



## Minutes of an open Meeting of the Parochial Church Council

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2021 at 11.30 in the church

### Our Vision for the Way Ahead

In the Chair: Joan Ridgway

Secretary: Jill Mather

Present: Tim Bayton, Marie Benton, Mary Chessum, Pat Cockman, Jayne Cooksley, Linda Dalton, Walter Gee, Shirley Godek, Liz Howell, Anne Killingback, Rachel Martindill, Jill Mather, Wendy Metson, Andrew Mimmack, Joanna Mimmack, Joyce Mitchell, Sue Parks, Carole Parsons, Susie Penberthy, Sue Pinn, Fr Martin Poolton, Fr Henry Pryse, Pat Read, Joan Ridgway, Nigel Ridgway, Tom Salmon, Pam Scotting, Cherie Snell, John Snell, Pat Snell, Elaine Sourbut, Louise Spencer, Elaine Torr, Katie Turner, Fr Steve Turner, Judith Wedgwood, Jim Weeks

**Apologies** were received from Caroline Adams, Susan Coombs, Jacqueline Herbert, Stuart Macwilliam, Marilyn Pegg, Jane Williams, Nigel Williams

**Fr Henry opened the meeting with prayer**, handing over to Joan Ridgway who explained that several people had responded to a request to submit ideas before the meeting and that those submissions had been grouped into four areas. (Written submissions to the meeting are in red.)

#### **I. Young People at St James'** (Caroline Adams, Jill Mather, Jim Weeks)

**Over the course of the pandemic**, we have been in touch, in an intermittent way, with the families and young people. We managed a nativity play, a few Zooms and two parties. Only a very few families have attended church services in the last 18 months. It is hoped that JAM and Messy Church will be able to reengage with the very young children and families in the autumn.

#### **Messy Church**

Messy Church pre-pandemic was very successful and attracted a large number of families, with a good number of the same families attending each time.

After the first lockdown Messy Church moved online for 3 months on our St James' Messy Church Facebook page. Messy Church is very practical and interactive and this may be the reason that viewing figures dropped. Some Messy

Church families joined the later Zoom sessions. Anecdotal conversations with families who used to attend, say they have missed Messy Church and there is a desire to restart it when safe to do so.

The national Messy Church organisation provides very good guidance, and we are waiting for this to be updated to help us move forward. <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/covid-19>

**The first possible date to restart Messy Church** face to face could be Wednesday 6th October. However, the number of cases in Exeter will need to be considerably lower than the present levels, where Exeter is currently the second highest in the country. The % of adults vaccinated in Exeter is also below the national levels. We will need to think about the format and look at what is happening after the schools have returned in the autumn term.

We are contacting our Messy Church helpers to find out how many feel they can help in the future and their views on how and what we should do. Careful consideration will be taken in consultation with the church wardens and a risk assessment will need to be in place. This is an important aspect of our outreach and work with young families.

### **JAM**

The younger children who come to church with their parents and attend JAM will need to reconnect when we restart, and we hope to have some more parents helping. We may need to consider the format and readjust timings and activities.

### **11-ups**

Reengaging with the older children, however, will be more of a challenge. The 11-ups have had a hard time during the pandemic, with more time off school and may well be feeling more isolated. Teenage years can be difficult in the best of times. We have lost touch with the 11-ups recently, despite our best efforts. Jim and Jill have been the sole leaders of this group over the last few years and with work and other commitments it is unlikely they will be able to offer something regularly again for 11-ups every Sunday morning from September. In fact, it is not ideal that two people of their age are the only ones engaged with the 11-ups. 11-ups, in particular, may need a **different format** and will need **new leaders and more help**.

**After prayer, discussion and consultation, we would like to suggest that we consider something rather different and special for our 11-ups, so they feel valued and included as part of our church.**

- Would it be worth considering employing **a youth leader** for a couple of hours a week, something that may appeal to a student or other young adult alongside their work or studies?
- Perhaps setting up **an early evening activity on a Sunday maybe every other week?** The time could be used one week in planning and the other carrying out the activity.
- We would also need **church members, including parents, to work alongside the youth leader** but this would provide a younger leader which may be more in tune with the type of activities and faith experiences that are more likely to engage 11-ups.
- We could also explore Exeter-wide and diocesan **partnerships** for 11-ups.

(In addition, Jill and Caroline have found that youth activities at Network church are run by a paid youth worker supported by university student volunteers and St Matt's runs similar activities to JAM for young children but weekday evening activities for older children run by youth workers. Nigel R found out that the Blessed Sacrament do Youth Alpha with confirmation age young people and GIFT (Growing in Faith Together) with the younger children.)

### **Discussion at the meeting:**

- i. Baptisms at St James': Sue Parks asked how we relate to the families who bring children to baptism, suggesting that more of the regular congregation might attend the baptism service to show support and make contact. She also suggested a home-made gift be given families and suggested a Cradle Roll be kept and cards sent to families at key points in the year. Joan Ridgway said that a gift is already given but agreed that it would be good if more people were to attend baptisms and that a system of keeping in touch might be reinstated through cards and an annual service. Fr Henry mentioned that recently a family who had brought a baby to baptism had returned to church. Pat Cockman suggested an invitation might be extended to families once they approach JAM age.
- ii. Toddler group: Sue Parks also said that families with babies born in lockdown have had little contact with their neighbours. She voiced the idea, mentioned by many people, that a toddler group led by a paid worker from the community might meet a need. Joan Ridgway and Susie Penberthy agreed that this initiative could indeed be a way in to church for many. Tim Bayton wondered if families attending Messy Church might like to be a part of setting up such a group. Elaine Sourbut said older people might also be there as a back-up offering a friendly, experienced presence. Fr Martin said that in a previous parish he had set up a toddler group which had taken three years to establish with large numbers; he recommended that such an initiative be given lots of time, lots of prayer and lots of patience. Fr Henry suggested that Ebbie Peters of Community Builders might be approached to discuss setting up a toddler group in our church hall.
- iii. Sue Pinn said that for any initiative after the pandemic it is likely numbers will be small at first but will grow week on week. She mentioned that before lockdown 20 girls had regularly attended Guides but in the weeks after the pandemic numbers have moved from 3 to 4 to 5 week by week. She felt that we mustn't be worried about starting small.

## **2. Older People at St James' (Nigel Ridgway)**

### **Alpha for Oldies**

"It sometimes concerns me that we have many affiliates (especially through the Hall activities), but for most of them there is a gulf between them "thinking we are nice people" and them deciding to come to church services. The best way in for most people is by way of a personal invitation to a suitable event. Therefore, with many older people among us, it will mean that it would be older people who will tend to be invited. Hence, a suitable Alpha or similar event, at a suitable time (say Tuesday or Wednesday coffee time) might be appealing. This could provide the much-needed fellowship and support that Luncheon Club used to give but would have a focus on Jesus and our Christian faith. Coffee and delicious cake and pastries is not so labour intensive as Luncheon Club used to be, and facilitators for oldies may not be so hard to find among our folks. Timing-wise, we may still consider running this event during term-time, in case folk are drafted into grandparent duties during the holidays. And in any case of course, the Church will have contracted post-COVID, so this could be a way in for new people."

**A teal/coffee and cake group** which may cater for people who previously attended Luncheon Club was mentioned by several people.

Caroline also mentioned, **a cafe** (simple refreshments, tea, coffee, cake), one morning just after 9 which may cater for parents after they have dropped off children at school. This may help **reconnect with parents** who have felt isolated during the pandemic.

#### **Discussion at the meeting:**

- i. Fr Martin welcomed this suggestion, saying that those unused to attending church sometimes find it easier to come to an event in a church hall. He supported the idea of a course such as Alpha for seniors and offered to help, but stated that, from his experience, a course such as Emmaus may be more appropriate.
- ii. Pat Cockman suggested a regular social evening with invitations to people to join us.
- iii. Funeral planning advice: Sue Parks suggested that some families who don't attend church like a church funeral and would benefit from meetings to discuss how to plan and arrange a funeral. Sue Pinn said that Fr Martin's talk to Outreach about planning a funeral had been well received and he said that he would be willing to repeat it.
- iv. Tim Bayton thought that all these ideas were excellent, but he was concerned that any initiative might fall to just one person to organise. He said a rota system would be essential to spread the load.

### **3. Sunday Evening Services** (Joan Ridgway)

Joan Ridgway submitted: "My vision is for **a monthly lay-led Evening Service** (to be held probably on the second Sunday of each month at 6.00pm). I envisage that we would generally be using Common Worship Evening Prayer on Sunday as the backbone for the service, since using this would take away what would otherwise be a huge pressure to be inventive and ground-breaking and would avoid "reinventing the wheel". This is a beautiful form of liturgy, giving huge scope for variations and additions to the basic format. I feel that we could use a variety of different music, different forms of prayers, different readings and so on alongside some more traditional hymns and ways of worshipping. I hope that this will give the opportunity for people to enjoy a time of worship and reflection in a fresh and more relaxed way. I am hoping that other people would join me in committing to participating in this venture.

#### **The Allotments**

Nigel R submitted, "Our **proximity to the allotments** is a bit of a wasted opportunity, especially since church members have numerous contacts with allotment holders. Therefore, with **Harvest** approaching, we could have a special allotment-holders' **Harvest Thanksgiving Service**. I would suggest either a special Sunday afternoon less formal service (rather like the Pet Service), or else as our Sunday Evening service in October.

#### **Discussion at the meeting:**

- i. There were several supporters of this initiative and a further suggestion from Tim Bayton of a range of formats to appeal to different audiences, which would also ensure a range of leaders.
- ii. As Nigel Ridgway had suggested a harvest-themed service, linking with allotment holders, it was suggested that that could be the first evening service.

- iii. Elaine Sourbut proposed a meditative, quiet, reflective service and Judith Wedgewood mentioned Benediction.

#### 4. Streaming services

- i. Jim Weeks said that streaming services could be part of our mission as well as catering for members of the congregation at home, but he asked the question of if the congregation felt the continuation of streamed services was of value post-pandemic. He said this *could* be done but only if the congregation wished to pursue it.
- ii. Louise Spencer asked how many people were watching now that more were coming to church, questioning if it would be a good use of money and resources. Jim Weeks said there were certainly fewer viewers (about 10 staying online from start to finish) now that the longer services were being streamed and we don't know if these viewers will also be attending church. There might, of course, be multiple members watching in one home.
- iii. Stuart Cook also delivers about 7 DVDs of the recording each week. Anne Killingback had been grateful for DVDs, recognising that, although it was a different experience, it was worthwhile when lifts were unavailable. Fr H said that the lift rota was being considered again.
- iv. Pat Reid said that one person (perhaps representative of more) had much preferred watching the earlier pre-recorded services in lockdown coming from homes and gardens.
- v. Barbara Morris (backed up Sue Pinn) said that streamed services had been invaluable for her and others recovering from periods of illness or hospitalisation.
- vi. The question of advertising the services was raised: TB said they were advertised in Contact and Rachel Martindill said they were also advertised on the church notice boards.
- vii. **Before the meeting, Stuart Macwilliam had sent the comment:**  
"I was speaking to a couple of people on the course [at Sarum College], and one of them (a priest from the local area) mentioned the fact that they have installed a screen in church so that the people who are worshipping remotely can be seen by the congregation in church (as well as vice versa) - this makes for a greater feeling of participation on both sides. Remote worshippers are also invited to take a turn in doing the readings or prayers. I wonder whether it's worth considering this option. Of course, it's dependent on a) practicalities like money and equipment, and b) allowing those who don't want to be seen by the congregation to remain invisible."
- viii. Stuart Cook reminded the meeting of Fr Martin's comment that things can start small and continue for some time before taking off. The only problem is finance – so if a significant number of people, having prayed about it, *want* streaming to continue, then it could go ahead in the hope that it was the right thing to do, with church members choosing to give to an appeal to be launched to fund new streaming equipment.
- ix. Joan Ridgway thanked Jim for all his commitment over the course of the pandemic.

#### 5. Other Points

- i. Sue Parks wanted to look outside the immediate community at St James' and reminded the meeting of its commitment to Eco Church, and suggested a recycling scheme be set up. She also spoke of the government welcoming scheme for refugees from Syria. Several local churches are already part of this and there is an established enthusiastic community of volunteers.
- ii. Finally, Joan Ridgway mentioned that, in several comments, there was a longing to get back to normal: for example, a desire for house groups to be re-established; a hope that Covid precautions might be lifted soon.

6. Fr Henry thanked Joan for chairing, Jill for taking notes and everyone for their wide-ranging, thoughtful, prayerful ideas within an atmosphere of mutual respect.

**The meeting ended at 12.30 with the Grace.**

Jill Mather

15.08.21