

St Michael & All Angels, Offham

Minutes of the

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

including the Annual Vestry Meeting

Held on Sunday 15th March 2020 from 9.15 a.m.

These meetings were held shortly before the first lockdown associated with the Coronavirus Pandemic. Normal attendance was affected as a result.

PCC Members Present:

Revd Green (Chairman and Rector), Stephen Betts (Churchwarden), Sally Biggs, David Godfrey, Jane Jordan (Deanery Synod Representative), Ken Jordan (Treasurer), Becky Robinson Hugill (Secretary), Mike Rowe, and 12 parishioners.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Gary Cowan, Sarah Hales Marshall and Hamish Urquhart.

2. Annual Address

In giving the annual address, Revd Green (RevdG) started by saying that he felt that this year's address could be seen as a rewrite of last year's address regarding living in uncertain times. Adding that everyone knew the country was facing an unprecedented challenge because of the threat of Covid-19.

RevdG reflected on what he had read regarding some people being in isolation, others in hiding, saying he felt that there was a continuing need for the church to offer a warm welcome, to breathe in discipleship and breathe out welcome. During 2019 RevdG felt the church has been able to offer a welcome in many ways, including the delivery of the Alpha course exploring faith which had led to welcoming new people in the church with the revitalised house groups also welcoming newcomers. The project looking at extending church building facilities was also focused on our welcome. RevdG had also been pleased to extend a welcome to Methodist friends following the closure of their church in Offham.

RevdG also said that he felt the project to rebuild the churchyard wall had extended a welcome also. He particularly noted Stuart and Sally Biggs had welcomed all those who came to help with patience and kindness.

On the matter of measurables, RevdG was grateful to report that there had been increases both in average attendances at church and in numbers on the Electoral Roll. RevdG added that the level of giving was steady and urged all those in the church community to review their giving and to consider an increase if at all possible.

RevdG went on to offer his heartfelt thanks to all who have contributed to the life of the church and the care of the church building with particular thanks extended to Ken, Stephen, Becky, Stewart and Sally. RevdG added that he found all the support given by the people of St Michael's to be extremely encouraging and knew it was a blessing.

With the onset of the Coronavirus situation RevdG was unsure what sort of welcome may be possible in the coming months and reflected on a seven point plan. Firstly not to panic, especially in light of recent supermarkets shortages. Next was to be more "Dave", following reports of Dave, a butcher, who had already been delivering food parcels to people local to him in need. Thirdly RevdG recommended everyone did their best to take care of their physical selves by taking exercise and trying to ensure good sleep. Although it might be difficult to actually be with people, RevdG urged everyone to pick up the phone and call those who may be in need, also RevdG urged everyone to treat all others with respect. There had been recent reports of racist attacks against people of Chinese origin. Additionally the congregation was reminded that they should not live in fear of the virus and they should take opportunities to live life to the full and to set a positive example to others.

RevdG concluded by reflecting that through 2019 the church community had focussed on being people of welcome and discipleship, and he hoped this would continue through 2020.

3. Minutes of the last Vestry and APCM Meetings held on Sunday 24th March 2019

3.1. Approval of Minutes

No corrections were suggested so the combined Minutes of both meetings were proposed as correct records by Sally Biggs and seconded by Hilda Bodley and approved unanimously.

3.2. Matters Arising from the 2019 Minutes

No matters arising were raised.

4. Vestry Meeting

It was confirmed that the Vestry Meeting was open to everyone who lived in the Parish of Offham as well as those on the Electoral Roll and that individuals did not have to be on the Roll to vote.

5. Resolution relating to Churchwardens Measure 2001

It was noted that two nominations for Churchwarden had been received, one of which was for Stephen Betts. Given Stephen had currently served more than six years as Churchwarden, and had kindly consented to stand again, it would be necessary for the congregation to pass a resolution relating to the Churchwarden's Measure 2001 for Stephen's nomination to proceed. It was explained to the congregation that the Measure set out that individuals may not normally serve more than six consecutive one-year terms unless a resolution was passed to enable further service. The congregation unanimously agreed to pass such a resolution.

6. Election of Churchwardens.

In addition to Stephen, the other nomination was for Jane Jordan. Following a final call for nominations, no others were received and Jane was duly elected for her first term as Churchwarden and Stephen was elected for his eleventh term.

RevdG added that he was pleased to also advise that Sonja Pitcher has expressed an interest in taking on an enhanced role with the church and would be acting as Associate Churchwarden in the coming year, helping to share the work load and adding flexibility for Jane and Stephen.

Mike Rowe asked for formal thanks to be recorded for Stephen for all he has done for the church and also for continuing to stand and serve. Further, that we record thanks to Jane for also stepping forward and adding her contribution as Churchwarden to the other valued roles she already undertook.

7. Any Other Business

RevdG advised that he had no further matters to bring to the meeting and invited those present to raise any other issues they felt were appropriate. No other matters were put forward so the Vestry Meeting was concluded.

8. Annual Meeting

RevdG started the meeting by confirming that anyone in the Parish is able to attend the APCM but, unlike the Vestry Meeting, only those on the Electoral Roll were able to vote.

8.1. Closing Nominations for the PCC

RevdG advised that he was aware of three nominations which had been received for PCC membership and invited any other nominations to be put forward. RevdG also invited further nominations for Deanery Synod representatives.

8.2. The Reports

8.2.1. Electoral Roll

RevdG advised that the Electoral Roll has been revised in recent weeks and currently stood at fifty-nine people listed, up by three from last year.

8.2.2. A Report on the last year for the PCC & Parish

(see Annual Address above)

8.2.3. Financial Report from Ken Jordan (Treasurer)

Ken drew the congregation's attention to the 2019 accounts detailed as part of the Annual Report, commenting that overall there had been an increase in planned giving with a predictable decrease in giving in church, although this still amounted to over £4,000 for the year. Ken added that the young people of the church really enjoyed passing the collection bag around. It was also noted that the church running costs had increased during the year by around £2,000.

Ken also confirmed that all payments for the 2013 Quinquennial repairs had now been made and also some monies had gone out in respect of those identified for during the 2018 Quinquennial inspection. On the subject of repairs, it was noted that some additional repairs had been made to the roof, although these costs had been largely reclaimed via the buildings insurance cover.

Monies held in the deposit account and in the Diocesan Church Repair Fund (CRF) had

continued to grow during the year, with the PCC deciding to continue to pay in around £200 per month to ensure that resources were always available for church repairs which were almost inevitable for buildings as old as St Michael's.

Ken also advised that until recently there had been a 25% 75% split of joint costs with St Mary's, but following a detailed review by both PCCs a decision had been made to amend the payment ratio with St Michael's now contributing 35% towards shared costs and St Mary's paying 65%.

The overall message from Ken was that in general at the moment the church's finances were healthy as although costs were going up so were the contributions it received.

Questions were invited but no additional clarification or information was sought. RevdG closed the section by reflecting that it was a good time for anyone who was considering changing to giving by standing order to do so as there were uncertain times ahead for church attendance but that most of St Michael's outgoings would still need to be covered.

8.2.4. Churchwardens' report from Stephen Betts

Stephen opened his report by thanking RevdG for preparing the Annual Report, reflecting that it covered a wide range of activities and achievements and that he would also like to extend his thanks to everyone who had contributed to the life of the church. Stephen added that he particularly wanted to thank RevdG and his family for taking St Michael's forward in worship and wanted to thank Kerry and their children for their support.

Stephen reflected that although Churchwardens were directly responsible for the smooth running of the Church, the fabric of the building and especially for supporting the clergy, many others at St Michael's contributed to this as well. He thanked both Jane and Sonja for coming on board as Churchwarden and associated Churchwarden respectively.

Looking after fabric issues was a constant responsibility, with the building like a living creature, breathing and moving, reflecting the characteristics of the congregation which was alive and growing. Stephen added that the chancel wall was still damp at the moment but that it should dry out.

Thanks were offered to all those who contributed to services by offering a welcome, giving the readings and offering prayers. Stephen mentioned those who contributed through their PCC membership and roles, and in particular extended, thanks to Ken whose hard work as Treasurer was much appreciated.

Revd Jim Brown and Margaret Moore's contributions as part of the ministerial team were recognised and appreciated also.

Moving on to fabric issues, Stephen reported that plans to address the issues highlighted in the 2018 Quinquennial inspection were well underway and although the church was in

a good condition, repairs of around £9,000 were still needed. Stewart Biggs had again kindly stepped in and offered to undertake, with help from others, much of the work which would reduce the associated costs significantly to around £3,000. Stephen added that approval for the work is currently being sought from the Diocese.

It was noted that following on from the Church Away Day, plans looking at extending church facilities were being drawn up and that any subsequent building project would need generous giving to support it.

Stephen concluded his address by extending thanks to Mike for his help and support in the last year and the many years before that.

Questions or comments were invited from the congregation and Eileen also offered thanks to Chris Jenkins for her work leading the festival flower team, Stephen echoed those thanks, adding that the flowers in the church contributed to the feeling that St Michael's was a special place and the team's hard work was much appreciated, as was the work of all the others on the flower rota, those who cleaned and those who led housegroups. Special thanks were also extended to Colin Wolfe for his help and to Anne for her hard work and support.

8.2.5. Sunday School Reports from Jane Jordan

Jane began by referring the congregation to the Sunday School entry in the Annual Report, adding that they were blessed to have use of the Jabez Barn and they were grateful to Anne and Stephen for that. Jane confirmed that Sunday School met on the 4th Sunday of each month with attendance ranging between four and ten children aged between five and fourteen. She added that Sunday School had also been supported by a young person from the church undertaking their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award. Jane concluded by saying that she was grateful for the congregation's indulgence of hearing back from the children on what they had been doing after each meeting.

RevdG expressed thanks to Jane for her support of the children's work in the church over many years, adding that Jane would now step back a little from that due to her new Churchwarden role and that he was grateful to Sarah and Julie for their continued service taking Sunday School forward.

Mike asked for a record to be made that St Michael's work in growing its congregation and its increasing engagement of children and young people had been noticed by the Diocese. Bishop James had asked about it and a Growth Enabler from the Diocese had talked to St Michael's to find out what we had been doing to achieve this.

8.2.6. Deanery Synod Report from Jane

Jane confirmed that the Deanery Synod met three times a year and that Bishop Simon had attended the most recent meeting at Watlingtonbury where a theme had been the importance of ensuring the views of young people were heard and responded to.

There was a brief consideration of the known challenges regarding clergy numbers in the Diocese and the direct impact this would have on the Malling Deanery. Jane briefly

recapped the main themes of the Deanery Mission and Ministry Plan which was now being implemented, giving the inclusion of Watlingtonbury with West Peckham and Mereworth to form a newly expanded Benefice.

8.2.7. Diocesan Synod Report from Revd G

RevdG advised that although he was no longer a member of the Diocesan Synod, the threads of the meetings had been passed through to him and a focus of the meeting continued to be Parish Share issues relating to the funding of clergy, vicarages, safeguarding etc. Funding and the fairness of the current Indicative Parish Offer system were an still issue, with the current system felt to still disadvantage those Benefices with a larger number of small rural churches despite changes to the offer system. It was noted that the current system did just suggest an "Indicative Offer" amount and the individual churches were not obliged to meet the amount in full. The Diocese has suggested the Benefice offered around £70,000 each year, although this year the combined offer from St Michael's and St Mary's total about £52,000 which included a £17,000 contribution from St Michael's.

The APCM recorded their desire to see an independent review of Diocesan finances.

8.3. Election and Appointments

8.3.1. Election to the PCC and Deanery Synod

RevdG confirmed that the PCC has three vacancies arising from the expiration the terms for existing PCC members and that three nominations had been received for David Godfrey, Emily John and Becky Robinson Hugill all of whom were duly elected unopposed. He also confirmed that St Michael's were seeking the election of two members for the Deanery Synod and two nominations had been received for Jane Jordan and Sonja Pitcher who were then also duly elected unopposed.

8.3.2. Appointment of Independent Examiner

RevdG confirmed that one of the APCM's tasks was to appoint the Independent Examiner for the Annual Accounts and he asked the meeting if everyone was happy for Brian Jones to continue as the Independent Examiner, should he wish to do so. Everyone present confirmed their consent.

8.4. Any Other Business

RevdG invited questions and comments on any of the preceding matters or on any other business, or any suggestions for areas of consideration going forward.

David Godfrey suggested that those present may like to here a little more about the suggested project to look into extending the facilities at St Michael's. RevdG confirmed that although he continued to be extremely grateful to Stephen and Anne for the continued access to the Jabez Barn, the church should not take this for granted or expect it be continued in the long term and recalled that a wish to extend the building's own facilities had been around since the 1980's when John Marshall had scoped out what may be possible. Any proposed addition would be modest but would include appropriate toilet facilities, a kitchen area and a meeting space.

Initial discussions had taken place with St Michael's Quinquennial Architect John Bailey and St Michael's were very fortunate to have Stewart Biggs, and Sarah and Rob Marshall as part of their community to provide expertise to support the development of ideas. It was noted that one of the sensitive issues would be the possible disturbance of graves in the churchyard as not all grave plots were marked. RevdG assured the congregation that the technology was available to identify any human remains, which may be re-sited nearby.

No other matters were raised and the meeting closed at 10:53 a.m.

To be signed off at the APCM in 2021:

Signed by: _____

Revd David Green, Chair of St Michael's and All Angels PCC, Offham,

Date: _____