

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Combined PCCs  
of St Matthew's Harwell with All Saints' Chilton  
held remotely via Zoom on Tuesday 3rd August 2021 at 7.30 pm**

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**Present**

**(J) Denotes Joint PCC member. There were thus 10 voting members including the Rector at this meeting - all resolutions refer to Joint PCC votes**

Hazel Benton(J)  
Phil Corbishley \*\*  
Peter Cox  
Tony Hughes (J)  
Phill Johnston (J)\*

Rebecca Lewis (J)  
Allan Macarthur (J)  
Patrick Moseley  
Carol Pigott (J)  
John Pigott

Alex Reich  
Jan Radford (J)  
Pam Rolls (J)  
Yvonne Sanderson (J)  
The Rector (J, Chair)

\* Present from part-way through item 3.

\*\* Present for most of the discussion but left before the final voting.

By Invitation: Jean Barton

The items were taken in agenda order. There was a break in proceedings from 8:55pm to 9:05pm.

## **1 Opening & Prayer**

The Rector read Luke chapter 1 verses 46 to 55.

The Rector said that this was the Magnificat, which forms part of the service of Evening Prayer. He invited those present to share their thoughts on the reading.

The Rector led the meeting in a time of open prayer.

## **2 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from: Sarah Barrett, Sid Gale, Gordon Gill, Melanie Shields, Eliza Wheaton (J) and Jane Woolley (J).

Stuart Gibson (J), Judith Russell (J) and Michelle Walker were absent.

Helen Brook had also been invited as a member of the SLT, but was absent.

## **3 Worship Services**

These papers refer:

- A. Viewing Figures for On Line Services
- B. Non-Communion Services from September 2021
- C. Morning Worship - Common Worship
- D. Morning Prayer – Book of Common Prayer
- E. 8am Communion Thoughts
- F. Mission in Revision
- G. Thoughts on Services
- H. Some Thoughts About Worship Services
- I. BCP vs CW Services

The Rector introduced the matter for discussion: During the past two Combined PCC Meetings in May and July, and the Extraordinary PCC meeting in June, we have decided to introduce a new pattern of services

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across both churches starting in September (the current pattern will continue until then). A review has been scheduled for November, and other reviews can be scheduled for later dates. We also have decided which services are Interactive and which are Holy Communion.

At the July CPCC meeting, the format of the Non - Interactive services was discussed – Common Worship or a mixture of Common Worship and Book of Common Prayer in various combinations, but a consensus was not reached. This meeting has been called to make the decisions about these services and related matters.

The Rector thanked all who had given comments in the papers for this meeting, or during other meetings, or other times, which were all helpful. All papers would be taken as read.

The Rector said that we should be mindful of people who are already in the congregations, though we can't take it for granted that they all will return post-pandemic.

In addition, we are not just here for those already a part of the congregations, but to reach out to the community, so we should also bear in mind the congregation of the future. We cannot just stay as we are, as the congregations will shrink by attrition over time. We are called to go out, so we should also be concerned about the 95% of the community that do not attend Church regularly and are not on the PCC so have no voice.

A wide-ranging discussion ensued. The following comments were made, and are grouped together here under the following broad headings:

### **Purpose of Worship and Outreach Services**

- The services we hold are Worship services to respond to God's love with thanks, and encourage and build each other up so we can go out into the community, and are not primarily outreach. There was some agreement to this.
- We have some services that are a mixture of Worship and outreach, such as Holiday Club and Generation Gold.
- The Rector said that in a way all of our life should be worship. Whilst a couple of hundred worship in church regularly, there are several thousand who do not. For some, this is because we do not facilitate worship in the way they can understand, so they may go elsewhere, or nowhere. There are lots of people in the community who may attend if offered the right sort of worship services. We currently engage some, we could engage more. Some Worship Services have a lot of visitors so are more evangelistic, for example Christening services could be 80% visitors and we have to make the most of these opportunities. There are others whose faith could be encouraged, such as the children and spouses of regular attendees.

### **Attendance at BCP Services**

- The BCP liturgy has been used here for 40 years, and the decline in attendance is more recent, so changing the liturgy and form of service may not be the solution, the congregation and leaders also need to be engaged in the community.
- The Rector agreed about community engagement, but churches throughout the Country are seeing a similar decline in attendance.
- Congregations are declining in part because people are not being engaged by the liturgy, and also because people are moving away and those that move in are not all coming to church. In the past, people moving into a community would go to the local church and adapt to the style of worship. Now, people are far more mobile and will try a local church once. If it does not suit them, they will go to another church or do another activity.
- People no longer have a Sunday School or Church Youth Club background so are less likely to understand BCP services if they try one.
- The decline in attendance to the Chilton morning service may be due to the introduction of Pebbles Family Service. The Rector replied that the decline started before that, and was due to natural attrition. The people attending Pebbles Family Services had not attended the BCP services, and they had not been engaged for some years. The Pebbles Services sought to provide for them.
- PCC members mentioned visitors that have attended BCP services, and either not liked them because they were too difficult to understand; conversely, people have not liked other services because they service were not traditional enough. Some visitors were happy to find a BCP service as a familiar type of worship.

### **Range of Service Provision.**

- We now have an Interactive service to cater for those not engaged with more formal worship. We should also have a provision to keep those who prefer a more traditional style of worship engaged.
- The Rector said that the Interactive service is only one of the 5 weekly services (4 Sunday and one midweek). The others four are standard liturgy, so the way we do these are important. We either facilitate and encourage or stifle and inhibit.
- Youth and young families are important and we should celebrate and appreciate their energy. We should also appreciate the loyalty and service of older members, some of whom have been here many years, and whose work to keep the churches open allows new things to go ahead. So, we should have a broad spectrum of services for all ages including some BCP provision e.g. once every 2 months.
- Loyalty is a valued point and we don't want to throw away something precious to people, but there are concerns with mixing up a 400-year-old liturgy with current liturgy. Younger people find it very alien – Fledgelings families find it a big step moving to an interactive service and a bigger one to a front facing non-interactive service.
- Some people have also attended and served loyally for many years whilst not having services that completely suit them. 4 out of 5 of the services are catering for the long-standing part of the congregation, we are not catering at all for a large proportion of the population. Though some have tried the services and stayed, others have gone elsewhere. There are some people who we have never tried to reach, this is a mistake which we should not repeat with future generations.
- There is a tension in trying to serve both of these aims faithfully.
- It is a challenge to respond to the needs of the many young families now arriving locally without leaving others behind.
- The Rector said that we are trying to hold together two very different aims 1) to provide for a faithful group of people that love BCP services and 2) a group who don't engage with BCP and never will, and if they encounter it, will be put off. Some may tolerate it for the sake of other people.

### **Consultations to Date**

- Pam Rolls, Jan Radford and others have visited the 8:00am Communion service congregation: They are sad to lose the service and would join the 9:30am service. They appreciated being visited and listened to. This was assuming there would be a BCP 6 times a year at Chilton and others at Harwell. It is a difficult decision.
- There was appreciation for the consultation taking place.
- The Rector said that he has had many conversations over the years, with some more formal consultations recently. He also talks to people outside the church or on the fringe, including wedding couples and for Baptisms and Funerals. There are people who are interested in church in our communities, we need to encourage them to join us. If we are not moving people from the "Crowd" to the "Congregation" congregations decline.
- The Rector said that over the years he has seen lots of visitors/new people in our church services. Many people seem only to try one service and don't return. There are plenty of other local churches to attend. All traditional services are in decline, some faster than others, and not recovering. Style of service is not the only factor, but we ignore it at our peril.

### **In-Service Explanations**

- If there are visitors at a BCP service an explanation can be given.
- The Rector said that we can do this at all services.
- This may break up the rhythm of the services for regular attendees but would help visitors.
- That BCP needs an explanation says something in itself.

### **Other Local Churches**

- It is important to do everything possible to maintain and grow the church, and the new pattern of services addresses that – Sunday morning will be more attractive to new people than other times. However, we should not be disappointed if people attend other churches as they are still worshipping.
- The Rector said that losing people will a problem for the Benefice, and he may not be replaced when he finishes if the Benefice is not viable.
- The meeting discussed which local churches have BCP services and other traditional services.

### **Communication of the New Pattern of Services**

- The Rector said that communication has been limited so far: The weekly church-wide emails for the last couple of weeks had mentioned the end of the current pattern and start of a new one.
- There will be more substantial communication from next week: The Broadsheet will include the new pattern and will go to the printers this week for distribution next week to all houses in the Benefice. There will also be in other channels including posters and Facebook.

### Review of New Pattern of Services

- If we agree on BCP every other month at 9:30am at Chilton, there will only be one before the November review. If it is the least popular then it can be stopped then, or we can continue for some more months then stop later. Other services have started and declined.
- There was some discussion of the “Hands Free” services that were run a few years ago.
- We should not keep theorising, but try something and see if people attend. The Rector agreed.
- There is a risk in any option – stopping BCP risks losing faithful people and keeping it risks putting new people off.
- The review could be in November but that is quite a short trial, so all of the new pattern should continue longer unchanged.
- The Rector said that the November review would be quite limited. We could schedule another review for example after Christmas.

### Evaluation Criteria

- It is important that we decide the criteria for success and failure now, rather than waiting until the review or end of the trial.
- Discussion ensued of who should compose the criteria and write a proposal. There was some agreement that the Senior Leadership Team should do this.

## PROPOSAL 1

The Rector made this proposal:

**That the Senior Leadership Team should discuss criteria at their September Meeting and present this as a proposal at the October Combined PCC meeting.  
No Objections.**

Any suggestions of criteria should be sent to the Rector.

## PROPOSALS 2, 3 and 4:

Three linked proposals were made:

- 2: One BCP at 9.30 at All Saints' every two months i.e.6 times a year**
- 3: One BCP service a month at 6.00 pm at St Matthew's.**
- 4: BCP at the weekday communion service - each time it occurs.**

Each to be voted for/ agreed to separately.

Further to this: if it is decided against the one BCP a month in the evenings at St Matthew's, then the next proposal for the evenings would be: 6 BCP services a year in the evening. - In the same way, the weekday communion services could be alternating: BCP and CW as another proposal.

### Points to Consider

The Rector said that the meeting should bear in mind the following when considering proposals:

- All four non-Interactive services are under discussion.
- We need to provide adequately for those that value BCP and not risk putting off the generation of the future.
- We should try and ensure that what we agree on stands a good chance of serving people's needs, a “nothing” or “everything” solution may not be helpful, and a compromise may be agreed that does not serve anyone.
- Travel: we have not had an 11am BCP service at Harwell for many years. There has been a BCP at 6:15pm. Some people who might return post-pandemic valued BCP. Does it need to be in Harwell or Chilton – location and time slots need to be considered. We could also have a quarterly evening BCP service at Chilton.

Further discussion ensued:

**Harwell Evening Service**

- A regular attendee said that due to the 18-month gap it is difficult to predict how many of the pre-pandemic congregation will attend. A monthly Sunday evening BCP service would probably be welcomed as it was in the past.
- A churchwarden said that it was about 12 regular attendees.
- The Rector said that he was considering a new format for the Harwell Evening service, to be aimed at the “missing middle” – younger people with no children, or Banns couples. There was some interest in this suggestion.
- The Rector added that if one in four evening services is BCP, the pattern would not be consistent and it may be more difficult to engage people in this new service. There was some sympathy with this view.
- There was further discussion of other times for BCP services such as 11:30am at Harwell or midweek.
- Sunday would be the preferred day for the BCP service.

**PROPOSAL 5**

The Rector made an alternative proposal arising from the above discussion:

- **BCP Service at Chilton at 9:30am on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of alternate months on the same Sunday as Pebbles Family Service – 6 per year.**
- **BCP Service at Harwell at 11:30am on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the other alternate months – 6 per year.**
- **An additional quarterly evening prayer at Chilton – 4 per year at a time to be decided.**

The Rector answered questions on this proposal:

- With this pattern there would be no BCP at Harwell in the evenings, so the Harwell Evening BCP congregation would need to travel to Chilton and may need help with transport.
- There would be sufficient leaders to lead and preach at services in this pattern. It is 4 fewer services per year than the previous pattern.
- For practical resourcing reasons, the in-person Evening Prayer service and the online service have the same leader, preacher and songs. The online service has little liturgy and could include the basic elements (e.g. readings, sermon, songs) of the evening service.

**Other Final Points:**

- There was some discussion of provision of music for the new pattern of services.
- The Rector said that he could make the required decisions, but he wants to be as collaborative as possible and the churches are largely volunteer-run. The congregations and communities have been here longer than him and will still be here after he leaves. The PCC has certain responsibilities including the broad pattern of services and the Rector is responsible for the detail and what is preached. He has brought the decisions on types of services back to the CPCC as it needs to be a consensus.

**VOTING ON PROPOSALS 2 to 5:**

**CHILTON:**

The Rector said that the strongest proposal for Chilton was for BCP in alternating months for the trial period, so he suggested that Proposal 2 is considered first.

**No Objections.**

**Proposal 2: Straw Poll: 8 For, 7 Against.**

<b>Resolution</b>	<b>BCP Services at 9.30 at All Saints' 6 times per year - on the Second Sunday in the month alternate months.</b>				
<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Pam Rolls</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>Passed by the JPCC</b>	<b>6 for, none against, 4 abstentions.</b>

**HARWELL:**

The Rector said that we should decide how we are to provide for those who value a BCP service at Harwell Firstly, Proposal 3 by Tony Hughes for Sunday Evening BCP services at St. Matthews. If that fails, we would consider Proposal 5 by the Rector for Sunday Morning 6 times a year in Harwell plus quarterly Sunday evening at All Saints'. If both fail there would be no further BCP at Harwell.

**No Objections**

**Proposal 3: Straw Poll: 8 For, 7 Against**

<b>Resolution</b>	<b>BCP Services at 6:00 at St. Matthews 12 times per year.</b>				
<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Tony Hughes</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>Passed by the JPCC</b>	<b>6 for, none against, 4 abstentions.</b>

**The other Sunday services at both churches will be Common Worship.**

**PROPOSAL 4: WEEKDAY SERVICES**

Following discussion, Allan MacArthur proposed that these should be a mixture of Common Worship, BCP and other styles and formats. The format will be decided after consultation with those likely to attend.

**No Objections.**

The Rector thanked all present for their contributions and the decisions made. There are some details to be worked out including music. Any comments on the Evaluation Criteria should be passed to him or the SLT. The Criteria will be presented at the October CPCC meeting. There will be a review of the pattern in November.

**As Proposals 2 and 3 had passed, Proposal 5 was left in abeyance**

**4 Any Other Business**

None.

**The Rector closed the meeting with the Lord’s Prayer at 10:03 pm.**

**Dates of next meetings:**

**Individual PCCs: 7th September 2021 online**

**Combined PCC: 5th October 2021 online**

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**CHAIR**

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**SECRETARY**

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**DATE**

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