

ST PETER'S CHURCH, TIVERTON

Annual Vestry Meeting Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Minutes of the meetings held in church on Sunday 14 April 2024 at 12 noon

The Revd Christian Hill, priest in charge, was in the chair, and 45 members attended.

Apologies were received from John Brewster, Sally Cole, Elaine Greensmith, Jenny Park, Shelia Richardson and Graham Willson.

Annual Vestry Meeting

The meeting opened with prayer.

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Sunday 23 April 2023 were approved and signed.

2 Election of Churchwardens

- 2.1 Gill Heard and William Zarrett had indicated their intention to resign after having served 12 years each during the period since 2008. Tributes were paid to both of them for their long and dedicated service, not only in respect of all they had done but also the generous and thoughtful style of their leadership.

They in turn expressed their gratitude for the privilege and enrichment of serving in this way and their thanks for the support of the community upon which they had depended.

In discussion the point was made that many of the tasks that the wardens had looked after in the kindness of their hearts were not definitive of that office. The 'job description' offered by the Church of England envisaged a rather less extensive responsibility, so those who might consider offering themselves for this work need not be deterred by the size of what had been practised. The two retiring wardens undertook to be available for discussion and advice in order to help new wardens to become familiar with the role.

- 2.2 There having been no nominations for the office of church warden, it was not possible to elect successors for the year 2024-25.

Signed:

Date:

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 23 April 2023 were approved and signed.

2 *The Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Parochial Church Council (2023)*

2.1 Helen Wakely, treasurer, introduced the review of the finances for the year 2023. She began by paying tribute to her predecessor, Chris Shields, who had maintained an unwavering cheerfulness, enthusiasm and helpfulness, and who gave up the role only when terminal ill health forced him to do so. She also thanked everyone who had helped her to understand and compile the annual accounts. She continued:

2.2 *The Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2023* records a drop in income to around £72k. We had continuing significant expenditure on our re-ordering project; all the funds saved for this project in the Church House Fund have now been used up. In addition, the discovery of dry rot in the vestry had cost many thousands of pounds to address. Care of the building required total maintenance of around £33k.

We have also faced the cost of living crisis, most clearly exemplified in our energy costs which rose from a total of £6k in 2022 to £18k in 2023. The Church also meets in full its commitment to the Diocesan Common Fund, which cost us around £1k a week in 2023 before any other costs were added.

2.3 The budget for 2024 indicates a likely deficit of £90k, so where can we find hope as we move through another year? First, we have had a wonderfully successful fundraising effort to repair the bells and their tower. Tribute should be paid to our bellringers and all of those who have contributed to their restoration. Second, we have been able to reclaim significant sums of VAT through the Listed Place of Worship Scheme. Third, we have instigated new efforts to hold additional fundraising events at the Church and to encourage regular contributions to Church funds through the Parish Giving Scheme. Fourth, we are most of all lucky at St Peter's as a result of the legacies given so generously by previous members of the congregation, which will allow us to meet future deficits for a limited period ahead if nothing changes. Finally, our investments have done well in 2023, but of course, they are at the mercy of the financial markets.

2.4 Our accountants Apsleys have given us a clean bill of health, but disappointingly have charged us the same fee as in previous years despite having less work to do this year in reviewing the accounts. We have been seeking a new agency to carry out the obligatory independent examination of the accounts, and a possible person who can help us with this has been identified.

The APCM received with approval the Annual Report and Financial Statements and delegated to the PCC the appointment of the new independent examiner of accounts for the year 2024.

3 Reports

- 3.1 *Churchwardens' report on the fabric:* Gill Heard and William Zarrett reported that 'the year 2023-24 has been quite busy and very expensive in respect of the maintenance of the fabric of St. Peter's. Routine planned maintenance has continued with service to our clock, fire extinguishers, lightning rods, alarm systems and roof cameras, all overseen by our Chair of Fabric, David Ricks. All are in good working order.

'Emergency maintenance has been a challenge involving several very costly projects: extensive and expensive repair of dry rot in the vestry; the repair of the rainwater hopper at the east end of the south aisle; maintenance to the windows in the bell tower, replacing the bird mesh and installing 'gale breaker' fabric to protect the bells; renovation of the bell workings and frame, undertaken primarily by the ringers who have very successfully raised the required funding; after a fire inspection, fire resistant enclosures needed to be added in the west tower to enclose the gas meter closet and the new electricity consumer board.

'In 2024, there will take place the quinquennial inspection: major expenditures resulting from it are not anticipated.

'The DIY team continues its valiant efforts, fuelled by coffee, cake and camaraderie, and earning the gratitude of the whole St Peter's community!'

- 3.2 *The reordering of the church:* David Ricks, chair of the project management group, reported: 'After about two and a half years of hard work and upheaval the reordering contract works are now complete. The changes that have been made involve new toilet with accessible facilities, the moving of the font to form a new baptistry fronting the Greenway Chapel, a greatly enlarged open area at the back of church with new chairs, a nave altar platform at the east end, a new servery, a new children's area, the porch refurbished and glazed, a new welcome area and a new meeting room/office with a gallery for the library.

'There are still snags and defects to be put right, and outside the contract furniture and fittings for the children's area and the library have still to be provided.

'It has been good to sense a general approval with the way the works have transformed our church for the better and in the way our church may now be used.'

- 3.3 *Safeguarding:* Joanna Hall-Tomkin, the safeguarding officer reported: 'This continues to be an area of high priority within both St Peter's and the Church of England as a whole. Parishes are required to raise awareness of this subject and to ensure that robust policies and practices are in place. The requirements for up to date and regular training are becoming more and more detailed, and there is no doubt that the role of Safeguarding Officer is a demanding one.

'I am continuing to update the online St Peter's Dashboard - eventually, this will mean that individuals can log in and check their own 'training due' dates(!). I am pleased to report that all PCC members now have the required current DBS - this follows advice from the Diocese.

'I am now working through the other 'requirements' for volunteers within our various roles in Church. My plan is to run some sessions in Church, involving watching the required video(es) over coffee and cake, to facilitate all being able to access them. Even those of us on the coffee rota are required to complete the online basic awareness course! My thanks to our bellringers, who are the first group to be bang up to date with training.

'St Peter's has been working to ensure that measures are in place for the 'safer recruitment' of people in specific roles within the parish, paid and voluntary, including those already carrying out the work. These are (i) where an individual has more than incidental contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults who are experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect. Examples are pastoral care and Home Communion visitors, Holiday Club helpers, and bell ringers with training responsibilities; and (ii) those in the parish with overall responsibility for safeguarding: the incumbent, the PCC and the safeguarding representative.

'New training is introduced all the time, and safeguarding is a standing item on each PCC agenda. The Parish Policies and Guidelines are reviewed annually by the PCC.

'I am looking for someone to help me monitor training requirements for volunteers - if you think you could help, please do let me know!

'Safeguarding can often worry people – it's worth remembering that **safeguarding is everyone's responsibility** - raising awareness is vital in ensuring that people feel safe when carrying out work for the Church, safe when in Church, and aware of whom they can ask for help, should it ever be needed.'

- 3.4 *The St Peter's Society of Change Ringers:* Sheila Scofield, the tower captain, reported on events during an exceptionally busy year in which work on the servicing of the bells was achieved, and the centenary of the bells celebrated, as well as the holding of a series of what might be termed regular ringing events.

In pursuing a target sum of £25k for work on the bells themselves, there had been a Town Band concert (September); a handbell and music concert (August); a coffee morning and sale (November); and afternoon tea and sales (February); in addition to monthly summer market stalls and knitting, sewing and plant sales. So far, the sum raised stands at £19.5k.

The ringing events listed comprise regular Sunday service ringing (until 15 January); regular practice (using neighbouring towers from 15 January onwards); a quarter peal celebrating the coronation of King Charles III; a ringers service to launch fundraising (May); a Tower open day (September); the St Peter's Shield Competition at Kentisbeare (September), which we won; the Guild Festival fortnight - 8 quarter-peals rung locally by members of the band (October-November); a quarter peal rung in memory of the Revd Robert Gordon (12 November 2023); a Tower Outing to South Hams (May); a ringers' working party to clear the west end path (summer Fridays); and weddings (May and October).

The required work on the bells was carried out in January by a Bellhanger over three days, when the fittings were stripped, and a further three days when most of the bearings were replaced. In March all parts and the bells themselves were returned to working order. Thereafter a peal attempt by the local band on 16 March was followed by a celebratory service and lunch on 17 March and a dinner on 23 March.

During this year of extensive and varied activity, the members of the Tower team had been very conscious of, and were grateful for, the support given by the whole St Peter's community of which they are a part.

- 3.5 *Electoral Roll report:* Sarah Ware, the electoral roll secretary, reported that at the beginning of 2023/2024, there were 104 electors on the roll, and during the year 8 electors were lost and 4 gained, the outcome thus being the border-line figure of exactly 100. With 101 being

the required minimum figure for 13 representatives of the laity on the PCC, membership rule M15.8b comes into play: 'If there are more than 50 but no more than 100, nine.'

She alerted members to her intention to start the required brand new roll in the autumn, since everyone will need to re-apply to be on the roll. She asked everyone to encourage new church members to enrol, and expressed the hope that by starting the new roll in the autumn, there would hopefully be time to achieve better numbers for the 2025/26 electoral roll.

- 3.6 *Tiverton and Cullompton Deanery Synod*: The three representatives of St Peter's, namely Emma Cobbledick, Joanna Hall-Tomkin and Kate Henshall, gave a report on the year in the life of the Deanery Synod.

'The Tiverton and Cullompton Deanery Synod's meeting in June 2023 included a talk by Brian and Chris Clarke who initially volunteered to work in Amsterdam's red-light district and subsequently witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall. They became inspired to go and work in Bulgaria, a forgotten Eastern Bloc country, where they founded the charity Krasifaid. Four years ago they returned to the UK to live in Cullompton where, unbeknown to them, they discovered a group of about 400 Bulgarians working at the Chicken Factory. These Bulgarians were mostly from the Roma people and not the Bulgars, they were used to being ostracised. They were surprised to find British Bulgarian speakers. Brian and Chris have been working to improve the acceptance of these people in Cullompton.

'In October, the speaker was Sharon Blyth (Children and Families Mission Enabler in Exeter Diocese), who gave a talk titled "The Biggest Mission Field". Sharon's talk was entertaining, interactive and practical - encouraging the deanery synod to draw on ideas from their own childhoods and sharing suggestions to take back to their parishes about ways to encourage children and young people into their churches. Sharon invited us to think about what is needed in the diocese? - volunteers, recruitment and training, and reaching out together; where are the children? - in schools, parks, cafés, shops, youth groups; and ideas of how we can help - reading to children in schools, school governance, acts of kindness, finding gaps in the school curriculum, prayer groups, picking up on festivals and special events. Sharon focused on what favourite aspects of school and church children will remember and highlighted that grandparents matter in influencing faith among children and teenagers.

'In February the Deanery welcomed the Revd Nathan Kiyaga, the outgoing Torbay Area Dean. He explained how the Torbay Deanery has forged links with Devon County Council and other community services to form "Torbay United", a charity aiming to support schools and the community through faith and other initiatives. Our Rural Dean, the Revd Andy Humm then introduced 'Lifepath Tiverton' which will run in June for all year 4 children to engage in art, history, drama, music and the Christian faith through learning about the Wesley family. This a collaborative project in the Deanery and we hope some members of St Peter's will take part.'

4 Elections

- 4.1 The proposal that David Catchpole as licensed lay minister be elected to membership of the PCC for the year 2024/25 was accepted, in line with membership rule M15.1h: "The members of the PCC are ... if the annual meeting decides that one or more of the readers licensed to the parish or to an area including the parish whose names are on the role of the parish should be members, the reader(s) in question'.

4.2 The following persons were elected as representatives of the laity on the PCC for the years 2024-2027: Susannah Emson, Mark Heritage, Sally Mundy and William Zarrett.

The membership of the new PCC will thus consist of the following:

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|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| <i>Incumbent</i> | The Revd Christian Hill | <i>Chair</i> |
| <i>Churchwardens</i> | (vacancy) (vacancy) | <i>ex officio</i> <i>ex officio</i> |
| <i>Licensed lay minister</i> | David Catchpole | 1 st term 2024-25 |
| <i>Deanery Synod representatives</i> | Emma Cobbledick Joanna Hall-Tomkin Kate Henshall | <i>ex officio</i> 2023-26 <i>ex officio</i> 2023-26 <i>ex officio</i> 2023-26 |
| <i>Representatives of the laity</i> | John Brewster Susannah Emson Mark Heritage Nickie Johnson Tom Mitchell Sally Mundy David Ricks William Zarrett (vacancy) | 1 st term 2023-26 1 st term 2024-27 1 st term 2024-27 1 st term 2022-25 1 st term 2023-26 2 nd term 2024-27 <i>ex officio</i> 2023-25 1 st term 2024-27 |

5 Priest in charge's reflections

The Revd Christian Hill outlined the aims and objectives which he believed should guide the life of the St Peter's community. He said:

'As the civic church of Tiverton, we have a leading part to play in the life of the town and the Christian transformation of our society. Following the completion of renovation works at St Peter's church this year, we now need to look at taking the next steps.

'In our next phase of church mission, I would like us all to concentrate on three things:

- 1 To know God, taking a personal responsibility for our faith.
- 2 To meet in groups, joining a midweek fellowship group that keeps you connected.
- 3 To make a difference to the life of St Peter's by volunteering.

'In particular at this time, we need more volunteers to help with the running of 'the ship'. We need volunteers to offer to co-ordinate many of the working groups, and of course in particular we need two church wardens and two deputy church wardens to assist them. This will be a priority for us over the coming months.'

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 12.55 pm.

Signed:

Date: