

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST,
MALDEN Registered Charity No. 1145155
Minutes of the 733rd meeting of the Parochial Church
Council held on Tuesday, 6th October 2020 by
Googlemmeet, with members joining from their homes.

Present: The Vicar in the chair, Pauline Armour, Franklin Barrington, Margaret Barrington, Brian Bowers, Jane Bransgrove, Mike Broome, Milly Broome, Marilyn Burkett, Richard Burkett, Lisa Down, Deborah Harris, Sally Josolyne, Marie McGuire, Anthony Pullen, Liz Pullen, and Lynn Sanger.

In attendance: Alastair Harris (treasurer), Faith Bowers (clerk).

Sally would again record the proceedings as a back-up for the minutes.

The Vicar opened with prayer.

7310 **1 - Apologies for absence** were received from Steve Clark, Louise Hall, and Martina Herpak.

7311 **2 - Notice of Essential AOB**
Brian and Sally both had short items.

7312 **3 - Minutes of the September PCC Meeting**
The minutes were approved and signed, and would be published on the website.
CWs/Amy

7313 **4 - Finance Update**
a) *Current position* Alastair presented the current figures. Seven donors had been lost, representing £270 per month. Sheri was making tactful contact to check if they realised. No banking had been done in August so some August income showed in September. £220 had been received in gift-aided donations. Thanks to Janet Flemming the final OMN advertising payments had been received. Gift Aid refund was yet to come. On costs, there had been a slight rise in electricity, and a fee for the website. Overall August had been a moderate month. The monthly deficit is running at £1,200-£1,300.

In September the Gift Aid for April-June came in (£3,800), making a healthy income for the month (£10,000), but costs, including maintenance and fire extinguisher annual tests, amounted to £8,000.

These figures suggested a deficit of £16,000 at the year end. This included £5,000 in unbudgeted but necessary expenses, including architect's fees and the kitchen boiler. There had been substantial donations from individuals, amounting to over £3,000. Tony asked if the August Free Will Offerings had now been banked and was assured the banking was up to date.

Alastair reiterated that he is always happy to have questions out of the meeting, preferably by telephone.

b) *2021 Budget*

Richard reported that the Finance Committee was working on the budget for 2021. They were trying to plan for two possible scenarios: (1) assuming the current Covid-19 restrictions would last until mid 2021 but that normal activities would resume in the second half of the year and (2) that restrictions would last throughout 2021.

If no action were taken and £72,000 were paid to the diocesan Parish Support Fund there would be a deficit of around £16,000 at the year end, similar to that anticipated for 2020. At the end of 2019 St John's had reserves of £79,000. By the beginning of 2021 that would have dropped to £63,000. So the questions were how much should be given to the Diocese and how could planned giving be increased, with the balance coming out of reserves at year end.

The church could cut the amount given to the Parish Support Fund to balance the budget. With planned giving and gift aid amounting to £75,000 that would require a cut to £57,000 in scenario 1, and £54,000 in scenario 2. Neither would be acceptable to either the Diocese or St John's.

If the total Free Will Offerings went up to £13 per week per person (the national average) from April that would realise £88,000, and only leave a small deficit on Scenario 1, and a rather bigger deficit in scenario 2. But although £13 was the national average, that would entail an unrealistic 30% rise in giving. These figures indicate that the PCC must act to ensure a satisfactory budget next year.

Case 3 is a first effort at compromise. It might be possible to raise Giving by 10%, to £80,000. Then deficit in scenario 1 would be £7,000, scenario 2 £10,000. The deficiency would need to come from reserves, leaving the at year end at (1) £56,000 (2) £52,000. Should this be the target? If in November the Diocese was told that the church would keep the £72,000 figure that would risk a drain on reserves.

Franklin asked what percentage rise had been achieved by the recent appeal. Richard said it had been very disappointing, making little difference overall. There had been a good response in recent donations.

Alastair observed that there had been a shortfall even before the pandemic impact and the church had long been over-reliant on fundraising. It was shocking that such a church should be giving 30% below the national average. The reserves would not last for ever.

Tony expressed reluctance to cut the Parish Support Fund, pointing out that this could lead to a future merger, making the Vicar give time to another parish. The Fund also supports training, so cuts there would reduce availability of future ordinands and readers. Raising money was particularly difficult at a time when many were facing loss of income.

The Diocese suggested that churches should retain reserves to cover a minimum of three months. Alastair observed that charities functioned differently from businesses, and many charities looked at covering six or even nine months.

Mike supported Tony's plea for allocating £72,000 for the Parish Support Fund, saying St

John's was in a better position than many churches. There were expensive building projects pending, but grant givers would not be sympathetic where there were substantial reserves.

Father Michael understood the argument for only promising £70,000 but if the church only paid £70,000 the extra £2,000 was likely to be claimed later. That was Guildford practice and probably Southwark's too. Clergy were now being made redundant, where parishes had more than one being paid. At present St John's was fortunate in having a full-time Vicar, but in future was likely to get what was paid for.

Richard observed that £72,000 was already a low figure. From such a church the Diocese would really like £82,000 or more.

He added that there were two potential extra causes for future expenditure: costs relating to the Scout Hut lease and security measures. There was a possibility of a Places of Worship grant for the latter. That day two police and someone from Esotech had inspected the site, considering better lighting, CCTV, and gates at the main entrance to discourage sleepers. Further details were awaited. A report should go to the Home Office in early December. The security costs were likely to be £10,000-£15,000, but if a grant were secured the government would pay 80%. It would be a good investment long-term.

The Finance Committee would welcome thoughts and comments on any aspects of the proposed budget as soon as possible by any of the available means of communication.

All

Alastair said the pledge for Parish Support had to be determined in November, but it would greatly help the Diocese if a minimum figure could be committed ahead of the final decision. It would help to know about the Scout Hut before the final decision.

Should £70,000 minimum be promised now, with the hope of increase once a final issue was resolved? Both churchwardens said they would prefer to commit to £72,000, and the majority of the PCC agreed to take this step in faith.

Tony expressed the PCC's thanks to the Finance Committee for all their efforts over this whole matter.

7314 **5 - School Places/Registers**

Keeping registers of attendance had to be dropped at the beginning of lockdown. These were resumed at the beginning of October, with a number of families at the 4 p.m. service. The Vicar was uneasy at hearing some felt they had to go to church and so miss seeing grandparents. With Covid numbers rising, one parent with health issues could not attend to bring the child. Parents had been asked to join the Electoral Roll, take the weekly mailing, and attend services when safe to do so. Letters would only be issued where there had been some effort at attendance. The Diocesan Board of Education advised the Vicar to do what he thought best. If the PCC was happy, he would publicise the arrangements.

Margaret said they could not put people at risk for a school place. The records required attendance over two years, so most should have some opportunity to show regular

attendance. Mike supported this. The PCC approved the approach.

7315 6 - St John's Hall, Scout HQ lease renewal

Solicitors, recommended by the Diocese, were appointed last week, and a surveyor contacted. Mike would be talking to the Scouts on Friday. Matters to resolve were the length of lease, level of rental, and costs. He hoped there would not be a large cost to the church.

7305 7 - Recovery Plan

The Vicar said this was a fallow time which should not be wasted while waiting for restrictions to end. He would like a team of three to search for grants towards the building work. At present there is money around because no-one is asking for it, so it would be wise to make an early move. Were there any volunteers for this team? **All**

Similarly it would be a good time to get ahead of the game with safeguarding training, as some was available via Zoom. Amy was identifying those who ought to be trained. Pastoral support and outreach were very hard at present. Happily the monthly Parish Lunch was being maintained with home deliveries, and there were plans for a home-delivered Christmas event, for which a grant might be possible. Pat Lovegrove and Iluska were organising all this but it would be good if more from the church were involved.

Over half the normal congregation was now getting to the church on Sundays, but the Vicar was concerned for the many who were watching the services but not receiving communion. This was likely to be felt especially at Remembrance and Christmas. There could not be the usual parade of uniformed organisations at Remembrance but the Vicar was wondering whether a few Scouts might lay a wreath. A Carol Service was to be filmed, with choir practice on 4th and recording on 5th December. It was all about how to keep people connected.

His idea of a live nativity at Plough Green was not possible because of numbers. He could be in the church with the crib scene for children to visit on Zoom.

Pauline expressed appreciation for these ideas. Sally asked if there might also be some kind of social activity at Christmas. Richard wondered about something at midnight to mark New Year.

7306 8 - APCM

Reports were available and questions were required by 18th October. The Vicar, churchwardens and treasurer would prefilm answers. The elections to PCC and Deanery Synod would follow subsequently. Deborah, Liz and Tony were completing terms on Deanery Synod. There were 4 PCC places to fill, with Martina, Sally, Steve and Louise completing their terms. The required quorum should be ascertained: this was a percentage of the number on the Electoral Roll, perhaps increased significantly with parents required to enrol to seek school recommendations. The Vicar observed that Sally could be co-opted for her technical services. **All**

7307 9 - St John's Website

Deborah was glad the Heritage Open Days took place but said they had made special

provision on the website in case nothing else could happen. Pat Lovegrove and Chris Beales had helped with this, Chris especially on hidden nature. This material had now all been allocated to regular sections of the website. People were interested in the church's history.

There was a page for the Harvest Appeal for the Food Bank.

While there was a button for donations, these incurred a charge, whereas bank transfers did not so were preferable.

The page welcoming the new Vicar should be updated.

Sally reported been 14,000 Impressions this month (people looking at the site), with 173 Clicks (pursuing further). The wasp spider had proved popular among the Impressions. Overall usage had been up 25% in the past month. The church hall, school, hidden nature, quiz, and harvest appeal pages were all sought, but especially the worship services. Sunday was the peak day. The 9.45 service had now been live-streamed for eight weeks, with 10-15 live viewers and a further 50-80 streaming subsequently. There were no questions, but Brian expressed appreciation of this welcome provision.

7308 10 - Safeguarding

Amy was gathering names for Marie to encourage online training. No issues had arisen but the Vicar and Marie were both available if anything should arise.

7309 11 - Any other business

a) *Church Hall* - Brian said a lot of work had been done by three or four volunteers during the summer, as listed in the committee minutes, and this ought to be acknowledged.

b) Contactless payments

Sally said the device had not been much used at services. She had now found an app which could be used on a tablet computer which would make payment in church easy. This had been used last Sunday, offering both harvest appeal and general church funds. The amount had to be selected and then the device just touched with a payment card. This might help to offset the current loss of £500 a month from loose offerings in the plate. She had provided a tablet for the experiment but for regular use the church would need to invest in a tablet and stand. Mike judged this a good idea, worth a little expense. Richard thought ideally it should be available at the entry door before the service and again at the exit.

Lynn suggested that positioning this would need some care. At present latecomers cause delay while sterilising at the entrance and parents signing the schools register block the queue when everyone has to leave through the lounge.

All the wardens ought to be trained in the use of the devices, though Mike is concerned about their workload. This is not helped by a shortage of sidespeople as many of the erstwhile regulars are elderly and still shielding. Jane suggested urging people to come early to allow for hand cleaning etc.

Mike concluded this was a good idea but needed careful thought on the best use. Lynn

judged it would be a good investment even if not fully used at present. **CWs/Sally**

c) *Heating*

The Vicar observed that the Church of England was inclining to think heating should be allowed without keeping doors open. Most churches are quite well ventilated. Milly had thought the blowers could be on before the service and then switched off, but it was not good to turn them off. Sally said they would not want a blower on too near the microphones.

d) *Pastoral matters*

Milly mentioned the sudden death of David Smith's brother Robert, and also how hard it was for the Hembrows, with Chris in and out of hospital, where Pat, not well herself, had to book visits in advance.

Lynn observed that Father Michael had now completed his first year at St John's and wished to express the gratitude of the PCC and congregation for his ministry. The Vicar in turn said he was glad to have a good team around him.

There being no further business, Tony closed the meeting with prayer at 9.45 p.m.

The next PCC meeting will be on Tuesday, 3 November, 7.45 for 8 p.m.