

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parishioners**

**23rd May 2022 at 6pm at St. Lawrence Church**

**In attendance:**

**PCC Members:** Revd Andrew Micklefield, Colin Aiken, Alan Armstrong, Angie Briggs, Matthew Bayliss,Tim Duddridge,Derek Gurney, Elspeth Mackeggie Gurney, Tori Hewitt, Lisa Hilla, Sarah Neish,Revd Lynn Power, Revd Gordon Randall, John Vivian

**Parishoners:**

Clive Muller, Anne Mason, Dennis Milns, Tony and Joyce Willman, Elizabeth Dain, Alison Parr, Robin & Jane Lees, Sarah Broadbent, Liz Griffiths, Trev Irwin, Sally Kemp, Paddy Hughes, David & Gwynneth Johnson, Pippa Mills, John Hubbard, Gill and Dave Tull, Ruth Randall, Beverley Jones, Paddy & Ann Mendham, Carol Outlaw, Helen Walters, Corinne Armstrong, Thelma and Mike Ward, David Willoughby, Ian Sutherland, Judy Phillips

**Minute Sec:** Sue Hubbard

**Parish Administrator:** Philippa Penfold

**Apologies Received from:**

Wendy Burnhams, Steve & Jenny Thompson, Robin Kemp, Alison Stickland, Keith Arrowsmith-Oliver, Lynda & Martin Baines, Anna Aungiers, Peta Sutherland

**ANNUAL VESTRY MEETING**

1. **Bible Reading and Prayers**

The Vicar read from 1 Peter, Chapter 4, verses 1 to 11 and also the Collect prayer for the day.

1. **Election of Churchwardens**

Nominations had been received as follows:

Angie Briggs – nominated by Chris Jackson and Elaine Barnett

Helen Walters – nominated by Alison Harris and Charles Walters

John Vivian – nominated by Maureen Mortara and Carol Graham

Sarah Neish – nominated by Gloria Wills and Anna Aungiers

Clive Muller – nominated by Timothy Codling and Tim Duddridge

Alan Armstrong – nominated by Lisa Hillan and Anthea Bailey

The meeting expressed thanks to Tim Duddridge and Keith Arrowsmith-Oliver who had completed 4 and 6 years respectively.

There being no objections to the nominations, all those standing for election were **duly elected unanimously.**



1. **Vicar’s Report**

Andrew had previously circulated his report, which he then summarised for the meeting.

* 2021 was significantly affected by the pandemic and had not been the year we had hoped for. Although we “opened up” as soon as we could, we were still in the process of re-establishing Parish life. Tim Duddridge had played a vital role in helping us to be compliant with Covid restrictions. AM expressed thanks to all who had done so much both in the Churches and reaching out to those who were isolated. Numbers were gradually coming back within our Churches.
* An ALPHA course had been successfully held led by Bruce Nicole.
* Martha had done a wonderful job with our young people, in partnership with the King’s Arms.
* The Ministry Team had changed, as we had welcomed Rev’d Bruce Nicole, Rev’d Peter Brown and his wife Elaine Brown. Wendy Burnhams would be priested in the Cathedral during the summer, thanks to Rev’d Gordon Randall who had supported her as Training Incumbent. Kate Powell had been appointed as Anna Chaplain. The team had also inherited 2 more members in Rev’ds Peter and Ingrid Owen-Jones who live in Medstead and take services in the parishes of Bentworth, Lasham and Shalden. However, we had said goodbye to Rev’d Rachel Sturt and Tim who had taken up their roles in Wrecclesham.
* Bentworth, Lasham and Shalden PCC’s had formed a significant workload for AM, a change due to the Diocesan need to reduce the number of stipendiary clergy and AM had been supporting them in sustaining their Christian work in those villages. The proposal was for them to form a single parish with AM as their incumbent (Vicar)
* St. Lawrence Choir had been a huge support in helping to build relationships with the villages, in particular for taking time to go to the various Churches and sing.
* There were great developments within the Parish, with the increase in small groups, service changes, outreach and community work. As in the quote from a former Archbishop of Canterbury **“The Church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members”.**
* Finally, AM expressed his thanks to Rev’d Gordon Randall for all his support.

1. **Report on the new Electoral Roll**

Currently 316, of which 19 are non-resident, broadly similar to last year.

1. **Elections to PCC**

No elections to PCC were required this year. Current membership is:

Churchwardens – as detailed in item 2 above

Treasurer – Colin Aitken

Deanery Synod members, Elspeth Mackeggie Gurney, Derek Gurney, Tori Hewitt and

Matthew Bayliss

Elected members, 1 for each church were:

* Robin Kemp – St. Lawrence
* Lisa Hillan – Holy Rood
* Wendy Burnhams – although she now has a PCC place as a licensed minister

1. **Financial Statements of the Parish for the period up to 31st December 2021**

The Trustees’ Annual Report and Financial Statements were available on the parish website. It was a 31-page document that contained the full financial information, therefore inappropriate to be printed and widely circulated. Colin Aitken, Treasurer would be happy to answer queries in addition to access on the website. Meanwhile noted that Derek Gurney was Chair of the Finance Committee.

Colin had prepared a PowerPoint for the meeting, key points from which were:

Statement of Financial Activities

Total Income at 2021 £236,577

Total expenditure at 2021 £245,822

Net excesss of exp. over income £9,245

Total funds were £292,548

It was noted that income (against the budget) was down by £5,647, but that expenditures (against the budget) was also down by £2,611.

Whereas support costs had remained stable, it was likely that Unrestricted funds would come under pressure with the huge increase in energy costs. It was likely to be in the region of 164% increase, i.e., £24,514, which meant that for 2022 the prediction of excess expenditure over income was in the region of £34,7000.

To some extent this would be offset by:

1. the recent increase in hiring rates for premises;
2. possible increases in income streams for the Parish Centre; and
3. the use of All Saints Church by the Butts Church.

The issue of making the most of cashless donations was raised, which was difficult in the Church of the Holyrood due to signal issues. However, investigations were on-going about the possibility of using QR codes.

Colin expressed his thanks to Tori Hewitt for her assistance as Bookkeeper.

Andrew thanked Colin for his work, and for the detailed information provided to the PCC. In particular it was our financial situation was in a reasonably satisfactory place, given the demands of the changes consequent from the pandemic.

1. **Reports on Fabric**

St. Peter’s. Sarah Neish felt “incredibly humbled and grateful” for the huge support she had received over the past year. It was likely that all the finances for the painting and repair work had already been raised, with particular thanks to Resurrection Furniture for their contribution.

All Saints. Angie Briggs reported that all annual maintenance checks had been done. A leak had appeared above the organ and roof repairs work had been undertaken, covered by insurance, as was the roof storm damage following one of the winter storms.

St. Lawrence John Vivian reported that new lighting in the Gallery Chapel is imminent, funded by Resurrection Furniture. Additionally, re-surfacing of the path in the Churchyard would be funded jointly by St. Lawrence Primary School and Alton Town Council and RF. This would make it safer to use. During the winter the heating system had been problematic. Additionally, at the end of November 2021, leadwork was stolen in the darkness from the full length of the ridge of the roof to the west of the tower. Repairs had been undertaken under an insurance claim.

The Church of the Holyrood. The situation was reported to be stable, after the renovations that had taken place a few years’ ago and the slates on the roof replaced, the gutters cleared and the Vestry roof repaired. A report had been sent to the Treasurer on likely expenses for the coming year. Investigations were being held with the Eco Church Team about a more environmentally sound boiler.

1. **Report of the Deanery Synod**

There was nothing further to report following the detailed report in the papers for the meeting. Our representatives were Matthew Bayliss, Elspeth MacKeggie Gurney, Derek Gurney and Tori Hewitt.

1. **Safeguarding**

Sally Kemp, Safeguarding Officer, was pleased to report that no safeguarding issues had occurred in the last year, and therefore there was nothing to report. She pointed out that safeguarding was “everyone’s business” and all should be well aware of the safeguarding issues. She thanked the Parish Administrators for their support and in particular all those who had completed DBS forms. It was noted that the timescales for completion had now changed from 5 years to 3 years.

1. **Appointment of Sidespersons**

It was noted that each local church has their own list of people who act in this capacity. The PCC appointed sidespersons, a task delegated to Churchwardens.

1. **Appointment of Independent Financial Examiner**

Colin proposed that Mr. L.J. Powell be appointed to act as our Independent Financial Examiner. This was agreed by the meeting unanimously.

1. **The Future**

Andrew made 4 key points:

1. A number of **structural changes** were being made due to the reduction in stipendiary clergy as set out in item 3 above. Across the Diocese, 22 posts were not being replaced and apart from Bentworth, Lasham and Shalden (BLS), a merger between Four Marks and Medstead was under discussion. BLS now intend to join together as 1 PCC governing the 3 churches, following the production of a draft document and a process of consultation with Church Commissioners. This had only been successful so far due to the co-operation of all parties. Noted that Kate Powell, Anna Chaplain, is not part of BLS and that the discussions at Four Marks and Medstead were in a later stage than BLS. In our Deanery the Clergy had reduced from 7 to 4 people, which does not take into account population growths. All churches in the area are working together to engage with newcomers. The meeting thanked Andrew for undertaking this additional ministry with grace, energy and faith.
2. The Butts Church, who had not been able to return to the School after the pandemic, were in discussions with All Saints and the Parish about how they could share the church. There had been a full debate with the congregation and a draft agreement, now with the Legal advisers, would be the framework for the arrangement. If this agreement is approved by the Butts Church, it would be considered by the PCC, under an annual review basis. Noted that this would provide income of circa £12,000 a year.
3. The Busy Bees Nursery in St. Lawrence Parish Centre had wished to extend their hours, which would, if it was possible to make an agreement, double our income. Discussions were on-going.
4. The new service pattern had started in January 2022, would be reviewed between now and September, which would allow time for questions, responses and for us to think carefully about the changes. The Church Wardens/PCC would then collate the responses, so that everyone could be invited to a Parish Conversation towards the end of September. It will also be written up in Sunrise. Andrew stressed that we should be prayerful about how we respond.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm, with prayers of thanks in particular for Penny Carmichael, one of the congregants, who was a great part of our Church Family and who was very shortly to reach her 100th birthday.

SH/30th May 2022