

PARISH OF ST ANDREW, COBHAM

Minutes of meetings held on Zoom on 23 April 2021

MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

1. Election of Churchwardens.

The Vicar said that this was a meeting open to all residents in the Parish. There were two candidates for Churchwarden, Michael Elson who had been proposed by Daphne McFarlane and seconded by Leonard Beighton and Pau Hurrell who had been proposed by David Taylor and seconded by James Moreno. He was not able to take new nominations, so he was delighted to say that they were duly elected. Michael had given his apologies for absence for family reasons: we were all aware of Verity's illness. He thanked Michael and Paul for all that they were doing: he met them on most Fridays and they did a great deal behind the scenes.

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

2. Welcome, apologies and prayer.

The Vicar welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming to the meeting. There were rather over 30 present. Apologies had been received from Michael Elson and Hugh Bryant.

He said that it was only six months since the last annual meeting, but that had been delayed because of Covid and we were now back to the usual time. There was much to celebrate and there had been joys and sorrows. There had been new lives to welcome and we had said farewell to those who had passed on. We had celebrated the seasons, Advent, Christmas. Lent and Easter. We had sought to bless the community and we looked forward to future changes of life.

He asked that we should allow Christ to be part of our discussions and that we should be and do what he would have us be and do - life, light and love for all, so that we should have gifts to offer others and live to serve others. He prayed that in these uncertain times for our parish life we should be life for all in the community and have a vision of doing good for all.

3. Minutes of the 2020 Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

The minutes of the 2020 APCM were approved without amendment, The Vicar said that he would sign them.

4. Chairman's Report.

The Vicar said:

'It is a little over six months since we had our last APCM in October 2020. At that meeting I updated you not just on the events of 2019 but also what had happened up to that point in 2020. In order to return to a more usual pattern we hold this APCM at the usual time and hope that in April next year we will hold the next.

As with that meeting in October last year my report will be different to a usual APCM. So again I ask your forgiveness if I don't mention you and your contribution to the life of St Andrew's, but be assured I am truly thankful for all you have done.

As we met in October the numbers of Covid cases were on the increase and by Christmas Eve we were once again in the position where our worship would return to our YouTube channel and our various meetings held on Zoom. Vaccines were undergoing clinical trials and our lives were becoming more restricted as the weeks passed. Christmas services celebrated in church in front of a camera rather than people were most unsatisfactory for this priest. However we all did the best that we could.

I do hope you have taken the time to read the 2020 annual review. Even a quick read through shows not only what great difficulties we faced as a church, but also the creative efforts made by so many to ensure that we remained connected and committed as the Parish Church for Cobham. My thanks to all who contributed, and to Leonard who compiled the annual review and those who helped him publish it.

In the midst of this chaotic year we did receive a most amazing blessing, by way of a most generous bequest from Gerald Stanford. This gift of £244,000 pounds was entrusted to the church that had been such a large part of Gerald's life for so many years. The receipt of such a large and generous gift has caused the Standing Committee and PCC to think hard about how to best use this blessing. Ultimately we have decided to designate the legacy into three funds for the PCC to supervise. The "Now" fund, for expenditure to facilitate mission and ministry in the short term, the "Later" fund, for expenditure that enables to grow with our vision in the future, the "never" fund, for making gifts beyond the church in the local community to causes we know Gerald supported. None of those designated funds are allocated to meeting our operational expenses as a church. I believe that gifts like Gerald's are not given for paying our gas bills and office expenses, no they are given to allow the expansion of mission and ministry as we seek to be Good News for Cobham. The day to day expenses are our responsibility, the living church of today paying its own way. As a church we have to eliminate the deficit between what it costs us to be church and what is given to the church through regular giving and on the collection plate. We

cannot continue with a deficit year on year. God asks us all to make our giving to him through the church to take a high priority in what we do with our money.

Another great and unexpected blessing has come to us by way of the pandemic too, as the world of international air travel suddenly diminished Shirley Mensa was left considering what Jesus wanted her to do next. She was foolish enough to mention to me that she thought working with children and young people might be something she had a calling for. A few months of conversations, prayer and an interview lead Shirley being appointed Children and Families Missioner in training at St Andrew's. I know that the skills that made Shirley so successful as a long-haul flight manager will translate into her new role with us and our youngest members.

Shirley joins a very hard working and able staff at St Andrew's. My priest colleagues Charleen and Moni continue to serve the parish with energy and enthusiasm, both are generous with their time and commitment, even though they are both engaged in extra theological studies too. Elaine has been able to work from home very effectively and makes sure that I don't miss important things taking place in the parish, she has embraced communications technology to keep us all informed and ready for whatever is coming next amidst a sea of every changing rules and regulations. Those same regulations have been a challenge for our music programmes too, David has provided music to enhance our online worship through recordings beautifully edited, and to hear music played live in church once again in recent weeks has been one of my biggest Easter joys this year. Thanks to you all for your determination in these most difficult times.

I don't have time to name every volunteer who has given time and energy to St Andrew's in the last year, your contribution is immense and we would not be able to function as well as we do without you. As regulations ease and guidance is changed I know we will need your help as things become more normal here at St Andrew's.

I can't let this APCM pass without mentioning the end of Peter Vickers' licensed ministry as a Priest of St Andrew's. Our hopes to have special service of celebration with Peter at the end of December were undone as Covid cases were spreading rapidly. I very much hope that as soon as we can safely gather for a Sunday service and garden party of some kind afterwards we can finally show Peter our gratitude for all he has done in serving as a priest among us for 27 years.

Before closing with a short Bible reflection I do want to celebrate a few things that have continued to bring the love of God to Cobham through the ministry of our church even in the midst of the most difficult conditions I have ever known as a priest.

1. Transforming Lives for Good – our coaches at St Andrew's school were able to move their efforts online and stay connected with their students and their families.
2. Weekly assemblies at St Andrew's School have been recorded and sent to the school, where they were shared with students in school and at home.

3. Our monthly services at Springfield house moved onto Zoom, it has been a challenge, but also a great joy, whoever would have imagined that four of us from St Andrew's would gather virtually with some of the residents and share a service of worship together.
4. Finally bags of "Hope" at Christmas and bags of "Joy" at Easter were shared with more than 70 people we thought would welcome a little extra encouragement. The response to this effort has been overwhelming, such a practical demonstration of God's love at work through the church.

In closing I turn to St Paul's letter to the church in Rome, chapter 5, verses 1 to 5

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Paul writes to the city of Rome which was frequently ravaged by epidemics that took many lives and disrupted the city for months on end. The people he writes too may be separated from us by centuries, but their experience of isolation and disorientation may not really be that far from ours today. A large number of the church had been forced out of Rome and not allowed to return and worship with their church during that time. Indeed much of the book of Romans is about how a church needs to get along after it comes out of a very disruptive time.

With that in mind, let's look at the sequence Paul chains together that leads from suffering to hope. Suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint. We have been on that journey too, we have all suffered to some degree since March 2020, we have endured for more than a year, I can see that our character is being formed, formed for the better I pray. Our challenge going forward this year is how we live with hope that doesn't disappoint, and really importantly how we reach out to others and bring them in to share in that hope with us.'

There were no questions or comments. Charleen Hollington said that we should give the Vicar a sincere vote of thanks for everything which he had done to lead us through this difficult time.

5. Safeguarding Report.

Wendy Jane Gray thanked everyone for all that they were doing to recognise the importance of safeguarding to our well being.

The safeguarding team at the Diocese were available to us to help us ensure that safeguarding is at the heart of everything which we do including in our service to the community, and this will continue to be the case as the lockdown eases.

Face to face training has had to stop, but there is now safeguarding training available on line.

The Church of England was carrying out a review to ensure that all safeguarding concerns were being met by appropriate action. Bishop Andrew had said that all our Churches have to be as safe as possible.

The Vicar said that he was very appreciative of our safeguarding team and of all the work which goes into ensuring that all our activities are safe.

6. Annual Report and Accounts.

Malcolm Graham said that he would like to thank Beryl Mooney for the work she had done through the year in keeping the Gift Aid records which enabled us to claim Gift Aid. He would also like to thank James Moreno for the work he had done as Assistant Treasurer. He had performed a number of one-off tasks. These tended to be where his greater expertise in law and modern technology meant that the task was performed far more effectively than if he himself had tried to do it.

The accounts had been shown in draft to the PCC, but he had to repeat many of his comments for the wider audience of the APCM.

The receipt of Gerald Stanford's legacy of £242k was the main event of the year and had meant that we were able to avoid any cash flow problems caused by the pandemic. Going forward, it provided a challenge of what was the best use of the gift. Also in the one-off section was the Spire appeal: £15.5k had been sufficiently successful nearly to cover the cost of replacing the Spire covering from cedar to oak and the renovation of the weathervane at £2,2k.

The other feature of the year had been the extent to which voluntary giving had held up. Some of the generous givers had given extra amounts. So, although the accounts showed that we had had a decrease of £15k in plate collections, overall the drop was much less than might have been expected. However we continued to have a deficit of donations not covering our costs.

Of much greater concern was the analysis which he was preparing, which was not of course in the accounts, of the guessed age of our donors by amount and number. This analysis would show that we were very dependent on donors who we had guessed were over 70. About 50% of our planned givers were in the guessed over 70s and about 25% in the under 60s with the over 70s being the more generous givers. The balance on these figures was those whose age was unknown or who were in the guessed 60s. We definitely needed to connect with the under 60s and/or have more of them in our congregation. He would be presenting his analysis to the Standing Committee in the near future. He added that these facts might not surprise many, but we needed to start facing up to the issue.

7. Report on the Fabric of the Church.

Paul Hurrell said that in the six months since the last report we had continued to maintain the fabric of the Church. A couple of the oak shingles had fallen and been replaced. The steeple jack had commented that otherwise all looked fine. There had been an internal inspection of the spire but we were still waiting for follow-up recommendations.

At this point the Vicar broke into the proceedings to say that he had just heard that Dorothy Mitchell had died. He had been able to be with her earlier in the day and had anointed her. He prayed for Fiona and Clive who had lost their mother and for her friends. We had lost a valuable member of the church. She had been a good and faithful servant and had done a lot for the community, in particular in her role as a Councillor. He asked that she should rest in peace.

8. Report from the Deanery Synod.

The Vicar said that in the absence of Michael Elson his report was on the website. The other members of the Synod had nothing to add.

9. Electoral Roll.

Dave Greenwood said that the number on the Roll was 172. That was one more than at the last APC. Tolani and Steve Martin had joined, but Ken Aitken had died.

10. Election of six members of the Parochial Church Council.

The Vicar said that the term of four members of the Parochial Church Council had come to an end. He thanked them all for their service. Liz Bradley had decided not to seek re-election: She had a very busy life, in particular looking after her three, very lively, boys and he thought that very reasonable. He hoped that she would return to the Council sometime in the future. The other three, Malcolm Graham, Carrie Taylor and David Tipping, were seeking re-election.

Tolani Martin had been co-opted following the last APCM and, now that she had been on the electoral roll for six months, she was eligible to stand for election. Lynn Moreno was welcome as standing for the first time.

This left one vacancy. He was able to accept nominations from those present, but no-one put themselves forward. With that, those nominated were:

Malcolm Graham	Proposed by Jill Newman	Seconded by David Taylor
Tolani Martin	Proposed by Elaine Bray	Seconded by Shirley Mensah
Lynn Moreno	Proposed by Lynsey Ferguson	Seconded by Paul Hurrell

Carrie Taylor	Proposed by Paul Hurrell	Seconded by David Taylor
David Tipping	Proposed by Beryl Mooney	Seconded by Edna Tipping

All five were duly elected to the Council. The Vicar said that he was very grateful to them.

11.Appointment of the Independent Examiner.

Malcolm Graham confirmed that Aidan Crilly was willing to be reappointed and his reappointment was agreed.

12.Any other business.

12.1 St Andrew's School.

The Vicar said that there had not been a report on St Andrew's School in the Annual Review. Linda Shaw had written an interesting report which could be found on the Chat. The School were building on the 'Good' Ofsted report. He invited comments, but there none.

12.2 Family.

The Vicar said that Daphne McFarlane had sent him a message which she had asked him to read out.

'As a former Editor, I am very glad that it has been possible for Zoe Ostley and her team to publish attractive issues during Lockdown in October last year and at Easter 2021, online and with printed copies. I would like to suggest that the magazine continues to be published at least quarterly, as an important part of St Andrew's communication system.

I consider it an advantage to have printed copies, as well as online, a) for church members without computer access, b) for handing out to visitors to services in future, c) for church publicity in Cobham Library, Cobham Day Centre and on special occasions eg Heritage Day, d) for clergy and Pastoral Assistants visiting the housebound or unwell.

To fund the cost of printing, it appears necessary to ask for donations from members of the congregation, as has been acceptable in the past.'

The Vicar said that there was no intention to end printed copies for the reasons Daphne had given.

12.3 Moving Forward.

In response to David Taylor who asked for a progress report on the Moving Forward Review, Paul Hurrell said that the appointment of Shirley Mensah as Children and Families Missioner was a first step in progressing the recommendations on Youth Church and on Kids Church.. The distribution of the Bags of Joy and of Bags of

Hope at Easter were similarly first steps in the work on engaging with the broader community.

On technology, branding and communications, Dave Greenwood had introduced a new operating system, ChurchSuite. He himself was preparing faculties for introducing facilities which would improve the audibility and visibility of the services both for those in the Church and for those watching on line. Work on branding and communications would now follow. Dave Greenwood added that the introduction in two and a half weeks of LentByte with daily readings was an example of what could now be implemented quickly.

Paul Hurrell said that on preaching during and beyond Covid 19 the ministerial team were considering what could be learned from the lockdown about the pattern of services and they already had some early ideas. So in all the report was not gathering dust.

13. Conclusion.

Peter Vickers thanked everyone for all the good wishes he had received on his retirement from the ministry. He also gave thanks for the Moving Forward report and for all the work being done to draw the Church together and to bring in others. He gave thanks for the meeting and the encouragement to members for moving ourselves forward. He closed with the blessing.