



(Reg Charity No: 1132488)

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

Meeting Information

Date Sunday 30th April 2023

Location St Margaret's Church **Meeting type** APCM

Chair Revd David Wallis **Minute Taker** Tessa Haughton

1 – MINUTES: Revd Wallis asked for approval of the Minutes of the APCM held on Sunday 1st May, 2022. The Minutes were agreed by all present with one minor correction for Generosity Week which ran from 9th to 16th October 2022. The Minutes were then signed, initialled and dated by Revd Wallis.

2 – MATTERS ARISING: No matters arising

3 – ELECTORAL ROLL – Electoral Roll Officer, Paul Charman

- A shortened version of the Electoral Roll with names only was on display for 14 days prior to Easter 2023 for everyone to check their names. Several new members were added during this time.
- The numbers on the Electoral Roll have increased and this year now stand at 186, with 66 being residents living outside the Beacon Parish.
- The number has gone up and down over the past year as people have moved from the Parish or sadly passed away.
- The revised shortened Electoral Roll will be on display for 14 days after the APCM at the back of the churches.
- In addition if any anybody has not signed up to be on the Electoral Roll please contact me for an application form to fill in then hand it back to me or one of my fellow Churchwardens.
- Revd Wallis asked that this report be formally adopted. Proposed by Tessa Haughton and Seconded by Virginia de la Pole. All present in agreement and the report was adopted.

4 – ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS – Treasurer, Mark Moody Stuart

- Copies of the Annual Report and Financial Statements were available through The Beacon Parish website.
- First let me thank Sue Sewell as Bookkeeper and Stuart Curry, and all of the others on the Finance Committee (Tony Blanchard, Tony Seddon, Ian Henley, Keith Hine and Mike Sewell) for their great contributions during the year.

- I hope that you have seen the Annual Report and Accounts for the year 2022 which is on the website and copies available in the churches.
- From a financial point of view it does not make cheerful reading and I draw your attention to the first couple of paragraphs of Section 8 on Page 6 of the Financial Situation – Outlook and Plans.
- The day to day running of the Parish continues to be in persistent and growing current deficit. The headline deficit of £80,379 compares with a deficit of £20,839 for 2021. This is the seventh year of deficit financed by drawing on reserves.
- We might hope that after a Biblical seven lean years we could hope for seven years of plenty, but unfortunately we have already had our seven years of plenty early and we having been eating our reserves for seven years without replacing them.
- Allowing for major expenditure so far of £59,409 after VAT recovery on Streat Church and expenditure on broadband installation of £4,330 the underlying deficit would reduce to £16,640 compared to £20,839 in 2021.
- The other major one-off expenditures on remedial electrical work in all three churches and the audio-visual equipment upgrade in St Margaret's were covered by legacies, grants and income from endowment funds.
- However, this reduction of the underlying deficit is due largely to an increase in unpredictable items such as legacies (increased by
- £11,000) and other variables such as the number of weddings and funerals.
- For greater security and to stop the unsustainable drain on reserves we need to increase income by some £20,000 per annum through committed regular giving and repeatable fundraising events.
- The picture on regular giving is not encouraging. Regular committed giving through Standing Orders or the Parish Giving Scheme actually fell by some £8,200 to £49,707.
- Perhaps because of a full return to in person attendance, cash and Good Box collections at services as well as at weddings and funerals rose by £6,067, partly offsetting the decline of regular giving.
- Unless the problem of the deficit can be addressed, we will be faced with making difficult expenditure cuts.
- The 2023 budget shows a projected deficit of some £65,500 of which major planned works expenditure on of some £43,000 including completing the Streat works, so an underlying deficit of some £22,500 when we wrote the 2022 report. This is now estimated at almost £25,000 or about £480 per week.
- Addressing this ongoing deficit is critical as our reserves are declining and will only last for a few more years. The declining reserves also reduce our investment income, so that there is a downward spiral in income.
- We have seen hugely encouraging participation in church from pupils at St Margaret's, who with new attenders, bode well for the future. But to reduce the deficit through additional contributions from those attending
- Normal Sunday worshippers who are generally giving regularly anyway is probably unrealistic as it would mean an average additional weekly contribution from each attendee of almost £10 every week.
- At our last Finance Committee meeting we discussed a number of ideas for actions to address the situation. We hope that you all and the PCC will discuss these ideas and perhaps suggest others.
- Many of these ideas would need a dedicated team with leader to drive the issue forward and you might consider volunteering to help.
- Possible actions and topics, not in any order of priority.

- Appealing to the wider parish community for ongoing regular giving in support of youth work, including parents of school attenders or older people who may not attend church nor reside in the Parish who would support youth work in the community.
- An appeal for ongoing support to the Parish from all residents. This would be something like the previous successful TRIO (The Responsibility is Ours) which required individual approaches to every household in the Parish.
- Other focussed special appeals. For example, the printer appeal had raised a modest £1.5k versus a cost of £7k.
- Collections at services and wider income generation: recent experience has shown that a bowl held by someone at the exit of each service has reaped success (e.g. recently at Easter).
- Given that many people do not carry cash, the Good Box is important. Should we have more? And is there a possibility of having boxes permanently in churches for passing visitors, as there is in St Margaret's, in spite of the problems with phone signals in the area?
- How do we increase attendance in all three churches and encourage commitment to regular giving.
- Could existing standing order givers be encouraged to move over to the PGS scheme with the twin benefits of improved cashflow and reduced administration?
- Could we increase income by more use of the Emmanuel Centre by third parties?
- Addressing the question of our Parish Share. If we do not pay 100% this increases the load on other Parishes. Could Parishes work with the Diocese to reduce possible overhead services? Parish share is based on the type and number of priests for the parish (stipendiary, "house for duty", retired priests, curate etc). Would a per capita contribution be a more equitable charging mechanism?
- Church House support and advice on Safeguarding, Finance and Youth work are valuable, should they really cost 20% of our Parish share?
- It was also suggested that we should reduce our Parish Share by at least the amount of fees from Weddings and Funerals which we pass on to the Diocese. Although we would like to increase the number of Weddings, the load falls entirely on Fr David and the Parish and not the Diocese. Is there any way of charging more, or encouraging more voluntary donations directly to the Parish for the use of the churches for weddings and funerals?
- We need to improve expenditure control in the Parish. The proper procedure involving the Finance Committee and PCC approval needs to be followed. We have to develop a presumption against even small expenditures.
- The Finance Committee needs to look at ways of maximising income from our investments and also look (with the Diocese) at ways of repurposing or redirecting endowment funds. We note the recent changes in the Charity Act which seem designed to facilitate the unlocking of funds.
- If we cannot address the ongoing deficit, we will exhaust our reserves in a few years. The PCC may need to start considering "unthinkable" actions such as discontinuing youth work, closing church buildings, or we may be forced to share an incumbent with another Parish. Each of these has very unwelcome consequences and in any case would have

varying and not always positive impacts on our finances. However, recognising these alternative options and examining such difficult issues upfront may be needed.

- The PCC and the congregation need to address these ideas for action above and other possibilities which may be suggested by forming teams with specific responsibilities. Questions and suggestions are welcome.
- Please pray about this critical financial situation and consider volunteering to lead or participate in initiatives. We need all hands to the pump. Seven lean years is enough!
- The Revd Wallis thanked Mark, Sue, Stuart and the Finance Committee and Sherrian, Paul and Rod the Generosity Team.
- Question from congregation: Has the PCC looked at opportunities for the churches to be used beyond just services. This is something that the PCC will consider and possibly the hosting of Concerts, Champing (where toilet facilities are available), meeting / event space. Also the use of the Emmanuel Centre by other groups in addition to the Beacon Parish and The Point.
- Question from congregation: If closing church buildings, which building and the implications of this are obviously very sensitive. Both Streat & Westmeston have endowment funds and Ditchling, Friends of St Margaret's. These funds can be used for the maintenance of the church buildings.
- There is increasing help from the Diocese and how Parishes can be supported.
- Next steps to form targeted groups through the PCC. A joint meeting of the PCC, Finance Committee and Generosity team will be arranged in the near future.
- Mark confirmed that the Annual Report and Financial Statements had been adopted by the PCC.

5 – APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS

- Maxwell Gumbleton in Lewes, were proposed by Mark Moody-Stuart and seconded by Sue Sewell.
- All present in agreement.

6 – DEANERY SYNOD UPDATE

- **Election to the Deanery Synod**

Name: Tessa Haughton

Proposer Alec Gaskin Seconded Pam Gaskin

- All present in agreement.

7 – ELECTION OF PCC MEMBERS

- The following have agreed to stand for a further year:
 - Margaret Bovill (Proposer Tessa Haughton, Seconded Gary Pickett)
 - Heather Evans (Proposer Brenda Hall, Seconded Gary Pickett)
 - Sherrian Guest (Proposer Virginia de la Pole, Seconded Dianah Martin)
 - Virginia de la Pole (Proposer Paul Charman, Seconded Keith Hine)
 - Mark Moody Stuart (Proposer Sue Sewell, Seconded Mike Sewell)
 - Sue Sewell (Proposer Brenda Hall, Seconded Mark Moody Stuart)
- Voted en-bloc. All present in agreement. All duly elected to the PCC.

8 – APPOINTMENT OF WELCOMERS / SIDESMEN

- Carl Belfield, Maz Hine, Paul Charman and Tessa Haughton will continue and ask members of the congregation to join them when necessary.

9 – REVD WALLIS ADDRESS – Main points

- Thank you to everyone for joining us today.
- There are a group of parishioners taking the Great is Thy Faithfulness course which is arranged by the Diocese. We are partnered with St Wilfrid's in Haywards Heath and it takes place over six months and we are halfway through.
- Many interesting ideas are coming out of this course and we will report back to you at the end. We expect to have a launch of our various ideas and will be asking people to give their time to this. These are likely an overlap between what Mark said earlier and what we are hearing.
- Thank you also to everyone for giving themselves and their time to our Parish. Turning up is the most important thing and to join in with God's message. Supporting one another whether through volunteering, funding, etc. God sees all of this.
- We tried Baby & Toddler Group on Thursday mornings which unfortunately didn't have as much interest as we hoped and so now we have morphed this into Coffee & Chat. Do join us between 10 and 11.30 at the Emmanuel Centre on Thursdays during term time.
- Our Parish Share is high and we need to find this money annually – we need to see what choices we do have.
- Thank you to those that help with the administration – it is a saving as we are not paying them.
- My thanks to everyone who gets involved in stewardship, events, finance, worship, the Christmas Services when I caught Covid, churchyards, cleaning, and all the other large and small things. Your help is invaluable and however small, God sees all.
- In particular, I must thank Gary, who works tirelessly with the Youth and School in our Parish.
- It's nice to be thanked – let's practice it.

10 – VOTE OF THANKS – Keith Hine

- As you may know, or even perhaps not know, David is the only paid member of the clergy in the Parish. At times we are so very grateful for the help of Peter Sills, Michael Maine and other visiting clergy, but the ultimate responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the Parish rests on David's shoulders.
- In this Parish we have three churches, each with their individual needs. But there is also St George's retirement village where a communion service is held in the Chapel every two weeks. The attendance at that service has grown considerably over the last few years. It may be worth noting that the population in St George's [which is in our Parish], together with the associated nursing homes, is now about 800 which is greater than the combined population of Streat and Westmeston.
- During the week, David also leads 'Wednesday@10' and 'Sing' once a month. In addition, he has meaningful interaction with all wedding couples, bereaved relatives and families bringing children for christening.
- David's other commitments include the school with regular school services in the church [6 – 8 each year] and weekly collective worship in the school for

which we are also grateful to Gary. David is also a School Governor and this has been very time-consuming with a new Head-Teacher and the school's incorporation into the Hurst Education Trust.

- He also chairs PCC meetings, supports Good Morning Friday and other on-line meetings such as the Advent and Lent courses and, in the last few months, the 'Great is Thy Faithfulness' initiative by the Diocese.
- The Diocese adds other meetings to his timetable with regular Deanery and Chapter meetings.
- A lot of preparation goes into every Sunday service including defining the theme for the day, organising the music and the preparation and printing of service sheets [which are different every week].
- David is also well-known in the local community and has a great number of informal interactions with people on the street as well as more formal meetings on various committees in the village.
- Why do I say all this? Well, many of us only see David on a Sunday morning when he leads a service for about one and a half hours. Many people probably think that is his sole responsibility and the rest of his week is free! As we can see, that is far from the truth.
- I have to say that, in my experience, David takes every opportunity to present the Gospel, showing people what a real difference Jesus can make in their lives. He takes those opportunities at Sunday services but also at Weddings and Funerals. We are really blessed to have David as our vicar.
- Do we support him enough? When did we last pray for him? When did we last thank him for leading our worship and bringing us closer to God? In spite of all his activity, the position of a vicar can be very isolated and vulnerable. David needs our prayers and encouragement.
- Behind David is Sally. She is not paid by the Parish but contributes so much with her practical support for David as well as her active involvement in catering and events. She always wears a smile! Thank you Sally for all you do
- We are really blessed as a Parish to have David and Sally and I would like to propose a vote of thanks for their service to the Parish.
- All present in agreement.

The meeting closed with a prayer from Heather Evans