

ST PETER'S, TIVERTON

Parochial Church Council

Minutes of the meeting held in The Tiverton Hotel
on Thursday 9 November 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, Heather Vincent and William Zarrett.

The meeting opened with prayer.

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 7 September were approved and signed.

2 Matters arising

- 2.1 *Coffee morning in aid of CHAT* (minute 7): There had been very strong support at the last PCC meeting for a fund-raising coffee morning in support of CHAT. Unfortunately, no one had felt able to organise such an event, but the PCC was still very hopeful that it should take place when someone found time to do so.

The highlighting of the pressing needs of CHAT at our Harvest Festival had, however, been notably successful. Not only had there been widespread appreciation of the well-judged sermon given by Alison the chair of CHAT at the main Sunday morning service but a substantial collection had been made. The letter of thanks mentioned made the 143% increase in foodbank usage last year and the 53% increase in overall services.

- 2.2 *Remembrance Sunday* (minute 8.3): Plans had been affected by the state of relationships between the various bodies concerned, namely the Town Council, the Royal British Legion and St Peter's. A plan had been agreed, but CH stressed the importance of St Peter's people doing everything possible to rebuild relationships in a spirit of peace-making so that the planning for this event in 2024 might be eased.

- 2.3 *Plans for the run up to Christmas* (minute 8.4): CH reported that plans have now taken shape in detail, indeed a collaboration between Tiverton Town Council and the Town Centre Partnership, St Peter's, the Pannier Market and The Unnamed Arts. The Christmas Light Switch-On will take place on Saturday 25 November in Phoenix Lane, the programme entitled *Fire and Ice* involving live music in conjunction with *Withyfest*, local theatre groups and then the celebratory 'switch-on'. In preparation for that 'switch on', paper lantern workshops will be taking place, including a family craft day in St Peter's on 18 November.

Heathcoats have provided generous sponsorship for the events on both 18 and 25 November, and CH and Lydia are prominently involved. The tone of the event is being set in advance publicity: 'We encourage the community to dress up, spend the day with us, shop, eat, sing and celebrate. Let's fill the streets with dancing, singing, lanterns and Christmas cheer.'

- 2.4 *Cleaning the church* (minute 9.2): WZ reported that three approaches had been made to potential cleaners, but no response had been forthcoming. He suggested that the best hope of success would probably come by way of a private approach to someone who was known to welcome the opportunity to earn some money.

3 Deanery Synod representation

It was agreed that JH-T would join EC and KH as representatives of St Peter's on the Tiverton and Cullompton Deanery Synod.

4 Safeguarding

JH-T reported that all PCC members have now submitted DBS forms and the response would soon be available. There will follow, of course, the commitment to undertake the related training courses provided by the Diocese. She also reported the lifting of the previous requirement that all those engaged in pastoral visiting should be DBS-checked, a change which was the cause of surprise and some unease on the part of some PCC members, bearing in mind the realities of some very sensitive situations, not to mention the controversial record of the Church of England in its handling of safeguarding issues.

Sunday 19 November has been designated Safeguarding Sunday, and this will be noted at St Peter's and discussed by in advance by CH and JH-T.

The PCC agreed that a fresh look at arrangements for pastoral care in the parish would be timely, and it was hoped to make progress in this matter before the end of November.

5 Live streaming arrangements.

The PCC received the minutes of the consultation among members of the Standing Committee during 5-12 October, at which the decision was made on behalf of the PCC and in the light of email voting by PCC members (12 votes in favour; 1 vote against; 1 abstention) to go ahead with the installation. WZ reported, however, a delay on the part of the DAC in confirming their approval, which the Archdeacon firmly anticipated and encouraged, and as a consequence it had not been possible to sign the contract for the installation. It was therefore highly unlikely that the system would be in place for the Christmas services. (See further minute 8.4.)

6 Worship

GH introduced the minutes of the meeting of the Worship Committee on 23 October.

- 6.1 *Choral Evensong* (minute 3.4): In response to the request that this be established once again at St Peter's CH observed that much depended on the evidence of demand and the availability of duly authorised persons to lead, as well as how the provision might relate to other plans, e.g. the current workshop concerning prayer and worship on Sunday evenings. He would discuss with Ian Johnson whether he might be able to help. In discussion reference was also made to the possible provision and training of lay leaders to share responsibility for Evensong. It was noted that the Exe Valley mission

community has long drawn on lay leadership for the provision of services. CH undertook to discuss the matter with the Archdeacon.

- 6.2 *Carol service* (minute 4.2): The time of the service would be 6.00, not 6.30, for the convenience of those invited participants with travel concerns. It was recalled that the 2022 service had been greatly enhanced by the singing before the main service began, and especially 'Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht': it was hoped that Lydia might be able to make similar plans this year.

The PCC endorsed the minutes of the Worship Committee meeting.

7 Finance

WZ introduced the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting on 26 October, including the treasurer's report (7.1), and went on to comment on specific matters (7.2.1).

- 7.1 *Treasurer's report on income and expenditure*: The summary of the position on 30 September 2023 was as follows:

	Actual	Budget	Variance
	£	£	£
Income	38,258	39,480	(1,222)
Expenditure	84,861	74,027	(10,834)
Deficit	(46,603)	(34,546)	(12,056)

The Church's accounts are showing an increasing variance from budget after nine months. As can be seen from the summary above, this is largely due to additional unanticipated expenditure on the fabric and for utilities, especially electricity. Within emergency maintenance, there are two significant events which are ongoing – repair of the wiremesh in the bell tower louvers, and most significant of all the dry rot found in the Vestry.

- 7.1.1 One area which has emerged as an ongoing time-consuming task, is the processing of funeral (and wedding) invoices. For funerals, currently the arrangement is for the Church to invoice the funeral directors, who then invoice the family involved. Once the family have paid the funeral directors, they then pay the Church. The Church then has to pay the Diocese its statutory fees, and each individual involved in any service e.g. visiting clergy and their expenses, sound technician, organist, vergers etc. It is a very complicated series of transactions, with the potential for errors at each stage! The only transactions that actually show on the Church's accounts, are the statutory and non-statutory fees.
- 7.1.2 *Extraordinary income and expenditure*: In the first nine months of the year, the main Church re-ordering work has continued to progress and has cost **£28,372**. Within this total, the new pew cushions cost **£10,303.73** and expenditure on the Newte Library stood at **£12,192**. The overall 'expenditure' on re-ordering is actually lower than at the end of August because of the £17k worth of VAT which was re-claimed and received during September through the Listed Places of Worship Scheme. Following the very high invoice received from SSE in relation to the Church's electricity usage, new meters are to be installed in the middle of October so that accurate readings are taken by SSE in future.

7.1.3 *Funds:* At the end of September, the designated or restricted funds were as follows:

	Designated £	Restricted £
Church House		79,987*
Donations for External Causes		36
Doris Osman-Dean (for music purposes)		4,459
Flower Fund		784
Fresh Expressions (ex 'Messy Church')		1,217
Organ Restoration	883	
Bell Restoration	6,131	
Total	7,014	86,483

*This fund was boosted by the VAT refunded through the Listed Places of Worship Scheme.

7.1.4 *Charity Commission:* The 2022 accounts have been submitted to the Charity Commission, and steps are being taken to update the PCC membership.

7.2.1 WZ made a number of observations on matters highlighted by the Treasurer's report. Thus, he observed that the variance from budget of just over £12k, to which the Treasurer referred, is mainly in the area of utilities plus emergency maintenance. Fabric usually runs well within budget but this time was substantially affected by the discovery of new problems like the dry rot in the vestry. The PCC needs to be prepared for further unforeseen expense after the imminent quinquennial inspection. Income from donations has been holding up quite well, and the VAT return of £17k, activated just before the deadline, was good news. Finally, the change in the software used for the accounts meant that the likely level of end-of-year statement preparation charges by Apsleys would be lower than previously anticipated.

On specific issues: (i) One smart meter has now been installed, with another due in the Greenway Chapel, cf. minute 8.3 below. (ii) The most realistic time for carpet cleaning to be taken in hand is after completion of the construction process.

7.2.2 DR was thanked for the high level of commitment and professional skill he had shown in the provision of detailed plans for repair work as well as for reordering.

7.2.3 CH informed the PCC that he and Helen Wakely hoped to make Christian giving the focus of the worship on Sunday 18 February in the hope of encouraging members of St Peter's to consider afresh the level of their giving.

He also suggested that the time had probably come for a review of the level of charges relating to occasional offices and events involving outside bodies such as concerts, any decisions about such changes to be implemented with effect from April 2024. While agreeing that some streamlining would be advantageous, WZ urged that the level of any changes be decided with sensitivity to the capacity of outside bodies to cope with increases. An example would be the East Devon Choral Society, whose very welcome forthcoming performance of Handel's *Messiah* is scheduled for 9 December.

The PCC endorsed the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting.

8 Fabric

DR provided an oral report on matters relating to fabric.

- 8.1 *Vestry dry rot works:* The extent of the dry rot has proved to be greater than anticipated. This is undoubtedly due to the cavity behind the 'lath and plaster' finishes. The suspended ceiling has been removed to allow the wall finishes to be stripped to a higher level in places. The rot extended to the top of the window on the north wall, and the whole of this wall has been stripped to allow replacement with a lime plaster directly on to the stone. On the other areas of stripped finishes, skimmed plasterboard will be used, which will be built out on metal laths to be flush with the existing remaining plaster.

Four low level underfloor wall vents have been introduced, to ventilate the floor and a 'french drain' is being installed externally on the north and east walls. The existing drain has been surveyed and is fine, but the cast iron downpipe on the north wall is in need of repair.

The room has been dried out and the walls have reached a satisfactory moisture level to allow reinstatement to proceed after one final sterilisation of all walls and the floor area. The new floor will be constructed first.

DAC approval of the works has now been confirmed. The price for the works has increased considerably, but they have to be completed in a proper manner to prevent the reoccurrence of the dry rot. The variations are being priced by the contractor as they are instructed, and the anticipated final cost will be in the region of £25-30k.

- 8.2 *Fire Precautions at the base of the tower as required by Fire Officer:* DAC approval has been granted for these works. Quotations have been obtained from Crowstep for the works to the gas meter cupboard and the electrical cabinet at the base of the tower. Approval is requested to proceed with these works in the sum of £2,972.10 for enclosing the electrical panel and £3,228.52 for the gas cupboard. The quotation includes the cost of some of the local fire alarm system required by the fire officer. The exact extent of the remaining alarm works needs to be established and priced.
- 8.3 *Smart meters:* A smart meter has been fitted to the main electrical supply in the tower, to allow better recording of usage. The secondary supply, in the Greenway Chapel, requires the removal of redundant equipment and possibly replacement of the meter before a smart meter can be fitted. A price for this work will be obtained. A smart meter for the gas supply is being investigated.
- 8.4 *Live streaming:* A quotation for the necessary equipment has been received and agreed by the PCC. We are still waiting for the DAC to approve the work before being able to progress.

9 Reordering

DR reported on recent developments.

- 9.1 *Children's area:* The works should be completed within days. Decisions have to be made about the use of the cupboards and which of them should be lockable. Notice boards and card reader are to be finalised.
- 9.2 *Library/meeting room:* The works have progressed well. The mezzanine structure and ground floor finishes are complete. The oak staircase and partition wall are being constructed this week with upper floor finishes next. The existing entrance door has been glazed and is ready for rehanging. The escape door through the screen is being constructed off site. The building works should be completed this month.
- New bookcases are being priced by Crowstep as the old shelves from the library proved totally unsuitable for reuse, both practically and aesthetically. The new shelves have been designed as modules of one meter to allow future flexibility.
- 9.3 *Window blinds to the mezzanine:* A faculty for the light-reducing permanent blinds to the windows has been received. A quotation from the specialist contractor will now be requested.
- 9.4 EC reported that the paintings of the Newte library had been fully conserved and returned. It is hoped that when work is completed on the mezzanine the paintings can be hung on the screen facing into the church for maximum public enjoyment. EC plans to apply to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the bookcases, window screens and remaining conservation work. She hopes to submit this by the end of the year. EC has ordered the environmental monitoring devices (funded by the church buildings council grant).

10 Any other business

- 10.1 *Church wardens:* CH shared with the PCC the news that GH and WZ will resign from the office of church warden at the next APCM. He voiced gratitude to them both for the fine leadership and sacrificial hard work that they had brought to their role. It would be important that a 'job description' be put together, distinguishing between tasks which define the role of church warden as over against other activity undertaken voluntarily and out of the kindness of their hearts. There was so much that fell into the latter category that the distinction would be especially important if possible new wardens were not to be deterred by the apparent range of responsibilities.

Members of the PCC were asked to give careful thought to the securing of possible successors. In doing so, it might prove helpful if we were to consider appointing one or two assistant wardens who would be able and willing to share the load.

- 10.2 *Fundraising:* It was pointed out that the timetabling of events in the run up to Christmas had taken over the weekend when the equivalent of a Christmas fair had usually taken place. This was an important source of income for St Peter's. It was decided to hold a similar event during the Easter period.

CH suggested that the opportunity to develop fresh ideas for other revenue-raising events in the first half of 2024 should be seized. Blundell's and The Lost Kitchen could well be partners in this regard.

DC asked that we should also keep in mind the needs of a suffering world 'out there', of which Christian Aid week was an annual reminder. The PCC had regularly and very

helpfully supported the distribution of envelopes for personal giving, but the amount of money we have raised each year in this way for what is after all the foremost charity to which the Christian community in the UK is committed, has been steadily decreasing. If some thought could also be given to how this trend might be reversed, perhaps by arranging the sort of enjoyable and very effective plan as the Safari Supper of a few years ago, that would be excellent.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.05 pm.

Signed:

Date: