

Minutes of a meeting of Harwell PCC held on Tuesday 9 July 2002 in Harwell Church Extension

Present

Chris Stott (chair)	Tim Roberts	Frances Taylor
Jean Barton	Clive Silver	Marilyn Thomas
Elizabeth Gill	Jim Sinclair (secretary)	Rob Thomas
Clive House	Wendy Sinclair	Steve Tunstall
Tony Hughes	Ruth Slatter	Jean Twigger
Nancy Preston	Martin Speed	Tony Ullmer

1. Opening

Chris opened the meeting with a thought based on Hebrews 12:26-28, followed by prayer.

2. Apologies for absence

Allan Macarthur: unwell.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the meeting on 7 May 2002 as distributed required several corrections:

- a) the date at the top was wrong;
- b) item 4(d): strike out 'of four';
- c) item 18: first sentence becomes 'Jean B reported that, at the initiation of Nancy Preston and Steve Ward, she and they had met to organise some joint meetings for the home groups'.

After these corrections, the minutes were signed as a correct record.

4. Matters arising

- a) **Altar frontals:** Wendy reported that she had passed the forms to Elizabeth to progress. Elizabeth has sent off to obtain a statement of support from the DAC – they will consider it at a meeting on 15 July. Finally, Elizabeth will proceed with the public notice and faculty application, following the pattern of Tony H's application with respect to the chairs with arms.
- b) **Church Hall garden:** Chris has talked with Alison Gale. The work is to start in the summer. The concerns about the representation of the title 'Peace Garden' were passed on. Alison said there would be no objection to any explanatory plaque giving a biblical slant.
- c) **Arm chairs:** Tony H had applied for and received a supporting statement from the DAC. Notice of the intended purchase was currently up on the notice board. At the end of the allotted period, the faculty application would be sent off.

- d) **Practice session for lesson readers:** still in hand by Marilyn.
- e) **Church Hall caretaker:** Chris has not yet found anyone to take this on. He will put a notice in the weekly service sheet. It was noted that the function includes not only handling bookings and keys, but also taking responsibility for ensuring that maintenance items are attended to. If necessary, two different people could handle these two aspects. The PCC noted with thanks the work that Liz Roberts had done in this post over the past 12 months, and resolved to write a letter of thanks, also assuring her that the search for a replacement is in hand.

Tony H expressed thanks for all who had helped in the recent work day at the Hall.

- f) **Second Churchwardens' deputy:** Alan Walker had not agreed. No further progress.
- g) **Replacement photocopier:** has been received and commissioned.
- h) **Diocesan Convention:** Ruth said that there were still places available. Those already booked have information and transport arranged. Five are to attend from Harwell and three from Chilton, for varying parts of the programme.
- i) **Church Planting conference:** Nancy reported that three from Harwell and two from Chilton had attended, and had also benefited from contact with a local Baptist attendee. The conference was found very stimulating. The Bishop of Liverpool had given a good talk on living as in a mission field. Other topics covered in seminars included new housing estates, cell churches, and combining the old with the new. Those who attended were still pondering the implications for our situation. With regard to the proposed Chilton Fields estate, the conclusion drawn was that we should avoid imposing pre-formed solutions: Christian activity should be allowed to grow from within, and we should be ready to support Christians who move in.

Chris and Jean B explained further the notion of cell churches. There is a strong emphasis on the small group as the fundamental unit. These are deliberately made to be outward-looking. The ethos of every-member involvement is strong. It is assumed that people will begin their involvement by belonging, leading to believing, and then to behaving.

- j) **Rector's secretary:** Chris reported with pleasure that **Naomi Gibson** has agreed to take on the post, commencing immediately after Joy finishes on 19 July. Naomi would in the first instance continue the pattern of working during the afternoons of Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of each week. She would treat the first 6 months as a trial period.
- k) **Joint meetings of the home groups:** Jean B reported that the brief season of joint meetings had begun excellently, with attendances around 30. In August, a third meeting would be based around a barbecue. People not currently attending a home group would be welcome.
- l) **Village Hall support:** a written report from Liz Roberts was circulated. The Hall management committee consists solely of representatives of user groups. Several user organisations have raised or contributed funds additional to their usage fees, but this has not yet included the Church. Hall maintenance generally comes to about £2,000 per year, but a number of exceptional projects require attention, including cleaning of the window curtains, replacement of the stage curtains, and structural survey of the ageing Freeman Hall.

Liz proposed specifically that

- the church donates £70 (per annum?) against the Hall's telephone rental;
- any maintenance, surveys or purchases made for the *Church* Hall be routinely reviewed for potential to share costs if the Village Hall happens to need a similar function;

- the church seeks to identify anyone qualified and willing to help with the matter of seeking grants from external bodies;
- the church helps to recruit 'heavy gang' volunteers for Village Hall maintenance needs.

In the discussion that followed, Chris said that although helping the Village Hall in its time of need was consistent with our adopted objective of living generously in the heart of the community, we had to balance our response against the fact that our own currently budgeted deficit for the year was some £8,000. Wendy said that the Sinclairs' small scaffold tower could be loaned for the curtain cleaning project. Tony H said that, as Buildings Committee convenor he would be happy to co-operate when beneficial in the way suggested in Liz's second proposal. Further discussion revealed a variety of opinions about the best way to help and about the extent to which the church should feel obliged to help at all if the Village Hall was not a self-sustaining facility.

The only specific action agreed is expressed by the following resolution:

Resolution	That the PCC announce a retiring collection at some forthcoming main service in aid of the Village Hall, and give the proceeds collected, or the sum of £100, whichever is greater, as a one-off donation.				
Moved/amended	Jim/Rob	Seconded	Elizabeth	Passed	unanimous

5. Financial Report and related matters

Elizabeth presented the usual written statement of receipts, payments and current balances. She summarised by saying that we were more in credit than expected, principally because of exceptional donations received. Furthermore, the Heating and Lighting account has now been closed, and the final balance credited to general funds.

A proposal from the Finance committee regarding Chris' proposed sabbatical in 1994 was signalled, and this was discussed with Chris absent and Jim Sinclair temporarily taking the chair. The proposal was that the two churches – Harwell taking a two-thirds share and Chilton taking a one-third share – make a special grant of £2,000 to help fund the travel and special activities involved.

The question was raised whether Chris' absence would mean that, on balance, some saving in ministerial expenses would predominate, or on the other hand payments to guest preachers etc. might lead to a net loss, to be considered alongside the proposed grant. Jean B replied that she was expecting to cover a very large fraction of the Sunday-service duties, so this would minimise the latter. Tony U noted that when Mary Carney took her sabbatical, there had been negligible change in the normal costs.

It was also questioned whether, so soon after a reduction in our stipendiary minister level from two to one, it was satisfactory to contemplate even a temporary reduction to zero. Others felt that a sabbatical for Chris was just what was needed to ensure his continuing effectiveness in the new situation.

The resolution was carried (16 in favour, 1 against).

6. Deanery Synod report

Clive S reported that the first meeting of the new Synod was held on 20 May, beginning with a Eucharist. All the elected office bearers were re-appointed. The Pastoral and Standing committees are of increased size; Clive now representing Harwell and Chilton. All parishes were up to date with payment of the Parish Share. The next meeting will be at the beginning of December.

7. Jubilee Weekend review

PCC members shared their reactions, all favourable. The Songs of Praise service was particularly appreciated by church members and others in the village alike. Wendy reported that the Welcome Group members who specially made two banners had found the project very satisfying, and would be willing to undertake similar work in future.

8. Alpha Courses progress report

Nancy reported that a day-time course has just finished. A supper for all past or potential future Alpha Course attendees was to be held on 10 July (next evening). The next course is planned to commence on 18 September.

9. Vision Coordinators

Tim reported that a first meeting had been held in June, and another would follow soon. A more substantial report should be possible to the next PCC meeting.

10. Laying Up of British Legion Standard

Chris reported that the Legion wish to lay up a further standard in the church at a special service some time in August. Laying Up means that the standard will be withdrawn from its normal service and occupy a permanent place in the church.

11. Joy Hance ordination

The ordination will be on Saturday 28 September at 5 pm. A farewell from the church is planned for 15 September, taking the form of a short service at 5 pm, followed by a social evening. One farewell gift will be a small paten and cup commissioned from Terry Doughty. Ideas were sought for another gift. One suggestion was a stole. Wendy undertook to consult with Nick, and the PCC authorised the Standing Committee to take a decision.

12. Church seating

Tony H presented a written report on the consultation of congregation members regarding the seating options experimented with over recent months. In summary, 11 respondents favoured a return to the original arrangement with all pews, 2 respondents favoured the first trial arrangement with 16 chairs at the back, 18 respondents favoured the second trial arrangement with 16 chairs at the back and 8 further forward at the ends of pews formerly long but now short; 6 respondents wanted other variations. On the question of removal of the kneeler panels in front of the front pews, 9 were in favour, 6 against, and 22 gave no clear response.

The feelings of many of those who favour a return to all pews appear to be quite strong. The number favouring some change are greater in number, and among these, the second option is the one clearly preferred.

Several had spoken in favour of padded runners on the pews. This was seen as an issue that could be pursued separately from the decision whether or not to replace some pews with chairs.

Resolution	That the PCC proceed with preparing to apply for a faculty to replace pews with chairs after the pattern of the second trial arrangement, and ultimately to dispose of any redundant pews.		
Moved	Rob Thomas	Seconded	Jean Twigger
		Passed	17:0 (1 abstained)

Before this action is complete, there is an interim period extending the formally approved period of experimentation. During this period, it would be advantageous if some of the removed pews could be taken out of the church building. Tony H proposed to ask Dennis Lay if some could be stored in a farm building. Agreed. Chris to seek advice from the Archdeacon.

Concerning the plan to be proposed for the ultimate disposal of redundant pews if a faculty is granted, the following resolution was put:

Resolution	That the plan be to retain, if possible, two long pews in storage outside the church, for the purpose of providing replacements as other in-service pews deteriorate. Other redundant pews and kneelers to be disposed of permanently, by means yet to be determined.		
Moved	Tony Hughes	Seconded	Frances Taylor Passed unanimously

13. West End reordering

Tony re-presented the drawing prepared some time ago by the architect Philip Waddy illustrating his ideas. However, the Buildings Committee was making no motion at this time to proceed with any works other than those already approved to tidy up in a more minor way.

Martin had not progressed his ideas for a Discoverers' display area in the area below the stairs presently occupied by the ancient clock mechanism. This would not be pursued until it became clear whether an alternate home for the clock would be found.

Tony H proposed a vote of thanks to David Pyke for his recent work repainting the kitchen.

14. Other business

- a) Jean B thanked all for her welcome into her ministry at Harwell, and for the gifts received.
- b) Martin reported that a Holiday Club would be held on Sundays in August. This is being organised by Tracey Linnard and Rosy Gardiner, who are seeking volunteers for leaders for different weeks. The idea was that existing Discoverers would invite friends, with the hope that some of these might be drawn into Discoverers. The village Recreation Ground and the Church Hall would be used for varied activities.
- c) Wendy reported on a personal visit by herself and Jim to see Christianne and Robert Thomas at their home in France. Old spectacles collected by church members for a charity supported by Christianne were delivered, and warm recollections and news were shared of those who had known the Thomases during their stay in Harwell some years ago.

The meeting closed in prayer at 10:03 pm

Next Meeting

Tuesday 10 September 2002 at 7.45 pm in the Church Extension.

..... Chris Stott, chairman

..... Jim Sinclair, secretary