

University Church of St Mary the Virgin

MINUTES FOR THE VESTRY MEETING AND ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

Sunday 18 April 2021 at 4.00pm via Zoom

The Vestry Meeting

Attendance: Ana Maria Niculcea, Will Lamb, Joe Andrews, Debbie Hall, John Bond, Karen Melham, Mary Lean, Megan roper, Laura White, Mary Lewis, Sarah Mortimer, Alice Willington, Janet Greenland, Felix Leach, Terence Cudbird, Margaret Chaundy, Judith Pettersen, Susannah Reide, Alison Le Cornu, Victoria Mort, Katie Hicks, Lesley Sutton, Stephen Maughan, George Williams, Margaret Lipscomb, Marilyn Lewis, Elizabeth Adams, Peter Shaw, Donald Reece, Adam Hardiman, Rosemary Burton, Julia Reece, John Barton, Sue Tibbles, Penny Howe, Greta Rye, Tess Blenkinsop, Mary Lewis, Nicholas Hardyman, Jenny Pettengell, Jenyth Worsley, Ellie Williams.

- 1. Opening prayers**
- 2. Welcome and explanation of protocols for this meeting**
- 3. Appointment of clerk**

Clerk – Ellie Williams. (Proposed by Mary Lean, Seconded by Margaret Chaundy).
Unanimous.

- 4. Election of churchwardens**

Janet Greenland. (Proposed by Margaret Chaundy. Seconded by Karen Melham)
Nicholas Hardyman, (Proposed by Sarah Mortimer, Seconded by Tess Blenkinsop)

Both Janet and Nicholas were elected unopposed.

Will is hugely thankful and grateful for the support and wisdom and advice of both Nicholas and Janet. They make a huge contribution to the life of this place and he is very delighted that they're continuing in this role for the next 12 months.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Attendance: Ana Maria Niculcea, Will Lamb, Joe Andrews, Debbie Hall, John Bond, Karen Melham, Mary Lean, Megan roper, Laura White, Mary Lewis, Sarah Mortimer, Alice Willington, Janet Greenland, Felix Leach, Terence Cudbird, Margaret Chaundy, Judith Pettersen, Susannah Reide, Alison Le Cornu, Victoria Mort, Katie Hicks, Lesley Sutton, Stephen Maughan, George Williams, Margaret Lipscomb, Marilyn Lewis, Elizabeth Adams, Peter Shaw, Donald Reece, Adam Hardiman, Rosemary Burton, Julia Reece, John Colin Barton, Penny Howe, Greta Rye, Tess Blenkinsop, Mary Lewis, Nicholas Hardyman, Jenny Pettengell, Jenyth Worsley, Ellie Williams.

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Welcome and explanation of protocols for this meeting**
- 3. Appointment of clerk**

Clerk – Ellie Williams. (Proposed by Mary Lean, Seconded by Margaret Chaundy).
Unanimous.

4. Minutes of the last meeting

Acceptance of the minutes of the last meeting (Proposed by Megan Roper. Seconded by Katie Hicks) – passed.

5. Report on changes to the Electoral Roll

There are currently 121 names on the electoral roll. 123 at the last report.

Electoral Roll officer is Sarah Ockwell.

6. Report on the financial statements of the Parochial Church Council for the year ending 31 December 2020

62 pages of accounts have been circulated in advance. Brief overview presented.

Summary of organisation through three accounts. (PCC Ltd, De Brome Trust and Church.)

Deficit of £128k this year but our reserves are good so total assets £2.7M. Income £400K (1/2 what we'd expect) due to covid.

We will need to replace the nave roof this year and will be in the region of £0.75M.

Summary of where our income comes from was given.

Summary of expenditure was given.

2020 focus – Shop, tower and cafe closed, not many events held, we applied for a lot of different funding opportunities which were both successful and unsuccessful. We made use of furlough scheme, we committed to playing living wage, we're £0.5M down from where we were last year. Grateful for congregation donations. Forthcoming roof repairs are going to be a lot (around £0.75M). There are challenging years ahead as shop and tower income still down. – finance committee are looking at a 5 year plan of getting back to 'normal'.

Huge thanks to Jeanne managing the finances this year.

A comparison was shown between 2020 and 2019 income

A comparison was shown between 2020 and 2019 expenditure.

Thanks to Jeanne and Thanks to Felix

7. Report on the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council and church activities (including a statement confirming that the PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 having regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults)

Our last report was presented six months ago as, following the Covid-related closure of all churches in March 2020, we finally held the 2020 APCM in October. This report therefore covers the period from October 2020 to April 2021

These six months have seen a second wave of the Covid pandemic, and a third lockdown. The shop, tower and Vaults café have been closed for most of this time, but thankfully the Church has remained open for Sunday services, although with greatly reduced numbers. The members of staff, particularly Ana-Maria Niculcea and Kevin Harris, who remained in post when others were furloughed, have worked hard to maintain a physical and virtual presence for St Mary's, both in Oxford and worldwide.

Sarah Mortimer became a Licenced Lay Minister at a live-streamed service at the Cathedral in November, and in December we welcomed Susannah Reide as an interim part-time Precentor. Applications for the appointment of a new Assistant Priest closed on 15 April and we will be holding interviews for this post in May. Three ordinands from Cuddesdon, Bethany Whinall, Josh Whithal and Becca McDonnell joined us for the Michaelmas and Hilary terms.

From October we held two Sunday services in the church; at 8.30 in the Chancel and 10.30 in the Nave. Numbers were strictly limited and attendees had to register in

advance. The 10.30 services were recorded and could be viewed live or later online. We held Morning Prayer daily in the Chancel for a few weeks in October but, in November, had to revert to holding Morning Prayer online. We celebrated Christmas with three services of Carols by Candlelight in the church on successive Sundays, Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, and Eucharists at 8.30 and 10.30 on Christmas Day. All these services were fully booked, and were recorded for online viewing. Because of Covid restrictions there was no congregational singing but the choir and organist provided wonderful Christmas music.

When a third lockdown began in January we reduced the numbers able to attend Sunday worship. At the start of Lent in February we joined with several college Chaplains to record and live stream Compline each weekday evening during Lent. March saw the easing of some of the lockdown restrictions and we were able slightly to increase the numbers attending services. In Holy Week we held Compline each evening in the Chancel. On Maundy Thursday a moving Sung Eucharist was held in the Nave and, on Good Friday, the Stations of the Cross and the Liturgy of Good Friday. The meditations for Holy Week were given by Graham Ward, Regius Professor of Divinity, and we thank him for his thoughtful messages. We celebrated Easter Sunday together in the joy of the Resurrection.

Weekly activities have of necessity been constrained by Covid restrictions, but some have continued online. In Hilary term a Sunday Focus Group was held in the afternoons, with a speaker introducing a topic for general discussion. There was a series of evening meetings on the theme of 'The Common Good', and the Poetry Hour continued, as did the midday Bible Study which this term explored Luke's gospel through art. We were able to have one concert in the church when, in December, Stile Antico gave a socially-distanced performance of 'A Renaissance Christmas' to a socially distanced but rapt audience. There were no events in the Old Library.

Through the Faith in Action Committee St Mary's has pledged £5,000 in 2021 to support Christian Aid's Nandolo Farmers Association Pigeon Pea Programme in southern Malawi. It was planned that a group of volunteers would form Saturday morning work parties to clear the undergrowth in Holywell Cemetery throughout the winter. These were started in September but were cancelled in October due to Covid restrictions. We hope to re-start them later this year. The weekly collection in the church for the Community Emergency Food Bank, organised by Margaret Lipscomb, was suspended in November but will continue when lockdown eases.

We are very grateful to the St Mary's staff for the support they have given to the clergy and church officers during these testing times. Some have been on and off furlough; all have been unfailingly helpful. A new cleaner, Fatima Zuber, joined the staff in January. Ana-Maria has continued to expand her technical skills so that our services and podcasts now reach far beyond our Oxford congregation. Patrick has been an invaluable help in keeping the church safe, and open to visitors whenever that has been possible, and acting as steward for the 8.30 Sunday Eucharist. In addition to his other responsibilities, Kevin Harris has provided invaluable practical knowledge and advice on re-roofing the nave. Jeanne White has continued to keep our accounts in order, which has been particularly necessary as our income has been greatly reduced by the pandemic.

Many members of the congregation have given their time voluntarily over the last six months, and we would like to thank Jill Harding and Liz Adams in the sacristy, Ellie Williams for her work as Secretary to the PCC, Margaret Chaundy for arranging the intercessions, Alice Willington for the Poetry Workshop, Sarah Mortimer for 'The Common Good', Victoria Mort the flowers and Lesley Sutton and Donald Reece the Grapevine, which is now operating online. The Sunday School has not been able to meet, but Laura White has arranged very useful meetings to discuss implementing 'Godly Play' when this is possible. We are grateful to Paul Thompson as Head Steward for running that challenging office so competently both before and after full lockdown.

The involvement of the congregation is central to the life of the church and members of the congregation normally read the first lesson and say the prayers of intercession both actually and virtually. All this participation, plus the wonderful music from our organist James Brown and the choir under Robert Howarth's direction, help to make St Mary's a vibrant and welcoming church community.

We particularly want to thank Will, who has worked solidly since the previous Annual Meeting to encourage us in our faith, and to ensure that all decisions have been made carefully and prayerfully for the continuance of the witness of this church.

Safeguarding

We confirm that the PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 having regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Safeguarding is included as a separate item in this report to emphasise that it is a core function of this church. The PCC adopted a new safeguarding policy in February 2021. This is a shorter and simpler policy than the previous one and is based on three themes:

- Promoting the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults
- Preventing inappropriate behaviour including abuse
- Protecting those who are suffering or who have suffered abuse

There is, in addition, new practice guidance which has been streamlined and simplified. Both the policy and guidance are fully in line with Church and diocesan requirements. Thanks to Margaret Chaundy, Louise Jarvis and Janet Greenland, and Judith Pettersen, who has recently taken on the role of Safeguarding Officer, for the work they have done on safeguarding.

8. Report on the fabric, goods, and ornaments of the church ('The Churchwardens' Report') under section 50 of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018

The PCC has continued to deliberate carefully on all matters related to the wellbeing of the church's building and people. The fabric, goods and ornaments of the church are in a good state, and ongoing repairs to the fabric have been carried out under Kevin's careful guidance. The Fabric Advisory Committee has continued to meet and its Chair, William Whyte, supported the creation of a separate Project Management Group to oversee the renewal of the nave roof. Thanks to the work of our Surveyor of the Fabric Mark Hammond and his team we have gradually acquired more information about the current state of the roof and the work needed to renew it. A recent meeting with representatives of the Diocesan Advisory Committee should now allow us to agree the final details of the works, approve a final budget, and ask the PCC to approve a faculty application. Once these stages are complete the job can go out to tender. We hope that the work will have been finished by the end of the summer.

The Vicar thanked the Wardens for their comprehensive report.

9. Report of the proceedings of the Deanery Synod

Nothing to report. Thanks expressed to our representatives.

10. Election of four parochial representatives of the laity to the Parochial Church Council for three years

Immediately before the elections, the Vicar informed the candidates and the electors that there was an ongoing dispute with Mr. Pouget about his occupation of the Old Congregation House. The Vicar noted that all members of the PCC were covered by trustee indemnity insurance and that the PCC had acted at all times on legal advice from the Diocesan Registrar:

<https://www.ecclesiastical.com/church/trustee-indemnity-insurance/>

Mary Lean (proposed by Ellie Williams, seconded by Karen Melham)
Ellie Williams (proposed by Mary Lean, seconded by Karen Melham)
Terry Cudbird (proposed by Alice Willington, seconded by Margaret Chaundy.)
Lesley Sutton (proposed by Margaret Chaundy, seconded by Liz Adams.)
Megan Roper (proposed by Alice Willington, seconded by Joe Andrews)

All candidates were elected unopposed.

11. Appointment of independent examiner

Mr Graham Cole of Wenn Townsend (proposed by Felix Leach, seconded by Karen Melham) – unanimously passed.

12. Vicar's Report

The Vicar expressed thanks to the PCC, and church wardens and Felix and also to many people who contribute to our common life and the staff.

We depend so much on our many volunteers and very grateful for their contribution to our community.

In 2017, the PCC approved a strategic plan with a focus on Worship/learning/hospitality. We began to reflect again back just before the pandemic. This has been in some ways paused during the pandemic but over the next few months with the appointment of a new assistant priest (hopefully by May) we'll be able to restart this process of discernment.

Focus on: Worship, Learning, Community, Culture, Hospitality, Sustainability

It will be important to engage others beyond the congregation who have an interest in us and want to support us and may have a renewed interest in the university church with the increased use of online engagement.

There's a huge task for us to do as we emerge from the pandemic and rebuild our common life and get things back on track.

Questions:

Adverts have gone out for the new assistant priest – the deadline was Thursday and we've had 5 applicants that Will is aware of, and he hopes that the members of the panel will be able to consider them in due course.

Thanks to clergy colleagues (esp. Susannah) for everything contributed.

Terry remarked he was keen to be on PCC to work on ways to develop regular giving/legacies/friendship schemes as part of his work leading stewardship. He is looking forward to contributing to the overall strategy. A small working group, including Terry, has been set up to look at stewardship which will report to the PCC. Thanks to Terry who has much experience and expertise in this field.

Victoria noted that we've got to know people much better over the last few months.

13. Closing prayers

The Meeting closed with the Grace.