

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, MALDEN  
Registered Charity No.1145155  
Minutes of the 735<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Parochial Church Council  
at 8 p.m. on  
Tuesday, 5 January 2021  
by Googlemeet, with members attending 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, Anthony Pullen, Liz Pullen, Lynn Sanger

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

The Vicar opened in prayer.

7343 There were no apologies.

7344 AOB There was nothing not on the agenda already.

7345 MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER MEETING

There were two small amendments. On page 3, 7337, Sheri Davis (not Sally) had attended the webinar on Planned Giving. On page 3, 7339, there had been no objection from neighbours about a camera (not a light) across the car park. With those two corrections the minutes were approved, signed and would be published in the usual ways.

CWs/Amy

7346 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

*The Angel Project*

The Vicar reported that giving to this had made possible gifts of £20 each for 80 needy children at Malden Manor School, plus gifts of £30 for 20 families at the Children's Centre serving Malden Manor. About half the donations had come from the congregation and half was support from the wider local community.

7347 VICAR'S REPORT

Fr Michael had originally envisaged a discussion on forward planning for 2022, but events had overtaken him, with the sudden unplanned closure of the church on Christmas Eve. The Archdeacon had left the decision to the local priests, so he had talked with those at St James and Holy Cross who had also decided it was wisest to close completely. At that time Malden Manor had the highest infection rate in south-west London, though Motspur Park has since gone higher. Closing the church at Christmas had been the lowest point of his ministry, but he hoped the PCC would feel that he and the churchwardens had taken the right decision.

The future remains uncertain. The Church of England is still allowing churches to open. Anglican and Catholic bishops and Moslem leaders have lobbied the government to allow places of worship to open, but St John's space is too confined and if meeting there would now entail open doors and no heating, the prospect is not

attractive. That would seem necessary as the new variant of the covid virus increases the droplets that get into the air as people breathe. He has had to conduct more covid funerals and does not want the church to increase the risk. St James has a much bigger space and fewer people but Katie has decided the risk is too great even there. Even the zoom eucharist without congregation, as done last summer, would increase risk as it involves a second person to film the celebrant.

#### *Maintaining visibility*

The vicar would continue to send out weekly service materials for people to use at home, and links to the services from Southwark Cathedral. Unfortunately those had not worked well for some last Sunday. St John's virtual 'coffee' meeting was proving important, though not many were now attending. The vicar thought there could be scope for other such virtual meetings: perhaps an informal 'drop in' session on Saturday mornings, for example. Marilyn suggested arranging a one-off zoom meeting for younger people, as the coffee time seemed to draw older folk. The Mothers' Union might be able to meet that way too. Sally and Jane both offered help with arranging virtual meetings. Marilyn said about 10 of the Reading Group had continued to meet monthly by Skype.

The ministry team continued to make contact with the housebound by phone. Pauline had heard how much Mo and Eva had appreciated the vicar ringing them at Christmas. Jane suggested the church might arrange some 'buddy mates', particularly for those who did not use computers. Anthony mentioned that St Augustine's College was offering retreats in lockdown. This service was free and he could supply a link to anyone interested. The church could invite prayer requests, and perhaps this should be mentioned on Facebook.

#### *Food Bank*

The church seems good at raising money for other causes. There would be the usual need to appeal for further aid a few weeks after Christmas. Sally suggested a QR code for donations on the churchyard board.

#### *Use of churchyard*

Franklin thought it worth reminding people, via the website, that the churchyard remains open, even though the building is closed. The gates being kept open helps to invite people in. It is a good area for people to be reflective. It would be good to have more laminated prompts for reflection and prayer. In Lent something might be done on the Stations of the Cross. Meanwhile the vicar would welcome offers of help with topics for reflection. Mike offered to put such suggestions up on the trees. **All**

It was important to find ways to maintain some visibility for the church. The star and decorated yew trees had been good over Christmas. Could the star on the tower continue, at least until Candlemas? Michael would ask Graham about this; it might depend on electricity consumption. **MR/GB**

Perhaps a yew could be made into a prayer tree, with provision of labels and pen so that people passing could name someone for whom they sought prayer. A wall of messages was also suggested.

Posters about what the church was offering during lockdown should be put up at the churchyard and also at the Church Hall. The vicar would speak to Amy about this.

7348 CHURCH HALL LETTINGS

*Scout Hut*

Mike and the Vicar had met on zoom with the diocesan solicitor and surveyor. In 1898 the Church Hall was established as the Institute, but they had failed so far to find the original document. It is not in the Surrey Archive at Woking. The Charity Commissioners had modified it on 27 November 1969 and that document has been traced.

Emma Mitchell is leading this for the Scouts and has been talking to their solicitor about updating the agreement, but this may not be completed before the mid-February deadline. Franklin observed that if the agreement ran out before a new one was complete, there might be extra liabilities and costs involved, which might require emergency provision. Mike would look into this. Insurance was another factor to be checked.

**Mike**

The solicitor and surveyor serve the diocese so are aware that all churches are expected to maximise property values. The church has to be realistic about this, but the Scouts are important to the church and the agreement needs to serve both well. The ultimate agreement will be signed by the diocesan officers on behalf of the church, and they could refuse to sign if they thought the rent too low.

Franklin said he should have declared an interest as one of the Scout leaders, though he is not involved directly in these negotiations.

Jane suggested that the original agreement might have been made by Merton College so it was possible they had the original documentation.

**Mike**

The costs of a new agreement are likely to be £3000-£4000, but the Scouts expect to pay this.

*Pre-school Playgroup*

The Vicar said this had largely been a 'gentleman's handshake agreement', with only one legal document in the 50 years. Most vicars are aware of various rather casual arrangements for use of premises. In this case Mike expected that the costs would be a matter for the playgroup and the Church Hall Committee, and would not involve the PCC and expense for the church.

7349 CHURCH BUILDING

The architect's first concern was to secure the building against weather and damp. He had one firm inspect the problem just before Christmas, and Chris Benson had shown a second firm round. Both quotations were awaited, but would go first to the architect. This remains a work in progress. It appeared that the paint applied to the central pillars in the 1960s did not breathe so acted as an airwick to draw damp up. Here the older paint was better.

7350 SAFEGUARDING

Marie and Vanessa had not reported any problems. The Vicar observed that closing the church was a safeguarding matter.

7351 WEBSITE

Sally would circulate a report on usage, but the salient points were:

- General search traffic and website traffic increased in December
- Website visits had more than doubled this year.
- Demographics of website visits changed significantly between November and December this year

Youtube/ Streaming: typically ranged between 15-10 live viewers on streamed services, increasing to about 80 in total for 'non live views'.

The recorded Christmas services were a huge success: 285 views of the Carol service and 400 of the Crib service. This was significant compared with the regular channel views, and far outnumbered the regular congregation.

7352 FINANCE

Richard was happy to report that November had proved a good month, thanks to gift aid reclaim and donations. The year-end projection now suggested a deficit of under £10,000, markedly better than had earlier been expected.

7353 SCHOOLS

Sally asked how well the local schools were equipped for remote learning. Margaret said that all schools who applied were given some equipment, though not usually enough to meet all the needs. Children who could not engage with remote learning were vulnerable so were among those allowed in school.

7354 CHRISTMAS DAY EVENT

Lynn asked to record thanks to Pat Lovegrove, the volunteers who so kindly cooked the lunch, and the drivers who delivered to about 24 homes of people on their own, who had much appreciated this service.

There being no further business, Marilyn closed the meeting with prayer at 21.06.

The next PCC meeting will be at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, 2 February 2021.