



St. Mark's Church Parochial Church Council

Minutes of PCC Meeting 10 February 2021



The PCC of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Mark, Bedford Charity Number 1164416.
All minutes are available on our website www.stmarkschurch.com

**The meeting was proceeded by Morning Prayer online on Zoom
35 people attended the online meeting**

Apologies

Janet Warren, Jean Kirk, Liz Jackson, John Day

Minutes of the previous meeting Minutes of the 7 October online meeting were agreed.

Worship Issues

Charlie updated members on the current infection rates in the context of Sunday Services having moved back online. The Leadership Team will continue to ensure that every step is taken to ensure the safety of St Mark's congregation and only move back to Sunday worship when it was safe to do so. Janet Day thanked Charlie and all involved for the work in continuing to hold worship via the church YouTube channel, it was greatly appreciated by all. Members fully supported this action to continue with online services.

Charlie added that the Chapel remains open for private prayer and that arrangements can always be made for individual communion by contacting him.

Arrangements for Easter were being finalised. The Ash Wednesday service will be on YouTube. Four evening Lent Course sessions were planned for Thursday evenings, via Zoom, lasting 30mins with time for discussion and reflection.

Charlie also advised that it will be recommended to the Annual Congregational Meeting that members of the current Leadership Team will remain in place for a further year.

Church Leadership Report

In addition to the scheduled meeting on 27 January, the Leadership Team had previously discussed actions needed to ensure ongoing safety of everyone. The current online services involved the minimum number of people, with hymns and musical pieces being recorded separately and readings by one person. Our thanks to Charlie and Corinne for the long hours involved in putting each recording together. Fogging is carried out every 72 hrs to maintain safe surroundings for any individual person visiting church, in addition to that needed for Preschool.

Centre Management

Although the Centre is closed there are regular tasks still being carried out such as mailings of Parish News and maintenance of the fountain by Linda and Edward and additional cleaning by Dave and Janet. Sign in sheets are still being completed and regular fogging is being carried out.

Finance

Ian presented details of the Church finances for the first four months of the financial year (1 Sep – 31 Dec). The main account had a surplus of £9,635.42, with a further £1,142 to be banked. However, this included a Covid Support Grant of £10,000. The Gift Aid claim for the Sep – Dec period was just over £4,312.89. Ian thanked everyone for their continued generous giving and for those who have taken out standing orders. This regular income is a major help in ensuring we have the strong cash flow needed to meet our fixed costs. A question was asked about possible changes in the National Budget that might affect furlough payments. There are currently 3 staff members who have been furloughed, so we will have to see how best to react at the time.

Ian also ran through the income and expense budget. Overall, the finances are in line with budget but, following the latest lockdown, hire income has again stopped, highlighting the need to contain costs. Ian had compiled various budgets to take account of the loss of hire income. We are still receiving an amount of hire income through the letting of the flat and the Parish Council and St Albans Woodland offices. The possible longer term impact will be a deficit of £8,000 by the end of the financial year, although it was too soon to confirm this. Our reserves policy is continuing to be

met. Further grant funding will also be investigated.

The Preschool account is showing a deficit for the period of £6,370 (-£5,207 for the same period in previous year). Because of lockdown, numbers are down but it is anticipated that things will improve over the coming months to correct this. The Churchyards Account was showing a surplus for the period of £6,387.23.

Some memorial gifts of money had been donated to St Mark's and the Leadership team proposed that a fund should be established for a glass covered veranda to be installed to replace the marquee outside the church. This would provide an outdoor waiting or meeting area between the church foyer and the Wren building. Council gave approval for faculty permission to be sought from the Diocese.

Ian was thanked for his hard work in ensuring the finances were under control during this very difficult period.

Bishop Alan had written to all PCC Treasurers to thank them directly for all their hard work during these challenging times.

Pre-school

Now fully open although numbers are still low, due in part to parents working from home and school age siblings being at home too. Up to four families had not yet come back. However, as mentioned above, it was anticipated that numbers would gradually increase. A lunch time member of staff had decided not to continue but she would not be replaced at this stage. Helen had submitted census data to the Council for the funding of 31 children which was all children available for the head count last October.

Storybox, Chat and Play & Junior Church

No reports due to lockdown closure.

Garden of Remembrance

All is continuing well. There had been twenty interments last year but the current lockdown had meant many families were not able to travel from outside the area. There are eight interments to be arranged over the coming months.

Jean and Malcolm have chosen to continue to keep the garden well maintained as they start early in the morning, are outside and do not come into contact with visitors. Thanks were recorded for their continued work in keep the garden looking so well.

Pastoral Support

There are currently forty four households regularly contacted by the Telecare Team, and any specific bereavement support requests are advised by Charlie. It has been suggested to a number of people to have a personal alarms (as recommended by Age UK) to provide additional independence and reassurance, and a number of contacts had taken this up. Christmas cards and candles were delivered to twenty eight households and were greatly appreciated. Wendy thanked all of the team for continuing to provide this very important outreach on behalf of St Mark's.

Safeguarding

Janet had recently attended an online safeguarding course. It had confirmed that our processes and procedures are fully compliant with both Charity Commission and Diocesan requirements. Sam added that guidelines for religious communities were being widened to other none Church of England bodies by the Charity Commissioners. Charlie and Sam will also be attending an online course covering safer recruitment. Thanks were given to Janet for continuing to ensure all safeguarding requirements are met.

Mission Matters and MAP Report

Sam had received a letter of thanks from JustUs for the donation made following the Christmas service collections. Plans were on hold until after lockdown regarding the Mission Action Plan.

Deanery Matters

Sam advised that two vacancies within the Deanery at St Andrew's and Kempston Transfiguration were going through the appointment process and are likely to be filled by the end of the year. Fr Paul Norwood will be Collated and Installed at St Martin's on 16 February 2021.

A.O.B

Charlie informed members that more requests had been received for online copies of Parish News from outside of the parish, which was very good.

Ian thanked Barry Southam for taking on the regular testing of the fire alarm system.

Dates of next meetings

The APCM will be held after the Wednesday Zoom Service on 19 May.

With no further business the meeting closed with The Grace.

Leadership Team Update

The following information is of importance to PCC Members and will be brought to the next meeting. It was agreed that there should be no plans to hold Car Boot Sales or the Christmas Fayre this year. The 'new normal' would likely mean having to be flexible and not involve set plans over the coming months. As an example of this, the online craft sale last year proved very successful, with over £400 raised, and could be promoted strongly this year. Janet will discuss with the Craft Group.