

St Matthew's Church Harwell

Minutes of the Annual Meetings held on Sunday 16 April 2023 at 11.20am in St Matthew's church

The meetings were attended by 24 people.

As the Chair of the PCC during the interregnum, Dr Tony Hughes, welcomed everyone to the meeting,

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Gordon Gill, Sid Gale, Alison Gale, Roy Slatter and Ruth Slatter.

Annual Parochial Meeting

2. Election of churchwardens

Tony Hughes thanked Allan Macarthur and Eliza Wheaton for serving as churchwardens for the past year.

Tony Hughes explained that Allan Macarthur is standing down this year because he is moving away. Tony said that Allan has completed three stints as churchwarden over the past 25 years, covering a total of about 13 years. Tony thanked Allan for all that he has contributed as churchwarden, especially during the recent Covid pandemic and during the current interregnum. Tony wished Allan well for the future. Allan then received a round of applause from the meeting attendees.

Tony Hughes announced that **Eliza Wheaton** and **Jane Woolley** had been nominated and seconded as churchwardens for the coming year. No other nominations had been received. Allan Macarthur proposed that Eliza and Jane be appointed. This was seconded by Anita Pepper. A show of hands indicated unanimous support for their appointment. Tony Hughes declared Eliza and Jane to be duly appointed.

Signed as a true record:

Chair

Secretary

Date

Date

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Election of Deanery Synod Representatives

Tony Hughes noted that Sid Gale and Gordon Gill had been nominated to serve as lay members of the Deanery Synod. Liz Roberts proposed that they be duly elected. This was seconded by Frances Taylor. A show of hands indicated unanimous support for their appointment.

2. Election of PCC Members

Tony Hughes displayed a list of current PCC members, including ex-officio members.

Tony Hughes thanked PCC members for their service over the past year.

A church with an electoral roll of 51-100 people can have up to 9 elected PCC members. There are 2 remaining elected PCC members part way through their terms and so there are 7 vacancies.

Jane Woolley, PCC Secretary, said that completed nomination forms for the following 4 candidates had been received:

- Liz Roberts
- Tim Roberts
- Phill Johnston
- Elizabeth Clarke

Eliza Wheaton proposed that these 4 candidates be elected as PCC members. This was seconded by Frances Taylor. A show of hands indicated unanimous support for their appointment.

Tony Hughes said that therefore there are 3 vacancies for elected PCC members. He encouraged other church members to consider serving on the PCC. Tony explained that vacancies can be filled during the year. The PCC can also co-opt up to 2 people.

3. Appointment of Independent Examiner

Tony Hughes explained that Jane Moreton has kindly agreed, once again, to be the Independent Examiner for the 2023 financial accounts.

Tim Roberts proposed that Jane Moreton be appointed as Independent Examiner. This was seconded by Georgina Greer and approved unanimously.

4. Receipt of the reports

The following reports had been made available in the weeks leading up to the meeting and were formally "received" by the meeting:

- **Minutes of the annual meetings held in May 2022**
Allan Macarthur proposed the acceptance of the minutes of the 2022 Annual Meetings as a correct record. This was seconded by Andy Lewis. This was passed by a show of hands. There were 3 abstentions from those who had not managed to read the minutes or who were not at the 2022 meeting. A hard copy was signed after the meeting by Tony Hughes and Jane Woolley as meeting Chair and Secretary respectively.
- **The annual report for 2022**, including the Electoral Roll report, approved by the PCC at its March 2023 meeting and signed by Tony Hughes as Chair of the PCC during the interregnum. See item 5 for more on the Electoral Roll

- **Fabric report for 2022**
Tony Hughes said that the church and church hall log books are available if anyone wishes to inspect them
- **Financial report and Accounts for 2022**, approved by the PCC at its March 2023 meeting
- **Deanery Synod report on 2022 proceedings**
- **Safeguarding report for 2022**, approved by the Joint PCC at its February 2023 meeting

These reports were noted. Tony Hughes invited comments on them but there were none.

Tony Hughes gave an update on the two actions arising from the 2022 meeting as follows:

- **Tidying the area behind the organ**: this was carried out in summer 2022 and the area has been transformed. He thanked the churchwardens for organising the work.
- **Communications** – ensuring that those not on the internet receive key news from the weekly e-bulletin: this was duly raised by the PCC Secretary at the Combined PCC meeting and discussed. The outcome was that the Church Administrator has provided printed weekly bulletins for people to pick up at the back of church, and notices on the overhead projector screen before the start of the main Sunday morning services in both churches. Tony Hughes added that oral communication was also important in keeping people informed.

5. Electoral Roll

Tony Hughes relayed that the number on the Electoral Roll as of April 2023 stood at 66, as compared with 77 in April 2022. Mike Pepper, the Electoral Roll Officer, confirmed that no one had been added to the Roll and 11 people had been removed because they had died or moved away.

Tony Hughes reminded church members that people can ask to be put on the electoral roll at any time during the year, and that only those on the electoral roll can be elected as PCC members. Tony encouraged church members not on the Roll to apply to join it so that they can participate fully in the life of the church.

6. Thanks

Tony Hughes thanked collectively all those who have done anything to contribute to the life of the church.

Tony Hughes expressed particular thanks to the ministry team who we have lent heavily upon to lead services and to preach during the interregnum. Tony said how fortunate we are to have a strong ministry team. Church members echoed this appreciation via a round of applause.

Tony Hughes then listed a few of the other tasks that people undertake around the church and repeated his thanks to all those who serve in these, often hidden, ways. Tony mentioned that the church could always do with more people for some of these tasks. He highlighted the cleaning team and said that this relied on one volunteer shouldering a considerable amount of the work, week in, week out. Tony appealed for more volunteers to come forward to help with cleaning and this was endorsed by Eliza Wheaton as churchwarden.

Tony Hughes also thanked the Church Administrator, Deborah Evans, for her vital work in the church office.

7. Implementation of the church vision: “Growing God’s Church, wider, deeper and closer”

Tony Hughes invited, Elaine Shrimpton, Assistant Home Group Co-ordinator, to talk to the meeting about the purpose and benefits of home groups.

Elaine briefly outlined how home groups work to deepen discipleship and to enable pastoral care. She then relayed some personal examples of how membership of a home group had benefited her. Elaine encouraged church members currently not in a home group to contact her or Revd Jean Barton to discuss joining one.

Tony Hughes asked if anyone had any questions about home groups for Elaine. There were no questions and Tony Hughes thanked Elaine for her talk.

8. Discussion and questions

Tony Hughes asked if there were any other questions or points people would like to raise. The following topics were raised and discussed:

1. Tidying the area behind the organ

Mike Pepper said that the area behind the organ now looks great and he expressed his thanks to those who have worked so hard on it.

2. Seating

Anita Pepper asked if it might be possible to make a few of the padded chairs from the north transept or the chancel available in the nave during services for the use of those who suffer from back and other pain. Anita explained that she finds it impossible to sit for an hour in one of the normal unpadded chairs. Joan Sutton commented that she also finds it difficult to sit in the unpadded chairs but that she uses one of the four specially provided cushions with straps available in the vestry which you can attach to the back of a chair to pad the back if you need to.

Brendan Bailey explained that the Fledgelings group uses the church on Mondays. This requires the chairs in the nave to be stacked away. The padded chairs cannot be stacked whereas the unpadded chairs are designed to be stacked. That is why there are no padded chairs in the nave.

Tony Hughes pointed out that in addition to the padded chairs in the north transept that are used by the orchestra, there are others stored in the church hall, including six armchair versions. It is indeed the case that when the proposal to remove the pews was approved by the Diocese there was priority given to the stackability of the replacement chairs, and a feeling that there should be some uniformity of appearance of the seating in the nave. The unpadded stackable chairs are though not comfortable for some people and we should see what more we can do to overcome this.

Eliza Wheaton commented that when the churchwardens had tried putting out padded chairs at the front of the nave, no one had used them.

Tony Hughes said that he would be happy to revisit with the churchwardens and the PCC the issue of seating for those who find the unpadded chairs uncomfortable or painful to use. We could perhaps have another trial of making some padded chairs available in the nave.

Action: Tony Hughes to revisit with the churchwardens and the PCC the issue of whether it would be possible to make some padded chairs available in the nave

3. Communication

Marilyn Thomas expressed her thanks to the Church Administrator for putting notices on the overhead projector screen. She said that it makes it much easier to keep up with church news or events. Marilyn emphasised how important she felt it was to be communicating such matters inside the church building and not relying just on email or the website.

Tony Hughes mentioned that Allan Macarthur had also had some thoughts about installing some kind of permanent electronic display of church notices on a TV monitor at the back of church.

4. Heating

Roger Clarke said that he noticed that the temperature during church services had felt much lower than usual over the last few months. Roger asked whether this was due to a change in heating policy.

Tony Hughes was able to confirm that there had indeed been a deliberate alteration of the heating arrangements in response to the dramatically increased price of electricity. Tony said that he thought that, historically, the church's electricity bill had been c.£3k pa. He said that it is now double that. It's a 90kW heating system so it uses a lot of power.

Tony Hughes explained that in the past, the practice had been to switch on all 24 radiant heaters together, which heated the whole church. The switches are now labelled to enable specific heaters to be switched on in certain 'zones'. So, if for example the only activity is in the chancel, you can just switch the chancel heaters on. This does though mean that the overall number of heaters on in the church during Sunday services is lower than previously and inevitably that does reduce the overall temperature.

Tony Hughes said that the Buildings Committee had written a paper for the PCC in 2022 to review how the church might save energy. The conclusion was that the scope for doing so was very small because about half of the heat loss in the church is due to natural ventilation and steps we could take to reduce other losses are mostly not cost effective. If we were to reduce the ventilation it risks deterioration of the ancient fabric of the building. The PCC did decide that it was worth putting cavity wall insulation in the church extension and that was duly carried out.

Tony Hughes invited Allan Macarthur to add any comments.

Allan Macarthur said that the church has been on a fixed rate energy contract and so we have been somewhat protected from price rises. However, this contract runs out in the autumn and the next contract could involve extremely high prices. Allan also relayed that in addition to the 'zoning' strategy, the churchwardens have also been setting the thermostats a bit lower now than in the past.

Allan Macarthur pointed out that the radiant heaters are directional, and they predominantly heat a surface rather than the air. A good tactic if you feel the cold is to sit directly under a heater.

Roger Clarke said that he fully appreciates the rationale for being economical with the heating. However, he worries that the church may then feel less comfortable to sit in and this could make it feel less welcoming to those on the fringes of church life.

Tony Hughes concurred that there is a balance to be struck between comfort and cost.

Elizabeth Clarke observed that the congregation at the main Sunday morning service is often very spread out. She wondered if it might help to put out fewer chairs so that people are more concentrated near the front. Then perhaps we could put fewer heaters on but turn the thermostat up. If attendance is higher than expected, the sides people or churchwardens can simply put out more chairs. Joan Impey remarked that people had got used to being more spread out during the pandemic and so they might take a while to adjust if they were asked to sit closer together.

Tony Hughes said that there was much food for thought here about the seating and heating arrangements, and we do intend to keep the energy use under review.

Tony Hughes thanked everyone for their comments and closed the discussion and questions section of the meeting.

9. Closing prayer

Tony Hughes invited Rev Joan Impey to close the meeting in prayer. Tony Hughes then led the meeting in saying The Grace. The meeting closed at 12.15pm.

Signed as a true record:

Chair

Secretary

Date

Date