

**Minutes of the Vestry Meeting and Annual Parochial Church Meeting
held on Sunday 2nd May 2021 at 10.30 in the Church**

Rev Rich Duncan (Chair)

Vestry Meeting

Welcome – Rev Rich Duncan welcomed everyone to the meeting with prayer.

Karen Gees, Parochial Church Council Secretary was proposed by Val Lynam and seconded by Sylvia Rhodes to be the Secretary for the Vestry and Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2nd May 2021.

1. Apologies

Rev Sylvia Lafford – Marilyn Israel – Jacky Adams – Beverly Bigmore – Joan Lewis – Jacky Mortimer – Caroline Dunning– Margaret Sheppard – Naomi Brown Tony Holden – Jacinta Holden – Grace Cockshott – Joy Eastwood

2. Election of Churchwardens

Nominee	Proposer	Seconded
Val Lynam	Beverly Bigmore	Marilyn Israel
Bev Lazenby	Jacky Mortimer	Jean Oddy

Rev Rich Duncan thanked the Churchwardens for all their hard work throughout the year and especially thanked Terry Stokes, who stood down as Churchwarden.

Rich informed the congregation that we were entitled to 4 Churchwardens and asked the congregation to consider becoming a Churchwarden. As no further nominations were forthcoming, the two above were duly elected.

The Minutes of the 2019 meeting were proposed by Philippa MacMahon and Steve Gees as a true record.

The Vestry meeting was closed at 10.55am

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Minutes – minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 17th February 2019 were accepted at a true record. Proposed by Philippa MacMahon and John Carter

2. Matters Arising – There were no matters arising.

3. Electoral Roll – The electoral roll officer Karen Gees, reported in 2019 there was 155 names on the electoral roll with the reduction of 3 names the number was 152. In 2020 there was 140 with the reduction of 3 and the addition of 8 this brought the total to 145. Up to 30th April 2021 we have 144 with the reduction of 3 and the addition of 3 names the number remains at 144. Karen Gees confirmed that the electoral roll had been displayed in the Church as legally required.

The following have now stepped down from the PCC Robin Morello and Caroline Dunning. Connie Coleman and Lyn Gibson have moved away.

Marion Jones stepped down from Deanery Synod. Marion very sadly passed away on Saturday morning 1st May 2021. Marion will be sorely missed. Sylvia Rhodes also stepped down from Deanery Synod.

April 2019 – 2020 the Parochial Church Council held 11 meetings with an average of 12 in attendance.

May 2020 – April 2021 the Parochial Church Council held 12 meetings with an average 12 in attendance.

Rich thanked all the members of the PCC for all their hard work throughout the year.

All PCC meetings during lockdown were held via Zoom.

4. Elections and Appointments

The following were nominated for election to the PCC for a period of 3 years.

Nominee	Proposer	Seconded
John Carter	John MacMahon	Karen Gees
Tony Holden	Stephen Gees	Karen Gees
Ben Stopher	Kate Duncan	Val Lynam

The following were nominated for election to the PCC for a period of 2 years.

Alison Scobie	Jean Oddy	Naomi Brown
Liz Goddard	Stephen Gees	Philippa MacMahon

The Chairman declared the above duly elected. There is a vacancy for another person on the PCC and a proposal by the Chair that one other person could be co-opted at any time the PCC. This was agreed.

Nomination for election to the Deanery Synod.

Nominee	Proposer	Seconded
Alistair John MacMahon	Caroline Dunning	John Carter

The Chairman declared the above duly elected. We are entitled to have 2 more people for the Deanery Synod. The Chair proposed that the PCC should be able to co-opt the additional reps on if the opportunity arose. This was agreed. Rich explained to the congregation what being on the Deanery Synod involved and invited any member on the electoral roll to contact him if they were interested.

Appointment of Sides–Persons for the coming year

No new nominations for sides-people were received. The Sides–Persons for this year are as follows:– Judith Perkins – Sandie Bates – Joan Peckover – Joan Lewis – John Watt – Terry Stokes – Simon Marsh – John Carter – Philippa MacMahon – John MacMahon – Roger Hiley – Caroline Dunning – Ray Miles – Angela Guees and Clive Morse.

5. Financial Report for 2019 – 2020

Undoubtedly, as with very many churches, we had a difficult year in 2020. The two covid–19 lockdowns affected our finances considerably, but because of you, nothing like as much as other churches have suffered. Our planned giving was just the same as in 2019 and I want to thank you all very much for continuing your standing order and envelope contributions even though the church was closed for several months! (Personally I'm not convinced we needed to shut out the congregation when many would have appreciated some comfort and solace, but we followed the bishop's advice nevertheless).

There was however a £15,000 drop in the revenue from the normal receipts from weddings, funerals, social events, Sunday lunches, film shows and hire of the Church Hall.

This was more than made up by the Fund Raising Group's efforts in applying to many organisations and charities when we raised over £41,000 during 2020 alone. For clarification the FRG comprised just four people:– Cecil Thompson, Bev Lazenby, Rosemary Leeper and John Carter. Without this contribution St Peters would have registered a deficit of £118,000 instead of the £77,000 it did. At the beginning of 2020 we instigated two new 21st century additions to our giving choices – the donations button on the website and the smart card reader collection plate. Both these new devices are showing an increasing benefit to the way in which people are willing to give.

I'm happy that we were able to pay our Parish Share in full – just over £75,000 – as many churches in the diocese were not able to do this.

Although we received it in 2019, I cannot stress how much the legacy left by Rosemary Miles – over £187,000 – has saved our bacon and enabled us to do things we couldn't have done without it. That, together with the FRG's total of £47,000 (including 2019) plus the FEOFFE charity's donation of £9,000 has enabled us to meet the unavoidable repairs and maintenance costs of over £81,000. This was principally the Church Hall and north aisle roof repairs, together with attention to walls and drains. Happily the money invested in the Church House Fund (when we sold the house on Bridgewater Rd in 1997 for £59,000, borrowed against it for the extension and paid it back by investing it) has matured and reached £112,000 at the end of 2020 and we have already spent £25,000 of it on the A/V system.

This may all have sounded a little confusing but in summary we have £87,000 left in the CHF, £131,000 left of the legacy but little elsewhere because in the past 4 months we've spent £20,000 more than we've received. We're spending £11,000 per month yet receiving only £6,000.

Our plans for the near future are for a new lighting system at approximately £40,000, re-decoration at £25,000 and the imminent appointment of a C&F worker at £28,000/year. In addition, of course, we continue to spend £15,000 per year on the maintenance of the church and church hall roofs (£14,000 already this year). There is also over £50,000 of Parish Share still to find this year. With the quinquennial inspection about to take place in a couple of weeks, I am also concerned about what may be uncovered and what emergency costs may be needed. The numbers I've just highlighted will pretty well clear out our reserves, which is of concern when we're running at a deficit.

Keeping an 800 year old church, watertight, warm and clean together with upgrading its facilities and growing the numbers is a difficult job but I hope with your help we'll be able to do it.

6. Presentation of the Annual Report

John Carter informed the congregation that he had displayed a copy of the annual report in the main entrance to the church and if anyone wanted a copy he would send them one.

Appointment of the Auditor

John Carter proposed that Bob Blencowe Chartered Account of 15 High Street, Brackley NN13 7DH be appointed the position of Independent Examiner. This was proposed by Val Lynam and seconded by Jean Oddy.

7. Fabrics, Goods and Ornament s for 2019 – 2020

Building

The church is now in good condition due to the ongoing repairs to the roof by Steve Hughes. He has also agreed to carry out maintenance to the roof which means that any problems can be detected and rectified as they arise. The extension roof is still proving to be problematic in that there is a problem with moss which, if not rectified, will reduce the life of the tiles. Whilst the worst of the extension roof has been repaired there is still work to be done as and when funds allow.

Graveyard

The churchyard walls that have collapsed have been repaired where necessary but the state of the walls is still of concern and there could be more problems in the future.

The Community Payback team have continued to tidy the churchyard whilst keeping to the constraints of the lockdown restrictions. They have also cleaned out the dirt from the heating channels in the church which may have contributed to the dark lines on the ceiling. Our thanks go to the gardening team and Community Payback Team for keeping the graveyard in excellent condition.

The Town Council has been made aware that the street light for the footpath to the left of the church has not been working for some time. After inspection it was found that the light was beyond economical repair. The Council have agreed to pay for a new light and are waiting for their contractors, EON, to fit one.

Attempts have been made to clear a blocked drain by the tower which has given a partial result as the drain is now clearing very slowly. As this is the probable cause of damp inside the church this will need to be monitored.

The five yearly inspection of the church is due to be undertaken in April 2021. The majority of the work highlighted in the last report in April 2016 have been done with the exception of pointing to the church and tower parapet and repairs of lead still outstanding. Work has started on the pointing but this may not be completed by the time of the next inspection.

The investigation into what to do about the closed St James church yard is ongoing.

Goods and Ornaments

A new audio visual system has been installed in the church. This comprises an electronic screen in the chancel which can be brought down for use in a service; a projector fixed to a pillar and a laptop for displaying the service. There is also a portable screen available for those in the south aisle who are unable to see the screen. This will be valuable when there are a lot of people in the congregation so not necessarily used on a regular basis. This has enhanced the sound quality within the church.

The remainder of the goods and ornaments are in good condition.

8. Safeguarding Report 2021

The safety of our children, young people and vulnerable adults is of paramount importance to us as a church. The Diocese has produced guidelines for every church which includes a safeguarding policy which we have adopted and a Parish Handbook containing all the relevant information people need to know about safeguarding.

All those who work with children and young people need to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and attend two courses C0 and C1 after which certificates are issued. These checks and courses have to be repeated every three years. Those who work with children in this church were DBS checked a year ago and when this expires next year they will be asked to do the courses as well. This ties everything together and makes it easier for us to keep track of when these need to be done.

Last year it was decided that all PCC members would need to be DBS checked and do the C0 and C1 courses as they are trustees of a charity which works with children and vulnerable adults. Initially PCC members were also required to do a further course, C2, which some of the members had done before it was decided that this course need only be done by those who lead children's sessions. This has been done and those who are appointed today will be asked to complete the DBS application form and do the courses in the next couple of weeks.

An abridged version of the Safeguarding Policy and contact numbers for anyone with concerns about a child are displayed in the foyer of the extension. If anyone wishes to read a full policy or see the handbook then please let me know and I will send you a copy.

From the end of May I will be handing over the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer to Tony Holden.

Safeguarding our children is not just the responsibility of the Parish Safeguarding Officer or PCC. It is up to all of us to keep our eyes and ears open for anything that we feel is not right and to report it to the PSO.

9. Vicar's Report

A) Looking back

See also the Annual Report for a more detailed review

i) Pastorally

The last year has had a dramatic impact on us in every way, physically, psychologically, and emotionally, but most importantly spiritually, for good and for ill. We will have learnt new things about ourselves, our loved ones, and the Lord himself. We will have sinned in new ways or in more serious ways. We will have

been wounded and we will have grown. Let's step back to take stock, to examine ourselves with a view to repenting and to preserving some of the lessons we have learned.

ii) Practically

At the risk of repeating Val and John's reports:

- some major positives
 - Rosemary Miles' legacy – with some designated some for the Children & Families worker, some for the audio-visual system, some for roof, and £50k pumped into our depleted reserves
 - The Fundraising Group's efforts
 - The Church House Fund
 - standing orders remaining stable
- major negatives
 - pandemic drop in income
 - urgent structural repairs vastly increased our expenditure (at least double the drop in income) – roof, pointing, churchyard wall

B) Looking forward

i) Practically

- In the next few months, we hope to restart the 8am (weekly/monthly) but cannot restart the 11am (4 key Junior Church leaders have stepped down for various understandable reasons). Midweek services should also be recommencing.
- LifeChurch continue to consider whether to they might use our building for services.
- Helen Price will arrive as fulltime Children & Families worker at the end of August.
- A 'Generosity Week' planned around harvest time, in line with the wider Church of England
- Looking ahead to our '800-Year' (Octocentenary) Celebrations in the summer of 2023, a trifold leaflet is available which outlines our plans so far (it will be 800 years since the first recorded vicar began at St Peter's).

ii) Pastorally

Wounds can take a long time to heal and we grow slowly. No one should expect things to be back to normal in their inner life immediately. Just as traumatic events can suddenly return to one's mind decades after they happened, so an upheaval like the one we have experienced will have long-term and sometimes unexpected effects. How can we help people not to be surprised by their struggles?

The ending of lockdown will bring people together face-to-face who have had very different experiences of it. While some of us quite enjoyed the first lockdown (good weather, family time, &c), I don't think I know anyone who still feels like that a year later. But the experiences will still vary greatly. Some have lost a husband or wife or mother or father, some are now unemployed, while others do not know anyone close who has died from COVID so it remains more distant. And yet when one part of the body suffers so does the whole. People will have different views on both the seriousness of the virus and the way it has been handled. Some will have been terrified, some blasé. Some will think the restrictions vital for our health, others see in them the harbinger of a coming tyranny. And yet, without agreeing on every issue, we are called to have one mind in Christ. How do we help people with such different experiences and views live out their unity as one body by loving and bearing with one another?

And the main thing we need going forward pastorally and for the sake of individual growth is the all-powerful seed of God's word. It was no accident that I chose Mark 4 to coincide with the APCM. Really, the main vision-casting I wanted to do today was done in this morning's sermon. Let's have that patient confidence in the slow but unstoppable growth of God's word, through the power of the Spirit, which is responsible to all of the good that has taken place over centuries in the past here at St Peter's and will be responsible for all of the good that will take place in the future.

10. Any Other Business

The secretary received no items to be discussed under any other business.

Questions and Answers

Judith Perkins raised the following:

- (a) Seating in the church – to be discussed, with the possibility of reverting to 1-metre distancing.
- (b) Singing in church – this will depend of government guidelines, as the weather improves it is hoped services could be held outside, where singing is permitted.
- (c) Extension – this will depend on government guidelines.
- (d) Judith thanked Rich for the online services he has been doing.

Anne Mellor ask about:

- (a) St James Churchyard – John Carter will submit to West Northamptonshire Council a planning application in respect of a proposed building on St James Churchyard.
- (b) Lady Chapel – when will individual /group prayer take place again. In the Lady Chapel. Hopefully this will resume again soon.

Rosemary Leeper said that she felt that, given the fact that the church's expenditure has exceeded its income for some considerable time, the PCC should not have made the decisions they have in the past year regarding the spending of considerable sums of money on the fabric and personnel of the church without prior consultation with the congregation. This spending has only been possible because of the recent legacy and it might well be felt by the congregation that the legacy should have been invested so as to be available for future emergencies such as repairs to the roof of the church. It is, after all, the congregation, not the PCC, who will be called upon to find the extra money which may well be needed to cover present expenses and future emergencies. Rich replied that whilst PCC will always be the decision-making body, more could have been done to explain and consult with the congregation. Rich admitted that, although there had been relevant articles in the magazine, perhaps a presentation after the service, as suggested, would be more helpful.

Rich is looking into the possibility of resuming the 8 am service.

The feedback was that having the children come into the first part of the 9.30 service is working well.

Sandra Hughes asked when we might be able to light the small individual candles – Rich will look into this.

The meeting closed at 11.55 with prayer.