

Minutes of a Meeting of the Combined PCCs of St Matthew's Harwell and All Saints' Chilton

held on Tuesday 6th July 2010 at 7:45 pm in All Saints' Church, Chilton

Present

Harwell

James Scott Cockburn	Tony Hughes	Steve Tunstall
Kate Evans	Allan Macarthur	(Minutes were taken by Martin Speed)
Sid Gale	Tim Roberts	Jonathan Wood
Gordon Gill	Roz Shipp	
Georgina Greer	Chris Stott (Chair)	

Chilton

Avril Butler	Carol Piggott	Liz Morris
Stewart Gibson	Alex Reich	Jeff Nesbit
Naomi Gibson	Andrew Hayes	Ruth Poole
Hazel King		

1. Prayer

Chris Stott opened the meeting with prayer.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Mel Gibson, Vicky Macarthur, Jane Woolley, Pam Rolls, John Berry, John Piggott and Bruce Keeble

3. Minutes of previous meeting

No corrections or alterations to the minutes of the last meeting of the combined PCCs on Tuesday 26th of January were requested, and they were signed by the chairman as a correct record.

4. Matters arising

- (a) **New service proposal:** Allan Macarthur gave a brief update on the proposal for the new Harwell evening service, reporting that the services were aimed for the second Sunday in the month, with the first target date being the 10th October. He said the name 'Hands Free' had been decided on to give an idea of the spirit of a service, and four groups had been set up to concentrate on particular aspects of setting the service up: one group for leadership, one for worship and music, one for sound and vision, and one for welcoming. He also said that there would be an announcement about this in services shortly, and a written communication for everyone who attended the existing second Sunday in the month evening service, which 'Hands Free' would replace.
- (b) **Pam Roll's Ordination:** Chris Stott told the meeting that Pam Rolls' ordination had gone very well on the 3rd July, and that it had been followed by a very well prepared and well attended celebration. This had been followed on the Sunday by Pam Rolls making her official ordination declaration in the morning services of our two churches. On behalf of both PCCs Chris offered his congratulations and said a big 'thank you' to everyone who had worked so hard to provide the wonderful celebration tea.

5. Discussion and input on the Deanery Pastoral Committee Paper

Gordon Gill introduced the committee paper, saying that responses were required by the end of September. He said the Deanery Pastoral Committee was made up from one representative from each benefice. The committee had spent some time looking at mission, but had been asked to look at the issue of reducing the number of stipendiary clergy by one which would bring the Deanery in line with its official allocation. The ideas represented by the paper were being submitted to every parish for views and would then be considered again prior to the Deanery Synod. These were seen by the committee as five reasonable ideas, and it was now down to the PCCs to come back with their views and add any further ideas they had. All PCCs were invited to give their views about options in all areas of the Deanery.

The PCCs were then invited to comment on each of the ideas in turn.

In the course of the discussion these **general views** were expressed:

- That the **Deanery will suffer** significantly through a reduction in clergy.
- That some members were **not sympathetic to the justification** for the reduction given in the paper. (The paper reported that: "the number of full-time stipendiary clergy available across the Church of England is falling, since there are more retirements than ordinations at this time" and that the quota system was introduced "in order to ensure this fall is shared evenly across the entire Church of England".)
 - One viewpoint was that the reduction in ordinations was not a reason for this Deanery to be penalised as it was not generally 'our' problem. More specifically, the opinion was expressed that the reduction in ordinations was not associated with our particular parishes - in which many clergy had trained and many had gone forward for ordination.
 - Another opinion was that damaging what we have in this area would be difficult to see linked to a real benefit in another area. Though, in opposition to this viewpoint it was said that a single member of the clergy in a particular northern benefice was covering a population of 90 thousand.
- The concern was expressed that there may be no real benefit in the consultation process – that church hierarchy may have a view already, that will not be influenced by the consultation process.

The key **points made about each option** were as follows:

Idea One: "Say no."

- It was observed that the potential **drawback recorded in the paper** (that no special post for the expansion could be made available if there were not a reduction in

stipendiary clergy now) was **not a great disadvantage**. It was noted that the special post would be temporary, and therefore it seemed that the Deanery would lose a permanent post to gain only a temporary one - and that an actual post would be lost in exchange for a planned post. On the other hand it was noted that that the special posting would provide a 'specialist' – someone well suited to pioneering and building a new church in a new estate.

- The view was put forward that the **proposed Didcot expansion represents such a massive change in the Deanery that it will undo any benefit from reorganisation achieved now**. The proposed increase in the population of Didcot overall in the expansion proposals was calculated during the meeting to represent around a 35% increase in the overall population in the Deanery. This will have a significant impact on the 'quota' calculations and the balance of population in the Deanery undoubtedly requiring further reorganisation if it goes ahead. It was therefore argued that it was better not to re-organise the Deanery now, and cause the problems that change brings, only to have to start again once the expansion had happened.

Idea Two: Merge the Cholsey & Moulsoford Benefice with the Wallingford Team.

- It was said that the merger would have the positive **benefit of incorporating many people who worship together into the same benefice**. Wallingford was described as being very clearly defined by the ring road and with many of those people worshipping in the central town church, but that much of that area was actually in the Cholsey and Moulsoford Benefices. Therefore, there are people in Cholsey and Moulsoford who would associate themselves with the central Wallingford church, but, because they are technically in another benefice cannot have weddings or christenings at that central church. In a similar way, because churches like Cholsey have a distinctive style of worship, they attract people from the wider area. (Two thirds of the congregation at Cholsey were said to not live in the village.)
- The point was made that it was **unfortunate that the potential positive benefits of this merger are being confused with the initiative to reduce the number of posts**.

Idea Three: Combine Harwell with All Saints' Didcot and attach Chilton to the Churn Benefice.

- One viewpoint was that the 'figures' for Harwell and Chilton showed the church to be doing well – and, to quote the popular adage, **'if it isn't broken don't fix it'**. An alternative merger would destroy what has been built up.
- There is **no link in style of worship** between Churn and Chilton.
- The merger **would fail to recognise the success of the existing set-up in bringing people into the ministry**.
- **Harwell does not have a natural affinity with Didcot** and there would be an imbalance in the sizes of the congregations.
- The **financial contribution of the benefice justifies a member of stipendiary clergy** – the benefice is already a net contributor in terms of parish share 'paid out' to stipendiary clergy 'received.'
- The **merger of Harwell and All Saints' Didcot could be seen as a way of dealing with the western extension to Didcot** – for which some of the housing will be in Harwell parish but be more appropriately seen as Didcot housing. **However, there were counter arguments to this:**
 - The view was put forward that it was not of benefit to Didcot to bring in Harwell – **Harwell was not a good lever to appropriate ministry for the extra housing**.
 - An **alternative** approach to merging the parishes to deal with this **would be to re-draw the parish boundaries** to put the housing all in Didcot.

Idea Four: Merge the Didcot parishes and district into one new Benefice and build a new Town Centre Church.

- The benefit of a new central Anglican church was not clear to many members, especially in relation to the strong presence of other Christian churches. **An ecumenical church in the middle of the town was seen as a positive idea.** The notion of the Anglican contribution to an ecumenical venture was seen as potentially small, but the view was also put forward that typically the Anglican contribution to ecumenical churches was considerable and that the community aspect of Anglican ministry was important.
- It was observed that a merged town benefice was in line with the difference between town and village churches. It was noted that **in villages there is generally only one option available**, whereas in a town it was possible to have more than one type of Christian church.
- It was observed that this idea was the one **visionary** idea in the paper – something advanced to meet the future, rather than retreating to manage dwindling resources.

Idea Five, which seems less advisable but which is included for completeness, is: Split the Churn Benefice between its neighbouring parishes and benefices.

- No members put forward positive views of this option. It was said to have **nothing going for it**, especially as the merger into the present Chum benefice had only just been completed and carving it up again would undo any of the benefits that had been achieved. (This option was accused of having been included as a truly dreadful option that everyone could agree to reject.)

It was noted that there would not be another meeting with time to discuss the response of the PCCs, and so it was proposed that the discussion reported in the minutes should be sharpened up into a response. Steve Tunstall volunteered to do this and present a response for approval at the September PCC meeting.

6. Report from the Ministry Leadership Team meeting

It was reported that notes of the meeting would be circulated shortly, but in summary:

- The interregnum had been discussed, and a planner had been produced which included arrangements for visiting clergy
- The Deanery discussion paper had been debated
- The recruitment process had been discussed
- Arrangements had been made for the start of work on the parish profile (as recorded earlier.)

7. Update from Churchwardens re: meeting with the Archdeacon

Andrew Hayes reported on the meeting of the Church Wardens with Norman Russell, the Archdeacon. Key points from the meeting were:

- The benefice should engage with the Deanery so that a plan could be agreed as soon as possible.
- ‘Like for like’ replacement should be assumed.
- Although much cannot take place until Chris Stott has left, there are things that can be done beforehand:
 - The parish profile can be written up
 - The parish representatives (for each parish) can be agreed
- Once Chris Stott leaves then the profile can be placed with the Archdeacon and a decision will be taken on whether to advertise or not (with advertising is most likely option). The advertisement would probably then go out in January.
- There is no keenness for a short interregnum. The authorities prefer a longer break where there has been a long-serving minister: around six to nine months.

8. Future Dates

- 17th July Noah’s Ark children’s activity afternoon.
- 23-27th August Children’s Holiday club at Harwell school
- 14th September Meeting of both PCC’s with Norman Russell, Archdeacon.
- 10th October First of the new ‘Hands Free’ evening services

9. Any Other Business

- (a) **Gordon Gill:** an e-mail letting everyone know that Gordon Gill had been moving towards testing his vocation had been circulated for information. Chris Stott asked that we remember Gordon Gill in our prayers.
- (b) **Stewardship:** Andrew Hayes and Peter Barclay Watt attended a meeting to hear about an initiative to centralise stewardship for more than one parish. Peter Barclay Watt would like to talk to the combined PCCs about this.

10. Close

The meeting closed at 21:05pm

11. Next Meeting

The next **Combined PCC meeting** will be on **Tuesday 14th September 2010** at 7:45pm in St Matthew’s Harwell The next **Individual PCC meetings** will be on **Tuesday 21st September 2010 at 7.45pm in Both Churches.**

Signed **Chairman** **Date**

Signed **Secretary** **Date**

PAPERS

Wallingford Deanery Synod Pastoral Committee Discussion Paper (June 2010)

