



**Parochial Church Council of the
Ecclesiastical Parish of St Mark**
Annual Parochial Meeting 16 April 2023



The meeting was held in Church after 9.30 Communion

46 church members attended. Minutes of the last meeting held on 24 April 2022 were approved and are available via the Church website. Charlie went through the agenda, and explained the procedures to be followed to members.

Appointments

The Rev. Canon Charles Royden was appointed chair of the meeting

Jim Williams was appointed as secretary

Laura Farthing and Liz Jackson were re- elected and appointed as Church Wardens

Laura Farthing was appointed as Lay Vice Chair

Safeguarding Officer Mr Mike Cooper

Electoral Roll Officer Mrs Avril Williams

Parochial Church Council Appointments

Standing Committee of PCC – The Leadership Team – Charles Royden (Vicar), Sam Cappleman (Assistant Priest), Laura Farthing & Elizabeth Jackson (Church Wardens), Alan Kirk, Janet Warren, Diana Johnson, Elizabeth Bean, (Wardens in Waiting), Mr Ian Farthing (Treasurer) Mr Jim Williams (Assistant Treasurer & Church Secretary)

Ex Officio PCC Members and Trustees

Mike Cooper (Safeguarding Officer), Wendy Waters (Reader), Lynne Seymour & Tim Wilkes (Deanery Synod Reps), Avril Williams (Electoral Roll Officer)

Elected Representatives as Trustees to PCC (i.e. not ex officio) Margaret Appleton, Janet Day, Vincent Holloway, Jean Kirk, Joan York, Mike Warren, Marion Prior, Janet Ibberson, Morag Stewart, Barry Southam.

- Charlie thanked everyone who had agreed to stand as trustees
- Current Trustee names will be included on the Charity Commission website
- Charlie thanked members of the Leadership Team, PCC members and members of the congregation for all the hard work over the past year to ensure the smooth running of our church and ensuring the continued safety of all those coming to St Mark's.
- Members of staff who are able to attend PCC Meetings but not vote are Wendy Rider Centre Manager, Helen Harpin Preschool and Sue Jones Preschool

Electoral Roll

There are 154 members on the Electoral Roll

Finance Report by Ian Farthing - Treasurer

Copies of the audited church accounts for the year ending 31 August 2022 had been circulated to all trustees, and further copies were available at the meeting. Ian presented the following details from the accounts.

The past financial year, whilst definitely better than the previous year, has nevertheless continued to be challenging in trying to proactively manage our budgets.

Many costs remain outside of our control including the increased cost of utilities which is proving to be an ongoing challenge.

We have continued throughout the pandemic to reassure the congregation and users of the centre that we were doing everything possible to make St Mark's an extremely safe place to visit.

It was agreed to purchase HEPA filters and new fogging equipment which, together with the outside space provided by the new Veranda, would reinforce our determination to make the Church and Centre safe. During this reporting period the office re opened in the September (2021) with groups then starting to return which had a positive impact on our Hire Income (thank you Wendy).

Mindful of the need to mitigate costs/ maximise income wherever possible we were also successful in applying for an Omicron Discretionary Grant from Bedford Borough Council of £2286.

Pre School operations were back on a more normal footing and whilst there was a loss of £6,683, this was a significantly better outturn than the previous year (- 30,747) and was achieved following close management of all income and expenditure by the Pre School Management Team.

The loss in the previous financial year had eroded the Pre School redundancy reserve which was topped up by £39,200 from main account reserves, these will be repaid when surplus funds are available.

Pre School roll numbers are currently very good and this has a positive effect on our funding , so in the current Financial Year 2022/2023 £10,000 has already been moved back from Pre School to the Main Account reserves.

It was important to remember that whilst reporting previous operational loss the preschool had nevertheless contributed towards the general account by paying rent.

The Garden of Remembrance has continued to operate largely to budget as anticipated over the year with surplus income for the year of £10,451.

Given the continued external financial challenges St Marks has managed remarkably well and remains in a positive position.

This is as a result of the congregation continuing with their generous giving for which we are so grateful. In addition proactive management of our hire and other income streams aligned with close management of all expenditure was of considerable importance.

The unaudited financial statements shows net expenditure for the year totalling £3,069 (2021 £39,972 net income following a generous legacy).

Managing the Church finances is a huge task and even more so during the past 2 and a half years so I am very grateful as always to the other members of the Church Finance Team, to Jim as Assistant Treasurer, and Charlie and Sam for all their support and encouragement. Also I would like to thank Wendy, Rosemary and Avril for all they do to aid the smooth running of the Church, Pre School and Garden finances.

There were no concerns raised from the accounts by our accountants Collett Hulance and they have confirmed they are willing to provide their services to us going forward as we so wish. It was proposed by

Janet Warren and seconded by Tim Wilkes that we appoint Collett Hulance as our accountants – carried unanimously.

Ian was thanked by Charlie on behalf of the whole church for what was now a full time task to manage all of the finances and payroll on behalf of St Mark's in ensuring that the church finances are maintained so efficiently. He also thanked Jim Williams for his duties as Assistant Treasurer and Gift Aid Officer.

Report on the fabric of the building, adoption of church policies

The premises continue to be maintained in excellent order. Four Velux windows had been replaced in the flat, along with surrounding roof repairs. The dishwasher is to be replaced, due in early May. Every effort is being made to ensure energy costs are contained and signs, encouraging hirers to conserve electricity, are in place.

Wendy thanked all of the volunteers who support her in the running of the office and church buildings. All the church policies were up to date, with hard copies in the office and electronic copies available on the church website. An up to date record and photographs of the church inventory are contained in the church terrier.

Thanks were recorded to Wendy for ensuring things run so well.

Safeguarding and Serious Incidents

Mike Cooper (Safeguarding Officer) confirmed to members that there had been no safeguarding or serious incidents. He thanked Janet Day for organising the setting up and renewal of DBS certification for members. Mike agreed to continue as our Safeguarding Office, carried unanimously. Mike and Charlie, as the Incumbent, are responsible for reporting Serious Incident Reports to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

Mike thanked PCC members for giving approval for him to access each member's record so that current a future training needs can be followed. If any members are having difficulty with setting this online access up, please let Mike know.

St Mark's Safeguarding Policy is available online via the church website.

Notes concerning Safeguarding Policy and Serious Incident Reporting are included in the meeting agenda notes (points 4.1 to 4.4). In addition, the following statement is added under point 4.1: 'Known offenders, and others who may pose a risk to children or vulnerable adults, must be effectively managed and monitored in consultation with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser. The clergy and Parish Safeguarding Officer are fully aware of this requirement. All Safeguarding information is stored securely in order that it can be communicated and passed on to relevant individuals if needed.'

Deanery Synod Report

All was running well.

Annual Report by Laura Farthing

In giving this report today I think it's fair to say that the last year was still another year of change and it's interesting to look back at how things have developed.

Our worship has continued with some COVID measures relaxed and some remaining in place, spacing of chairs and the sacrament administered by intinction. The purchase of the HEPA Filters and fogging equipment has also helped to keep the building and the congregation safe. These measures have given a

high degree of confidence among our congregation that worship is as safe as possible. It is so pleasing and rewarding to see our congregation grow especially when the wider church is seeing their numbers overall decreasing.

Easter, Harvest and Christmas Services were all well attended and in October we had the opportunity to chat with the Bishop of Bedford when he attended our PCC meeting.

Those members of the congregation who are not able to join us in person, are able to share in services which we continue to broadcast on our YouTube Channel. In addition the provision of our Wednesday Service has remained online and is well received and greatly appreciated by around 20 plus people on a regular basis..

Parish News continues to supplement our worship with the service liturgy, Bible commentaries by the ministers, prayers by Janet and Mike Warren and a beautiful new painting by Marilyn Bailey on the cover every week. Together with news and information Parish News is sent out by Mailchimp every Saturday to over 160 members. This is an excellent way to keep in touch with people who cannot attend church in person and allows them to stay informed about the life of the church. Charlie and Corinne continue to be the bedrock of our broadcast team and thanks to them and to all those who assist with the PA system.

We are truly blessed with the ministry of Charlie, Sam, Alan and Wendy who have enriched our understanding of God through their sermons, reflections and through their teaching in Lent and Advent courses. We also celebrated Wendy Waters 20 year anniversary as a reader in the church.

The Pastoral support group continues to keep in touch with people through Telecare where their regular calls are a real comfort to those receiving them. Thank you to Charlie and all the team for their commitment and dedication to this really important part of our mission. The monthly Bereavement Support Group was also re-established during the year and its return and outreach is well received by those attending.

Childrens work continues to thrive with Chat and Play and numbers upwards of 25 regularly attend each week, Janine also takes the same enthusiasm to Junior Church and we are grateful for all her hard work and dedication to our young people.

Pre School continues to operate in a very competitive environment but since September roll numbers have been excellent and sessions are full which has a positive impact on finances following the challenges of the last couple of years. Helen Harpin and Sue Jones lead the team of 15 practitioners supported by the Pre School Management team of Charlie Ian and Di. Parental feedback continues to be excellent and we are grateful to Helen Sue and the team for all they do in making Pre School such an integral part of life here at St Marks.

Mike Cooper continues in his role as safeguarding Officer ensuring that all the mandatory online training has been completed and reporting systems are all in place, Mike is supported by Janet Day who deals with the necessary DBS checks. We cannot overstate the importance of Safeguarding which is the responsibility of all members of the PCC and Trustees. Thanks to Mike and Janet for all they do and for Charlie and Sam for their oversight of this vital area.

Since the church office reopened fully back in September 2021 Wendy has done a sterling job in managing the return of our Hirers with only a couple of groups not returning. A number of new groups have filled what little spare capacity we have. Although we are largely full for hire Wendy is always willing to try to accommodate any new group requests.

We are so grateful to Wendy and the team of Office Volunteers who keep the centre open, the hirers and users happy and also keep the income flowing.

The veranda is now in place and gives us new opportunities to use this outside space which is COVID safe

and keeps us dry

During the year we completed the process of changing all our church lighting to LED to conserve electricity and were successful in obtaining grant funding of £4700 towards the cost from the Mayor's Climate Change Fund. at a time with utility costs being a real financial challenge this was a great result.

On that point we are so grateful to Ian and Jim for all they do in leading the effective management of the church finances and for everyone else who supports them in this mammoth job.

We were also able to support the local community by repurposing the chapel into as "warm space" providing comfort, care and refreshment to those who use it, whilst still retaining the ability to provide a quiet space for prayer and reflection. We received a £500 grant from the Borough Council to support this activity.

The Garden of Remembrance which is an important area of our outreach continues to thrive and now has had 748 interments of ashes, plans to further expand/improve the garden areas are always on the horizon and new granite kerbs have now finally arrived on the slow boat from China.

John Leo our gardener works hard to ensure that the garden is the tranquil and beautiful area that we and all those who use it have grown to love and appreciate.

Thanks to Avril who oversees the garden activities, meets with families and handles all the behind the scenes work. Thanks also to Linda Parry for supporting Avril by looking after the memorial wall and for Charlie and Alan who take the services.

Fundraising has continued with, raffles and the sale of craft items and cards at both Easter and Christmas we are so grateful to all who put their hands to making these beautiful items and also for those who provide goods for our raffle hampers and those who buy craft items and raffle tickets, your contributions are so important so a big thank you to all. In February we had a Quiz Evening run by Di and Laura Johnson, this was very well attended, and we received excellent feedback - thanks to Di and Laura for their hard work on making this a great evening

April saw the first of our 50/50 Fundraiser Draws take place, this has been a great success and currently has 140 numbers allocated which currently provides £140 to church funds and £140 in prizes each month. The generosity of the congregation cannot be overstated both from weekly/monthly giving and supporting the church and fundraising efforts and also supporting Bedford Foodbank in our mission project, we are truly blessed to have people who are so caring and so generous both with their time and their money.

Looking back on the last year It now seems that we have come through the worst of the COVID pandemic and emerged as a strong and united congregation. There has been a necessity to change the way in which we do things but some of these have provided opportunities to embrace better things which we might not otherwise have considered.

As I draw this report to a close we can see how many activities go on here but many are behind the scenes where lots of people are involved, I have thanked some teams and people in the body of this report but here are some not yet mentioned to who we are also so grateful and who make our church so amazing.

Those who read the lesson and lead us in our Intercessions

Our welcomers and coffee makers

Marion and the flower arrangers and the weekly church flower deliverer.

Our Sacristans, Jean Lynne and Elizabeth

Clive and his musical ensemble

Chair movers, and grass cutters.

I do hope I haven't missed anyone out but please be assured if I have, that we are so grateful for the contributions of all, named or unnamed to the life of this church, and we thank God for all these gifts and talents bestowed on us to work in his name.

Dates of future Church Council meetings

4 June 2023. Further dates to be confirmed at the above meeting

Date of next APCM 14 April 2024

The meeting closed with prayer