St Mary's Safeguarding Policy was formally withdrawn.

Susan Allender will ask Robert to make the necessary change to the church website.

New PCC members Richard Gibson, Jane Ibbotson and Karen Forster-Pearce will be required to undertake the CofE Safeguarding Course CO. The secretary had forwarded the link prior to the meeting.

Barry Sharp completed the CO course in 2018; it is valid for three years and so it will not be necessary for Barry to undertake the course again at this time.

Daphne Harrison, Ali Wakefield, and Sarah Way will need to complete the Leadership Safeguarding Course which has been interrupted because of the Covid-19 situation.

Discussion - Reflections on Church of England Report into Sexual Abuse

Revd Mark Bridgen opened the discussion by stating that this is a real fall from Grace for the Church of England. It makes appalling reading. However, there have been considerable changes over the last couple of years as there had been a real disconnect between paperwork and communication with people. Communication is now much better with the diocese. A lot is currently expected of people regarding safeguarding.

Mark suggested there should be a checklist to establish whether there is anything we have been missing. He also proposed that Safeguarding should be more of a team effort within the three churches, with everyone being more pro-active. However, we must remember that most people are volunteers within our churches.

We should have a presence on our websites to show the church is a safe place to attend. We need to look at how we reach out to the Parishes and ask ourselves who are we protecting?

A discussion followed and a summary of points raised by PCC members is below:

1. Would people know where to go if faced with a problem?
2. We need to make options for reporting available.
3. The church website is a good place to start.
4. Make easy routes for reporting available.
5. People are more comfortable speaking to someone they know, rather than the Vicar, for example.
6. A contact for independent chats is available through the Diocese.
7. Safeguarding has to be accessible to people.

8. What do we need to do ourselves to help?
9. We need to make the whole church aware.
10. There have been changes in culture and behaviour within the church and a huge amount needs to be done and addressed. We must take what steps we can to make access for help instantaneous, rather than searching through a website, especially where children are involved. The Safeguarding Policy is more for adults who have been approached with a problem.
11. Suggestion that we should have a safeguarding team as it is much too big a task for one person to deal with. Ali and Richard both volunteered to be on a team with Susan.
12. Good idea for us all to be aware of issues by undergoing the safeguarding courses.
13. The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer has a spreadsheet available regarding roles.
14. We can't really expect everyone to be properly trained but we do have to know what to say if approached, so basic training is needed.
15. Karen and Diane visit baptismal families and will need to know where to direct them if approached with a safeguarding problem.
16. Mark was asked whether his previous parish had any other ways of approaching the issue. Answer: No they didn't.
17. Schools have pastoral care but they shouldn't be expected to deal with church issues. As a church, we need to make sure we have a safety net in place and available.
18. The problem needs to be acknowledged and be seen to be acknowledged.
19. Problems should be reported first to our safeguarding officer, then Vicar/LLM/Churchwardens/PCC.

Mark emphasised how this discussion has shown the importance of the role of the Parish Safeguarding Officer, which is very tough and demanding. He also mentioned there are a team of three for safeguarding at Kippington church.

We need an opportunity to hear how the Parish feel about safeguarding policies and practices but must make it clear we are only talking about safeguarding in church, not in the wider community.

Mark concluded by saying it was good to hear everyone's comments. At some point there will be a discussion with the Diocese where we may have an opportunity to tell them what we would like regarding safeguarding as a Parish. He pointed out that the general reflections and comments he has heard/received are specific to each individual church. He thanked everyone and hoped we will make our churches a safer place for all, especially if they know where to go for help, if needed.

11 AOB

Fire Notice - Alison reiterated the instructions contained in her fire notice, which had been sent to everyone in advance of the meeting. The basics have been taken from the notice on the notice board in church. She pointed out it is a work in progress, especially regarding the evacuation from church and everyone congregating in the church car park, which could be dangerous if cars were to start leaving. We need to think about that point.

Two important points to note:

- 1) In the event of a fire, please ignore the current instruction of one door in and one door out of church. This is only in place because of Covid restrictions when the church is open for services.
- 2) Not to move cars if evacuated.

