

St Peter's Church

Worship Committee

Held on Monday 1 March 2021 at 7pm by Zoom

Present: Gill Heard (Chair), Rev. Robert Gordon, Richard Stenlake, Jenny Palmer, Jenny Park, Kate Henshall, Joanna Hall-Tomkin, Anne Searle, Julian May

Gill welcomed the committee and opened the meeting with a prayer.

1. Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

2. Matters Arising

RS reported that David Ricks and Edward Palmer (Jenny's son) had said they were happy to join the readers' rota. This will increase the number of male readers from 1 to 3.

3. Review of Services

Only one service had been held in church since Christmas, with a very low attendance and feeling 'unsafe'. JM commented that the very low attendance was in part due to the active discouragement from RG because he feared for people's safety. RG explained that many of our sides people were vulnerable, leaving us with insufficient to meet safety requirements. There was no vaccine at that time.

Robert and Steph had continued to hold the Sunday telephone/Zoom services which were very much valued with, usually, upwards of 100 people attending, including people from other parts of the country and abroad. They are much appreciated and it was noted that RG and Steph were putting in a lot of time and effort to set up and run these services, managing to keep calm as they welcomed so many people. It is hoped and expected that the virtual format will be used for a long time to come, in order to support people who continue to feel unsafe.

J H-T spoke up for people who, like her, are suffering from Zoom-fatigue and missing church attendance in person and wondered whether the church could be re-opened, even if not every week, given that it is legal to do so. RG replied that we were 'getting close' but 'not there yet'. He would know more after a meeting with fellow clergy on Thursday March 4th

4. Future Services

RG was hesitant about the church being open on Easter Day (April 4th). KH suggested that outdoor services could be held, as at Christmas, but RG said we must wait for further guidelines (Thursday March 4th). Although the Cathedral is about to open its doors again for worship and one of Steph's churches is also holding services, St. Peter's is a 'difficult building to manage' and 'unsuitable' to be opened at the moment.

5. Choir Items

Rosie Bruce has been holding weekly choir practices via Zoom and around 8 people are attending these. Two new anthems are being learned.

GH mentioned that a new Director of Music would have to be found and RG said it was in the budget.

Graham Wilson has been keeping the organ in good voice by playing it from time to time, for which gratitude was expressed.

6. Any Other Business

GH passed on suggestions and comments she had received from three church members, as follows.

1. Many people are lonely and hope for a more social / sociable time within the church family when life returns to normal.
2. Can the BCP be used occasionally at the main service? There is a rise in young people nationwide appreciating the use of the BCP in online services.
3. Is it necessary to have a Eucharist each week? Perhaps one service a month could be non-Eucharistic? Could the 8 o'clock service be less frequent?

RS agreed about reducing the frequency of the 8 a.m. service, suggesting twice a month as a possibility.

JP wondered about having a BCP communion (occasionally) at a time between 8 a.m. and 10.15 a.m. thus amalgamating the 8 a.m. and main service.

KH suggested that online services might become a permanent feature of worship, being held in addition to, and at a different time from, services in church.

AS recalled Morning Praise, an informal, non-eucharistic monthly service, which she remembered having been enjoyable. RS and RG remembered that about 25% of the regular congregation had not attended these informal services and this was felt to have been a pity.

JM asked why it was thought a good idea to have fewer 8 a.m. services; and expressed the feeling that each one of us found different types of service helpful, so it was not surprising if people who enjoyed the Eucharist did not attend an informal service. It is clearly important to offer a range of service types to cater for all tastes.

KH thought that developing the social element of any informal service would encourage more people and RS suggested starting such services later – say 11 a.m. - and following them with lunch.

KH also recommended that we capitalise on our improved contacts with the Exe Valley churches by sending out invitations to any social events which might be held in St Peter's.

J H-T said it would be good to have a rota of all services to be held so that people could plan ahead. We needed to have an eye to the age groups being targeted, as we really need to encourage people into church. The social side is vital.

She also suggested live-streaming the church services so that people could stay at home if they wanted to but also be part of the worshipping community in the church. This would be particularly good with the more informal services. (although they would miss the lunch!) JM supported the idea of live-streaming.

J H-T and AS would love to have Taizé / Taizé-style services whenever possible, not necessarily in the evening – but said we would have to remember Robert, who would have to organise all this!

RG agreed that it is good to have lots of ideas on which to draw when planning worship.

KH reminded us that we need to hit the ground running when we do actually re-open, so services and events need to be in place not still ideas on the drawing board.

RS brought up the fact that many people miss singing hymns. RG said that technical issues prevented music being played for virtual attendees to sing together. It was confirmed that during the virtual choir practice, they cannot all sing together because of a time lag. Although each person can sing in their own home - alongside Robert and Steph perhaps - but muted, it was agreed that what gives real joy is singing together.

KH appealed for plenty of notice of first service in church, so that Guy can prepare.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 7.45 p.m.

The date of the next meeting was not arranged.