

ST PETER'S, TIVERTON

Parochial Church Council

Minutes of the meeting held at The Tiverton Hotel
on Thursday 9 May 2024 at 7.30 pm

Present: The Revd Christian Hill (in the chair), John Brewster, David Catchpole, Emma Cobbledick, Susannah Emson, Kate Henshall, Mark Heritage, Nickie Johnson, Sally Mundy, David Ricks and William Zarrett.

Apologies: Joanna Hall-Tomkin, Tom Mitchell.

In attendance: The Venerable Andrew Beane (Archdeacon of Exeter), Stacey Gray (Marketing and Communications Coordinator for Tiverton Town Council) and Philip Whitlock (Exeter Diocese Mission Resources Manager).

The meeting opened with prayer. A welcome was extended to Susannah Emson and Mark Heritage as new members, and to Sally Mundy and William Zarrett as re-elected members of the PCC.

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 14 March were approved and signed.

2 Matters arising from the minutes

2.1 *Coffee morning in aid of CHAT* (minute 2.1): NJ has decided that she needs to withdraw from overall responsibility for leading this event, so in the absence of co-workers to help with planning and provision, the plan was abandoned.

2.2 *Choral evensong* (minute 2.2): CH reported that it had become clear after consultation with Graham Willson that the numerical strength of the choir is unfortunately insufficient at present to mount such a service. It might be possible, however, to invite one of a number of excellent visiting choirs to come and sing at St Peter's, or to hold a Taizé service (always much appreciated) instead, perhaps on a Sunday afternoon in late September.

2.3 *Fundraising event on 6 April* (minute 2.3): SM reported that the total raised for furnishing the Children's Corner stands at ca. £800, mainly from the 'Spring Fair', and £110 from 'coffee and pancakes', which she and Gill Heard had held on Pancake Day. They hope to repeat these events next year.

2.4 *Hired cleaner(s)* (minute 2.5): Every effort is being made to widen awareness of our hope of finding such a person. SE suggested that enquiries should be directed at some young mothers with whom she was in contact professionally, who might be glad of some paid employment.

3 Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

These were provisionally noted, subject to some further discussion between MH and CH of the minute of the incumbent's report. This would be considered and, if necessary, adjusted in the near future before memories of the event faded.

4 PCC officers for 2024/25

The following were elected as officers of the PCC for 2024/25: David Ricks as vice-chair, Emma Cobbedick as secretary, Helen Wakely as treasurer, and Joanna Hall-Tomkin as safeguarding officer. (For details of membership cf. appendix to these minutes.)

5 Duties and responsibilities of PCC members as trustees

As required at the first meeting of the PCC year, the responsibilities attaching to membership were reviewed. There is a helpful guide to membership on the Diocesan website: <https://www.exeter.anglican.org/guide-for-new-PCC-members-pdf> - well worth reading by seasoned as well as newer PCC members.

5.1 *Finance:* Under the Charities Act (1993) all PCC members are trustees responsible for all the PCC's financial activity (though without individual liability for any monies). St Peter's is fortunate in currently having substantial reserves.

It is the duty of PCC members to monitor all income, including giving, donations, legacies, wedding and funeral fees, magazine adverts and sales, fundraising and any other activities; likewise, with expenditure, notably the Common Fund, insurance, utilities, maintenance, staff salaries, fees and expenses. Most of this work is carried out by the treasury team (sides persons, cashiers and counters, fundraisers, treasurer) and overseen by the Finance Committee. This Committee reports regularly to the PCC. Trustees should be satisfied that adequate safeguards against fraud or error are in place, and they should ask questions if in any doubt.

The Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) was adopted *nem con* by the PCC eight years ago. When PCC members themselves join – as the hope is that they will – it is a sign to the congregation at large of a quite essential benefit accruing to St Peter's. For all concerned, the PGS is certainly the easiest, the most efficient and discreet, method of regular church giving. Thus, it proved invaluable during the period of the covid lockdown: those parishes who used it were protected financially, while others found themselves facing considerable difficulty.

5.2 *'Fit and Proper Persons':* Members of the PCC are required to sign these forms of declaration, thus responding to the requirement to comply with the 2010 legislation that requires churches (and other charities) that reclaim Gift Aid to be able to demonstrate that they and any church staff and volunteers who manage church funds are 'fit and proper persons' to do so.

Every member of the current PCC has now been supplied with a copy of this form and has signed it.

5.3 *GDPR:* A slightly different issue is our requirement to conform to the GDPR rules. The Data Protection Act 2018 is the UK's implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Everyone responsible for using personal data has to follow the strict 'data protection principles'. In conformity with this requirement, those members

of the Tiverton St Peter Parochial Church Council (2024-25) who are happy for their names and/or emails to be disclosed on digital messages relating to PCC business are requested to sign to this effect (or to indicate if they are not as the case may be) at the next meeting.

6 Safeguarding

JH-T, prevented by professional duties from attending this meeting, sent the following message to members.

- 6.1 *DBS checks*: new PCC members are reminded that they must carry out a DBS check as soon as possible, and JH-T will bring the relevant paperwork with website details to Church for them.
- 6.2 *Domestic violence training*: all PCC members must have up to date domestic violence training. We need to do this as soon as possible, and to inform JH-T when we have done it. The link is [Domestic-Abuse-Training-November-2023.pdf \(anglican.org\)](#). She would like to know whether people would prefer to do this together (it lasts several hours) or by themselves online.
- 6.3 *Basic awareness training*: JH-T has had only one response to the email she sent out to other groups about completing their basic awareness training, etc., and it is becoming very, very difficult to chase all this and continue the role on her own while holding down a busy job.
- 6.4 *Groups awareness*: at the APCM she asked for volunteers from the coffee rota, choir, etc., to help her coordinate the 'chasing' of their groups, but she had no response! Her conclusion: 'I'm not sure what else I can do!'

7 PCC committees 2024/25

Proposals from the Standing Committee for the membership of these committees had been checked for the willingness of the named persons to serve, and these proposals were forwarded to and accepted by the PCC, cf. accompanying [updated] appendix to these minutes.

8 Dates and locations of future PCC meetings

The possibility of meeting in the hall of St Andrew's church had been discussed, but the only evening when the hall is available is Monday, and it was felt that this was an unideal evening from our PCC's point of view. It was therefore agreed that the next two meetings would be held in church on Thursday 11 July and Thursday 5 September, with the following meeting's being held on 7 November at a location still to be decided.

9 Finance

WZ gave a brief report on recent developments, which had been almost entirely normal. However, two matters were far from normal. The cost of the dry rot repairs to the vestry had turned out at £33k. And the unwelcome payment made necessary by a vandal's removal of the spigot on the external tap, leaving the water running for three days, amounted to £1k, which could not be covered by our insurance policy since the sum involved was less than the excess defined by the policy.

It was noted that the quinquennial inspection of the church is currently in process.

10 'Contactless card giving'

Philip Whitlock, the Exeter Diocesan Mission Resources Manager, opened up this topic. He advised the PCC on how to gain optimal benefit from giving by visitors to the church through the use of card readers. He has extensive experience through his position at Ottery St Mary Church and also through his work with the Diocese.

Mr Whitlock reviewed the increasing trend for card usage by all ages, including a surprising increase in use by more 'mature' individuals. He demonstrated a card reader which consists of an Android tablet carrying the software, connected to a SumUp machine for connectivity. One advantage of this system is its ability to be customised through our existing 'Give-a-Little' portal: any amount of suggested donation can be programmed; donations to specific campaigns can be chosen by the donor; and a Gift Aid election is easily available.

While our SumUp card reader is well designed for selling items (wine, etc., during concerts) it does not have the capacity for being custom-tailored for other uses, nor can the donor indicate a desire to Gift Aid the donation.

Discussion centred around where such a card reader should be located within the church to make it more obvious to the visitor. Concern was expressed that we did not want it to appear we were charging for entry, nor that we were distracted from our primary Christian mission. Visitors enter churches for all sorts of reasons, and it could be very unhelpful to them if the receipt of payment appeared to be the priority.

After the meeting, Mr Whitlock suggested he could provide a machine for St. Peter's to trial for a few months. Various locations in the building will be considered. The initial cost of this type of card reader will be something over £400, plus the cost of providing electricity in a new location.

11 Marketing strategy

Stacey Gray, the marketing and communications coordinator for Tiverton Town Council, made a presentation, offering her services and experience for a one-year contract. During that year, she suggested, 'we need to do all we can to attract attention and bring people in'.

The foundation for her proposals had been laid in the presentation by CH at the PCC of 14 March 2024: minute 5.4, and by the statement of purpose, again set out by CH in what became the draft minute of the incumbent's report at the APCM on 14 April 2024, which had been circulated to PCC members: 'What a wonderful opportunity we have here at this moment. It is unfortunate for a house of God to say the least, that we are now in the position of having to relaunch our church, in some way, as a business in order to maintain its strong and relevant place in our community.' The discussion of Stacey Gray's proposals registered an awareness of these observations.

11.1 *Aim and outcome:* In detail, the *aim* would be the building of a modern and relevant communications platform that advertises what St Peter's is all about and what it has to offer to the wider community. The intended *outcome* would be the raising of our profile

across the region, bringing more people to be part of St Peter's Church – that is to say, more active members, more volunteers and more income to sustain church life.

- 11.2 *Marketing, events and finance:* there would be a focus on these three areas of development: For marketing (i) the updating of the website and social media, the use of our live stream facility, and signage and local engagement targeting a younger and broader audience. For events planning (i) events and concerts, for which collective meeting and planning, taking account of contracts and terms and conditions of hire, would be important, and the opening of the Church for performances/rehearsals essential. For finance (i) funding and commercial viability, in harmony with the principles of Christian worship would be important, as would be the reviewing and development of a fairly fixed pricing structure, and advice on opportunities to improve cash flow.
- 11.3 *Practical details:* Stacey Gray listed here the plan for a one-year contract; the possible payment of £600 per month, with start date to be considered and the heavy outlay of time at the beginning of the contract to be taken into account. The assistance of the congregation would be vital for events, including management of the live stream. Progress would be regularly reported back to the PCC.

Discussion following this talk was on many matters appreciative. It is undoubtedly a matter of common concern that the demographic profile of St Peter's is so heavily weighted towards those members who are elderly. There is also a shared awareness that the annual statement of accounts tends to record a substantial deficit, which is widely regarded as something that cannot go on for ever. Further, St Peter's has always been committed to making effective its Christian influence in the community of Tiverton – and perhaps inevitably, and in a way not unrelated to personalities involved, this has sometimes been more successful and at other times less so. But ...

The observation was offered by DC and supported by several other members that the model of the Church proposed in CH's declaration finds little support in Christian tradition in general or the New Testament in particular. To put the matter tersely, the Church is not a business, it is not for 'relaunching', nor does it exist to draw attention to itself or make profit for itself rather than to serve and to offer and nourish an authentic experience of God. The comment was made that instead of repeated references to quantity in various connections it would be truer to the gospel to set our sights on quality, in particular to doing everything possible to make the experience of worship more deeply meaningful, reflective and enriching.

Other points made in discussion were that £7.2k is a lot of money to spend on such a project; that the events envisaged, naturally over and above those already welcomed to St Peter's, e.g. concerts, were not at all clear; that the highly desirable regular opening of the church building required people to take responsibility for that opening ... but who are these people, one might ask, since those who work for St Peter's are almost all heavily committed already?

It was agreed that more thought needed to be given to the principle and to the details that might be part of the contract if (which was not certain) the decision to go ahead were made. The PCC would return to the topic at its next meeting on 11 July.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.45 pm.

Signed:

Date: