

**Minutes of the Annual Church Meeting – Monday 27<sup>th</sup>  
March, 2023, at St. Mary's Church, at 7.30pm.**

**Present:** Matt Trendall (Chair), Alise Trendall, Jonathan Bailey, Colin & Pam Baxter, Ann Beaton, Ann Marie Butler, Susan and Robin Dynes, Roger Fennemore, Birgitte and Philip Grace, Roger Hancock, Ann Hough, Melvyn Letts, Christine and Brian Norwood, Trish Rosewell, Adrian and Lisa Rowe

**1. Opening devotions and welcome from the Chair**

Matt welcomed everyone and said all the paperwork for tonight has been uploaded to the website and we will be referring to them as we go along. Matt said he had been reflecting on New Year 2018 when he presented a simple vision for our church to see us through our next seasons. He read verses 3-4 of Psalm 126. We had had a period of gradual decline and were crying out for God to restore our fortunes – he was inspired by the Psalm and had invited us to a Season of Sowing. Matt said that looking again today and reflecting on our journey he has a great sense of thankfulness that the last five years have been very fruitful and there has been a lot of sowing and a great sense of energy. The Lord has done great things for us. He is still directing our path into the current season of sowing and reaping. He has sown lots of seeds and we are seeing our harvest. We have had rapid growth over the last 18 months. Growth always brings changes but strong relationships hold us together as we have greater diversity with more people. This can be unsettling because we are here to serve a bigger community. So this year let us hold at the back of our minds the words of Psalm 126. Matt then said an opening prayer.

**2. Election of churchwardens (meeting of parishioners)**

Matt said that the Church of England has one of our sponsoring oddities in that anyone in our community is able to vote on the election of the churchwardens.

Matt said he was delighted that Roger and Jonathan were willing to stand again and paid a personal tribute to them both. They have done an amazing job this year and a lot of their work is hidden from most people. Matt said he thanked them for their brilliant service.

Jonathan said that he and Roger have a lot of help and they thank everyone for this.

Roger and Jonathan were proposed by Melvyn Letts and seconded by Pam Baxter and elected unanimously.

**3. Apologies for Absence:** Oscar and Cristina Amenos, Jocelyn Lord, Elizabeth Prockter, Clare Tyers, Jonty Vowles

**4. Minutes of the Annual Church Meeting of 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2022**

These have been uploaded onto the church website. It was proposed by Roger Hancock, seconded by Jonathan Bailey and accepted unanimously as a true record of the meeting.

**5. Matters Arising:**

**a. LEP Review and update on Walton LEP's registration as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation:**

**Update on registration as a CIO:** This is a requirement by the Government but the deadline for registration has been extended by 10 years!

Matt said our finances have to be harmonised across the parishes: there will still be individual accounts but it is a large amount of work to harmonise our accounts. We are not in a position to do this at the moment. It will be put back on the agenda in the autumn but probably won't be until next year that we are registered. It will put us on a better legal footing but we are not facing any legal threats.

**LEP Review:** Matt said that we had been asked to be a pilot LEP for the latest review. The WCP had met twice and had positive meetings. One of the questions asked if the LEP wished to remain an LEP. We are very proud of our ecumenical Partnership and see no good reason to lose it so we

hope very much to stay as a Partnership. We will have someone come to visit us to discuss our statements in the Review. The Partnership are in a very healthy financial position. We gave £4,500 in 2022 as an extra gift of support to other parishes, and had offered £5,500 extra in 2023, which was not adopted. We are trying to be generous if we can.

**Churches Together in Milton Keynes;** We had the Mission Partnership for 40 years and in spring last year they hosted their final event. Churches Together in MK was formed in the autumn of 2022, and in January this year Churches Together in MK was launched. We don't know what kind of organisation it will become but its success will rest on the independent churches buying into it. As a sign of our support we are paying the same subscription that we paid to the Mission Partnership, which is about £1,300.

**b. Walton Staff News:**

Matt reported that the Revd. Ruth Gookey from Christ the King has had a serious brain injury and is on long term sick leave. She has been signed off again for a few weeks and will return to work at the beginning of May. We will keep Ruth in our prayers and support her through her recovery. Revd. Ruth Maxey from Church Without Walls contract ends in 2025. ~~Matt is now actively supporting CWW and providing pastoral oversight.~~ Ruth M. will be on sabbatical from July to October this year. CWW will be looking after themselves for these three months. All have agreed this is the best way forward to help plan when Ruth's contract ends. All these discussions are important for the Partnership and we are doing the best we can in all these situations.

We are grateful for the help now of two other ordained ministers: Revd. Philip Derbyshire is playing an active role on an informal basis and helping out in an ad hoc way. Revd. John Robertson is worshipping at All Saints Church and led the service there yesterday.

Revd. Keith Straughan: Matt said we had never said a proper goodbye to Keith who stepped back last summer but he gave him his heartfelt thanks for all he did for our Partnership from 2015 to 2020. He played a big part in our church life, but won't be involved in our Partnership for the foreseeable future.

**c. Status of Current Practical Projects, including container shed, back of churchyard and Garden of Rest**

Jonathan went through their Churchwardens' Report which was based on the latest Quinquennial Report. They have a running schedule of things to look at. At the moment the East Window seems to be moving as the gap at the top seems to be larger. The advice is to fill the gap and see if it holds.

A long handled brush for dusting higher up is required (it was noted that we do have one). We should reinstate having a day when everyone can come and give the church a clean.

A frame needs to be constructed for the metal container shed to support climbing shrubs, in order to hide the container..

The ride on lawn mower has been fixed at a cost of approximately £500. There are detailed instructions on how to start it.

We have been given a large rotavator which will be useful when digging the glebe land and removing brambles.

The churchyard clean ups will continue in the spring.

It was suggested that a schedule of jobs that needed doing should be put up in the porch so people can see what needed doing when they are free.

Garden of Rest: Matt is working with the Parish Council: the area has been flattened and seeded with grass. Working with Edel on the third set of designs.

We had renovation work in the Bell Tower which Trish oversaw brilliantly.

We have use of a room in the Community Centre which we use quite a lot.

We held a fire drill which went extremely well and the church was evacuated in 1m 10s. The North door is not included in the fire drill. Fire Marshalls: two should be in attendance every Sunday. We need two more Fire Marshalls.

The churchwardens said they are extremely grateful for all the help and support they receive and to Matt and Alise for their leadership of our church.

6. **Reports and Updates – including churchwarden’s and treasurer’s reports, changes to church membership, and brief summary of what’s happening around MK currently:**

a. **Churchwarden’s Report:** Jonathan has already delivered this and is attached.

b. **Treasurer’s Report:** Matt said he was very grateful to Ann Marie for taking on the Treasurer’s role a year ago and thanks to her for all the hard work she has put in to the role.

She is in the process of producing the accounts and is working with Jonty Vowles. We have enough cash at the bank at the moment.

At the moment we are operating on a deficit of just under £6,000 and this is more than it should be. Planned giving has increased but our monthly income is a lot short of what it should be to be secure. We are thankful for the income generated by the coffee mornings and quiz nights which generates over £1,000. The card reader is going well and generated £1,500, most of which is money not given as cash – it more than pays for itself.

Fees for weddings and funerals plus fund raising and Canzonetta concerts and Christmas Card competition brought in £1,500 at the end of the year.

The Townlands Charity supported us in grants for our major maintenance projects as did the Broughton Trust for our new boiler and fencing. We have taken £3,000 out of our reserves. However our reserves are ok: they were £37,000 at the end of 2021, and were £34,000 at the end of 2022, which means that our investment fund has held its own despite the bad year for the markets. £34,000 is equal to 8 months of our turnover at the same expenditure as of today. Normally reserves would cover 6 months of expenditure.

On the income side, we have to be realistic about what it costs to run our church. Looking at our expenditure over the last ten years it has held up well: this is due to three reasons:

- a. The Church of England Investment Accounts have done spectacularly well at 10% return a year. For example in 2021 our operating deficit was £4,000-£5,000, which was covered by a 10% return on our investments – but last year we didn’t get this level of return.
- b. We have received a lot of grants over the last ten years: over £100,000.
- c. We have been bailed out with one off large gifts but last year we didn’t get such one off gifts. Matt said that unfortunately we don’t get enough to run our church through our giving. Over an 8 year period we have broken even, thanks to the above reasons.

Matt said he was aware that the majority of our congregational giving goes to paying him, and it is 8 years since he gave a negative report on our finances. We can’t grow our staff team because our finances won’t allow it. We are about £800 short of what we should have to be in a position to meet all our monthly outgoings. Once we rely on fund raising we become a hostage to fortune.

#### Q&A

A question was asked about S106 money. Matt said the council paid for our church roof last year. Our Parish Share is £29,000 but we add £5,000 to support mission so our Parish Share is £34,000. We have the largest membership in the Partnership, and joint largest attendance on a Sunday. We need to look at ourselves initially.

A comment was made that if 20 members paid an extra £10 per week this would solve the problem. Also remember to mention that the card reader is at the door especially as we have many new members. A question was asked about opening the church: we have a donation box. When church has been open before very few people had come in.

Our income from burials is charged at the standard rate of £300 per burial, which is a fraction of what the Council charge. Our churchyard is mowed and looked after.

Matt said that money is the least important thing in the church: but we do have to be realistic about what it costs to run our church.

### c. Church Membership

As of today we have 76 full members and 14 Associate members (four adults and ten children). This number is likely to grow as some new members haven't completed their form yet. The Electoral Roll figure is 63 – this is calculated so as not to 'double-count' members.

Anglican	59
Non Anglican	16
Not stated	1
TOTAL	76

### 7. Elections and appointments: Treasurer, Secretary, Church Stewards, Responsible Adult, Deanery Synod Reps and WCP link posts:

Matt thanked Ann Marie, Trish, Susan, Ann, Jonathan, and Roger for being our Stewards. Anthony and Jonathan for being our Deanery Synod Reps and Jonathan and Ann for being our WCP Reps. It was proposed by Lisa Rowe, seconded by Alise Trendall and carried unanimously that everyone be reappointed for the coming year.

### 8. Safeguarding updates – including re-approval of Policy and Safeguarding Officer

Also to Rachael Jenkins for undertaking the role of Safeguarding Officer. She is excellent and we are lucky to have her. Also to Susan Dynes as our Responsible Adult who is there if children have a problem. A comment was made that we should make children aware of this. A summary of our Safeguarding Policy is on the back of page 2 of the AGM paperwork. It was proposed by Lisa Rowe, seconded by Alise Trendall and carried unanimously that our Safeguarding Officer and Responsible Adult be reappointed and our Safeguarding Policy be readopted.

### 9. Rector's Reflections (Annual Report):

Matt gave some highlights from his written report. He had been revisiting what we set ourselves last year. A lot of people have joined us and have got actively involved in our activities in lots of ways. Our February attendance (one Sunday) between 2014 and 2019 was an average of 49. In February 2022 it was 37. For February 2023 the average was 59. Our lowest congregation this year was 47 and on one particular Sunday it was 74. Overall, our average attendance is 20% bigger than before the pandemic. We are capitalising on our energies. The language classes are made up of people from the congregation, as is help with the Community Café. The language class will be expanding to two classes with one on a Saturday morning from the 29<sup>th</sup> April. We responded quickly to the energy crisis with Warm Spaces, but we are taking a pause at the moment. Cristina and Oscar organised a highly successful International Women's Day. We have coffee mornings, choir, school links and Monday morning prayer. We should emphasise one community. We also still have an online presence. We need to have sustainable growth. Matt asked the members to go into three groups to discuss the following. How can we grow deeper /closer / further in the coming year?

#### a. Deeper with God:

- Prayers after service
- Children's Bibles for church – *note: this has been actioned*
- Continuing Lent Groups
- Courses
- Testimony slot

#### b. Closer with each other

- Home Groups - needs People to lead
- Common interest – food
- Creating space at the end of church to chat and connect
- Explore different ideas
- Time in service: 'this time tomorrow': what people do in their paid work
- Free time prayer and praise evening

- c. Further out to the community
  - New estates
  - Cultivating friendships
  - Prayer walks
  - Skills audit – see below

Other comments in discussion afterwards

Having a register of people's skills: help of some sort: contact list group of skills: Skills Sunday Service

What happens outside drives what happens inside

Possible new Service at School: Matt is waiting for a team to emerge

Church Emotional Needs : We are looking at holding Kintsugi Hope meetings, helping with people's mental wellbeing.

Matt thanked everyone for coming and we finished by saying The Grace together.

DRAFT