

**DIOCESE OF ST. ALBANS
PARISH OF ST. ANDREW, BIGGLESWADE**

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING (APCM)
HELD IN ST ANDREW'S CHURCH ON
SUNDAY 25TH APRIL 2021**

Rob Butcher chaired the meeting.

33 parishioners were recorded as having attended the meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Nicola Woodward, Elaine Martin, Maggie McLoughlin, Bob and Anne Newman, Sue Oldroyd, Gill Hibbert, Nettie van de Weerd, Robert Lackey, John Dilley, Jessica Mephram and Gill Whinnett.

2. Approval of the minutes of the 2020 APCM

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th September 2020 were approved by those present.

3. Matters arising from the previous minutes

There were no matters arising.

4. Annual Reports

a) Electoral Roll

Ruth Marshall-Jones reported that the year commenced with 132 parishioners on the Electoral Roll, being the third year in the six-year cycle. With the departure of the Scott family and the loss of several members of our church family since the last AGM, the Electoral Roll had a membership of 125. The return to the diocese would therefore show a total of 125 persons, of whom 117 are resident in the parish.

b) Report on the Proceedings of the PCC and the Parish

Ruth Marshall-Jones thanked those who had contributed to the Annual Report of the PCC in its slimmed down version, being a reflection of the COVID-19 pandemic. She said that the report was adopted by the PCC at their meeting on 6th April and confirmed it would be submitted to the Charities Commission in the usual way in due course.

c) Financial Report

The Statutory Financial Statements 2020 and a Summary Sheet of these figures had been circulated. Andrew Rutt spoke to these by way of a PowerPoint presentation to highlight:

- the closing balances of the PCC Funds as at 31st December 2020 and in what form they are held;
- the general fund income and expenditure over the last five years in bar charts;
- that the general fund had a deficit in 2020 of £9,000;
- that the income reduced in the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in rental income from the Chapter House and regular stewardship giving, but that savings were made in some expenditure and that the parish share was met in full. It was highlighted that not all parishes across the Diocese had achieved this;
- that over £13,000 had been made in charitable donations through the Church accounts.

Andrew commented that the PCC finances remained in a strong position, but it was a concern that regular giving had fallen from £80,000 in 2018 to £74,000 in 2020. That said, he made the point of thanking everyone for their continued regular giving in spite of the difficult situation of the last year, and that it is greatly appreciated.

A number of questions and concerns were raised by those present with regard to the reduction in income, how the new vicar and associate priest would be funded with the parish share increasing and the need for a stewardship campaign with a more personal approach than just letters.

Angela Dilley thanked Andrew for his excellent report; she felt that it was important we have a stewardship appeal once things get back to normal. She asked that the PCC look at this when the time is right.

Andrew added that looking at what might happen over the next few years, all the things that had been mentioned are already in progress.

Rob added his personal thanks to Andrew for all the work he has done in a relatively short space of time. The meeting applauded.

d) The report of the Churchwardens on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of the Church

Rob gave a verbal report on the buildings and contents. He and Rosemary have had only seven months in post and are still in a period of transition.

- The organ was considered to have been completed by the time of Rev'd Guy Scott's last service.
- The last quinquennial work was completed in 2020.
- The vicarage has not been let during the vacancy due to restricted timescales for letting and appointing a new vicar, but work by the Dioceses, e.g. boiler replacement, has been undertaken. Further work is scheduled for 2021.
- Seasonal work has continued in the churchyard.
- The next quinquennial inspection has been arranged for August 2021.
- There has been a tidy up of the choir vestry, the parish office, and the Chapter House storage area.
- Thanks to the work of previous churchwardens, the Terrier is in a well-organised state to make any adjustments needed for the next Archdeacon's visit later this year.

e) The report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod

Rosemary reported that the Archdeacon's visit will be slightly different this year. There will be an inspection, but it will be less formal as the brief is to see how people are managing and where the Diocese can help. Lucy Dilley wondered whether the Diocese had any plans as to how parishes could help other parishes that might be struggling; she felt that we needed to think about this. Rosemary said that we are beginning to be more pro-active and with the arrival of the new Rural Dean, Graham Buckle, the standing committee are very much of one mind to do as suggested and assured the meeting that this was their goal.

f) The report on the Vicar and Churchwardens' Charities

Rob gave a verbal report. The paperwork for the three Vicar and Churchwardens' Charities has been received and steps are under way to change the names of trustees and signatories. There have been no payments made since the last APCM.

5. Elections

a) Election of 4 persons as representative on the PCC for 3 years

Four nominations were received: Paul Daniels, Rob Lackey, Maggie McLoughlin and Mark Simmons. Rob declared that all were duly elected to the PCC and congratulated them on their appointment.

b) Election of 1 person as representatives on the PCC for 1 year

Two nomination were received: John Dilley and Vivienne Gayfer. A paper vote therefore took place following which Rob declared that Vivienne Gayfer was duly elected to the PCC. He congratulated her on her appointment.

6. Safeguarding

Vaughan Johnson reported that there had been no particular instances that needed to be investigated. He added that he was delighted Carolyn Tebbutt had taken over from Linda Canty as DBS recruiter and acknowledged the impressive job done by the safeguarding team and their continued work to keep going with safety procedures.

7. Appointment of an Independent Financial Examiner for the 2020 Accounts

Rob was pleased to say that Colin Sparshott was happy to do the accounts. It was therefore proposed that he be asked. **Proposed: Vaughan Johnson; Seconded: Rob Butcher. All in favour.** Andrew to confirm with Colin.

8. Remarks from Churchwardens

A week after last year's APCM on Sunday 20 September, it was time to say goodbye to our Vicar, Revd Guy Scott, and to Kate, Alice, and Clarrie. Owing to pandemic restrictions and the need for social distancing, acts of worship and farewells took place over a period of 6 days with Guy's final, memorable, Eucharist on Feast Day of Michael and All Angels, Tuesday 29 September, when members of the choir enriched our worship with a carefully chosen selection of music. We continue to be thankful for the Scott family's wonderful contributions to wide-ranging acts of reverent and dignified worship, involvement with our children and young people, not least during annual Holiday Clubs, and their friendship and fellowship for a decade since Guy's licensing in 2010. Owing to the continuing impact of COVID-19, and unforeseen legal issues in the Diocese of Bath and Wells, the Revd Guy was eventually installed as Vicar of St John the Baptist, Midsomer Norton on 10 December 2020; it was our privilege to represent St Andrew's at the service and to enjoy socially distanced hospitality in their new home. We still look forward to a parish visit to Midsomer Norton once restrictions upon travel and socialising are lifted; not least, it will be good to see Guy's main leaving gift, a splendid greenhouse for his new garden.

The early months of the vacancy have already included two further national lockdowns, but we give thanks for limited worship during Advent and Christmas; and so many diverse new ways of sharing not only the great festivals, but public and private worship. Contact via Zoom, our newly re-launched website, social media, and innovative use of our church grounds have all contributed to improved mission and outreach, and communication. The wonderful floodlit nativity tableau outside the east window, the Sunday School Nativity and Passion presentations via Zoom, the poignant floodlit Easter crosses combined with seasonal floral displays, the Advent wreath, beautifully illuminated Christmas tree, and our Easter cross, garden and Paschal candle in our church have enriched and worship and private prayer during challenging months.

We are privileged to have been supported by a team of visiting clergy; our thanks to the Reverends Grant Fellows, Les Oglesby, Cally Hammond, Robert Sibson, and Geoff Lackey for celebrating Holy Communion with us, and also contributing to our Zoom worship throughout the vacancy. Social distancing and COVID-19 restrictions have limited the opportunities for lay participation during our worship, but we trust that we will soon be able to welcome back more frequently the choir, altar servers, lesson readers and intercessors, deputy churchwardens, sidespersons, and those who provide hospitality after our worship, and on other occasions. We thank all, too numerous to mention by name, who have contributed in any way to worship, maintenance, mission and outreach, and other aspects of St Andrew's life during the most challenging of months. Particular thanks to those who have served on the PCC this year; and a warm welcome to new members who begin their term of office today.

We are pleased to report that the closing date for applications for the appointment of our new vicar is Monday 10th May, with interviews scheduled for Monday 7th June; please join us in praying for the candidates, our church and parish during this pivotal time in the worship and life of St Andrew's. We have been truly blessed during this time of vacancy and pandemic, despite so many unexpected challenges and frequent feelings of isolation, even loneliness, during lockdowns; we now have many reasons to give thanks to God, and to look forward to the future with confidence and joy.

Since the APCM in September 2020, we have sadly said farewells to several highly valued, gifted, and committed members of our community of faith: we record the deaths, and services of thanksgiving here in church, for Yvonne Gray, Alan Smith, Kathleen Woods, Anne Maynard, Maureen Noble, and most recently Jack Walters. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

9. Any other business

Philip Rutt spoke firstly about the work of the Friends of St Andrew's and how it was becoming absolutely crucial. He referred to the work that had been carried out that could not have been afforded without the Friends and said that since the Friends was launched, they had given over £360,000 to the PCC. However the funds are dwindling and currently stand at just over £60,000. With the rate of spending, he warned that the funds will be exhausted in 18 months. He urged all to spread the word and emphasised the need for new proactive trustees. He said it would be good to get back to the level of membership whereby every church member was a member of the Friends.

Secondly, on behalf of the meeting and the parish, he expressed his thanks and appreciation for the work being done by members of the PCC, for the lay readers and for all the visiting priests, and especially for the work of Rob and Rosemary as churchwardens. He said they had done an outstanding job with great expertise and dedication and asked for this to be placed on record.

Lucy Dilley added to this by saying that we are gifted so much with generosity of time and talents and that it is great that people are filling vacancies even in these difficult times.

There being no further business, Rob thanked everyone, and the meeting closed with the Grace.

(Chair)

(Date)