

# **PARISH OF ST ANDREW, COBHAM**

## **Minutes of meetings held in the Church on 30 April 2023**

### **MEETING OF PARISHIONERS**

#### **1. Election of Churchwardens**

The Chairman said that this was a meeting open to all parishioners. The term of office of the churchwardens was one year. Sam Acquaye and Paul Hurrell were standing again for office. Sam had been nominated by Carrie Taylor and seconded by Michal Elson and Paul had been nominated by James Moreno and seconded by David Taylor. In the absence of any other nominations, he declared that they had been elected.

### **ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**

#### **2. Welcome, apologies and prayers**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He said that he was pleased that, having moved the meeting from a Friday to a Sunday, meant that there were many more people attending. Everyone was free to attend, but only those on the electoral roll could vote, if there were one. There were about 70 people present.

Apologies had been received from Sam Acquaye, Claire Costard, Rev Charleen Hollington and Rev Bryan Silletti.

He said that, as there had been prayers at the service which had just ended, he would not pray further now.

#### **3. Minutes of the 2022 Annual Parochial Meeting**

With the correction of the spelling of Aidan Crilly at the foot of page 7, the minutes Of the 2022 APCM were agreed and would be signed by the Vicar.

#### **4. Chairman's Report**

The Vicar spoke as follows:

'We are trying something new with our Annual Parochial Church Meeting this morning, we are meeting on Sunday Morning not Friday evening, we are meeting here in our Church not in Church Gate House, all with the purpose of maximising the opportunity for members of St Andrew's to take part in this important part of our life together as Jesus' people gathered in Cobham as St Andrew's Church.

Fundamentally a Church is people, not a building, and whilst we are blessed with a wonderful building, we are blessed with even more wonderful people! So in this morning's experiment we are look to encourage as many of those wonderful people to hear about their church, take part in its governance and look forward to all that God has in store for us in the months to come.

So let me begin with thanks, thanks to all who make St Andrew's their spiritual home, and especially you who have taken the trouble to come out this morning to play your part in our church governance. As I have already said, the Church is made up of us all, and being together on Sunday morning and in the many other ways we gather in groups large and small at other times through the week is what will keep us alive as a community of those trying to follow Jesus in our daily lives. So please hear my thanks now for all you did in 2022 to make our church the special place it is. If in the course of my report I don't thank you by name, I ask your forgiveness, but be assured I am truly thankful for all you have done.

I do hope you have been able to read the 2022 Annual Review. My thanks to all who contributed, and to Leonard who compiled the annual review and those who helped him publish it. I do not intend to repeat what I have already written there! However, it is heartening to read the various reports and see only a few references to Covid 19! 2022 was a much more normal year with far fewer direct interruptions to our Mission and Ministry as a result of restrictions and regulations in response to a global pandemic. We understand that for some, concerns around Covid are still restricting their lives and engagement, so we continued to offer our services online through the church YouTube Channel and respond pastorally where we are aware of particular needs.

I do want to pause for a moment and consider two deaths in 2022 that were felt deeply, one by the whole nation, the other by this church community and the wider community of Cobham. On a Thursday evening In September as I stood here conducting a wedding rehearsal I was told that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II had died, less than 2 months later on November 1<sup>st</sup> the first Reverend Peter Vickers, Priest for Cobham and faithful servant of this church in so many ways since ordination and for decades before also graduated from this earthly life to share the close presence of the God he loved and served.

Thanks to all those who stepped up in the days following each of these deaths to allow Cobham St Andrew's to pay its tributes and celebrate two lives of faith and dedication. And whilst I am offering thanks I need to give special thanks to my colleagues in Mission and Ministry. I am grateful for my clergy colleagues, Charleen,

Moni, Tori and Bryan, who all work tirelessly for the welfare of our parish,' The Vicar prayed for Charleen that her procedure would be successful and that she would quickly be fully restored, and continued, 'for David who skilfully brings together our musical ministry with choir and band to help us lift our hearts to God in praise. I give thanks for Elaine who offers such a warm welcome to all who connect with us through her ministry administration and communication, her energy and enthusiasm for all she does are second to none! Shirley's leadership among our children, young adults and their families, is also something I am thankful for as she seeks to deepen our connections within and beyond the church. And all of this is underpinned by our Churchwardens, Paul and Sam and the members of the Parochial Church Council. Many others take significant responsibility in chairing committees or championing our mission partners, offering hospitality and caring for our buildings. I give thanks for you all.

I would like to turn to a small portion of Isaiah Chapter 62 that was part of the Morning Prayer reading for last Tuesday, St Mark's Day.

Go through, go through the gates,  
prepare the way for the people;  
build up, build up the highway,  
clear it of stones,  
lift up an ensign over the peoples. Isaiah 62:10

Context, people back in Jerusalem 538BC, they are being urged to go back out through the gates they so recently and joyfully entered, go back through the gates and improve the road so that even more people can come through them and sit under God's flag of love, healing, wholeness and security. They are being asked to make things better for those who are coming after those who are finding their way into Jerusalem. A great image for the city of God and a very good job description for its residents, Go through, go through the gates, prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway, clear it of stones, lift up an ensign over the peoples. I believe what worked in 538 BC for Jerusalem, works now in Cobham too. It is just as good for us as it was for them. In 2022 we did some significant building up and managed to clear a few stones too.

You will hear later in the meeting from our treasurer accounts and budgets will be presented in great detail. But for now I want to focus on a headline, one of the ways we have built up, a stone we have managed to clear. The headline is that in 2022, our Church, St Andrew's Cobham ended the year with a small surplus, not a deficit. This is a Red Sea Miracle in my opinion. We spent less than we had come in for the first time in many years. A number of things contributed to this amazing turn around, to clearing the stone of a financial deficit, and through these things I believe we are resetting our relationship with church finances. The single biggest step we took was to use our reserves to take an entrepreneurial in Mission, to buy a house, 57 Coveham Crescent, so that Bryan and Tori could come and continue their training and share their gift and talents with us a part of the ministry team. In the process of doing that we shifted the way we have been relating to money, our reserves became

a catalyst for growth and ambition rather than a fall back resource to plug the gap between income and expenditure. And the great good news of this Red Sea miracle is that you did it, by responding to our gift day last May and by faithfully continuing to give to God through the church week by week and month by month, you have turned a big deficit into a small surplus and bought a house in the process. It is my prayer for St Andrew's that this surplus isn't a one-off surprise, rather a new trajectory where deficits in our finance become something from the past. To use Isaiah's imagery a stone removed never to be dragged back onto the road again.

How will we achieve all this, and it is here that I am very jealous of shampoo manufacturers. I heard the story some years ago of a very bright marketing executive at a shampoo company with pretty well managed to double his companies income with the use of three little words, I will read them straight from this bottle (sorry Margaret I forgot to mention I was borrowing your shampoo bottle this morning) RINSE AND REPEAT!

How I wish rinse and repeat would work for us. But there is no clever way to suddenly double our giving to God through the church. What we have is the determination to serve God by growing as his disciples and doing our bit to build up the road and clear the stones. We will do that in many ways in the months to come, some we know about and have planned, others that are yet to surprise us.

So thank you for your faithfulness in 2022 and please stick with it in 2023.

As we think for one last time about that verse from Isaiah 62, where those who had returned from exile to their beloved Jerusalem we now being asked to go out and make it easier for others to come back in, I am reminded of Archbishop William Temple's saying that,

"The Church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not yet its members."

Go through, go through the gates,  
prepare the way for the people;  
build up, build up the highway,  
clear it of stones,  
lift up an ensign over the peoples. Isaiah 62:10'

## **5. Safeguarding Report**

Wendy Jane Gray said that safeguarding was at the heart of everything which we trying to do. Everyone had to be comfortable when they came to church. It was much more transparent than it had been. There was training available on the website which she encouraged everyone to take. We should know what was going on with a clear chain of access to an appropriate person if need be. safeguarding was an ongoing process and was more visible than previously.

Wendy Jane said that she had moved to Hampshire and would be giving up as the safeguarding officer when she had a successor. The post might be split with someone else responsible for the DBS work. She hoped that someone would come forward, but she would stay on until they did. We all had to look after each other and listen to what people said. We needed to love each other and keep safe.

The Vicar thanked Wendy Jane for all that she was doing, We needed a good transition. Safeguarding was not something we did: it was something in our nature and at the heart of all that we were.

## **6. Annual Report and Accounts.**

Malcolm Graham thanked Beryl Mooney for all her work on gift aid claims and Elaine Bray for administrative support: also Leonard Beighton and Paul Hurrell for authorising payments.

He said that the accounts presented to the examiner and to the meeting were slightly different from those presented to the PCC at its last meeting. He had found two largely compensating errors: the net effect was that the surplus of income over expenditure was £263 larger than previously shown.

On our property assets, the cost of the house in Coveham Crescent would very approximately equal the figure in the accounts. But the cost of our purchase of Church Gate House in 1964 had been £44,000 and it had recently been valued at approximately £1.3 million, £0.5 million for the flat and £0.8 million for the remainder. These figures were important as we might need to raise a mortgage to fund our cash expenditure as, with the exception of last year, our expenditure usually exceeded our income excluding legacies.

The overall change between 2021 and 2022 in our income and expenditure figures was between income exceeding expenditure by £15k in 2022 compared to expenditure exceeding income by £48k. These figures excluded profits and losses associated with valuations or sales of investments.

This was mainly due to the one-off gifts and the gift aid claim on them of the Ministry and Mission campaign increasing income by £48k. In addition cash collections were £11k compared to £3k and yellow envelopes £12k compared with £8k as the Church was not open early in 2021.

Expenditure increases in 2022 were inevitably on Church heating costs and also on maintaining the Church with an increase of £6k on painting and stonework on the Church and on the rebranding exercise and the notice boards. In addition the youth worker's salary and expenses were larger as Shirley Mensah had only started in April 2021.

As for the balance sheet, there had been a radical change in our assets and designated funds. We had transferred the balances on our Now and Later funds as we prepared to buy the house for the use of our incoming curates, and had sold our

largest investment with Schrodgers. This left us with a cash balance at banks and our property assets which were shown at their purchase price.

At 20<sup>th</sup> April we had £104k at the NatWest and £27k with Lloyds which was adequate for the moment. However it was barely equal to a half year's expenditure. We had been promised loans to fund the entrance to Church Gate House.

David Taylor asked why Church Gate House was shown in the accounts at the purchase price and not at the current value. Malcolm said that in previous years the figure had not been relevant. We should consider this year whether we needed to raise a mortgage, but the valuation had only just come in.

Simon Bray asked how the heating costs might be affected in future. Malcolm said that Greg Bradley could answer this better than he could. In any event our staffing costs were a higher figure: he hoped that our heating costs could go down, but they did not have a major effect.

The Vicar thanked Malcolm for all his work he did as our Treasurer.

## **7. Budget Committee Report.**

The Vicar said that we now had a Budget Committee to think about expenditure in the coming year and to monitor its progress. This was led by Revd Bryan Silletti who could not be present and had written the following report.

'The Budget Committee is a new committee identified to allocate funds for specific areas of ministry and operation in the church. This budget committee, working with each budget holder, has compiled a PCC approved budget for 2023 calendar year to help us understand and manage our expenses as a church for each year. The overall budget was developed to steward the church's finances with the understanding we are a church whose ministry is driven by a faith in Jesus. This is our first year with this new budget approach and it will be reviewed quarterly to see what improvements and corrections need to be made. This will be made known to the PCC. The large portion of the budget is a fixed amount and cannot be changed, for example Parish Share, total outward giving, salaries, and insurance. The next largest portion of the budget is driven by property and specialty property projects which is reviewed regularly at the PCC. The remaining budgets (ministry, office, utilities, music, supplies, and Children & Youth) will be managed by the budget holder and the PCC.'

The Vicar said that Bryan's report had shown a significant deficit for the current year: this was because he had included special projects which would be financed differently. Our income would, all being well, broadly match our ordinary expenditure.

## **8. Report on the fabric of the Church.**

Paul Hurrell said that a lot of work had been done on the fabric of the Church, such as repairing stonework in the Chapel, repainting the loft ceiling, repainting the porch,

repairing the rendering of the plaster work, and fixing a handrail to the boiler room steps. In the course of reducing our energy bill, the Church boiler had been serviced, the controls improved and a faulty flue replaced, the boiler in Church Gate House had been replaced, and the halogen lights were being replaced by LED bulbs. There had already been a 75% reduction in the Church lighting usage and this would increase to 80% when the work had been completed.

The nave altar had been refurbished thanks to a gift from Geoff Morris, and the gate at the north west of the churchyard had been refitted by Keith Baird and paid for by David Robinson. The maintenance needed a great deal of work, and our thanks were due to Clive Moorman who put a great deal of effort into it.

Judith Robinson asked what the advantage to the community would be of the work on the entrance to Church Gate House about which we had heard nothing. The Vicar had said that the plans had been exhibited in Church Gate House. There would be greater flexibility in the space, including significant improvement in the storage, including moving things in from the boiler room, and in the toilets, including the disabled toilet. The entrance would be improved as had been recognised by the Council when they gave us a grant.

## **9. Report from the Deanery Synod.**

The Vicar said that there was a report from the Deanery Synod in the Annual Review 2022.

## **10. Electoral Roll.**

David Greenwood said that we had ended last year with 173 people on the electoral roll. Since then 4 people had died, but, after a campaign, 11 people had joined, including some young people. So we now had 180 on the roll. [After the meeting one other person joined the roll.]

## **11. Elections.**

The Vicar thanked Kim Constable, Sue Kilpatrick and Tolani Martin who had stood down from the Parochial Church Council for their work on it and hoped that they might stand again in the future.

He said that there were 4 vacancies on the Council and 3 nominations. Leonard Beighton had been proposed by Judith Robinson and seconded by David Robinson; Nigel Goddard had been proposed by Alison Greenwood and seconded by Paul Hurrell; and Cathy Whitnall had been proposed by Richard Hollington and seconded by David Robinson. In the absence of any other nominations, these three were duly elected.

In addition, Adam Skinner had expressed an interest in joining the Council. He was not on the electoral roll, but it was agreed that he should be co-opted onto it in the first place.

As for lay members of the Deanery Synod, Claire Costard had been nominated by Carrie Taylor and seconded by David Taylor, and David Greenwood had been nominated by Cathy Whitnall and seconded by Nigel Goddard. David Taylor had been our third elected lay member, but as a member of Diocesan Synod he was a member ex officio. The Vicar said that Claire and David were duly elected and that the PCC should agree who the third member should be.

### **12. Appointment of Independent Examiner.**

It was agreed that Aidan Crilly be appointed our independent examiner.

### **13. Any other business.**

David Taylor said that he thought that it should be added that the PCC had had a half day at which they had agreed the priorities for the Church Development Plan and how they might be achieved. The Vicar said that these concerned strengthening our finances which he had discussed earlier; what he called the buttoning on points, how people could best be kept in touch, for example through small groups; and how the Church might best build out into the community. All this would be reported on in the Annual Review.

### **14. Conclusion.**

The meeting was concluded at 11.53 am by the singing of 'There is a Redeemer'.