



Minutes

of the Parochial Church Council meeting
held via Zoom on Thursday 9 September 2021 at 7.30 pm

Present: Mary Seaton (in the chair), David Catchpole, Emma Down, Gill Heard, Kate Henshall, Jean Jenner, Deborah Lal, Catherine Makepeace, Sally Mundy, David Ricks, Christopher Shields, Richard Stenlake, Vicki Stuckey and William Zarrett.

Apologies: Joanna Hall-Tomkin, Averil Long and Jennifer Palmer.

The meeting opened with prayer.

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 15 July 2021 were approved and signed.

2 Matters arising from the minutes

- 2.1 *Interregnum prayers* (minute 5): It was noted that the decision to include in each Sunday's intercessions a prayer that the right person might be found to become the new incumbent had yet to be implemented. DC would contact the intercessions coordinator about this.
- 2.2 *Post-lockdown: health and safety* (minute 6): WZ reported that there had been full consultation with the health and safety officer about the updating of arrangements for the post-lockdown situation, and these arrangements had been checked and approved by him.
- 2.3 *Charity Commission requirements* (minute 11): It was noted that the Charity Commission's requirements for trustees were for the name, date of birth, date of original election to the PCC, and any other trusteeships to be recorded. Members of the PCC were asked to send these personal data to WZ so that there might be full compliance with the requirements and appropriate harmony with current data held by the CCLA.

3 Safeguarding

CM reported that the required Safer Recruitment procedures were almost complete for those volunteers currently in roles which might involve more than incidental contact with vulnerable people, including children. Role descriptions, a formal application for a role as well as two references were needed. CM expressed her gratitude for the willing cooperation of all those involved.

Sunday 10 October has been designated Safeguarding Sunday, and the Revd Justin Montague, who will be presiding at the main service that day, has undertaken to include a reference to safeguarding in his sermon.

4 Interregnum report

GH and WZ reported on recent developments as the interregnum had gained momentum.

- 4.1 Consultation has taken place with Archdeacon Andrew's colleague, the Revd Mike Clark, concerning the schedule of future events. The anticipated date for the interviews for the post of incumbent will determine the date for the advertisement, which will in turn determine the schedule for the preparation of material such as the parish profile. Mr Clark, who will be coming to St Peter's to preside at a service in December, has undertaken to check these matters with the Archdeacon.

A zoom-type (or possibly in-person, depending on the conditions) 'vision evening', to be led by the Archdeacon and Mr Clark, is planned in advance of the preparation of the parish profile, and will be a welcome chance for everyone involved to consult and get to know one another.

- 4.2 A revised and updated version of the 2004 questionnaire for as many members of the three churches as possible to complete has been prepared by the Standing Committee in conjunction with the Interregnum Working Group. It will be circulated with the request that it be returned by 31 October, after which the contents will be surveyed and summarised by a review group in each of St Andrew's, St Peter's and St Thomas's. The aim has been to check and learn in user-friendly style the views of all members concerning the wellbeing of each of the churches and their hopes for the future, including their sense of what they themselves might contribute, and what qualities and skills they thought would be needed in the person appointed to exercise an effective ministry in these parishes.

5 Worship

GH introduced the minutes of the Worship Committee meeting on 24 August.

- 5.1 *Plans for future services:* All necessary bookings for clergy to lead services up until the end of 2021 have been made. Unfortunately, the reordering process means that it will not be possible this year to hold the usual Remembrance Day Service, or the Christingle and Carol Services, though there is every hope and expectation that these will return in 2022. Graham Willson has been extremely helpful in looking after the music, having prepared recordings when the organ has not been usable, and we are greatly indebted to him for his skill and commitment.
- 5.2 *Social contact:* The outdoor drinks and nibbles session after the service on Sunday 5 September, involving some 30 people, was greatly appreciated, and it was evident how pleased people were to be able to meet and talk together. It is planned to repeat the provision on 3 October immediately after the Harvest Festival service.
- 5.3 *The 8.00 am Holy Communion service:* It has become clear that several regular attenders in the past have been missing this service, and it is hoped that a resumption will be arranged for the first Sunday of the month in the new year.

The PCC endorsed the minutes of the Worship Committee meeting.

6 Finance

WZ presented the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting on 26 August, and CS reported on the current state of the St Peter's finances.

- 6.1 *Current financial situation:* Income to date stands at £7,627 (budget £2,786), assisted by a double receipt of tax relating to the Parish Giving Scheme, and expenditure at £5,923 (budget £7,780), producing a figure of £4,642 above budget. This suggests that we are heading for a smaller annual loss than was budgeted.
- 6.2 *Payment to Tim Bayton:* The PCC received and accepted the Finance Committee's recommendation that with effect from 1 October Tim's hourly rate be increased from £10/hour to £11/hour following the successful completion of his first six months. His work has been of a very high standard, and many efficiencies have been achieved. This increase in payment will cost the church an additional £480 annually.

[Note: After discussing Tim's increase with him, WZ decided, with Standing Committee support, to make a slight change in the basis of remuneration. Tim does not track by the hour his working for us. So, instead of the original arrangement for payment for 40 hours per month at £10 per hour, a flat fee per month seems more appropriate. The agreed 10% rise would have taken this to £440, but in line with the sentiment of the Finance Committee and the PCC, and for ease of remembering a round number, the decision has been adjusted in favour of a flat £450 per month until Tim's annual review in March, 2022.]

- 6.3 *Fundraising:* Two special fundraising plans, and then a third possibility, are envisaged:
- (i) *The Harvest Festival on 3 October* (presided over by Bishop Jackie, assisted by Fr Richard Maudsley) is a very special occasion, and on the evening before it at 7.30 pm there will be a concert during which Tim Bayton's bass quartet will play for 45 minutes. There will be no charge but donations will be invited.
- (ii) *Seedtime to Harvest* was the special concern of the late Roy Webber, and the PCC decided that in Roy's honour this will be revived this year to raise funds towards the cost of cushions for the pews following reordering.
- (iii) *Use of St Peter's after reordering:* VS reported on conversations with the East Devon Choral Society, in which it had been made very clear that there is much enthusiasm for the use of a transformed St Peter's for concerts.

7 Fabric

DR gave a report on recent developments in the fabric area.

- 7.1 *Heating system:* As previously reported to the PCC, the control system to the heating plant is no longer reliable. It is life-expired and can no longer be maintained, so a completely new control system is required. A quotation for new controls has been obtained from MBH, the company which services our plant, in the sum of £3,690 plus VAT. This quotation is qualified in case any other unforeseen problems may be found, and it is also now beyond the stated date for acceptance.

In view of the magnitude of this cost we sought the advice of the Diocese who gave us an alternative contractor to approach. They suggested that we should 'buy some time' by repairing the present system while the diocesan policy on 'greening' the heating of churches

is developed, which may lead to the possibility of grants being made available in future. The firm suggested, *Sprague & Ouseley*, visited the church and promised to send an engineer to look at our plant and quote for the necessary works. Despite numerous calls and promises they have failed to help us.

Given the necessity of ensuring that the heating system should be running reliably in time for the cold weather, the PCC decided *nem con* to authorise the placing of an order with *MBH*.

- 7.2 *Repointing works:* Russ Palmer, our maintenance architect, has provided documentation covering repointing works on the east face of the south aisle, where water ingress is evident internally. This is due to incorrect work being allowed previously, most likely in the 50's. Some of this work has been allowed for in this year's maintenance budget, and quotations will be sought for the most pressing areas, with further works being undertaken as and when possible.
- 7.3 *Other matters:* Various smaller jobs have been undertaken as necessary, including (i) the replacement of lights in the choir LED fittings; (ii) modifications to the sound system while the organ is out of action; (iii) WiFi router extensions in church to allow the contractor's external CCTV cameras, which incidentally will be left behind at the end of the contract, to operate properly and send alerts to personal phones; and (iv) clock maintenance resulting from a power shut down, with the chimes' getting out of synchronisation when the weights failed to rewind. The clock will be stopped when Western Power do their works to the mains.

8 Reordering

DR reported on recent developments on site as the re-ordering process gathers momentum, and on discussions within the project management group (PMG).

- 8.1 *Internal:* The pew removal at the west end and the baptistry is substantially complete. The reduction of ground levels has revealed arched vaults below ground which are being recorded by the archaeologist. A small number of human bones, obviously from very long ago, have been found below the pew platforms and gathered together for replacement below the new floor. No sign of any burials has been found.

The discovery of the brick vaults has required an amendment to the flooring sub base specification. Vibrated compaction is no longer possible as it could lead to the collapse of the vaults. A revised concrete sub base specification, with light mesh reinforcement, is being prepared by the structural engineers.

Provision is being made for the incoming services required by the new servery.

- 8.2 *External:* The demolition of the old toilet block is complete, and the blower room is being carefully taken down to save the old stone door and window surrounds. The stone from the old toilets is retained and will be reused to build the plinth to the new block.

The contractor is waiting for Western Power to attend on site to relocate the incoming mains switch and distribution board to allow completion of blower room demolition. This will now be in the base of the tower where the mains enter the church, so the cables will actually be shortened rather than extended, a much simpler task.

- 8.3 *Final design matters:* Three items are still under consideration by the PMG.

- 8.3.1 *Relocation of the Newte Library:* Before any changes are made to the library a specialist 'condition assessment and preservation audit' has to be undertaken both for the books and for the four paintings which form part of the Newte bequest. ED has obtained a quotation for the study on the books and will obtain the equivalent for the paintings. She will also make application for funds that are available to pay for these studies. When we understand the preservation works required and their likely costs she also knows of bodies who may grant funds for these works.

ED is concerned about the suggested relocation of the library in the body of the church for environmental and security reasons. No suitable alternative provision in archives elsewhere has been found.

The idea of creating a mezzanine level over the new meeting room has found general favour with the PMG, and the idea has been sent to the architects for their comment. The mezzanine would be solely for the housing of the library. It would be reached via a staircase against the north wall of the meeting room, behind its own wall and locked door. The meeting room would be environmentally sealed from the rest of the church and the mezzanine would be left open above balustrade level both to allow the sound from the organ to reach the church and also to preserve the environment for the books.

Members of the PMG feel the provision of this special, separate space for the library could be a great asset, and the cost of the works may not be very much greater than any other solution, as the present heavy oak bookcases can be reused. The works may have to form a third phase of the reordering but as no location for the library has been approved that may well apply to any chosen solution.

The PMG will publish further information once the architect has commented on these proposals.

- 8.3.2 *Selection of the new chairs:* The PMG group has considered the specification for the 160 new chairs that will be needed, and agreed that this number and the storage available require that they be metal-framed with laminated timber seats and backs, to allow convenient storage in stacks of 40 on mobile trollies. All advice from all sides is against upholstery for longevity.

Many examples are available in many different finishes, and the PMG is now obtaining samples for trial. The cost range is from ca. £50 each to ca. £350. We hope to find a suitable, comfortable chair somewhere in the middle of this price range. The industry standard and most expensive is the Howe 40/4 which may be seen in Salisbury Cathedral. Sample chairs will be requested from several manufacturers.

- 8.3.3 *Porch:* The contractor is pricing, as an alternative to the new porch in the contract, the refurbishment of the existing porch, hopefully at a very much reduced price. The design of the porch in the contract has large heavy glass doors which require very expensive automatic opening devices. These are known to be expensive maintenance items and can give problems in use, which may be a significant disadvantage.

The top side panels of the porch would be glazed, and a new solid roof installed with a new pair of glazed inside doors. The porch would be removed from the site and returned as a completely refinished item.

It will be possible to move to a decision when comparable prices have been made available.

8.4 There was considerable discussion in the PCC of item 8.3.2. While the issue of stacking chairs was recognised as not unimportant, DC and VS urged that the greater importance of providing soft and comfortable padded seating for those who attend St Peter's, whether for worship or entertainment, be recognised and acted upon. St Paul's has introduced padded chairs following their reordering, and St Peter's should, it was argued, no longer persist in providing seriously uncomfortable seating. In the modern world this is simply unacceptable; padded chairs are not necessarily vulnerable to any serious extent to marking, and as another PCC member observed, cleaning procedures have in any case made strides in recent times; and it is difficult to justify an informed preference for discomfort when comfort is achievable. Finally, DC observed that after many hours spread over twenty years sitting on the eminently stackable chairs in Salisbury Cathedral (cf. the reference above), these were scarcely models of comfort – in fact, quite the reverse. He and VS urged that the reordering process should be the opportunity to banish hard, unsympathetic and uncomfortable wooden seating from every experience of attendance at our church.

9 Any other business

9.1 *Christmas ordering of pies and cakes:* MS reported that a repeat this year of the very successful fund-raising enterprise in 2020 was under consideration.

9.2 *A cross-Atlantic rowing project in aid of CHAT:* MS also reported that a group of oarsmen had in mind a sponsored attempt at an Atlantic crossing in aid of a number of charities, including CHAT. It was agreed that St Peter's would be happy to support the plan, and that it would be helpful to know the identity of the other charities which were in mind alongside CHAT.

9.3 *Dusters:* It was noted that the building work in the church was inevitably causing a great deal of dust, and it seemed likely that a rota of dusters would need to be in place so that the building might be prepared for use every Sunday.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8 55 pm.

Signed:

Date: