

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST,
MALDEN Registered Charity No. 1145155

Minutes of the 731st meeting of the Parochial Church
Council held on Tuesday, 7th July 2020 by Google
Hangout, 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, Steve Clark, Deborah Harris, Sally Josolyne, 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.

7287 1 - Apologies for absence were received from Louise Hall, Martina Herpak, and Marie Mcguire.

7288 2 - Notice of Essential AOB.

a) Everyone echoed the Vicar's vote of thanks to Lisa Down for the fund-raising silent auction and to Sam Scotland for cleaning graffiti off the doors.

b) Tony wished to speak about Deanery Synod.

7289 3 - Minutes of the May PCC Meeting

Richard asked for one addition on p.2 (7280/5), after 'This was carried unanimously': 'Richard asked the PCC if they were comfortable, in principle, to taking money from reserves to meet the anticipated year end deficit. The PCC agreed.'

With that addition the minutes were approved and signed, and would be published on the website. CWs/Amy

7290 4 - Finance Update

Alastair presented the May figures, which were the first month this year to show a surplus. Standing orders continued consistently, and there had also been some donations. The figures did not include donations for elsewhere, e.g. Lent Lunches, school Bibles, as these only went through St John's accounts before being passed on. Gift Aid recovery had brought about £4000. Expenditure was largely as predicted. The revised forecast for the year looked slightly better, if services could be resumed in September.

There was a question about tax recovery on small donations. That used to be on sums under £20 but was now under £30. Alastair said he put donations from church groups, like the knitters, in that category, but not for votive candles as they were of a more personal nature.

Richard then spoke about the efforts to encourage more giving. This would not be easy until services could resume, but there had been appeals in the parish mailing and on the noticeboard. He would write something for OMN. Meanwhile the Finance Committee

could plan visual displays, a direct link to the giving page, etc. With many having clear-outs during lockdown, people should be encouraged to keep their Jumble for St John's. The donations page on the website was beginning to work. The Fundraising Committee had been active and he was grateful for their various efforts.

Tony asked if the Finance Committee had done more about using reserves. Alastair said that was a matter for the end of the year, when the deficit would be clear. It might prove necessary to retrieve some of the money deposited with CCLA next year.

Richard would like to register with the Coop as a local charity. This had to be done by 12 August. The Coop chooses some local charities to receive 1% from its members. The PCC agreed to registering for this.

Easy Fundraising was working quite well, but it would be good to remind people about the box to tick when purchasing online.

Alastair said the June accounts were showing some response to the appeals. Over £200 had so far been raised for school Bibles. Most donations were gift-aided. £2000 had come, mostly anonymous. He wrote to thank for substantial donors where he had an address.

The PCC thanked Alastair and Richard for their careful work. Fr Michael said he would like to write to all making freewill offerings, as both thanks and reminder. The PCC approved

7291 5 - Recovery Plan

The church had been opened for private prayer the previous Sunday afternoon. About ten came. The churchwardens had arranged the necessary cleaning etc. It went well. This would be continued, provided there were sufficient volunteer minders, two being needed each session.

The Vicar was not prepared to offer communion yet. He preferred to play safe. Meanwhile he was learning from other clergy experience and mistakes. Bishop Christopher had suggested that clergy should take their summer holidays before reopening services. St John's has a large congregation in quite a small church, making it more challenging than for neighbouring St James, with a large church and small congregation. It was important not to lose public trust. He thought St John's would need two services, perhaps 9.45 and Sunday afternoon. People would need to choose and then keep within those bubbles.

He was receiving requests for funerals and christenings in church. With numbers not over 30, he was inclined to agree to these. The Julian Group had requested permission to meet in the churchyard and had been allowed to do that on Monday evening.

He and Tony were thinking about one or more virtual house groups to help unpack some of the current issues, not least where God was in it all. It was also necessary to be realistic and prepared for another wave of infection later in the year.

Pauline asked about the over-70s who are supposed to continue shielding carefully. The Vicar thought decisions would be left to individuals. The earlier service might be designated for older people.

The Vicar and Sally were thinking about live-streaming the services. Harvey had offered to help too.

Pastorally, the Vicar was concerned about the bereaved. He had been working with some in need of help. There had been nine Covid deaths in the parish. The idea of a Bereavement Cafe was going ahead. Mr Nolan, chaplain at the Princess Alice Hospice, would provide training material, although that would need to be adapted to local needs. The need now was to identify a team to train. Truelove's would direct people to the Cafe and probably provide some subsidy for it.

He was also in contact with a mental health charity (with which he had experience in Epsom) about help with the wider community from lockdown issues. The stress was too much for some marriages: some within the congregation would probably fail. There would be considerable need to help people through all this.

Saturday morning Open Church could help with this. People often found it easier to talk over a coffee.

Christmas was going to be difficult, without carols, crib services and midnight masses. The Vicar was wondering whether an open-air nativity could be staged on Plough Green, perhaps with help from Richard Challoner school and Malden Manor Community Church. The Parochial School had already some experience, proving it was possible out of doors. He would like to explore the idea. He also wondered whether in December it might be possible to have a cone of light on the church tower, which is visible from trains at quite a distance.

If there was a Sunday afternoon service, provision might still be made for private prayer, perhaps midweek. Thought should also be given to doing something for the young, perhaps in the upper room on Sunday afternoons.

He was optimistic overall: the church would still be there beyond Covid.

7292 6 - Foodbank Donation

Deborah said the church had given £250 earlier, and the final donation from 2019 had been added to that. The church would need to think about charities to support this year.

Foodbank donations had fallen during lockdown. The request was now more for vouchers and donations, rather than actual food. Perhaps a special effort might be made at Harvest. Marilyn mentioned that several shops in the area had boxes for foodbank donations, which might be used by those who would usually give through the church.

7293 7 - APCM

A date should be set in October. Most reports had been received and made available. So far no questions had been received. The Vicar, Churchwardens and Treasurer would prepare their report. Elections were needed, with 3 places on PCC and 3 on Deanery Synod to be filled. Milly observed it was usually necessary to persuade people to offer, as few actually volunteered for these important responsibilities. The PCC should give serious consideration to this.

All

Liz said her 3-year term on Deanery Synod was up, but she would be happy to continue.

The Vicar suggested the meeting should be on either 18 or 25 October. *The PCC agreed to hold the APCM on Sunday, 18 October.* No-one should be disenfranchised, so some postal voting would be necessary.

7294 8 - MPS Governors

Andy Down had now stepped down because of other commitments. St John's was currently under-represented, with the school seeking Foundation Governors from beyond the parish. The year ahead would be challenging and teachers would need supportive governors. Relations with the school had improved, but that demanded more involvement from St John's. The role was not onerous but quite challenging. An effort should be made to find suitable people.

7295 9 - St John's Website

Deborah said the requested information about the parochial school had now been added. Amy had been asking for more photos. These ought to be refreshed regularly.

Sally spoke about the analytics. The history and nature aspects both drew interest, as well as Fr Michael's worship videos.

Asked about the loss of the Parish Blog, which had not been maintained after Fr Kevin retired and Liz Sealey died, this had been succeeded by 'What's on at St John's'.

Thanks were expressed to Deborah and Sally for all their work on this.

7296 10 - Safeguarding

The focus on this had necessarily changed, but Covid brought fresh concerns about safeguarding, with the need to wear masks, use sanitisers etc. Many were careful, but by no means all. St John's policy required 2 metres distancing and masks.

A new diocesan safeguarding officer was still awaited.

7297 11 - Deanery Synod

Tony spoke about the Synod's current concern with homelessness and poverty within Kingston. The statistics for the borough from Christians against Poverty were remarkably grim, on unemployment, arrears of Council Tax, debt, lack of central heating, etc. This parish was certainly not immune.

Richard said the church needed to consider its support for KCAH. He estimated that the Foodbank was losing perhaps £50 a week from St John's.

The Vicar wondered if this was an area that might draw community partners to work with the church. Something should go into OMN in the next month or two.

7298 - AOB

a) Sally had seen a school's virtual choir and wondered whether something was possible

for St John's. Marilyn doubted that.

b) Some felt the Zoom meetings on Sundays worked better. Jane offered to host PCC that way.

c) Marilyn had noticed something in diocesan information about a scheme to help private places of worship. St John's might be eligible, but would have to apply quickly, before 9 August.

There being no further business, Milly closed the meeting with prayer at 9.40 p.m.

The next PCC meeting would be on Tuesday, 1 September 2020 at 8 p.m.