

PARISH OF GREAT CHESHAM
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING
held on Wednesday 17 May 2023 at 8.00pm
at Hope Church

Present: Edward Bowes-Smith (Team Rector) Chairman
and 55 other Parishioners.

In attendance: Martin Paxton

Opening Reflection and Prayer

Edward Bowes-Smith welcomed everyone to the 2023 APCM and thanked Hope Church for hosting the Meeting.

There followed a reflection on 1 Peter 4: 7 - 11, followed by an opening prayer and a song.

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

Election of Parish Churchwardens

Nominations had been received, prior to the Meeting, for Peter Hamilton and Sarah Williams to be elected to serve as Parish Wardens until the 2024 Annual Meeting.

Edward invited further nominations from the Meeting. There being no other nominations for the positions:

Peter Hamilton was elected to serve as Parish Churchwarden until the 2024 Annual Meeting.

PROPOSED: Rob Collins **SECONDED:** Juliet Mitchell.

Sarah Williams was elected to serve as Parish Churchwarden until the 2024 Annual Meeting.

PROPOSED: David Green **SECONDED:** Ruth Brown.

51 IN FAVOUR 4 ABSTENTIONS 0 AGAINST

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

1. Appointment of Secretary

Martin Paxton had agreed to act as Secretary to the Meeting.

PROPOSED: Nigel Edward-Few **SECONDED:** Sarah Williams **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED.**

2. Apologies

Chris Embleton-Smith, Gill Glenister, David Green, Richard Hartfall, Geoff Houston, Gillian Hourston, Rachel Meldrum, Danny Reilly, Julie Rennard, Beryl Stannard.

3. Minutes of Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 27 April 2022

The Minutes were accepted by the Meeting.

It was **PROPOSED** by John Spence, **SECONDED** by Margaret Gingell and **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED** that the Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 27 April 2022 be taken as read, these having been circulated to District Churches, and that the Chairman sign them as a correct record of that meeting.

It was noted that PCC Minutes are available in the 'Resources' folder in Churchbuilder: [Sec's Note: Resources – Team Documents - Parish – PCC – PCC Minutes Approved].

4. Elections

a. ***Ratification of District Elections (circulated).***

- i. *District Wardens*
- ii *PCC Representatives*
- iii *DCC Representatives*

b. ***Licensed Lay Ministers (LLM) Representative on PCC.***

It was **PROPOSED** by Ian Hamilton and **SECONDED** by Andrew Patterson and **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED** that the District Elections should be ratified and that **Geoff Houston** should be elected as Licensed Lay Ministers Representative on the PCC.

c. ***Election of Parish Deanery Synod Representatives***

Nominations had been received, prior to the Meeting, for Michael Hardman and Margaret Gingell to be elected to serve as Parish Deanery Synod Representatives.

Michael Hardman was elected to serve as Parish Deanery Synod Representative.

PROPOSED: Julie Dziegiel **SECONDED:** Peter Spring **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED**

Margaret Gingell was elected to serve as Parish Deanery Synod Representative.

PROPOSED: Hilary Sparks **SECONDED:** Mark Macklin **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED**

5. Welcome's and Thank You's

Edward thanked:

- ~ Wendy Atkinson who was standing down as St Mary's Deanery Synod Representative
- ~ Sarah Brown who was standing down as Emmanuel Representative
- ~ Ian Maxwell who was standing down as Emmanuel Representative.

Edward welcomed those who were new to the PCC:

- ~ Martin Phillips (Emmanuel District Warden)
- ~ Hazel Rymer (St George's Representative)
- ~ Don Sanderson (St Mary's Deanery Synod Representative (ex-officio))

Edward also thanked all those who were continuing in positions of responsibility and who were continuing to serve on the PCC.

6. Commissioning Prayer

There was then a Commissioning Prayer for the new PCC.

7. Reports

Annual Reports for 2022 had been made available prior to the Meeting.

a. *Team Rector*

Edward gave thanks for all the development and growth there had been around the Parish over the past year.

b. *District Churches*

The District Church Reports were noted.

c. *Electoral Roll Report*

There were no comments or questions on the Electoral Roll Report.

d. (i) *Treasurers Report and Accounts*

The Annual Report and Financial Statements for year ending 31 December 2022 were noted.

The 2022 Accounts were finalised and signed off in April.

The following points were raised:

Missionary & Charitable Giving - CPAS (p20)

As CPAS are a Patron on the Patronage Boards of St Mary's & Emmanuel it was considered inappropriate that Giving should be reduced from £3,088 in 2021 to £2,076 in 2022. It was proposed that the Level should be restored in 2023.

As only St Mary's supports CPAS it was suggested this be considered by St Mary's DCC.

Long Term Loan to Green Hill Trust (p26)

The security of the unsecured long term loan of £100,000 to the Green Hill Trust was raised.

Assurance was given that the loan is safe and that repayment by the due date of 31 December 2026 will be honoured.

District Treasurers were thanked for all their work during the past year.

d. (ii) *Appointment of Independent Examiner*

It was **PROPOSED** by Michael Hardman, **SECONDED** by Julie Dziegiel and **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED** that Jacob, Cavenagh and Skeet be appointed as Independent Examiner for the forthcoming year.

e. *Parish Properties and Fabric Report*

There were no comments or questions on the Parish Properties and Fabric Report

f. *Deanery Synod Report*

There were no comments or questions on the Amersham Deanery Synod Report.

g. *Safeguarding Report*

There were no comments or questions on the Parish Safeguarding Report.

8. Rector's Thoughts

At the May 2021 PCC Meeting, Ministry across the Parish was reviewed and a 3 year process to take it forward was agreed.

The first year '**Ready to Rebuild**' completed in May 2022.

The second year '**Set**' - exploring new partnerships - is now also complete.

- ~ *Continued Recovery* Church attendance figures are still not up to pre-pandemic levels; this is also the case across the Diocese – and beyond.
- ~ *St John's, Ashley Green.* St John's now has a weekly 11.15am Service.
- ~ *Hope Church.* Has continued to work towards coming into the Parish Structures in its own right. The Mission Order is currently paused.
- ~ *Exploring new partnership across the Districts.*
 - ~~ Hope Church joining with St John's, Bellingdon remains a possibility.
 - ~~ St John's, Ashley Green could also be linked with another Church in the Parish.
- ~ *Reviewing Parish Operational Needs – Administration, Finance, Buildings.*
 - ~~ maintenance and improvement aspects of Buildings have been reviewed
 - ~~ considering the best administrative structure to support Mission and Ministry is ongoing
 - ~~ different Churches looking after different aspects of Mission is a possibility.

The original intention was for the third year to focus on putting plans made into action: '**Go**'. However, in light of the Church of England's potential change in doctrine with the proposal to introduce Same Sex Blessings, it is necessary to '**Wait**' for the air to clear. The Parish Clergy are united in saying – on 'conscience' grounds – that they will not be conducting Same Sex Blessings. The PCC are happy to support the Clergy in exercising their conscience.

A Parish Finance Review Group has been set up to work out a fairer way of splitting the Parish Share between the Districts and to review the Parish Share payment made to the Diocese. The first Meeting was held on 15 May. Parish Share payments to the Diocese have been paused pending the report of the Group to the PCC. The PCC remains in a position to pay the full Parish Share to the Diocese. Edward had also written to the PCC.

So '**Waiting**' at present. The position will, hopefully, be clearer by the time of the 2024 APCM.

The Year Ahead - PCC Meetings

The key focus for 2023/24 PCC Meetings will be:

- ~ July - Finance Review
- ~ September - Safeguarding
- ~ November - Planning and Budgetting
- ~ January - Reflecting on Goals
- ~ March - Annual Accounts

9. Questions

Edward invited questions from the Meeting.

The following points were raised:

a. **Parish Finance Review**

Membership of the Finance Review Group (FRG)

Membership of the Finance Review Group (FRG) comprises: All Clergy, Parish Wardens, 1 x District Church Warden from each District, Parish Treasurer, District Treasurers.

FRG Membership was advised to the 22 March PCC Meeting in a pre-Meeting paper.

[Sec's Note: The pre-Meeting paper was 'Supporting our Clergy and Reflecting Together on the Implications of February's General Synod's Motion on Same Sex Blessings: Clergy, Wardens and Treasurer's Note].

Five members of the Group are Clergy which ensures all Churches are represented by Clergy; all District Treasurers are also involved.

Church of England Structure and Democratic Process

The Church of England structure is: General Synod – Diocesan Synod – Deanery Synod – PCC – DCC. Officers elected to a Synod / PCC are 'ex-officio' on bodies 'below' those to which they are elected and act independently of those bodies.

Timetable and Reporting of FRG

Three Meetings are arranged:

- ~ 1st Meeting - Met on 15 May and considered: Biblical Principles for Giving; Reasons for and against paying the Parish Share in full; the Diocesan / Deanery / District figures; each Districts 'financial health'.
- ~ 2nd Meeting - External Speakers
- ~ 3rd Meeting - Recommendations for July PCC Meeting.

Pausing of Monthly Parish Share Payments

The decision to pause the monthly Parish Share payments before the approval of the 22 March Minutes was considered inappropriate; this decision should have been taken by the PCC after the results of the Parish Review Group were presented.

Publication of PCC Minutes

PCC Minutes should be accessible at the same time for all PCC Members. At the recent Christ Church DCC Meeting some knew the result of the e-mail vote to pause the Parish Share whilst others didn't.

District Payments of Parish Share to Parish

Districts continue to pay their Share to the Parish each month. These payments are being held by the Parish. If the decision to resume payments to the Diocese is made the Parish will be in a position to do so.

Same Sex Marriage Blessings

Whilst it is acceptable for Clergy not to undertake Same Sex Marriage Blessings this should not result in Parish Share payments being withheld and non-engagement with the Bishop.

View from Emmanuel

In 1 Cor 6: 9 -10 Paul teaches about those who will not inherit the kingdom of God

(unrepentant sin); it is difficult to endorse a Church teaching which is endangering people's eternal fate.

Emmanuel feels strongly about not partnering with those who are doing this. Results of a recent congregation survey requesting a response to this issue were:

~ 7%: do nothing

~ 7%: mild action, eg. write a letter

~ 86%: robust action, eg. withholding of Parish Share payments.

In light of this strength of feeling Emmanuel are grateful for the current pause in Parish Share payments and for the opportunity to reflect on what the Parish Share is being given to. We need to give each other space.

A Deanery Perspective

Need to keep in mind that the aim of the Church is to present the Gospel. For this to be possible for all Churches within the Deanery Great Chesham's financial contribution is needed. If the money from Great Chesham is withheld other Churches will suffer.

General Synod

The House of Bishops agreed at a recent Meeting that only an update will be provided at the July General Synod. Further proposals from Bishops are not expected until the November Synod. The Finance Review Group (FRG) may wish to be aware of this.

Emmanuel - Giving

If Parish Share payments had not been paused some people at Emmanuel would have stopped their Giving.

If Emmanuel stop their Giving where does that leave the other Churches?

Parish Share being paused is the strong action that is needed to send a clear message to the Bishops.

Edward Millais fully supports Emmanuel's position and would, if it became necessary, be willing to stop his salary and move from his house.

Clergy Stipends and Church Buildings

Clergy are paid by the Diocese and Church Buildings are owned by the Diocese.

The Parish

It is important that the breadth of feeling across the Parish is considered and a review of Parish giving to the Diocese is undertaken now to consider the fairest contribution. Parish Clergy are united on the issue of Same Sex Blessings. There is also strength of feeling elsewhere.

Bishop of Oxford

The Bishop of Oxford is understanding of the current Review whilst encouraging the Parish to make it a swift process.

The following Resolution was proposed:

That, in light of the timing of the reporting to PCC members of the result of the PCC vote, the PCC should be requested to rescind its vote to pause payment of the Parish Share until the work of the Finance Review Group is completed in July.

PROPOSED: Nigel Edward-Few **SECONDED:** Paul Brooks

For: 20 **Abstentions:** 6 **Against:** 45.

The Resolution was not Passed.

b. ***Parish Pastoral Care***

The benefit of actively exploring what AGAPE love means in practice was highlighted. Within the current different views and conclusions all are trying to love. It was suggested a Review Group should be set up to consider how Pastoral Care may be shown, while there is pain, to enable respect and patience as the Parish moves forward.

Edward thanked everyone for their attendance at the Meeting.

10. **Closing Prayers**

The Meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer at 9.15pm.

Chairman

Date