

ST MARY'S, RIVERHEAD WITH DUNTON GREEN

MINUTES

Meeting of the Parochial Church Council

Tuesday 19 January 2021

8.00pm on Zoom

PRESENT:

Alison Bull in the chair

Rachel Wigley, Revd. Mark Bridgen, Daphne Harrison (LLM), Stuart Wigley, Ronnie Todd; Susan Allender, Alison Bull, Simon Bull, Karen Forster-Pearce, Richard Gibson, Jane Ibbotson, Charlotte Rakhit, Barry Sharp, Bennet Smith, Sarah Stott,

1 Passage of Scripture and Prayers

The meeting opened with a bible passage and prayer.

2 Apologies

Margaret Nicholas, Ali Wakefield

3 To approve Minutes of Meeting 17 November 2020

The Minutes were agreed by those present and will be signed as a true copy.

4 Church Services and Events

Licensing service for Revd Andy Finn - 23 Jan 2021

Alison Bull started by thanking Mark Bridgen for all his support and Ministry over the past months and for making the time to get to know us and allowing us to get to know him, especially in the current climate with Covid restrictions.

Alison then confirmed that the Licensing service for our new Vicar - Revd Andy Finn - will be at 2.00pm on 23 January. Anyone wanting to attend should email Alison. She will send out the log-in details on Thursday.

The first part of the service will be the commissioning, followed by a more informal part with Andy being welcomed by the Deanery and the Churchwardens. Andy will then respond.

Sunday 24 January will be Andy's first service at St Mary's but he and Mark will be covering St Luke's church for Anne while she is on retreat before her institution in early February. It will mean that our services will stay at 9.15am to allow Mark and Andy to leave our services in good time to be at St Luke's. After Anne has been licensed, the times of our services will revert to 9.30am on Sundays.

Church or Zoom for future services in Jan & Feb?

In the current circumstances, church services will be on Zoom during January and likely to be on Zoom in February. The format of February services will be discussed further with our new vicar after

he has been licensed. On Sunday, Andy will explain to everyone that he won't be able to stay to chat after services when he is covering for Anne.

Virtual Christmas Tree Festival- Review

Sarah Stott told the meeting that, thanks to a lot of people, the virtual Christmas Tree Festival was a huge success. A lot of hard work went into the planning and setting up and thanks to everyone who was involved. Over 120 magnificent trees were featured, around 280 recorded visits to the site and a total of £428.50 was raised, half of which will be sent to Age UK Sevenoaks. Sarah hoped it was an uplifting "virtual" experience for everyone.

Possible Future Events - Suggestions please!

Several suggestions were put forward as future events to allow us to get to know Andy and his family. One was to have a meal in break out rooms, as we did for the Harvest lunch. Other suggestions were a quiz and flower arranging.

Ronnie Todd had spoken to Christine Smith and read out an email sent by Christine with lots of good suggestions for online entertainment. Ronnie was asked to arrange an Events Committee meeting to discuss the various options and put them forward for consideration.

5 Finance

Stuart Wigley gave the report.

An "indicative offer" document had been circulated prior to the meeting for consideration and discussion of our Parish Share.

The note showed the previous three years payments, before the pandemic and during the pandemic.

2018 £46,800
2019 £48,878 (+4.4%)
2020 £48,878 (+0%)

Stuart went on to explain the contribution that St Mary's makes to the Diocese is based on a formula calculation. The calculated contribution for 2020 was £40,338. However, St Mary's contributed £8,540 additional funds to match what was paid in the previous year because we could afford it at the time.

The calculated contribution proposed by the Diocese for 2021 is £53,383 (+9.2%).

During interregnums, Parishes are encouraged to keep their level of giving to the Parish Share unchanged. The Diocese state "During vacancies, benefices are encouraged to maintain Parish Offer contributions in full. For long interregnums (over 12 months) some deduction may be understood in consultation with the Archdeacon." St Mary's vicar retired in March 2019.

During the period without a vicar, there has been a global pandemic and the impact of Covid19 has substantially impacted on the levels of income and giving. In 2019 the income from planned giving and collections was £49k and in 2020 this income is expected to be in the region of almost 50% less (£25k).

Additional income from collections from those present at services during Easter and Christmas 2020 was not possible. Also, income from the church hall, which was £14k in 2019, is likely to be 55% lower at £6.1k for 2020. Due to the lower level of giving, GiftAid will be reduced.

During 2019, £8.8k of income was generated from wedding fees etc. This is likely to be close to zero overall. Therefore, total income is expected to be in excess of 60% lower in 2020 compared to 2019.

The lack of income has partly been offset by reduced expenditure on gas and electric as well as payments for the organists being substantially lower than last year. However, since March 2020 we have had to dip into reserves, which cannot be sustained.

Income for 2021 is expected to be in the region of £2,800/month including gift aid, interest and excluding any contribution from the church hall (normally just over £500/month). This depends on when the lockdown ends.

Expenditure is expected to be in the region of £1,900/month, excluding the parish share. The majority of this is fixed and committed, for example insurance premiums, photocopier charges, council tax, repair funds, music licenses. The excess of income over expenditure is just over £900/month.

Considerations include the following:

1. Pay the Indicative Offer
£4,448/month, (£53,383 annually)
2. Pay the same as last year
£4,073/month (£48,878 annually).
3. Pay nothing for 2021

The vacancy period was 22 months and the Parish Share has been paid throughout this period. If a view was taken that payments after a 12 month period of vacancy are over and above what is required, there has therefore been ten monthly payments (22 months less 12 months) of £4,073 made, which total £40,730. This payment could be St Mary's contribution for 2021, and also combined with the over payment during 2020 of £8,540, totalling £49,270.

4. Pay what can be currently afforded, with an allowance of four months income for the church hall, and keep the level of contribution under review. Suggested commitment of £1,000/month.

Stuart asked the PCC for their opinions/views in light of current uncertainty.

A discussion followed. It was noted we have no legacies in the pipe line. Stuart explained the reason our giving has been reduced is because we are not in church, receiving regular income through envelopes/gift aid and no loose collection. Stuart has written to all those who regularly give via envelopes to ask if they would consider giving by standing order and some have responded positively.

Mark mentioned the possibility of a £5k grant from the Diocese to struggling parishes. Stuart felt it wouldn't necessarily help as we would ultimately be giving it back to the Diocese.

Another point was raised that we need to have four to six months of reserves in line with the Charity Commission guidance and cannot sustain dipping into our reserves.

Stuart suggested he puts forward a proposal to the Diocese of paying £1k per month, with an agreement to review the amount on a regular basis during the year.

The above proposal was put to a vote.

Everyone present voted in agreement with Stuart's proposal.

Mark advised the meeting, from a future 3 Parish Team perspective, we should be able to have a common purchasing policy and assist one another in various ways including obtaining discounted work rates where appropriate.

6. Church Fabric

Cleaning of Mosaics - Stuart explained to the meeting that, having received a legacy last year to pay for the cleaning of the mosaics behind the altar, these have now been surveyed and we will shortly be receiving a report. After which, our Architect will put the job out to tender. A faculty will also be applied for.

Clock Arrester - Unfortunately, a little while after the arrester was installed, the clock stopped working. This is not due to a faulty arrester but to the pendulum and winding mechanism. Stuart is hoping it will be working very soon.

7. Safeguarding

Susan Allender reported that our website has been updated with all the safeguarding matters agreed at our last meeting, including the various links. It is very clear on guidance for anyone needing help.

Janet Sharp will be doing the C1 safeguarding and leadership courses.

Sunday Club are getting on with booking their leadership courses.

Susan will make a plan for the rest of the year to put to everyone.

8. Joint Council for "The Benefice of West Sevenoaks Team Ministry"

As discussed at our meeting in September, a Joint Council is to be appointed, made up with people put forward from each of the three parishes, either PCC or anyone on the electoral roll. Alison asked the PCC to give some thought to whether they would like to put themselves forward or nominate someone. All names to be given to Alison or Rachel.

The nominations will be voted on at the APCM if there are more than two nominations.

It was confirmed that the commitment would be approx. six meetings per year for a period of two years. Specific tasks would be allocated as and when decided or others may be asked to undertake the specific task.

Mark explained that the original intention was for all three PCCs to meet and agree a way forward for ministry and mission, to eventually be put to the Joint Council. Unfortunately, Covid has scuppered that intention.

The responses on the requested reflections from all three parishes have been helpful and will be sent to the clergy group and lay group (yet to be formed) to enable the responses to be studied and subsequently fed to the three PCCs.

Once the Joint Council has been formed, each PCC will cede some of their responsibilities to the Joint Council.

Mark will send an explanatory note to everyone, including the congregation, and it will be made clear that they may put themselves forward.

9. Outreach & Mission

Dunton Green Initiative - Daphne reported that not a lot has happened since our last meeting. A couple of meetings have been held in December but the school links have gone because of Covid and school bubbles. Angus MacLeay and Andy Finn will meet with Phil and Kathy James at some point. Andy intends to be involved with any future meetings set up by Phil and Kathy.

WiFi - Alison thanked Stuart for arranging for the WiFi installation in church.

10. Deanery Synod Briefing

Bennet Smith reported on a Deanery Synod meeting which had been held on 12 November.

Bishop James, who had been visiting the Deanery, mostly virtually, was welcomed. Mrs Judith Howard, a licensed Parochial Assistant, was there to speak about the Deanery prayer link, published each month and sent to the clergy for use and distribution in their parishes. It is an evangelical tool in the Diocese and is available on the Diocesan web site.

She asked for clergy in each parish to appoint a representative for prayer and to send their contribution by the 10th of each month. Currently there are five parishes contributing at present and it usually contains Parish topics and special prayers for seriously ill parishioners. There are two meetings a year for the group of praying reps. Mark advised that Joan Taylor from St Mary's, is a rep for Kippington

The Bishop informed the DS meeting that he will be retiring in July, after 11 years in office. He is looking forward to a different pace of life. When appointed he saw his role as a 10-year calling; he will be 65 this year. A "Vacancy in See" committee has been formed and will ask for a statement on behalf of the Diocese of what they want in a Bishop.

With regard to finance, Bishop James advised that some Dioceses are running out of cash and national discussions are in progress looking at organisation and savings. Consideration is being given to sharing resources and services in adjacent Dioceses. Good management and investing for the future is required with possible changes for deploying ministry. There will be investment in communications, following experiences during the Covid lockdown, which have shown a successful new way of remotely conducting services online. A national pot of money is to be made available.

Rochester Diocese is not badly off financially because income has reduced by less than other Dioceses. Giving has been sustained, raised by appeals for which there has been a brilliant response. There has been good management and cash flow is in a good place.

Bishops James finished by saying that Covid must make us think imaginatively for what we can aspire to in the future with faith. Covid is not the will of God and he is convinced good will come out of these distressing times.

11. Sunday Club/Teenagers

Ronnie Todd read out a short report from Ali Wakefield:

“Due to the current lockdown restrictions, we are likely to be meeting virtually for the foreseeable future.

We will be looking at hosting a virtual Easter performance if we are unable to hold this in person. We are looking at activities we can run virtually (e.g quiz and walking Easter egg hunt) to celebrate as a congregation.

We will be welcoming Tamar and her children to Sunday Club this coming Sunday which we are very much looking forward to.”

Charlotte Rakhit told the meeting that Woody had been to Sunday Club on Sunday, after a time of absence, and really enjoyed it. They are doing a really good job.

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

13. Date of Next Meeting

Standing Committee	8 February
PCC	23 February

The meeting ended with the Grace