

The meeting was held in church with attendees wearing face masks.

Present: Jema Ball, (Vicar/Chair), Ann Thomas (Warden), Caroline Jowett-Ive (Warden), Jo Bridgwater, Hayley Brydges, (Youth Minister), Angela Cattell, Julia Gwyther, Jennifer Hall, Tony Hughes, Al Meadows, Jo Morris (Curate), Caroline Owen (Treasurer), Kate Pinfold, Nick Powlesland, Brian Richardson, Peter Robottom, Jerry Sandford, Tony Yeadon.

In attendance: Steve Fairbairn (Secretary).

1. OPENING REFLECTION & PRAYER

Jema opened the meeting at 7:30pm by noting that most of her PCC meetings as vicar had so far been held using Zoom. She then read from 2 Corinthians 4 and encouraged the meeting attendees to be a source of support to others in spite of all external pressures.

Attendees were advised that they could remove their masks when speaking to ensure clarity of expression.

2. APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies had been received from Simon Potter and Caroline Simpson.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1 To agree the minutes

Jema asked PCC members whether they would accept the minutes of the last PCC meeting. There were no objections to the minutes and this led to the following proposal.

Proposal The minutes of the PCC meeting held on May 12th 2021 can be accepted as an accurate record of the proceedings and so can be signed by the Vicar.

Proposed Caroline Owen **Seconded** Peter Robottom

Result This proposal was accepted unanimously and Jema signed the minutes.

3.2 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3.3 Leadership Team Minutes

These minutes had been pre-circulated to PCC members and so were taken as having been read by attendees. It was noted that John Gwyther and Caroline Jowett-Ive are also new

members of the mission committee along with Kate Pinfold, otherwise there were no comments on these minutes.

4. RESOURCING MISSION

4.1 Our Staff Team

Jema reported that Matt Hurley has not resigned yet, but is intent on doing so by the end of the month. She noted that he plans to train as a secondary school teacher in Barnstaple and would be a sad loss at St. Mary's. The HR Committee will meet in September to begin the process of recruitment. Jema said that Matt was likely to return to St. Mary's on August 22nd for a formal farewell and that the congregation would be invited to give towards a leaving gift. It was noted that Matt has been on the Government Job Retention Scheme for several weeks due to his role being currently curtailed by the pandemic, which has meant that 80% of the cost of his salary can be reclaimed. Matt has still been receiving his salary at 100%.

Jema noted that our staff office would be closed for two weeks during August.

4.2 Our Finances

The financial accounts documents had been pre-circulated prior to the PCC meeting. Caroline Owen reported that she now expected a year end deficit of about £35K, but that income is slowly rising, including income from hosting weddings and hall bookings. She noted that there have been National Insurance savings because of reduced salary costs, though as of May 2021 the Children and Families Minister's pay has been increased to match the hours worked. She advised that our current losses are covered by the income from last year's gift day. She also noted that the Development fund and Church Hall funds have now been formally separated in the accounts.

Jema noted that the Diocese was grateful to us for meeting our Parish Share for last financial year, particularly since many other churches could not. All churches have been asked to consider whether they could increase their Parish Share payment or make an additional one-off gift, since most churches were not able to meet their Parish Share in full, as we were. In light of the fact that we did pay the full Parish Share, Jema advised that the Diocese would not be surprised if we could not give an additional gift in this financial year.

In response to a query on cash donations, Caroline noted that these have decreased since March 2020 but that sundry donations have gone up. Jema reported that in the future we would still have retiring collections at specific services (raising money for other charities) but that electronic ways of donating would need to be the way forwards (e.g. donating through charity websites) as many people do not carry cash anymore.

Caroline advised that our reserves of £76K would allow us to cope with overall budget deficits for a few years and that we are not dependent on a few large donors like some churches are. It was noted that at this time of year there is often a deficit and Jema advised that the Finance Committee were actively planning the Stewardship Appeal for this year. Jema also advised that the Mission Committee was actively considering funding for our Mission partners, with an appeal being made to the congregation on 16th July.

4.3 Our Buildings

Peter Robottom reported that he had had a meeting with two people from the Diocese on Eco options for a new boiler for the church. When this decision needs to be made, it will likely be either an electric boiler powered by photovoltaic cells on the church roof, or an energy efficient gas boiler which could be converted to be powered by hydrogen gas when this technology comes on stream.

Peter advised that costs and practical details were now under review. Jema noted that the current boiler is likely to last another winter having been recently repaired.

It was noted that, regarding the building works required by the Quinquennial and Triennial reports, there is currently nothing vital for the PCC to take action on.

Jema noted that on September 24th and 25th there would be voluntary working parties both inside and outside the church buildings to do some low-level maintenance work. Posters would be produced to advertise for support. Peter noted that regular voluntary effort on grass mowing was also needed and that David Swithinbank estimates the mowing time required as 2-3 hours every other week.

4.3.1 Hall Redevelopment Project

The details of the Church Rooms Development project and a proposal for funding the works by the sale of our St. Laud Close property had been pre-circulated to PCC members.

Jema asked for someone to summarize the position which prompted the immediate response "sell the house to pay for the hall". It was noted that the loss of income as a result of the sale of the St. Laud Close property would be £950 per month, but that raising the funds needed for hall redevelopment through fund raising events would have a huge cost in terms of time and effort and would result in limited returns. It was noted that it might be possible to reinvest some of the proceeds from the sale of St. Laud Close in another smaller property. It was also recognized that to offer St. Laud Close to one Church employee rather than another would be difficult and that recent tax system changes meant that the financial advantage of being effectively granted rental income was now removed. It was also noted that sale of the property next to the vicarage had allowed the purchase of both the St. Laud Close and Howecroft Court buildings and that Howecroft Court had been sold as part of the Beyond 150 works. This exchange of views led to the following proposal with the generally accepted wording as given in the pre-circulated proposal document.

Proposal The PCC should approve the sale of the St. Laud Close property which is owned by St. Mary's Church in order to enable a substantial amount of the capital from that sale to be invested in the hall project.

Proposed Brian Richardson **Seconded** Kate Pinfold

Result This proposal was accepted by all PCC members bar one abstention.

Peter Robottom reported that a planning application for an extra house on part of the land around 1 St Laud Close would be made as soon as a Design and Access Statement has been prepared using drawings produced by Alan Patterson. Quentin Alder is sufficiently recovered to proceed with clearance of the conditions on the hall enhancement planning permission and which are also required for the necessary Faculty from the Diocese.

It was noted that thanks were due to the Buildings Committee (Nick Powlesland, Chris Thomas, Al Meadows, Caroline Owen, Ann Thomas and Peter Robottom) for preparation of documents concerning the redevelopment project.

Jema said that she recognized the need to approach the congregation on funding for redevelopment works but that this would not be done until January or February 2022.

5. MISSION and MINISTRY UPDATES and DECISIONS

5.1 Worship and Teaching

A note on the Church of England "Living in Love and Faith" (LLF) book and related course had been pre-circulated to the PCC members. Jema noted that the book is a weighty tome and that those taking part in the book group or LLF course would be able to feedback shared learning on this subject to our diocesan leaders. Plans are still being formulated as to how St Mary's will approach this. More information will follow in September.

5.2 Caring and Praying for each other

Jo Morris' update paper on "Care and Support" had been pre-circulated to members. This highlighted new initiatives and projects which gave members related prayer points. On the night, there was nothing to add to the report but it was noted that there is a lot happening in this area at present, which is really encouraging.

5.3 Connecting with Younger Generations

Hayley reported that plans are progressing with "Shine on Sundays" which will begin on September 5th on alternate Sunday mornings. This will provide age-specific teaching for children and young people.

5.4 Stoke Bishop C.E. Primary School

Jema noted that Rachel and Hayley have been able to host Prayer Spaces in school for three year groups this term. She reported that an OFSTED inspection is expected in the Autumn term. She was happy to note that the school is very pleased with the partnership with St. Mary's and that those involved with the school as Governors or in other ways are working hard to maintain this strong connection.

Post meeting note: A summary of these prayer spaces was produced by Rachel and circulated to the PCC with the minutes for information.

5.5 Serving the wider parish, mission areas and beyond

Andy Judd noted that the 43rd Scouts Group AGM had been held recently over Zoom and that Hayley had joined in. He reminded attendees that the church has a long association with the Scouts. He reported that funding the rebuilding of the Scout Hut has been hard work and a long drawn out and continuing process. Jema noted that she hoped there would be uniformed groups in church on Remembrance Sunday.

Jema reported that September 19th would be the date to acknowledge Harvest, including an appeal for the Bristol NW Foodbank. We may be able to hold a bring-and-share lunch after the 10.30am service that day. She also reported that there will hopefully be three other social events in the Autumn term (a 'clothes swap' event, a wreath making event and Beer and Carols) which would hopefully appeal to those outside the church community. She also reminded PCC members of 'Connect on Tuesdays' as mentioned in Jo Morris's report which would involve coffee, chat, creativity and Communion. It is hoped that this will draw in people from the community who are not yet part of St Mary's.

Jema noted that because Helen Johnson, the Priest in Charge, is moving from Shirehampton Church that St Mary's clergy would need to provide support there on a fairly regular basis during the vacancy and that the other ASMA churches also need support from time to time.

It was noted that there would be a move to reduce the number of mission partners and so it would be necessary to create a shortlist and get a vote from the congregation on those whom the church would support formally.

It was reported that the attempts to link up with students at the University Halls of Residence were continuing and plans are in place to strengthen the team ahead of the new academic year. Members were told that quite a few students are coming to Wills Hall for prayer. Angela advised that students like the church support teams and so she was wondering what to do next now that the "ground was well watered". It was noted that the Student and Youth Worker from Highgrove Church in Coombe Dingle is also involved with this ministry.

5.6 Safeguarding

Caroline reported that a Safer Recruitment policy has been produced to ensure that volunteers and employed staff are recruited in line with our Safeguarding Policy.

6. OTHER ITEMS

6.1 Grand Piano

A paper had been pre-circulated to PCC members which gave details of the temporary installation of a grand piano, not owned by the church, on the dais in front of the James Chapel. Jema noted that hosting the piano was low risk and reversible, but could make a positive contribution to church music.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no pre-arranged AOB, but Jema reported that details of Covid-related de-restrictions for in-church activities still needed to be decided, though it was still not clear would be formally allowed. Jema therefore asked whether the PCC would agree to allow the Leadership Team to take the relevant decisions early in the week following the PCC meeting. This led to the following proposal.

Proposal The Leadership Team should proceed with deciding the details of Covid related de-restriction practices.

Proposed Nick Powesland

Seconded Hayley Brydges

Result This proposal was agreed by 13 PCC members with 7 abstentions (those on Leadership Team) and so was formally accepted.

8. CLOSING PRAYER

Jo Morris closed the meeting in prayer asking PCC members to be thankful for God's presence and to pray for God's blessings on the decisions taken during the meeting.

Jema reminded members that the next meeting would be held on September 15th and declared the meeting closed at 9:06pm.

Signed..........

Date.....15/09/21