



St John's Parish Church

New Alresford, Hampshire



St John's Church Parochial Church Council Minutes of meeting held Tuesday September 12th 2023

Present: Heather Brearey, Rector (Chair), Jane Parsons, Maureen Skayman, Rosie Waring-Green, Miranda Pinch, Colin Scott-Morton, Charlotte Ryton, Susan Roberts, Rex Corfield, Pearl Page, Sue Clarke, Lawrence Will, Caroline Wheeler, Jackie Connell, Ian Waring-Green, Jon Whale, Paul Whiffen, David Carr (Secretary).

1. **Prayers:** Led by Heather.
2. **Apologies:** Nolly, Janet
3. **Conflicts of Interest:** Rosie explained that this new (now standard) item was meant to cover St. John's generally, not just the PCC discussions and decisions. No conflicts were raised.
4. **Rector's Report:** Heather read out her report (the text of which is sent with these minutes), which had been a very difficult exercise in writing considering the conflicts, disagreements and people's only partial knowledge of events, and asked for comments. Jackie said that we have to return to respecting others with recognition of the healing and diversity required, and suggested a "clear the air" meeting. Heather agreed on this, and there will be a spring PCC Vision Day organised to deal with it. Susan Roberts highlighted the importance of retaining the more traditional worship forms such as the Cross procession, with the Gospel being brought into the body of the church. Miranda said that we have steadily become less diverse in worship, Jackie saying that the pandemic had caused a lot of this. Ian said that, on the other hand, it had been an opportunity to reassess. Pearl thanked Heather for her courage and honesty in addressing these issues and later added "in the light of what Heather has just shared with us all I feel it is important that each one of us should pray individually to God and ask Him to search our hearts and show us if there are things we need to put right with Him and each other". Jon said that, in his three years of being involved, he had found St. John's to be unfailingly warm and welcoming. Heather emphasised that all this must not be allowed to divide the church family, and we should place all disagreements in God's hands. A prayer ended these discussions.
5. **Future Vision:** Heather reported that this would replace the previous standing item of Bishop's Review. Many items and initiatives are being successfully progressed, we should all seek to "seize the day" and continue to think deeply about this.
6. **PCC Minutes July 11th 2023:** Approved, accepted and signed by Rosie (as chair of that meeting).
7. **Matters arising:** None.

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ALRESFORD - COVENANTED FOR UNITY

8. **Standing Committee Minutes August 14th 2023:** Approved and accepted.
9. **Matters arising:** (1) Heather said that her recorded comments regarding the choir stalls and space requirements were now retracted. Further consultations and discussions were required on this, which would occur. Use of some choir stalls would be possible for some services e.g. Harvest and Christmas. (2) We continued to receive requests for memorial benches—it was thought that requesting donations for memorial plaques on existing benches would be the best idea, and a volunteer was sought to handle the administration for this. (3) Heather had identified a possible candidate to act as PCC Secretary. (4) No one had yet come forward to volunteer to act as churchyard manager.
10. **Finance:** Jon summarised his report. Our overall funds have reduced by a further £4k. For the first 8 months of this year, our total overspend is now £15.3k. The breakdown of funds is £181,00 – Unrestricted/designated £163.5, Restricted £17.5 k. The receipt of legacies has secured our short to medium term financial future and we currently have 168 k of readily accessible cash. The £4k overspend this month is due to a number of things, including unexpected bills such as the new water heater, continuing high utility costs and a reduction in our regular giving. On a more positive note, we have now received a £10,000 legacy from the Hasted family for maintenance of the churchyard over the next 25 years. BT have now transferred all services from landline connections to Cloud connections. Magazine – due to the changes made to both the style and print run, we will be looking at an overspend for this year of up to £4000. Jane and he have met with both Charlotte and Liz; Charlotte will bring a report. A discussion was held regarding the investing of our Reserves: we could invest a lump sum with a higher interest rate—CCLA has a higher rate account, but with more risk attached. After discussion, it was decided that, as there was a considerable amount of legacy and donated funding, we should not risk this. **Therefore, a vote was taken and it was decided to maintain the status quo and retain the existing investment approach.**
11. **Safeguarding:** Rosie reported that Sarah was progressing the checks on those involved with Youth work.
12. **Health and Safety:** Paul had provided his report: A focus on Fire risk continues:
- Paul W continues running regular tests of the Fire Alarm System (with notification of the Control Centre in Chichester)...nominally weekly, but more realistically every 10 days to 2 weeks...
 - Church Evacuation Drill of Congregation was held 23rd July 2023. Well received and lessons being incorporated.
 - We should run a Sunday evening service Evacuation Drill before the clocks go back.
 - Fire Awareness and Evacuation training of targeted individuals will begin in the Autumn – the plan is to do this internally as a refresher rather than calling in a Contractor to save costs... to start with Pilot courses and then learn & adapt from there...
 - Paul is maintaining a tracking system (Spreadsheets) to record and monitor various H&S activities and actions. Actions are being tracked using a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) approach to nudge people along, including himself, and maintain discipline.
- This and other documents are mainly being stored online (Dropbox) with paper document administration where necessary.

As at evening of 7th Sept 2023, there are 45 Actions (up from 27 in early July):
2 Red (not started) – up from 0 in early July.

22 Amber (Underway) – up from 16 in early July.

21 Green (Completed) – up from 11 in early July.

The Church site is relatively safe (though we must never be complacent of course). As is often the case, most accidents happen on the road (driving, cycling or walking)...it is likely that the biggest safety risk to us is not at the Church itself, but travelling to and from it...

Finally, Health & Safety is a mindset that depends on input from all – it's a cultural thing - hence if any individuals see any issues around Health and Safety then please do let Paul know, thank you.

13. **Deanery report:** Miranda summarised the briefing notes on the Deanery Rwanda discussions, and the Deanery proposal for an engagement with Nyaruguru Diocese was considered. A vote was held as requested, and with four abstentions, *the meeting recorded that the PCC disagreed with the proposal.*
14. **Altar frontal placing:** Rosie produced some samples of the fabric of the Textile artist's work for consideration. These were admired and thought highly suitable. Heather proposed (sec. Rosie) that production of the frontal should proceed, subject to Faculty approval, and that it will be made to fit both the high and the nave altar. **It was resolved, with two abstentions, that this should proceed.**
15. **Creation Care/Eco:** Rex proposed that the Creation Care/Bees Knees group organise a service for Rogation Sunday (May 5th 2024) , **and this was agreed.**
16. **Fabric:** Jon reported that on the Eco Audit document the top three points had been successfully completed, and that progress was being made with the remainder.
17. **Complaints and Bullying Policy:** Heather said that, although it was a great shame that such a policy was needed, we required one to deal with complaints as the furore over the recent letter to Bishop David had demonstrated. There had also been several instances of bullying behaviour, with Penny suffering this. A standard "behaviour" sign would now be displayed on notice boards. The drafted policy had been distributed, and it was agreed that the Standing Committee would act as the Complaints Committee. **With this agreement it was resolved that the Policy be adopted.**
18. **100 Club:** Colin reported that the arrangements were nearly complete, and we just needed a decision on membership criteria. Following discussion, it was agreed that we should make the membership as wide as possible, to avoid concentrating on church members only. Publicity could commence, and we could start in any month. **ACTION: Colin.**
19. **Events: (1) Apple Day:** Charlotte reported that there were some remaining staffing issues to be resolved, but that all arrangements were progressing, involving e.g. Scouts, Guides, Pigs, Rotary and the schools. (2) Jackie reported that there would be a CTiA Away Day in Ropley on October 21st.
20. **Magazine:** Charlotte described the usual conflict between costs and quality, which had produced the requirement for a subsidy approaching £4k (see Finance report above) and we discussed this. Jon suggested a number of measures: a 10% increase in advertising charges (not increased for a number of years); an increase in issue price; shorter print

runs; less colour. He suggested that the magazine operate on a print budget e.g. up to £2.5k plus what could be generated from advertising, **and this was agreed by all**. A vote of thanks was agreed for all those on the magazine team.

AOB: (1) Rex reported that he was looking at obtaining the Eco Silver status for the church. (2) Sue Clarke reported that a new Visitor course was being planned for the autumn. (3) Charlotte reported that it was time for a refresh of the First Aid course, and she was investigating options. (4) Maureen requested that the church cleaning should not take place on the Easter Saturday, as this caused difficulties for the Church Flowers team. (5) Rosie invited everyone to consider the Bible passage 2 Chronicles 7-14, in the light of what we had been discussing – "Then if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves, if they will pray and seek me and stop their differences or evil ways, I will hear them from heaven. I will forgive their sin, and I will heal their land". (6) David was thanked for his ten years as PCC Secretary and was presented with a gift and applause.

The meeting closed with The Grace.

Next meeting: Tuesday November 14th