

ST PETER'S, TIVERTON

Minutes

of the Parochial Church Council meeting
held in St Peter's Church on Thursday 13 July 2023 at 7.30 pm

Present: The Revd Christian Hill (in the chair), John Brewster, David Catchpole, Emma Cobbledick, Joanna Hall-Tomkin, Gill Heard, Kate Henshall, Nickie Johnson, Averil Long, Tom Mitchell, Sally Mundy, David Ricks, Christopher Shields, Heather Vincent and William Zarrett.

Apologies: None.

The meeting opened with prayer, and CH offered guidance concerning the spirit and practice in which he hoped the business of the PCC would be conducted.

1 Minutes and matters arising from the minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 11 May were approved and signed. There were no matters arising from those minutes which were not covered by other items on the agenda.

2 Membership proposals

2.1 *Deanery Synod:* It was agreed that EC would serve, together with KH, as a representative of St Peter's on the Tiverton & Cullompton Deanery Synod during the years 2023-26.

2.2 *Committee membership:* In the light of conversations that had taken place after the last meeting there had been some alterations to the membership of some committees, and the PCC approved the new arrangements. See the appendix to these minutes.

3 Safeguarding

3.1 JH-T updated PCC members on the Hub – metaphorically speaking, the process of gradually turning ambers to green! The hope is that eventually the reminders for training will all be automatically digitally generated.

3.2 Safeguarding records have all been transferred from handwritten to digital.

3.3 JH-T distributed the Confidential Declaration Forms ready for enhanced DBS check. She requested PCC members to complete these as soon as possible and return them to her before (*sic*) completing the online check. Dates could then be agreed for meetings to enable her to go through the evidence checks.

4 Finance

WZ and CS introduced the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting on 29 June.

- 4.1 *Overall survey:* Income at £23k is £2k ahead of the budgeted sum, and expenditure is almost £3k higher than was budgeted. The end result is a deficit of £21k, which is £1k higher than was budgeted for this stage in the year. Of particular note, after only five months the electricity and gas costs combined are £5k higher than budgeted, though the Diocese has promised a £2k grant to assist with heating.
- 4.2 *Fabric repairs:* Three different causes of expenditure have their effect: (i) The likely cost, ca. £2k, of the imminent repairs to the hopper at the east end of the south aisle. (ii) The likely cost, ca. £7.5-10k, of the required responses to the Fire Officer's report, namely switchboard protection, protection of the gas meter cupboard, a fire alarm system to protect the tower, and illumination of the fire exits. (iii) The likely cost, ca. £10k, of the treatment required in view of the significant outbreak of dry rot in the vestry. This necessitates the evacuation of everything in that room. The contractors and architects are in some disagreement as to the best treatment, i.e. whether or not to install a concrete floor to replace the wooden floor.
- 4.3 *Reordering expenditure:* (i) The cost, ca. £30k, of completion of the children's corner, which will allow for the donation card reader by the door. (ii) The cost, as yet undetermined, of the construction of the library and meeting room, for which a faculty has finally, i.e. after 15 weeks, been secured from the Chancellor. The contractors' re-pricing of the work has spread over a large range – thus £69k (Crowstep), £94k (Corvel), or up to £167k (others).

The Church has received a bequest of a further £10k towards re-ordering. It is thought that ca. £50k will be left from the Church House funds after paying for the children's corner. This would leave a deficit of around £40k still to cover. From here there are two possible routes: *either* to take up the offer from an anonymous donor to pay what is needed to complete the work *or* to use some of the remaining Church investments.

- 4.4 *Recourse to Apsley's for assistance with book-keeping.* This has still to be made firm, though it should be noted that, while there will be a cost for the book-keeping during the year, ongoing familiarity with the accounts would be likely to lower the final cost of auditing at year end.

The PCC endorsed the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting.

5 Worship

GH introduced the minutes of the Worship Committee meeting on 19 June.

- 5.1 *Holy Communion participation* (minute 1a): There was an extended, spirited discussion of the issue that the Worship Committee had considered. CH initiated the exchanges, stating his preference for intinction by the celebrant as, in his view, the best way to take seriously health and safety considerations and to overcome unease among any whose wariness of sharing the common cup might bring division between them and those who favoured the use of one common cup. He was emphatic that no one should feel excluded from Holy Communion.

Several arguments were mounted in favour of the traditional practice of sharing one common cup. First, this is the common practice of the Christian community as reflected in the Eucharistic words of Jesus and the developing biblical tradition. Second, it is also the mainstream Anglican preference: the Church of England only resorts to intinction reluctantly and occasionally as need arises. This needs to be taken seriously. Third, the current resort to intinction (whether by celebrant or communicant) derives from the quite exceptional circumstances of the pandemic. To continue the practice is to magnify a vanishingly small risk. Fourth, nothing would prevent any communicant from following up a preference for intinction such as a tiny minority of St Peter's people have favoured in the past, i.e. by retaining the wafer after distribution and then personally dipping it in the chalice. This has happened in very few cases indeed, but there has been no sense of division or of inappropriate action on their part as their personal wishes have been accepted and respected.

It was agreed that in our practice we would revert to the tradition of St Peter's and the mainstream Anglican practice of separate communion in both kinds, including the common cup.

[Later addition by CH: 'There is a need to cater for more than a third of the congregation who would prefer not to sip from the common cup for health reasons. They have feelings of vulnerability that stem from a suppressed immune response following illness during covid, or perhaps have other health issues/history to contend with. This is their truth and they would greatly appreciate our love and support by allowing them to continue with intinction for Holy Communion. With this understanding we will now offer both the common cup and intinction at our services of Holy Communion.']

- 5.2 *Readers in church* (minute 5b): It was agreed, following the discussion in the Worship Committee, that the two readers at a service should be requested so to prepare themselves to make their way to the lectern/microphone that the service should flow without undue interruption. Some might appreciate some help in learning how to use the microphone effectively.

The PCC endorsed the minutes of the meeting of the Worship Committee.

6 Fabric

DR introduced the minutes of the Fabric Committee meeting on 4 July, updating them with news of developments since the time of the meeting.

- 6.1 *The bell chamber* (minute 3c): The wire grilles by *Morrish* have now been installed, and the dismantling of the scaffolding on 15 July will enable the bells to be rung on Sunday 16 July.
- 6.2 *Dry rot in the vestry* (minute 3d): The situation has been inspected by the DAC expert in wood furnishings and fabric, who has given advice as to the action needed. His recommendations have been agreed with our architect, who will prepare specifications for the works to be carried out. A local specialist, *Sterling Preservations Ltd*, will quote for the work despite having a different view from that which has been recommended. It is urgent that permission be given by the DAC and/or the Archdeacon to enable the works to proceed.

- 6.3 'Net zero' (minute 4j): We need to accept the invitation (with subsidy attached) from the Diocese to apply for an energy audit, including advice on the building as at present and also allowing for possible changes that might be made in the longer term.

The PCC endorsed the minutes of the Fabric Committee meeting and agreed to the specific proposals. In so doing it registered an awareness that the quinquennial inspection of the church is imminent, and that this may lead to expenditure on fabric, but presently the sense is that the fabric of St Peter's is in good condition.

7 Reordering: the latest developments

DR reported on two matters, namely the work on (i) the children's area and (ii) the meeting room and library, and EC provided an additional briefing on the latter as well as the paintings.

- 7.1 *Children's area*: It was hoped that work on this area would begin within a week.
- 7.2 *Meeting room and library*: DR's report covered the following two items.
- 7.2.1 *The required faculty*: This had at last, after four months, been received, and fortunately the delay had not proved critical, as it easily could have done.
- 7.2.2 *Tenders*: These had been received from four contractors: £94k, £118k (twice) and £168k, all of which were higher than the sum budgeted. Some savings might conceivably be achieved by reducing the specification and in such a way as to avoid lowering unduly the appearance of the final product.

Crowstep, our existing contractor, has been asked if he would like to submit a revised quotation for the current scheme, and this he has done with a new price of £69k. While this price is obviously very attractive, we have serious concerns about Crowstep's recent productivity and ability to carry out the work in a timely manner. A meeting has been arranged with Crowstep and our architects on Wednesday 26 July, when we can question them in detail and establish their commitment to the works. It has been indicated that there may be long delay in respect of two contract items, i.e. the oak staircase and the glass balustrading. By revising these items some time and money might well be saved. Our attitude to the appointment of Crowstep for this work will also be influenced by their progress with the children's area in advance of this meeting.

- 7.3 EC reported on the paintings and the library, as follows.
- 7.3.1 *Paintings*: The paintings which are being conserved are near completion and will be returned in the first or second week of September. They will need to be stored in the memorial chapel until the office/mezzanine is complete. The spend deadline for the Idlewild Trust grant of £4,250 passed in June but EC secured a three-month extension until the end of September 2023. EC will prepare and submit the report to the Trust. The Church Care grant of £3,000 for the paintings needs to be spent by 25 March 2024, so is not an issue.

The Church Care grant needs to be spent by the PCC and then reclaimed. The Idlewild grant has already been received.

The total cost of the painting conservation is £8,350, which will need to be paid on receipt of the paintings and conservation reports in September. The remaining £1,100 not covered by the grant money will be covered by a private donor.

- 7.3.2 *Library*: EC reported that she had spoken to Victoria Stevens, our conservator, about the need for doors on the bookcases for the library. Victoria, and a colleague she consulted, feel that with the humidity of the church often exceeding 60%, doors will create an environment in which mould will be likely to grow (mould growth is extremely likely in humidity above 60%). Victoria's recommendation is to combat light by installing blinds over the windows. This would be similar to the blinds used in many National Trust houses. The light reduction would be similar to that in the church currently with the dust sheet. Any blinds will require another faculty.

The Church Care grant of £9,600 for the library conservation needs to be spent and reclaimed by 26 July 2024. Due to inflation and the subsequent rise in cost of materials this will not cover the cost of as many materials as were originally budgeted. It is also unlikely that the book-shelves for the Newte Library, which a lot of this grant covers, will be able to be completed within a year, so an extension may also be required. The PCC needs to cover the cost of purchase and then reclaim the money from Church Care.

The PCC agreed for EC to spend up to £5,000 of the grant on materials for the Library such as data loggers for temperature and humidity and a disaster pack.

- 7.3.3 *Crowstep*: EC expressed concern at using Crowstep to carry out the mezzanine construction in view of their unreliability in respect of previous work.
- 7.3.4 *NLHF*: EC will compile an application for funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to help cover the additional costs associated with the library construction and blinds.
- 7.3.5 *Church records*: EC is arranging the transfer of the church records to Devon Heritage Centre over the summer, as agreed by PCC in May 2023.

The three follow-up actions are: (i) the obtaining of quotations for blinds [EC]; (ii) the compilation of an NLHF application for the costs of the mezzanine, and deadlines for applications [EC]; (iii) the appointment of a contractor to carry out construction works [the PCC].

8 Deanery Synod

KH reported on the meeting of the Tiverton & Cullompton Deanery Synod on 26 June, where guest speakers Brian and Chris Clarke had reported on the charity which they founded in 2007, *Krasifaid* (krasif = beautiful in Bulgarian). Experience of working in Amsterdam and Berlin had inspired them to work in Bulgaria. Returning to the UK to live in Cullompton they discovered a group of about 400 Bulgarians working (unbeknown to them) at the Chicken Factory. These Bulgarians were mostly from the Roma people and not the Bulgars; sadly, they have become used to being ostracised. Bran and Chris were surprised to find British Bulgarian speakers, and have been working to improve the acceptance of these people in Cullompton. They have also been involved in trying to help Ukrainian refugees.

9 Any other business

- 9.1 *The appointment of the new Bishop of Exeter:* In view of the impending retirement of Bishop Robert and the beginning of the process of taking soundings about his successor, an email questionnaire will be circulated to the entire congregation in order to achieve the maximum amount of involvement of members of the churches in the consultation process.
- 9.2 *Richard Stenlake's funeral:* Members of the PCC expressed their appreciation of Richard's funeral, which had been so fitting for a fine human being and Christian person, whose tragic death in a car accident we all lament from the heart. Members wondered whether it would be possible for copies of the family's moving tribute to Richard to be made available for us all.
- 9.3 *Churchyard maintenance:* The report of the excellent work being carried out on the paths in the churchyard by Mark Heritage was received with gratitude. JH-T offered to organise a 'gardening party' to assist with the weeding.
- 9.4 *Supporting CHAT:* CH observed that he was keen to strengthen the ties between St Peter's and CHAT, where the need for food reserves was reportedly acute. He intended that the Harvest Festival on 24 September would be an occasion for publicising the needs of this vitally important local charity.
- 9.5 *More sidespersons and refreshments helpers:* GH and SM appealed for more willing helpers to be found in both areas. CH underlined the importance of sidespersons in looking out for newcomers and welcoming anyone and everyone coming into the church.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

Signed:

Date:

Date of next meeting: Thursday 7 September

ST PETER'S, TIVERTON

Committee Membership

2023/24

The Rector and the Churchwardens are *ex officio* members of all committees. The safeguarding officer is available to act as consultant to any committee.

FABRIC COMMITTEE

David Ricks* (Chair)

Mark Heritage

Derek Long

Neville Mundy

Keith White

Simon Trott

(as tower representative)

FINANCE COMMITTEE

William Zarrett* (Chair)
Christopher Shields (Treasurer)

John Brewster*

Janet Rendle

David Ricks*

Heather Vincent*

Helen Wakely

PASTORAL CARE GROUP

Rosie Longbourne (Convener)

Sue Beale

Kate Henshall*

Jean Jenner

Averil Long*

Sally Mundy*

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Gill Heard* (Chair)

Joanna Hall-Tomkin*

Kate Henshall*

Nickie Johnson*

Julian May

Tom Mitchell*

Jenny Palmer

Jenny Park

PROJECT MANAGEMENT GROUP

David Ricks* (Chair)

Emma Cobbledick*

Gill Heard*

STANDING COMMITTEE

The Rector (Chair)

The PCC Vice-Chair

The Churchwardens

The PCC Secretary

William Zarrett*

The Treasurer (when necessary)

* indicates a PCC member.