

ST MARY THE VIRGIN, RIVERHEAD WITH DUNTON GREEN

MINUTES

Meeting of the Parochial Church Council

Monday 5 July 2021
8.00pm on Zoom

PRESENT:

Rev Andy Finn in the chair

Rev Mark Bridgen, Rev Anne Bourne, Daphne Harrison (LLM),
Alison Bull, Rachel Wigley, Stuart Wigley, Ronnie Todd, Susan Allender,
Simon Bull, Michele Cooke, Karen Forster-Pearce, Richard Gibson, Margaret Nicholas, Barry Sharp,
Bennet Smith,

1 Passage of Scripture and Prayers

The meeting opened with a bible passage and prayer.

2 Apologies

Jane Ibbotson, Sarah Stott,

3 To approve Minutes of Meeting 11 May 2021

The Minutes were amended at point 10, Matters Arising, to read:

.....1) Finance - there has been an email exchange

In place of

.....1) Finance - there has been a meeting

Proposed: Alison Bull

Seconded: Rachel Wigley

All content

The Minutes will be signed by the Vicar at the next opportunity.

4 Matters Arising

Deanery Prayer Link Representative

The prayer link was discussed by the Monday prayer/bible study group and Alison Bull volunteered to be the link for St Mary's. A topic is put forward by the prayer group and agreed and discussed with Daphne before being sent on to the Diocesan Prayer Group.

Churches Together

Rachel Wigley asked if there was any further news on the Churches Together Group. Anne Bourne advised that a meeting had been arranged but was subsequently cancelled. She understands it is being rearranged. Sue Shepherd is the Secretary and has no more information. Anne will ask for Mark and Andy to be included in any further email exchanges.

5 Finance

The Treasurer (Stuart Wigley) gave an update. He is due to carry out a half year review which will be done in due course. He will then circulate his findings and look again at our Parish Share contribution.

We have been given a grant from the Diocese and have also received a significant legacy from Beryl Ellinor, which is good news.

An application for a grant towards an audio/visual system for church has been made.

There is a new App from the Diocese relating to the parish giving scheme where the Diocese provide assistance with the administration, including Gift Aid. It would eliminate the need for standing orders. Stuart is looking into the possibility of using it.

Stuart is looking into an alternative company for our church insurance. We are currently paying £400 per month to insure the church and the church hall.

A meeting has been held between Stuart and the treasurers from St Luke's and St Mary's Kippington and they are looking at sharing contacts, especially for any work needing to be done in the buildings.

Trevor Harrison has kindly offered assistance to help Stuart with the Finances.

The question of whether the Diocese will receive a share of the amount of the legacy was asked?

Stuart replied that, as the legacy is not restricted to a particular project, it will be included in the assessment of income when it comes to calculating the Parish Share.

Andy thanked Stuart very much for all his hard work.

6. Church Services & events

Andy gave a massive thank you to the churchwardens, Stuart and Simon for all the work they do in streaming the church services and keeping the physical church running. He also thanked everyone else who help in lots of ways, for instance the concert organised by the Events Committee and church cleaning, inside and outside, amongst others.

The subject of using wine and wafers for the Eucharist was discussed. Andy told the PCC that St Luke's and St Mary's Kippington distribute the bread and wine through intinction. The Vicar dips the wafer into the cup of wine and then gives the wafer to the communicant. The Vicar takes full communion once all the communicants have been served. Everyone has the option to take just the wafer, or wafer dipped in the wine, as we journey back into regular services in church. Most people thought it was a very good idea.

A proposal was put forward to go ahead with the option of using wafers dipped in wine from this Sunday, for those who wish it.

Proposed: Richard Gibson

Seconded: Karen Forster-Pearce

All in favour

Andy then advised the meeting that we are very much in need of sidespeople and asked if we could encourage others to volunteer so that he is able to get a rota up and running.

7. Church Fabric

Mosaics - Stuart Wigley reported that we are struggling with getting quotations for the cleaning of the mosaics at the moment. He told the meeting that Paul Todd has kindly offered to help and will be meeting with him in the near future.

Church Clock - The clock is now working. Hooray!

Quinquennial Report - The report has not yet been received. We are hoping to receive it in the next couple of weeks.

8. Safeguarding

Several documents had been sent with the Agenda and Minutes in advance of the meeting relating to serious incident reporting, both safeguarding and non-safeguarding incidents. Andy explained that the PCC have a responsibility to report any safeguarding incidents to the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer which will be left with him to deal with.

The acceptance of the documents and the way we report serious incidents, as given above, was then proposed for approval by the PCC.

Proposed: Susan Allender

Seconded: Michele Cooke

All in favour

Andy proposed a vote of thanks to Susan Allender for all the hard work she has put into the many Safeguarding matters she has had to deal with and to Ronnie Todd for her work on the DBS checks.

9. Reflective Process

Andy had sent a letter on 27 May to address certain comments he had received about our current form of worship. He explained he was conscious of certain things which are happening, or not happening, at the moment, which some people do not agree with and he wanted the PCC to be aware that he is working within the realms of the profile for St Mary's and to allay any fears of conversations that he is not doing what was asked of him. He is also conscious that the letter has led to lots of other conversations around what he is doing/not doing.

He suggested we discuss the various comments and try to process a way forward.

We are on a journey back to physical worship which some people may fear. They may be feeling anxious or isolated about the pros and cons between physical/Zoom services and may be feeling pulled in different directions. The journey back may be complex and will need a lot of reflecting and listening.

Andy shared a list of things which have been missing during the pandemic, most of which have been because of current regulations i.e. singing, coffee, meeting together to chat in church, before and after the service. It's like missing a comfort blanket which is needed to make us feel settled. Many

things are not quite the same. Some of our church traditions have not been there, but once we're able to put things back, perhaps it will help people feel more comfortable. There may still be lots of restrictions and we will have to live with a new normal as we can never fully go back to how things were pre-Covid.

We may be fully back in church after September and can start to have servers back and do some of the things we used to do, which may help to make it feel like St Mary the Virgin church again. However, we probably won't have the same number of people in church and with 3 sidesmen, 2 readers, 1 intercessor, 2 servers and a crucifer – as well as 1 to run the zoom service and 1 to operate hymns/laptop at the back -that is 11 people needed for a Eucharistic service; it could be difficult finding people to help.

With regard to St Mary's traditions, Andy told the PCC that he preferred not to have the bell rung during the consecration of the elements. His reason being that it is often used in high church settings to mark the point where some people understand the bread and wine to become the body and blood of Jesus. He does not agree theologically with that belief. However, he would be happy for the bell to be rung at the beginning and end of the service.

Unfortunately the aumbry candle, which hangs in the Lady Chapel, broke away from its fixing and, because of insurance issues, it was thought best not to replace it but to have a battery candle and tea lights in there for private prayer.

He felt we still have a long way to go and we have seen massive changes during this time of the pandemic. What we need to do now is fix our eyes on Jesus.

The PCC were then invited to give their comments, listed below:

(Margaret Nicholas) conscious that Andy (Vicar) has given a great deal towards the traditions of St Mary's and she does welcome new ways of going forward. However, she doesn't understand why we can't keep all of our St Mary's traditions. The wearing of a chasuble and the ringing of the bell are not things affected by Covid.

(Karen Forster-Pearce) we are lucky to have Andy and the support he is giving us as a church. There have been disagreements in the past about women priests, amongst other things, which we overcame. Karen had never thought of St Mary's as a high church and feels we should be offering our help to the clergy rather than raising issues.

(Bennet Smith) struggling with the chosen way of worship currently at St. Mary's and believes people would prefer to keep the traditions, as given in our profile at the time of interview. He feels it's a shame that certain members of the congregation feel the need to air their feelings of disappointment with the way the worship is conducted and believes Andy is not being as adaptable as he would have expected from the interview process.

(Vicar) not used to wearing a chasuble and prefers not to because he feels it is restrictive. However, because of the depth of feeling of some members of the congregation, he is happy to wear it at important festivals such as Easter and Christmas. With regard to the candles not being lit in front of the mosaics, a comment in the report on the condition of the mosaics mentioned there was a black substance on the mosaics caused by the lit candles.

It was mentioned that those particular candles were introduced by Rev Gerald Cunliffe in the 1990s and so are not part of a particularly long standing tradition in St Mary's.

(Ronnie Todd) not having bells, candles or the wearing of a chasuble didn't particularly bother her but that was probably because of her non Anglican background. However, she did feel that there were members of the congregation who had been attending St Mary's for many years and their love of tradition should be dealt with sensitively. She made the point that Andy has shown his deep Christian faith and love of God in the way he leads our worship, which is very important.

(Susan Allender) we have been through a really difficult time over the past 2-3 years, with the interregnum and the pandemic. Now is *not* the time for splintering of the congregation, but we need to move forward carefully and be sensitive to everyone's feelings. We really don't want people leaving St Mary's. With regard to ringing of the bells, she feels that they are an important part of our worship.

(Daphne Harrison) a conversation had with Rev Martin Booth about the ringing of bells during the blessing of the sacraments. As mentioned by Andy, some higher churches believe in transubstantiation when the bell is rung during the blessing of the sacraments, which he does not believe in. Martin also did not believe in transubstantiation but felt the ringing of the bell did remind people outside that something of importance was happening in church and so offered it as a service to all.

(Rachel Wigley) received observations from certain members of the congregation that they are not against change but would prefer to move forward with changes slowly.

(Alison Bull) as a relatively new member of St Mary's, has accepted the inherited higher church traditions. Feels that the point in the service when we hear the bell and always seeing the sanctuary candle alight is a sign that God is with us at all times. We should be looking to God and following the ways of Jesus when thinking about traditions and should not forget that.

(Susan Allender) made the further point that there should be no comparison of Andy, our vicar, to Martin, our previous vicar, this is purely about St Mary's traditions.

(Simon Bull) there are two very valid opposing views and he would like to go away and think about all the various comments from both sides.

Andy suggested we meet again for a further discussion in a couple of weeks to give everyone a chance for further thought. The Secretary will send round an invitation.

10. West Sevenoaks Team Ministry Matters

Rev Mark Bridgen spoke about the Terms of Reference relating to the West Sevenoaks Team Ministry, which had been sent to the PCC prior to the meeting. He recognised that, as part of a team, there are certain decisions to be taken in tandem with other PCCs. He asked the PCC whether there were any points which needed flagging up. He is trying to get the joint council off the ground as a cooperative and collaborative body and believes it is important that we support one another as churches. Mark drew the attention of the PCC to the paragraph on confidentiality, 2nd page, item 10, as there had been a small change to the wording. Mark made it clear that the joint council will not be taking any powers from the individual PCCs. There were no questions.

The Terms of Reference were then put forward to the PCC to agree.

Proposed: Barry Sharp

Seconded: Michele Cooke

The PCC were all content

Rev Mark Bridgen then advised the PCC that Steve Osei-Mensah, our new team curate, will be ordained on 25 September. There will be a joint welcoming service for him on Sunday 26 September, held in St Mary's Church, Kippington, at 10am, which will also be live streamed. There will be a team choir and Sunday School. Mark pointed out to the PCC that Steve will not be a full time curate and will be working with us on Wednesdays and Sundays only. He is self-supporting and has a full time job.

11. Outreach & Mission

Dunton Green Initiative - Andy reported that Phil and Kathy James are holding services on a weekly basis and he has been invited to preach on 18 July. He is hoping to resume the Thursday services in Dunton Green but at the moment is not sure whether we will be able to use the DG Village Hall.

12. Sunday Club/Teenagers

Michele Cooke reported that Sunday Club will be holding a live meeting this coming Sunday. The focus will be on joy. They will light a candle at the beginning of the class. Everyone is looking forward to it. The meeting will be in the hall.

There had been a pizza party in the Vicar's garden the previous Sunday. 12 young people attended and a good time was had by all. Lots of pizzas consumed!

13. Any Other Business

A vote of thanks was given to Rev Mark Bridgen for all the work he had put in to the Joint Council Terms of Reference.

Andy also proposed a vote of thanks to Margaret Nicholas for all her hard work over many years as Church Administrator. Andy said that a future PCC will have to address the issue of whether we should appoint a paid administrator. At present he is part-time vicar and part-time administrator due to the volume of administration and this is an issue we need to address.

14. Date of Next Meeting

SC Tuesday 7 September

PCC Monday 20 September

Anne Bourne closed the meeting with prayer.