

Minutes of the Meeting of St. James P.C.C.

Monday 20th March 2023

Present: Rev Rob Powell (Chair), Glynis Wilkinson, Jacqueline Gray, Ailie Neill, John Talbot, Adam Seymour-Davies, John Farebrother, Nick Burt, Rocky Deans, David Kafuko, Marlon Ganesh, Sarah Veal (Observing).

1. Opening Prayers

Rob welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with a prayer.

2. Apologies: Frances Christian, Lisa Burrows, Stepheney Sulaiman, Sandra Lucas, Marcia Gordon, Liz Gibbons, Alan Burrows, Rev Mark Pybus, Yvonne Mason, Peter Neill.

3. Minutes from the meeting held on 30th January 2023

The PCC approved the minutes unanimously.

4. Matters Arising

Item 5b: Electrical Lighting Project: Rob reported that we have received the funds from our two CBF accounts, amounting to £12,890.09, and our application for an interest free loan of £8,000 has been approved by the diocese, repayable in monthly instalments over 5 years beginning the month after the first draw down. We are now awaiting the result of our faculty application before commencing the work.

5. Finance Report

a) Management Accounts

In Alan's absence Rob presented the accounts for the year so far to the end of February 2023 which show an income of £28,707 against a budget of £29,888. Expenditure in the same period was £35,431 against a budget of £33,647. This resulted in a deficit of £6,724. The main contributor to the above expected expenditure was high utility bills.

b) Approval of 2022 Accounts

Rob presented the year end accounts which had been signed off by our independent examiner, Leroy Reid. These showed an unrestricted income of £202,696 with a further £3130 restricted. Expenditure was £222,208, resulting in a deficit of £16,381.

A question was raised about the costs of the independent examination and whether there were any cheaper options, such as Paula Thomas or Raphael Gordon. Rob said he would ask Alan to explore options.

The independent examiner's letter was also presented for approval.

Approval of the accounts was proposed by John Farebrother, seconded by John Talbot, and passed unanimously.

Approval of the letter was proposed by John Farebrother, seconded by Nick Burt, and passed unanimously.

c) Financial Recovery Strategy

Nick presented a Financial Recovery Strategy along with some targets, drafted by a working group comprising himself, Rob Powell, Keren Pybus and Paula Thomas. The strategy has three main objectives: to create an activity plan that brings us back to break even at the end of 2023; to create a growth strategy aligned to the MAP to raise income in order to fulfil our calling as an outward, mission focused church; and to raise an additional £33k over our planned expenditure in 2024. Questions and comments included:

- Should we keep the Friendship Circle funds as a designated fund rather than moving them into the General Fund, as proposed in the strategy? Whilst it was suggested that the financing of future work among our older members was a legitimate subject for debate, it was agreed to remove that proposal from the strategy.
- We should act quickly on the proposal to move some money into a high interest account.
- How will the strategy be monitored? The suggestion was quarterly or termly.
- We perhaps need to do some work on our lettings publicity.

The PCC gave its approval to the strategy and accompanying targets.

6. Vision/Mission Action Plan

In Rev Mark Pybus' absence Rob reported that work is ongoing to populate the draft MAP with small working groups tasked with implementing the objectives. It is hoped that a report will be presented at the APCM, along with the financial recovery strategy.

It was suggested that it would be good to press ahead with the formation of two of the planned working groups rather than wait any longer, namely The Youth Working Group and the Pastoral Care Working Group. This was approved by PCC.

The PCC paused to pray at this point.

7. Living in Love & Faith

Rob gave an update on the process and reported on the discussions and decisions from General Synod in February. Rob had written a letter to the 3 churches in the Furzedown Team following the General Synod, explaining what had been decided and expressing his personal concerns. He therefore took some time to explain to PCC members the reasons for his concerns and his statement in the letter that if the bishops' proposals go ahead unchanged some, including Rob, might feel it necessary to leave the Church of England.

Rob explained that the Church of England is founded on a set of theological principles called the 39 Articles, number XX of which states that it is unlawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to Scripture. He then summarised the biblical case against the affirmation, celebration and blessing of same sex unions and concluded that the current proposals would mean the Church of England departing from Scripture and therefore from the 39 Articles. Many, like Rob, believe Scripture teaches that this is a salvation issue and that we cannot therefore agree to disagree and continue walking together as the Church of England.

Work is now going on to refine the proposals for presentation at the July sessions of General Synod and conversation are taking place to seek to persuade the bishops of the need for some substantive structural changes in the Church of England to enable dissenters to remain in the fold.

Rob stated that he strongly believes that, once the proposals are finalised and implemented, probably in July, it will be important for St James PCC to make its own mind up on the issue regardless of Rob's personal decisions about his own future. This may be difficult, but necessary. It was suggested that when that debate happens perhaps it would be helpful to hear both sides of the argument, as we did in the Sexuality Forum some years ago.

8. Safeguarding & Renewal of Policies

No reported safeguarding incidents since last meeting.

Rocky had been asked to do some work on reviewing and redrafting some church policies and he presented three for consideration: Fire Safety, Safeguarding, and Behaviour. PCC members were asked to make any suggested amendments to Rocky before the next meeting in May, at which time the three policies will be approved.

Rocky also reported that he is working on producing a booklet containing all church policies so PCC members and other key people can have them all in one place. He is also setting up a google.doc system to support the pastoral visiting team.

9. Building for the Kingdom

Mike White, Chair of the BFK Working Group, had written a letter to PCC members to update on progress with the project. He summarised the major achievements to date as follows: Worked with our consulting partners JBKS to complete a feasibility study outlining plans for our buildings; engaged the DAC (Diocesan Advisory Committee), on our desire to redevelop the church buildings in service of our Church mission; and created a first draft of the business case in service of the feasibility study.

He stated that the group's aspirations for 2023 were as follows: Re-engage with our Church community, let them know the work that has been happening in the background and give them the opportunity to ask questions/seek assurances; hold a formal on-site meeting with the full committee of the DAC so that as we move forward with our plans, we do so with their support and considerable expertise and guidance; finalise the strategic business case which we developed in service of the feasibility study; and start planning for future phases of the Building for the Kingdom project.

10. APCM

Rob reminded members that the APCM is due to take place at 10.30am on Sunday 30th April and that numerous roles would be up for election at that meeting. He encouraged members to get nomination forms completed in good time.

The meeting closed at 10.05pm with The Grace.