

The meeting was held as a Zoom gathering with attendees logging in from their homes.

Present: Jema Ball (Vicar/Chair), Simon Potter (Associate Vicar), Ann Thomas (Warden), Caroline Jowett-Ive (Warden), Jenny Baker, Hayley Brydges, Angela Cattell, Steve Fairbairn (Secretary), Julia Gwyther, Jennifer Hall, Tony Hughes, Wendy Hughes, Jo Morris (Curate), Caroline Owen (Treasurer), Pauline Pearson, Yvonne Penn, Brian Richardson, Peter Robottom, Jerry Sandford, Caroline Simpson, Justin Stratis, Hazel Trapnell.

1. OPENING REFLECTION & PRAYER

Jema opened the meeting at 7:30pm by thanking PCC members present for persevering with the difficulties of meeting via Zoom. She then read from Matthew 7 verses 13 and 14 and asked members to reflect on whether God was saying anything to them in connection with those verses on the night. She concluded by expressing the hope that current difficulties would help to lead us to greater fullness of life.

2. APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies had been received from Andy Judd, unavoidably committed to a business issue, John White engaged in a Hazelnut Farm meeting and, post meeting, from Tony Yeadon and Jo Wright.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

3.1 To agree the minutes

Jema asked PCC members whether they would accept the minutes of the last meeting of Nov 11th 2020. No objections were raised which led to the following proposal.

Proposal The minutes of the PCC meeting held on November 11th 2020 can be accepted as an accurate record of the proceedings and so can be signed by the Vicar.

Proposed Caroline Jowett-Ive **Seconded** Caroline Simpson

Result This proposal was accepted unanimously.

3.2 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. UPDATES ON CHURCH / ASMA / DIOCESAN / NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

4.0 Church Opening Decision

Jema noted the need to insert an extra item on discussing the Leadership Team decision to keep the church open during Lockdown #3.

It was noted that some churches have closed in response to the growing number of infections. Jema recognized that any decision to stay open would have to be subject to review, particularly as Covid infection rates in Bristol had been rising. She confirmed that there is no pressure from the city council to close. She noted that attendance at the last Sunday 10:30 service was about 30 with some attendees in higher risk demographic categories. However, she reported that people are being advised of the risks, they are required to wear masks and are sitting in individual seats and so are well spaced. Furthermore, people are asked to leave promptly after the service.

Jema noted that work is proceeding to allow better links over Zoom to improve links to congregation members at home and that the sound technology has been improved. She advised that members of the clergy would never be forced to be present for gathered worship as there is some risk involved, although gathered worship remains within the law and congregation members can, and do, choose to remain at home.

Nevertheless, it was noted that love of our neighbours could be seen as staying at home unless absolutely necessary, to minimize the possibility of spreading the disease. Simon Potter emphasized that closure for gathered worship could effectively cut people, like himself, off from their "spiritual home" and that mental health issues were at stake as well as physical health. It was clear from the discussion that there is no one obvious path to loving one's neighbours during the pandemic. However, it was also pointed out that while people can make their own decisions as to whether to gather in person, doing so potentially puts others at risk. There was also a question about what message we are sending to the wider community by continuing to gather, and a reminder that, being able to gather openly for worship at all, is a privilege that not all Christians everywhere enjoy.

Jema noted the need now for the PCC to decide whether to allow gathered worship to continue and noted that it is simply not possible to please everyone. This led to the following proposal.

Proposal The church can remain open for gathered worship for the next four Sundays subject to any necessary closures invoked by law.

Proposed Angela Cattell **Seconded** Jennifer Hall

Jo Morris lead PCC members in prayer before votes were cast by confidential messages passed to the secretary using Zoom Chat notes.

Result The secretary reported that the proposal was rejected by 12 votes to 8 (at 8:30pm).

Jema noted that this decision would be reviewed in four Sundays time.

Jema then reverted to the planned agenda by calling Caroline Jowett-Ive to speak on the issues facing the Mission Committee as spelled out in the pre-circulated document.

4.1 Reforming our Mission Committee

Caroline Jowett-Ive drew PCC members' attention to the big effort Mike Stewart had put into heading the Mission Committee in the recent past and said that she was now willing to take up the role and work with Jema on Mission Committee issues. She noted that they do need at least two other PCC members to act as representatives on this committee.

5. FINANCE

5.1 Management Accounts

Caroline Owen reported that the Gift Day had brought in ~£60K and so she expected a 2020 year end surplus of ~£26K. She confirmed that this figure includes all tax-backs. She noted that she still expected this year to end in deficit but that that deficit would be covered by the current surplus.

5.2 Stewardship Appeal Update

Caroline reported that on the issue of stewardship it is still not obvious what the level of funding increase would be, but some people have definitely switched to the Parish Giving scheme. She stated that there have been savings from staff furloughs and less building works have been done, but such savings have been offset by reduced church income.

Jema noted that in response to the positive financial position she could see no reason for St Mary's to reduce its Parish Share. This statement went unquestioned.

Caroline reported that the Diocese has been really pleased with the maintenance of our Parish Share contribution as other churches have relied more on cash collections which are down due to the pandemic.

6. STANDING ITEMS

6.3 Staffing

Jema decided to cover this item first because it related to the financial issues discussed immediately before. She noted that our cleaner, Lucy, is on furlough and that she has to shield at present. The most pressing issue for the Office staff is that their two desktop computers are barely fit for purpose and are now slow and old. She also noted that Hayley had had to use her own computer at the Sunday service and that the sound system desk needs a new laptop now, but that is a committed essential expenditure. This report lead to the following proposal.

Proposal Two new desktop computers should be purchased for use by Office staff.

Proposed Hazel Trapnell

Seconded Brian Richardson

Result This proposal was accepted unanimously.

6.1 Safeguarding

Caroline reported that two PCC members still need to complete their DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks. She also noted that Safeguarding Courses which PCC members need to complete are being done.

6.2 Fabric and Health and Safety

Peter reported that the attendance by New Day AV contractors to investigate the failed monitor connections at floorbox 5 would be on Thursday 21st January.

6.3/ Mission Partners

Jema reported that Joseph Bilal would like to express his gratitude to us over Zoom during a Sunday service. It was noted that Joseph's cousin has died recently and that Joseph would like to repatriate the body, but lacks the necessary money. It was also noted the elections in Uganda will be a risky time for the people there.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Jema explained to the PCC that she finds it really helpful to have advance notice of items that PCC members wish to discuss which are not part of the formal agenda. At this meeting, the discussion about gathered worship fell into this category. However, Jema also noted, and apologised for, the way that initial decisions to keep the church open (following the Lockdown announcement on 4th January) were taken. She acknowledged that wider consultation should have been sought before reaching a decision, and also that the situation in terms of Covid cases had changed a lot in the eight days since the decision was taken. She expressed her gratitude to the PCC members for their wisdom and graciousness in these difficult matters.

9. CLOSING PRAYER

Justin Stratis closed the meeting in prayer at 9:10pm.

Signed.......... Date.....27/04/21

The date of the next scheduled PCC meeting is Wednesday 10th March 2021.

