

## St. Mary's Church, Wavendon

### Minutes of the Annual Church Meeting – Monday 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2024, 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, Fay Grech-Marguerat, Roger Hancock, Christine and Brian Norwood, Elizabeth Prockter, Gill & Michael Ramsbottom, Trish Rosewell, Adrian Rowe, Susan Tame, Clare Tyers, Jonty Vowles.

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

Matt welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with everyone saying Evening 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 and gave them a huge Vote of Thanks.

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

Roger and Jonathan were proposed by Trish Rosewell and seconded by Susan Dynes and elected unanimously.

#### 3. Apologies for Absence: Karen Crossley, Sally Fennemore, Ann Hough, Chris Langford, Melvyn Letts, Lisa Rowe, Lianne Tyers.

#### 4. Minutes of the Annual Church Meeting of 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2023, and any matters arising not covered by the agenda

The minutes have been uploaded onto the church website. It was proposed by Pam Baxter, seconded by Jonathan Bailey and accepted unanimously as a true record of the meeting.

#### Matter Arising: World Day of Prayer – Palestine

This had been held on the 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2024, and organised by Lianne Tyers. Thirty people attended and £102.59 was raised for the movement.

#### 5. Reports and Updates:

##### a. Churchwarden's report

Jonathan said their report was a very practical report as a lot of information had been covered in the Rector's Report. He said that the church-yard clean ups would be reinstated this summer: it was a good social event and well as getting the church-yard in good order!

A new lawnmower had been purchased with a grant from the Townlands Charity for which we were very thankful. On the 19<sup>th</sup> April the Wavendon Volunteer Army, approx.. 8 – 10 people, would be coming to help with the clean up.

Some trees on the western edge had suffered damage during the winter storms and had to be lopped and we had received a grant from the Townlands Charity for this work for which we thanked them very much.

The hard infrastructure on our new Garden of Rest will be completed hopefully soon after Easter.

Thanks were given to Milton Keynes Council who are paying for all the works involved.

Jonathan said he and Roger were very grateful to all the volunteers who kept the church and church-yard in such good condition. Our larger congregation means that we have to provide additional service sheets, hymn books and more chairs!

At Holy Communion we are encouraging three or four people to come together to the table, otherwise it takes a lot of time for everyone to receive.

A question was raised about going back to using the altar rails and the Communion Cup. Matt said that going to the rail will take longer and offering a non-alcoholic option is easier with individual glasses. We now have gluten free square wafers too.

Jonathan and Roger gave thanks to Matt and Alise for the tremendous work they do: it was a privilege to serve you.

A plea was put out for more people to help cleaning the church.

## **b. Treasurer's Report**

We had had a difficult year financially and ended the year with an operating deficit of £6,500. This meant we had taken £5,000 out of our reserves to balance the books. The major reason was our energy costs. To get the church warm costs between £15-£20 per hour and the boiler has to go on three hours before an event so it is costing £75 to £80 every time we want to use the church in the winter. Our Quiz Nights and Coffee Mornings now cost us to run but they are our gift to the community and we shall continue to offer them. Matt said that when energy bills drop again we will be ok. We are in a gas deal which ties us in until the end of this year. We are already being pushed to take out another deal for early December but have to decide now. It is incredibly difficult to predict how things will go. Roger suggested looking at the Diocese' Parish Buying Scheme and this will be followed up.

Planned giving had fallen but the Good Box had taken approx.£4,000.

Fees from weddings and funerals had been approx £2,000 lower than we would normally expect.

There was a big appeal at the end of last year and donations increased by approx. £500 per month. This £6,000 will plug the gap in our finances over the year and put us in a position of break-even but it doesn't let us plan for growth.

We rely very heavily on volunteer culture: with one paid minister, without any other paid posts, is a point to think about.

Our operating costs on repairs and maintenance show how we are incredibly efficient and we are very grateful indeed to those people who give up their time to keep our machinery in good working order. We are also very grateful for the grants we have been awarded over the year.

Our Investment Accounts have historically yielded annually returns of 10%, which is double the market apart from 2022, owing primarily to the Ukraine War.

Matt said he was very grateful to Ann Marie for all the work she did as Treasurer: there were four months in the summer of 2023 when we couldn't access our accounts at the bank and it was extremely stressful for her.

A question was asked about the requirements to marry in St. Mary's Church. Matt said conditions had been greatly relaxed since the last CofE review. He was asked about publicity for these services. We had looked at increasing publicity a few years ago, but most weddings were a lot of work and with the church fees of £550 of which £250 was given to the Diocese it was a small return for the church.

## **c. Electoral Roll (ie changes to church membership)**

Matt said that this year there had been significant growth and church membership now stands at 91 adults and 24 associate members (7 adults and 17 u18s). The 91 members identify as 65 Anglican and 22 non-Anglican (with 4 not stated). Our reported Electoral Roll is 72 to avoid double counting in our Partnership.

|                                                  |           |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Anglican                                         | 65        |
| Methodist                                        | 6         |
| URC                                              | 0         |
| Baptist                                          | 4         |
| Roman Catholic                                   | 5         |
| Other: Salv Army/ Pentecostal/<br>FIEC/ Orthodox | 7         |
| Non Anglican                                     | 22        |
| Not stated                                       |           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                     | <b>91</b> |

**6. Elections and appointments: Treasurer, Secretary, Church Stewards, Deanery Synod Rep & Walton Churches Partnership link posts**

Matt said that our Area Dean left a year ago. He was one of only two paid Area Deans in the country. This role is now being undertaken by four local clergy who are sharing the role between them and doing a wonderful job. They have appointed a new Secretary and Treasurer. Jonathan is a member of the Deanery Standing and Pastoral Committees, Carolyn Sanderson is a member of the Pastoral Committee and Anthony Tull is our other Deanery Synod rep. Thinking about the overall focus in MK there is a big focus on the Deanery.

The Diocese have said that they are making a big investment in Milton Keynes next year but what strings will be attached? The Diocese have applied for a grant from the Central Church of England. We are a large parish: how do we serve the people of MK?

Churches Together in Milton Keynes is up and running: this is the successor to the Mission Partnership. The WCP haven't formally joined yet: they don't want to do something as a token, but we are supporting them financially as we did the Mission Partnership.

We have four congregations in our Partnership: All Saints, St.Mary's, Christ the King and Church Without Walls. We have had a good run in the last decade.

Ruth Maxey's contract runs out next year but she is looking to become a part-time Minister for CWW and Newport Pagnell, starting in the near future – two very different congregations.

Ruth Gookey is still unwell, after suffering an abscess on the brain two years ago. We are currently liaising with the insurance company.

We have lots of resources to help Christ the King: Lianne, Philip Derbyshire and Ruth Maxey have taken services.

Our Stewards continue to work for the church: Jonathan is a WCP Rep. Treasurer Ann Marie, Ann Secretary and Chair of WCP, Trish and Susan School Governors. 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 Alise Trendall, seconded by Roger Hancock and carried unanimously that everyone be reappointed for the coming year.

**7. Safeguarding updates – including re-approval of updated Policy, Partnership Safeguarding Officer and St. Mary's Responsible Adult**

Matt thanked Rachael Jenkins for undertaking the role of Safeguarding Officer. She was a professional in this field. We have revised our policy and a summary is included in the AGM pack. The full policy is 55 pages long.

Susan is our Responsible Adult who is available to talk to vulnerable adults and children. She will be standing down in the near future.

Matt thanked Rachael and Susan for all the work they do on safeguarding.

It was proposed by Fay Grech-Marguerat, seconded by Chris Norwood and carried unanimously that our Safeguarding Officer and Responsible Adult be reappointed and our Safeguarding Policy be readopted.

Matt said that with the growth of the church we would like two more members to become Stewards. They would have a particular responsibility allocated to them. A Church Family Steward who would bring people together and a Steward to co-ordinate our community work, language class and other things. If you are interested, please speak to Matt.

#### 8. **Rector's Reflections (Annual Report):**

Matt said we had lots of things to celebrate. Six years ago we spoke of a season of sowing and Psalm 126: 'Restore our fortunes O Lord, like streams in the desert/Negev. Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.' With our season of sowing, there is a new energy in church after struggling to draw people to us.

We had a good season of church in the pandemic, with zoom and recordings and lots of people volunteered in lots of ways. We have journeyed as a church and done a lot of hard yards but our church family has improved rapidly and we are seeing some of the fruits now.

Matt said that numbers are not the most important thing: we are thankful for the growth. It has been natural growth, and people's experience of trying us is like a 'great big hug'. It is a loving community life – what makes us us.

As we get bigger it will be more difficult to keep our closer community feel. We may want to look at starting another church on one of the new estates.

Our major initiatives have continued to prosper: language classes, Children's church, Women's Evenings, Canzonetta, Quiz Nights and Coffee Mornings and everyone who bakes. After last year's AGM we have actioned the following: restarted prayers after the services, bought Children's Bibles, Lent Groups, an alpha Course, testimony slots running more regularly, home groups and most people staying after coffee.

There are more ways we can develop: a particular focus on people in work – "this time tomorrow" find out about their work and how we can pray  
Prayer and Praise Evening – we can do this now with all our new people  
Skills Audit – gifts and talents – a few weeks after Easter a 'Skills Sunday'

#### 9. **Discussion**

A member asked if we could bring back Café Church. Perhaps we don't have enough round tables and do we have the service at 9.30am on a Sunday or at a different time. We used to have an 8.30am service and then café church – the two-service option. If we continue to grow we will have to look at this anyway. Should we look to move it to the Community Centre?

Could we remove the pews? We would need permission from the Diocese and they were put in as part of the Restoration in 1850 and the Victorian Society would object so we probably wouldn't get permission. Could we have Café Church once a quarter?

Everything is going well at the moment so although variety is good we don't want to lose what we have. With our curate coming and Revd. Philip we have more help.

In this season of growth we should be open to conversations about how things could go forward – Matt is very willing to listen to ideas.

In the local community, people are beginning to get more energy. We had the Music Festival in 2018 and the Commemoration of WW1 and on both these events we were working together. It is the Anniversary of DDay coming soon and next year the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WW2 so perhaps we should look at doing something for these two important dates.

The card machine was considered to be in the wrong place. Members debated where was a good place! We could put a QR code on our paperwork so that members clicked on this and got into our website or a paying page?

Members said Compline together and the meeting closed at 9.15pm with the Grace.