

St Mark's PCC Meeting on Zoom Mon 18th Jan at 7.30pm

Opening prayer: Ben King read Hebrews 11 vv1-16 on faith and those who showed it even when they only saw things promised from afar. He then prayed for the meeting and those gathered.

1. Apologies

Barbara Lumsden

Present: Rev Ben King (Chair) , Peter Arnold(Treasurer), Ann Arnold, Jackie Randall, Yvonne Tiley Mike Richardson, Sharon Yates,Charlotte Mouzer, David Dale, Janet Bone, Michael Semuguruka and Jane Ridout (Secretary)

2. Minutes of the Meeting held 16.11.20 and Matters Arising

There were 3 small typing errors but the meeting passed them as correct. Jane will send a revised copy to Ben for signing. Jane will also send out the new revised PCC terms of service to all members.

There was a query to Peter Arnold from Ben King about the Christmas budget which had been agreed at £800 but appeared to have been slightly more at £1396 as shown in the accounts for 2020. Peter broke down the figures: The Christmas boxes had cost £235 (there had been an additional £205 left over from 2019) Advent expenditure amounted to £498 which covered :Advent candles and candle holder, the Advent Reflections booklet, the real Advent calendars and Advent Sunday nativity resources. The cost of the Advent boxes came from Restricted Fund LOB money and is included in the £1,805.13 Youth Work costs (near the bottom of page 3 in the accounts) General Christmas expenses came to £388 and the Christmas tree outside the church was a further £70.

3. Vicar's Report:

(This had been previously sent to the members)

a) Advent and Christmas feedback.

The Meeting looked together at the Christmas review sheet and discussed first what had gone well. It was clear that people both inside and outside the church had enjoyed the float telling the Christmas story. The Advent booklet was mentioned as a helpful daily guide. One member felt that there had been a good balance of services and activities for church people and for the local community. Another member enjoyed the liturgy of the Christmas Eve service.

A member of the music group said that preparing for the Christmas music and carol services had been hard work but much liked. Messy church was mentioned as being very successful even though it had to be modified at the last moment.

It was generally felt that the Christingle service had been good fun and was well received, especially by those who were physically in church. The parcels both to children and the wider members of the church were also felt to be lovely, much appreciated and a very worthwhile idea.

When the meeting looked at what we could have done better, it was felt that maybe next year, although the Christmas card was a lovely idea and well produced, it might be best not to put every event in it, just those of widest appeal. This may be an idea to repeat at Easter. There had not been a large take up of the Nativity trail but it was felt that hard work had been involved and that perhaps we could revise it slightly for next Christmas.

It was noted that the evening of the Nativity Float had not been advertised in the card and this was because it all became rather last minute due to changed circumstances. There was also a feeling of not wanting to disappoint if it couldn't happen. Also, it was pointed out that the event had been on the church website because that was able to be added quickly. Ben said that even so there had been between 20 and 30 people at each station. He invited members to give more feedback if anything else came to mind.

b) Vision 2021

The New Year has brought a sermon series thinking about The Body of Christ....inspired by the October prayer day. Ben said he would appreciate thoughts and prayers from the PCC. Ben said how beautifully the banner group had represented this for us all. He hoped for fresh insights and ideas and hoped to present something more coherent at the 1st March meeting.

- **Prayer and the Holy Spirit:** our own prayer and encouragement through the Holy Spirit is central to our actions. One member recalled a past member of the music group who was very brave about stepping out and sharing what words she felt were from God. He said that we too need to be ready to share whether it be personal or general. Ben agreed. Another member asked if we could have some teaching and ministry time in future sermon series to encourage us all in this.
- **Technology:** It was pointed out that different groups can access church activities when they may not be able to come out. Ben said that all over the country numbers of Alpha groups have taken off. One member said that it worked well as long as those who want to work with it really know how to use it and suggested that training might be a good idea. Another member said that although some older folk can't easily access it, she felt the quality of our online services has been excellent.
- **People:** The fact that many of our elders are getting very fed up of being on their own and there must be others who are feeling cut off. What can we do both now and in the future to help with this? It was felt that pastoral contact has to be way forward.
Our young people have been very well catered for by Sharon. (Enlarged upon later in the meeting)
- **Community:** Half of all respondents from the day of prayer mentioned our local community. Some ideas were put forward. One member said that Bonny Downs appeared on Songs of Praise walking around a field and leaving messages of hope and encouragement for others to find and read. Ben said

that Sharon's Christmas tree which has now become a tree of Hope is thinking along those lines. It sends a positive message and has Bible verses to read.

We were reminded that in the past people we don't know have put up prayer requests and they must be missing the accessibility of the church building. We discussed the possibility of tying messages on to trees or bushes on the Flats and thinking about some outdoor planning for when warmer Spring weather allows.

c) Lent, Holy Week and Easter.

Ash Wednesday is 17th February which isn't long ahead and there will be online provision for this. Ben proposed that we use Lent itself to pray for the community. It was suggested that a prayer booklet would be a useful lent discipline. Ben asked the meeting for any thoughts on Holy Week. The idea of using the float again was proposed, perhaps using the church cross. The meeting heard about an idea Ben had seen before where a cross outside the church was covered with floral oasis so that people could be invited to insert a variety of individual flowers.

4. Race Steering Committee:

(Michael's report had been previously sent)

Michael gave a synopsis of the Steering Committee report and felt very strongly that conversation is what is really needed. One main message seemed to be that people felt welcomed but not always that they belonged... something that talking would hopefully move us forward on.

Ben said that every BAME member of the church had been contacted and that this will lead into a chat session. The idea of a quarterly BAME service was discussed but after a while the meeting felt that maybe it would be better to weave a more varied liturgy and leadership into our existing services. Exclusion is a big issue in many areas and among several different groups of people. It would be better if everything could be designed to fit together. The meeting felt that other groups too, have felt marginalised so it's about blending the whole congregation together and achieving greater representation. The streamed services have seen many more people participating which is a very good start and we have the pandemic to thank for this. The Steering Committee agreed with these thoughts and felt that "blending" is a key word. Patrick Rigabie has said he'd be happy to be contacted about a possible church BAME forum because of his involvement in something similar at work. It was felt that a new liveliness could be built into our services to include more people and preferences.

5. Treasurer's Report:

(Peter Arnold) (Peter's reports had been sent to members in advance of the meeting)

a. Annual accounts

There were no comments or queries from the income sheet on page 1.

A question was asked about the £1,946 staff expenditure on page 2 and Peter clarified that this accounted for cleaning expenses during the year.

Balances: Peter pointed out that this showed we had spent £10,000 less than our income in 2020. We have some designated funds from Vi Woollard's legacy, now in the deposit account. This was £40,768, (**NB:** now with interest, it stands at £43,670. This was sent to Jane on 20.1.21, after the meeting, due to late arrival in the post).

Peter told the meeting that we would need to discuss the use of Helen Rigby's legacy but suggested that for the time being we move 65% of it, £240,000, into the CCLA investment account in order to protect its current value. Our normal CBF C/A is only giving 0.2%.

Ben King asked about the 65% decision and how easy it would be to draw out money if a large sum was needed. Peter replied that there was no particular reason for investing that amount but that he had felt it to be a sensible percentage. Peter guessed (though needs to confirm) that it would take about 2 weeks to withdraw an amount.

Another question was asked about the £1200 interest that has gone into the C/A. Ben then suggested that it might be a good idea to re-invest interest accrued. Peter felt that the benefit of investments is that we can use the interest to pay current bills. The member who asked the first question felt too that the interest should be re-invested and bills should be met from regular church income.

Peter said it would be quite difficult to ascertain which interest was coming from which investment and that the investment value has been increasing so the dividend would be helpful.

It was decided to give this matter some thought and to have a further conversation about the best way to deal with the investment dividend.

Peter Arnold proposed the 1st motion: Is the PCC willing to support putting £240,000 of Helen Rigby's legacy into the CCLA account? This was seconded by David Dale and passed unanimously by the meeting.

Peter Arnold proposed the 2nd motion: Is the PCC willing for him to treat this legacy (£369,647) as a Designated Fund (as done previously with Vi's legacy) for ease of administration. This was seconded by Janet Bone and passed unanimously by the meeting.

Peter told the meeting that this legacy pushes us well over previous income years and that we may very well have to employ a professional accountant. He had had a quote of £3,500 + VAT making it a possible cost of £4,200. However it had been suggested to Peter that if we explain to the Charity Commission that this is a one-off situation, they might grant us an exemption. Peter said that if the CC say no, he will then look for another quote for comparison.

Peter asked if the PCC would authorise him to 1) move ahead on this matter and ask the question and 2) for the Standing Committee to make a decision. There was a majority vote in favour of him doing so regarding both points.

b. Budget for 2021

Again the members had been sent the budget accounts before the meeting. Peter said that it is likely that our loose collections at services would drop during this year. Our Giving will look as though it has dropped, on paper, because the timescale for gift aid using the Parish Giving Scheme gives the tax back in the same accounting year rather than from the year before.

The CCLA investment a/c interest might vary from 2020 interest, depending on what we decide to do with the interest accrued. Peter reminded us that we need to plan for increased spending on the building this year.

Peter's budget for this year assumes an income of £81,310 and a total expenditure of £81,720....a near enough balanced budget.

The PCC gave unanimous approval in accepting this budget for 2021.

c. The Energy Audit:

In view of the time at this point in the meeting, it was decided to postpone a discussion on the energy audit until the next meeting as Peter had prepared a lengthy document which needed to be given time and thought. Peter said that if anyone wanted to see the full 33 page energy audit before the next meeting, he would be very happy to send it out.

Ben, on behalf of the whole meeting, gave Peter a warm vote of thanks for all the work that he has done, and continues to do, for St Mark's church accounts.

6. Youth and Children's Report (Sharon Yates)

The meeting had been sent Sharon's detailed youth work report and Ann Arnold gave thanks on everyone's behalf for all that Sharon had done to support our younger members over the Christmas period. Ben too, said what a wonderful service to the families, the craft boxes had been. Sharon acknowledged that they had been very well received and that she had had good conversations with parents and carers while delivering them. She found too that there had been echoes of the Race survey findings.

A question was asked about the ICT challenges among our church family younger members. Sharon said that they had been in contact with all our families and they were coping with school demands. The school too was doing pastoral work, so together many children were being supported well. She said that Godwin school was asking for any available unused laptops that could be used by families without one. The school technician would be able to wipe the hard drive clean before use. Several members were keen to express their thanks to Sharon and this very valuable service to the community. Ben also thanked Sharon for her hard work and dedication.

7. Churchwardens' Report (Mike Richardson on behalf of himself and Sharon)

The report had been sent to all prior to the meeting.

Mike felt that the report showed how we were already working together as the Body of Christ in the way that the building had been used during last year and around Christmas. We now also have much more available data about online participation which will be very useful as we move forward and discuss how the church can develop into the future. Mike said that every action taken had been as a result of risk assessment and that as a church we were at all times ahead of the guidance from the C of E.

Since writing the report Mike said that Chubb had carried out a fire alarm check and a lights check. Both areas have passed. From now on we have to test the fire alarm and emergency lights once a month and will need a few more people trained up to do this.

Ben thanked both the wardens for their continued support of him and the St Mark's church family.

8. Safeguarding: (Ellen Kemp)

The meeting had been sent the new template for hiring out the church building and the necessary safeguarding requirements. Ellen told the meeting that Ben had been doing risk assessments for all the online activities including Alpha and the new Bible Course and also the evening meetings.

9. Deanery Synod Report:

There had been no official meeting of the representatives but Ben said that in our Deanery, reductions to the Ministry will have to be made and that people are being asked to consider moving on. He asked us all to remember these difficult decisions in our prayers. There is a red, amber, green strategy across the whole Deanery to decide which posts are viable. We are of course, waiting for the new Diocesan Bishop to oversee this. Without wishing to be complacent, Ben said he felt that St Marks would be given a green light. Ellen Kemp as a Deanery Synod rep said she felt that some parish boundaries would be altered and some parishes enlarged.

10. Correspondence:

There were three letters of thanks sent to Jane Ridout through Peter Arnold; one for the gift of £400 to CS; one from Woodgrange Baptist church for our foodbank gift of £255 plus the food donations given through Julie Thomson, Steve and Radhika Bynon and Ben; one letter from Faith in Schools for our gift of £1,150 and for joining the 150 Campaign.

The meeting ended at 9.30 in prayer - Jane Ridout and Ben King.

Jane Ridout January 2021

