

MINUTES OF THE 2021 ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting took place on Sunday 9th May 2021 on Zoom, commencing at 11.50 a.m. chaired by the Revd. Patrick Taylor, Vicar. There were 56 people present.

- 1 **Apologies** were received from Rebecca Mills and Chris Kennedy
- 2 **Minutes** of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 12th October 2020 were accepted.
- 3 **Matters arising**
Patrick acknowledged the change of PCC secretary. He expressed his gratitude to Miriam Dow, who, with her husband the Rev. Andrew Dow, has moved away from Stratford-upon-Avon. He thanked Liz Roome for stepping in and taking over the role.
- 4 **Vicar's Address (given as the sermon at the 10am Service)**
I've stood here on many occasions to give the Vicar's address for the annual meeting, and I always include a review of the past year. But as we look back on 2020, well, I really don't know where to start. What a year! Perhaps the best place to start is to thank God that the church is still here, still gathered around God's word and sacrament.
Thanks be to God that God's Church has proved herself able to adapt so swiftly to the challenges of the pandemic, in this parish and worldwide. I'm most grateful to all those of you who stepped up so willingly to make sure we keep in touch with everyone, offer worship - whether online or in person- and also, when we've been allowed, open up this building each day for visitors or private prayer.

As we begin now to regroup, we're discovering once more something we used to take for granted: the value of coming together as a community, worshipping God and supporting one another in our journey of faith and our desire to serve the people of this parish and beyond.

So, what else have we learnt? Well, I think we've rediscovered what it means to be a Parish Church, run by the people of the parish, for the parish. The sudden loss of visitors and income (we will look at the actual figures in our meeting later on) meant all the paid roles here in Holy Trinity and some of the admin roles in the Parish Office had to become redundant and we lost many of our wonderful staff was employees. We had already begun, before the pandemic, to try to move to more of a volunteer culture, with paid staff supporting in the background. The past year has radically accelerated that shift, but it means that we now look much more like the parish church that I think we're meant to be. This was no more true than when we had our walk-through services at Christmas and Easter this year, made possible by a huge team of stewards, led by the Churchwardens, and with a very significant contribution from our choir.

As our church opens up again and visitors return in just over a week's time, this new culture of us all mucking in is going to be more important than ever. We

can only open if there are enough volunteers present to steward. At the moment there are some days when we may have to have to keep the church doors closed because of lack of volunteers signed up. So we face the prospect of hundreds of people walking down the path on a busy day in the summer holidays, only to find the doors bolted shut. Not only is that a tragedy as we won't be sharing our beautiful, active parish church with them - and of course the heritage we are stewards of - but it also means no income from their donations. We've been reminded this past year just how much we had come to rely on that income to keep the basic functioning of the parish going. We're very grateful for all that those of you who are part of this church give as your Stewardship, an expression of your Christian discipleship. But the reality is that without the extra income from our visitors, we are going to carry on losing money every month, and we can't go on like that.

In our second reading today from the Gospel of John, Jesus says, "I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends". In the past we relied on our paid servants - our staff - and could afford to pay them from our visitor income. But we're in a very different place now. And perhaps that's a place closer to the one Jesus intends for us, because he want us not to be servants, but friends. A servant turns up because they have to and because they want to get paid. A friend turns up for the benefit of their friend, even if there's nothing in it for themselves. After all, "someone will lay down their life for their friend," as Jesus points out. A church made up of people who are friends of Jesus, rather than servants who turn up because they're going to get something from it, is the sort of church I believe we're called to be. As Bishop John Stroyan has put it, "the Christian life can never truly be lived with the attitude of "God on my terms" but only "God on God's terms".

There is an ancient icon which you may have seen before. It's called 'Christ and His Friend'. It's the oldest known Coptic icon, from the 8th century in Egypt, and depicts Christ, who is on the right holding the book of the gospels, and a 3rd Century Abbot called Mena. It's usually called "Christ and his Friend" because the figure on the left could represent any one of us, as a disciple of Jesus. After all, as our first reading reminded us, "the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles." We are all invited to take up the offer of being Christ's friend - this is not just for the special, holy people. There's something reassuring about this image: Jesus has his arm around the friend's shoulder, an expression of love, support and protection. The looks on both faces are confident, expectant and hopeful. The pandemic has reminded us as a church of our important role in offering hope to our community. "Love one another as I have loved you" says Jesus. Jesus has one eye on the friend and another looking out. Likewise, the friend looks out to us with one eye, and to Jesus with the other. This is not a cosy "me and my Jesus" embrace. The Friend is looking out, ready to bless and to serve others in Jesus name. With so much need post-pandemic in our communities, we will need to look again to see how we can serve our parish. For example, to consider how we can offer the Parish Centre as a community resource. But the Friend also keeps one eye on Jesus. Our efforts to do good will not bring about the Kingdom of God unless we keep looking to Christ, unless we abide in Christ, to use the language of the Gospel reading.

Something I've certainly learnt in the past year, is that it's better to do just a few things well, rather than running around being a "busy fool". We're applying that approach to our Sunday morning worship. We used to have multiple services, and the clergy would race around trying to keep all the plates spinning. On some Sundays there used to be five services all happening at once: in Holy Trinity, the Parish Centre, the two villages and at the Rosebird Centre. We're taking this opportunity to pool our resources and, here at Holy Trinity, to focus on one service at 10am on a Sunday Morning, with the intention of this being intergenerational, bringing everyone together, whatever our age, and combining a variety of styles. If this really is a parish church run by the people for the people, then our worship is included in that, so we are setting up some lay worship teams to work with the clergy and Director of Music to plan and help lead this 10am service. If we are friends and not servants, then we can't see church as something laid on for us by someone else. As Tim Hughes, Vicar Gas Street Church, Birmingham said recently, "the Church is not a show that we come to consume, it's a place we come to belong."

Notice in the icon how the friend has feet shown, but Jesus doesn't? I'm reminded of the words of St. Teresa of Avila: "Christ has no body but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours." Our parish vision is Lives Changed through God's love. Yes, it's God's love, God's grace that does the changing, the transforming of people's hearts; but we have been chosen and sent by the Father, and it's up to us to draw people to Christ so that they might know for themselves God's transforming love.

So it's our feet on the ground, caring for the vulnerable, feeding the hungry; it's our hands showing support to the bereaved, kindness to the those whose spirits are broken. There is so much work to be done to grow our churches, that it's difficult to know where to start. We need to have a focus for our time and resources, which is why each church in this parish will be considering in the coming months a new Five Year Plan.

"I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father." As I finish, I just want to draw your attention to one other detail about this beautiful icon: notice how the figure of Jesus on the right is slightly larger and taller than the friend. He has a cross in his halo and the word "Saviour" written beside it. In all our activities and busyness as a church or in any part of our lives, we must never allow ourselves to eclipse Jesus. What we have to offer this broken and hurting world is not ourselves but Christ, and we must never get in the way of Jesus for others.

It's been a year of loss, frustration, pain and sorrow, and Jesus has been with us in all of that. As we begin to look to a time of recovery and then renewal, we're invited by Jesus to take our place alongside him as his beloved friend. Then Jesus' joy will be in us, and our joy will be complete. Amen.

5 Consideration of:

a) Electoral Roll

Mr T Raistrick reported that the number on the Electoral Roll stands at a total of 351, up from 340, as calculated at the official cut-off date.

The number is broken down as follows:

Holy Trinity 312 (2020: 300) - 14 added and 2 removed, net gain 12 (4% increase)

All Saints 17 1 down from 2020

St. Helen's 22 unchanged from 2020

Of the total 351, 27.4% are non-residents (i.e. live outside the official parish boundary)

The split by gender is 66.4% women and 33.6% men.

Tim Raistrick was thanked for his work on the Roll.

b) Proceedings of the Parochial Church Council

These are contained within the Financial Statements of the PCC as required by the Charity Commission. The full PCC had met 8 times during the year, with an average attendance of 76%. Mike Warrillow proposed that we accept the Report, seconded by Anthony Woollard, and carried, all in favour. John Cohen, and Teresa Kristunas were standing down from PCC and were duly thanked.

c) Church Accounts

Using a Power Point presentation, Mike Warrillow outlined the current financial situation:

In 2019, the Parish had a surplus of £122,221; In 2020 the parish had a deficit of £102,532. The parish was therefore £225,000 worse off by the end of 2020. The breakdown of the above figures shows that, compared to 2019, in 2020, Holy Trinity was £246,000 worse off, All Saints was £3000 better off, and St Helen's was £18,000 better off.

The cause of the big drop for Holy Trinity was the loss of Visitor Donations because of the Pandemic. Visitor Income was £312,000 less in 2020 than in 2019.

Without ongoing income, Holy Trinity has only 11 months' expenses available in Unrestricted Reserve Funds; All Saints has 10 years in Unrestricted Reserve Funds; St Helen's has 4 years in Unrestricted Reserve funds.

It is therefore imperative that all parishioners regularly review their own levels of stewardship, and that as many people as possible make themselves available for volunteering opportunities, so as to limit the need for paid staff.

Mike Warrillow proposed, seconded by Anthony Woollard, that the accounts be accepted. All were in favour.

The Vicar then expressed a huge thank you to Mike for his work as Treasurer.

d) Stewardship & Gift Aid

Because Chris Kennedy, the Stewardship Officer, was unable to attend the meeting, Mike reported that Stewardship has held up over the pandemic; in fact, it has gone up by 3%. 80% of givers are now giving by means of Standing Order. About 200 people now give regularly. Chris Kennedy will be continuing as Stewardship Officer. The Vicar thanked Chris for his work, and all those who were part of the regular giving scheme.

e) Appointment of Auditors

Mike Warrillow proposed that Mazaar's Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditors, of Dudley, West Midlands be retained as Independent Examiners of the

accounts for 2020/21. This was seconded by Teresa Kristunas. All were in favour.

f) Fabric, Goods, and Ornaments

Rhod Mitchell, as Churchwarden with responsibility for buildings, reported that the Terrier and Inventory had been completed. He reported that:

1. A temporary roof has been put onto the Bier House to prevent further deterioration.
2. The insulation and carpeting of the Bell Tower have been done.
3. The development of the North Transept is progressing. We are awaiting DAC permission in order to proceed with the exterior work, and are looking into what to do with the interior.
4. The conservation work on the King James Bible is ongoing, as is the construction of a suitable case to house it in.
5. Work on the Rood Screen in the North Transept is in hand, as is the finalization and erection of the Rohan memorial bench.
6. Fund-raising will be needed to fund the purchase of new chairs. Visitor income is especially important in this respect.
Rhod drew our attention to possible future works:
7. The sound and lighting system needs renewal.
8. Grills to protect the windows on the outside.
9. The south side aisle roof needs repair.
10. The west side of the tower needs repair.

Moving forward, it has been decided to split the roles of churchwarden and clerk of works. Mark Sayers has been appointed the new Clerk of Works.

Rhod thanked everyone who had helped in the past year.

The Vicar thanked Rhod for his leadership of the team, and thanked Mark for taking on the role of Clerk of Works.

g) Deanery Synod Report

As Joint Acting Area Dean, the Vicar reported that:

1. The Deanery Synod had not met since our previous APCM.
2. A new Deanery Plan is being drawn up, but it is not likely to affect clergy deployment in this parish significantly.

6 Elections

a) Parochial Church Council

There were 4 vacancies for 3 years. 4 nominations had been received: George Reah, Liz Roome, Sam Bridges, Sam Jupe. There being no other nominations, these four were duly elected.

b) Deanery Synod

Peter Rowland has stood down because of health issues. Teresa Kristunas was elected to replace him.

The Vicar thanked Peter for his years of service to our church in this capacity.

7 Matters of Parochial and General Church Interest

1. The Vicar thanked all who contributed to the smooth running of the parish during the difficult Covid times of the past year:
 - a) the Clergy Team and the Director of Music, Douglas Keilitz;

- b) the other members of staff: Andy & Sarah, who were currently part-furloughed, and Rebecca who was on full furlough;
 - c) the Pastoral Contact Team leaders, and Jenny Rowland and Diane Patterson who oversee them
2. Chris Cottrell reported that the Social Team is planning a picnic on July 18th in the Vicarage garden. She stressed that the team needs extra members.
 3. Anthony Woollard, on behalf of the Eco-Church team, emphasised that the impact on the environment should always be considered in the planning of future projects.
 4. Hilary Newman thanked all members of the flower team for their hard work and support during the past year.
 5. Jo Walker reported that plans were afoot to restart Soundbites concerts soon.
 6. Paul Lageu thanked the Vicar for his leadership throughout the past difficult year.

The Vicar led us in The Grace, and the meeting closed at 12.50 p.m.