**St. George’s Church, Wilton**

**Parochial Church Council**

**Minutes**

Tuesday 14th November 2023 7.00pm

Present : Nick Griffin (Vicar), Bethan Baigent, Laura Willetts, Rob Cromwell (Curate), Mary Carson, Hilary Hayes and Hilary McKegney (Deanery Synod reps), Jenny Norman(Safeguarding Officer), Pete Underwood, Paul Cole, Katie Lanchbury, Matt Norman, Rev’d Richard Kelley and Chris Sampson (invited Worship Director)

1. The meeting was opened with a reading and prayer.

2. The new members : Hilary Hayes, Hilary McKegney, Laura Willett, Jenny Norman and Rev. Rob Cromwell were welcomed by Nick.

**Apologies** were received from Ian Pinder (Treasurer) and Helen Clegg (PCC Secretary)

3. The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record and signed.

**Action points from the previous minutes.**

Christian Concerns

Rob Cromwell and Ian Pinder met with Christian Concerns Coordinator, Carole Smith to discuss the way forward for our charitable giving. It was agreed that there would be a transition period enabling Carole to step down and for the PCC to take responsibility and agreed that that Rob would come up with a list of 12 charities with advice from Carole for PCC approval.
The PCC thanked Carole with sincere gratitude for many years of service and serving the church and these charities so well over the years.

Digital Giving

We have purchased two tablets to go work with the sumup machines and are in the process of looking into how to display the card reader and tablet together in both church and hall setting.

They will have the ability to choose different amounts as well as choose between donating to the church or to the charity. This was trialled at the recent Moroccan evening with great success.

The PCC thanked Matt Norman for setting this new process up.

**4. Items for Discussion and Decision**

**Worship Director Update**

Chris Sampson, our Worship Director was invited to report back to the PCC how he has found his first year at St Georges. Chris thanked the PCC and St Georges for making him feel welcomed and feel at home so quickly.

One of his main challenges was having two church services and to look into

how to bring more unity. He introduced joint services which although a lot of work to do to, was really good as it helped all to belong together.

**The 9.30am Service**His duties are organising music, communion settings, looking at how they can feel like unknown music so wished to bring more familiar music setting into the service. Chris leads the choir with choir rehearsal providing the music, sometimes audio recordings but as some of the choir is of an age accessing online resources can be a challenge so it is about finding ways to help them. The main challenge is to grow the choir. With the music settings, robes- it is felt that it can be a barrier to recruiting more members hence the introduction of the Come and Sing Choir which expands the current choir from 6 upto15.

This has proved easier for people to feel they can join and are able to access the online resource folder where Chris sends recordings as reading music can be a challenge for some. The choir has come from 9.30 members which is encouraging but swells to more when it is a joint service and some from the 11 join in.

Wider objectives is to increase the volume of the organ playing and increase prayer at start of choir. Chris wants to encourage more of the choir to pray together so is gently working on that.

Moving forward Chris would like to retain the more traditional service style but to introduce more contemporary music which the PCC approved of.

**The 11am Service**
Chris explained that when he arrived he felt that the key to progression is to build community, to build a sense of trust and a team. This has been managed through rehearsing together, sharing meals together. There is a set song list in order to balance how we introduce songs to the congregation. Since Chris’ arrival 9 new people have joined the worship team and Chris is still hoping to bring in more as they come forward and feel comfortable to play/sing. There is a real feeling that God is bringing more people along and precisely what is needed.
Chris’ aim is to develop the training side. With 9.30 rehearsals on a Sunday before the service, it is felt that more rehearsals will maybe be needed to really inbed new worship songs and to gel the worship team together.

Chris noted that our tech Team Matt Norman and Matt Ellett have made his work here so much easier with their time, dedication and expertise in making “everything happen” technology wise. It is noted that there is a lot of work involved in set up and sound check and live stream and was described by Chris as “Exceptional Excellence.” The PCC also wanted their thanks to the team to be noted and appreciated.

At the moment, developments tech wise has meant pressing pause because of the possible change of service location but all in all the Choir seem to be happy and the worship is moving forward with the commitment, skill and talent of Chris as our Worship Director. The PCC expressed their delight in the work he has done and gave thanks for all he has brought – with heart and Spirit.

It was also noted that should St George’s wish to tap into schools, Rev’d Richard Kelley said that Queens College would be very happy to see how we could work alongside them.

**Geography of Services**

Nick gave a presentation outlining the current situation about the 11.00 service that is often overcrowded and uncomfortably full. This problem is especially felt at the beginning of the service when many of our 9.30 congregation are finishing their coffee in the hall. At points we have had people arrive and leave when they have not been able to get a seat, others are left queuing for seats until the point in the service when the children leave for their worship around the site. One regular admitted that they struggle with panic attacks in the crush near the coffee hatch. The small space upstairs for the under 3s is cramped, Kids@11 often is too tight. Other challenges of space include a reasonable place for prayer ministry because the noise in the room means that it can be difficult for people to talk quietly together and prayers and prayed for as they cannot hear one another speak.

After viewing the options it was agreed in principle to cost up and report back to the PCC to renovate the Scout Hut as a comfortable and welcoming café space to be used not only by the Church on a Sunday but with a potential for using the space for SOUP and other events if it was deemed to have been redecorated to a high enough standard.

It was recommended that the Scout Hut was renamed and launched as a new space but the PCC were in agreement that it looked like an option to pursue for the short term.

Middle term solution was agreed to trial moving the 11am to the Church after Easter and in the meantime to try to look at ways to make the church feel more welcoming.

The suggestion was for the 11am congregation to enter through the South door as it was more open but to have the West door available for disabled and prams to use. The space under the tower would have to be looked at but taking into consideration the cleaning cupboard and anything else that would be required to be kept there.

***Action*** Standing Committee to come up with costing for redecoration of the “Scout Hut” and report back to the PCC before agreement on work being carried out

**A Proposal for a Church Weekend Away**

Hilary Hayes presented options for the Church to be away together as they are good for community and fellowship.

The options included looking at Lee Abbey as a whole church, Spring Harvest and New Wine.

The PCC considered that different groups could attend different places but felt that the key to the success of weekends away were to help fellowship and become one church.

New Wine was felt to rule out sections of the congregation who may not appreciate camping and cost aspect, Spring Harvest was felt to be too near Easter and not enough opportunity to gather together as a church so it was agreed that Hilary Hayes and Hilary McKegney should look into a whole Church weekend away to Lee Abbey.

This would not stop other attending other festivals such as New Wine, Satellites etc should they wish to but that Lee Abbey should be the one promoted as the Whole Church Weekend Away.

***Action:*** Hilary Hayes and Hilary McKegney to contact Lee Abbey to provisionally book a weekend and then coordinate the organisation of a church weekend away

**5. Items for Questions and Decision**

**B1 Membership**

Since 2003, the only ecumenical group working and meeting together regularly is ‘B1’. This grouping meets on a weekly basis for prayer and mutual support and once a month for a wider breakfast. Once per year (normally November) there is a joint service which is held at Wellsprings which can hold 800-900 people and normally churches would cancel their local service to join together.

Churches do agree to ‘give’ to a pot which is then normally distributed to local charities (BESOM, TYFC, Taunton Chaplaincy), this is voluntary and not a mandatory part.

There were some reservations about the ‘oversight’ with one church holding 2/3 spaces and that not all churches are present by any means and some leaders feel it is too exclusive and theologically narrow which carries a reputational risk for us at St Georges.

Nick has been joining some of their regular meetings for support, fellowship and to show good willing to other churches and proposed that St George’s join the B1 group primarily because some unity is better than no unity. Practically this will mean going to the November service but mostly this is a relational rather than corporate arrangement.

Some reservations were posed as to the lack of numbers of Anglican churches being represented but it was felt by the majority that by being an Anglican presence could be helpful for B1.

The decision to join B1 was proposed by Pete Underwood and seconded by Mary Carson and agreement with one abstention.

**6. Items for Information**

**Financial Update**

The Treasurer had circulated a Financial Update Report due to not being able to be there but circulated an update via email before the meeting. The church’s bank balances currently stand at £66,942 after paying 9 months of this year’s Parish Share (i.e. £64,081 out of a total of £85,442). I am expecting that we will pay our Parish Share in full this year.

We are behind with our Gift Aid tax reclaims due to difficulties in registering the change of administrator with HMRC. However, I believe that the registration has now been sorted out and Robin Stamp is ready to submit 3 quarterly claims in quick succession in the near future (and that will include the tax recoverable on the office building appeal income).

Christian Giving receipts are up 20% compared with the same period in the previous year and this increase will also be reflected in the Gift Aid tax recovered in due course.

Although the building work on the Parish Office is nearing completion, we have not yet been invoiced by the main contractor. The total cost will be in the region of £30,000 but we have only paid out £8,984 so far (and we have not yet received the £2,000 contribution offered by the Diocese).

In addition to the initial grant of £3,000 from Hubbub for the Community Fridge, we received financial support of £2,500 from Taunton Council towards

the project. The cost of building the shed, buying the fridge, connecting the electric supply and other set up costs totalled £7,214.

Other costs for 2023 will be higher than for 2022 but are broadly in line with expectations. Inflation has impacted on most expenses (including gas, electricity and admin costs) and 2023 will be the first full year of paying a part-time worship director.

**Safeguarding Update**

*Promoting a Safer Church* – this policy was circulated to the PCC and no and the PCC agreed to adopt this as our own Safeguarding Policy.

*Recruitment of Ex-Offenders* – the sample policy for the Recruitment Policy of Ex-Offenders that we had intended to base ours on, was withdrawn on 23/10/23 as it is deemed to be out of date, so will be carried forward to the next meeting.

*Responding to Concerns of Allegations* – a flowchart which detailed how to progress a safeguarding concern was agreed by the PCC.

*Training for Key Roles* – 12 members of the PCC have successfully completed all the required Safeguarding training leaving 1 with training outstanding on just one area so great progress made.

*Safer Activities*– most of the activities remain the same except for:

Buggy Buddies and Mothers Bible Study group will be amalgamated.

Cosy Café is to be renamed as SOUP

Pastoral Care and Home Communion will be amalgamated

*Family Picnics* – these are arranged privately by parents independently from the church so will be removed from the list of Safer Activities.

*School Holidasy/Creche /Sunday Club* – the use of the word Creche for this has led to confusion at the last PCC meeting, so a new name is required. It was agreed to call it a Breakout Room for the time being.

The PCC agreed that during the school holidays until we have enough Kids/Youth leaders, toys could be put out in a room that would have 2 Safer Recruited adults in the room but there would be no led activity. It would also need to be stressed that parents would need to remain with their child.

Once we have enough trained Kids Leaders we will provide continuous Sunday Clubs through the holidays.

We need to make sure that we are able to give the Childrens teams enough of a break between rota duties before we provide this.

***Action:*** The Families Coordinator to organise a “Breakout Room” rota for the school holidays which do not need to be a part of the Childrens Team but must be Safer Recuited by the Church

*Safer recruitment* We have made great progress with the Safer Recruitment of volunteers for all our activities.

Next steps are that we need to complete the Role Descriptions and Risk Assessments.

Bath and Wells are due to have their Safeguarding audited in March or April 2025 with a focus on parish safeguarding so they are keen that we should be as prepared as possible. To do this, we are encouraged to make good use of the Parish Dashboard which was optional but has now been made compulsory.

**Health and Safety update – Peter Joyce**

Peter Joyce confirmed that the 5 yearly inspection had been conducted and that Rev’d Jim Cox happy that he is happy with the progress we are making, with nothing being highlighted for immediate action that had not already been identified by ourselves.

The Lightning Inspection Test has been carried out at the beginning of the month and although we don’t currently conform to the new standards, it is working and serviceable but to conform we would need to have the pole bolted to something to steady it.

Nick and the PCC thanked Peter for all his hard work with Health and Safety and looking after the Church and the whole site so brilliantly and with such care.

**Standing Committee update – Peter Joyce**

It had been agreed to update the PCC with the business of the Standing Committee. Peter circulated a paper to the PCC at the meeting but this will be emailed to the Parish Administrator and circulated to all to see a summary of the Committee’s meetings in between the PCC meetings.

***Action:*** PJ to email BB with the Standing Committee Summary to distribute to the PCC before each PCC Meeting.

**Dates for Future PCC Meetings**

It was agreed that as the church business gets busier to increase the number of PCC meetings so it was proposed to update the number of meetings to be bi-monthly.

The proposed dates are:

|  |
| --- |
| 16-January |
| 05-March |
| 21-May |
| 09-July |
| 10-September \* this may need to be changed to 17th  |
| 19-November |

**Any Other Business**

Pete Underwood queried what happened to the funds from the last Christmas Fayre. Hilary and Bethan explained that the funds went back to into the general fund and has also been used to purchase 2 gazebos for use at all St George’s events.

Jenny Norman queried why the Christmas Fayre had not been brought to the PCC to agree to the event taking place which used to be the case when we had a Social Events Coordinator in the past. It was explained that previously there was a “team” that used to get together to discuss events which were then brought to the PCC approval. As there is now no team, these have been decisions made by the Staff team to help bring in funds and for primarily outreach into the Community on each individual event.

The meeting was closed by saying the Grace together.