



St. Mark's Church Parochial Church Council

Minutes of PCC Meeting 14 June 2022



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 began with Compline and 21 people attended

Apologies

Margaret Appleton, Elizabeth Bean, Di Johnson, Janet Day, Jean Kirk, Janet Warren, Avril Williams,

Minutes of the previous meeting

Minutes of the 16 February online meeting were agreed with no matters arising.

Leadership Report

- The Leadership Team had met on 6 May, which was the first meeting for the two new LT members Diana and Elizabeth following the APCM on 24 April.
- Ian went through the Church Finances and budgets and year to date results, which highlighted the challenges ahead, particularly with Pre School and the soaring utility costs.
- Laura reported that it was excellent that most of the groups hiring from us have now returned following breaks for COVID and thanks to Wendy and the Volunteers for keeping everything going and encouraging hire from new groups.
- The Leadership Team had looked at the latest Church and Public Health guidance on COVID, which has become a feature of all our meetings. Where it is felt safe and sensible, measures are updated to make sure all the congregations' needs are considered. As a result, the following is to update PCC members:-
 - ⇒ We agreed to finish with disposable cups on a Sunday reverting to mugs, the coffee arrangements seem to be going well with people having the opportunity for fellowship but in a spaced and airy environment.
 - ⇒ Janine has removed the needs to book into Chat and Play and was also looking at re introducing refreshments and was picking up with Helen to mirror COVID procedures which we are supportive of.
 - ⇒ We discussed singing, and agreed to defer any decision on returning to standing to sing until September and you will have seen the article from Charlie in Parish News detailing our rationale.
 - ⇒ We are hoping to be in a position to resume Junior Church in September and are exploring a possible grant from the Diocese towards Children's work.
 - ⇒ Likewise we agreed to defer a decision on the return of Bereavement Support Group until September.
- Laura reported that good numbers are being maintained on both YouTube and the Parish News Circulation list. It was good that we are keeping in touch when people can't get to our services or are nervous at attending in person.
- Easter services were well attended and we felt offered a variety of services/material suiting differing spiritual needs.
- Queens Jubilee – To celebrate, it was agreed to offer cake on Sunday 5th June, which was enjoyed by all.
- Christian Aid - Envelopes and collecting boxes had raised over £400, thanks were expressed to Jean Bank and Carolyn Morris.
- Harvest – Hog Roast on 4th September will follow the Harvest Service. Food donated at the service will go to the Foodbank. Rod Jones has kindly agreed to make the Harvest loaf and we will share this at the end of the service.
- Safeguarding – Mike Cooper confirmed there have been no Safeguarding incidents to report. Dashboard is being updated and one trustee is still to finish mandatory training due to illness – plan in place to complete.
- Commemoration Service – Date set 06/11/22 Speaker being arranged.
- Events/fundraising – We discussed some ideas for Social and fundraising events for the coming year and we will come out to you once these are finalised and dates are agreed, these include a quiz and raffle.
- A question was asked about re-introducing Car Boot sales, but there are no plans to do this for the remainder of the year.

- Laura finished by thanking everyone, on behalf of the Leadership Team, for all the support given by church members.

Finance

- Ian gave details of the Church finances for the financial year to Apr 2022. On the Main Account income totalled £89 883 and Expenditure £113 341. The year to date deficit reflected a gradual build up in hire income from September, expenditure of £10 974 on completion of the veranda, £1 990 Hepa filters and £450 for fogging equipment, plus increased utility costs. Ian gave further details of this when going through actual results versus budget for the period. Overall income had been 66.25% against a target of 66.67%, expenditure had been 69.91% against the target of 66.67%, with gas and electricity costs being 91.57% and 109.20%. This highlighted the need to ensure savings on energy usage wherever possible. To illustrate this further, Ian pointed out that our current gas charges were more than previous combined gas, electricity and telephone charges. Steps had been taken to offset energy usage.
- Ian had been successful in applying for and receiving a 50% grant to upgrade all the church lighting to LED. A grant of £2 286 (Omicron Grant) had also been received to help offset reduced hire income.
- Hire charges had now been increased to reflect increased running costs but, at the same time, ensure that St Mark's remained very competitive.
- Ian thanked church members for their continuing generosity through Sunday offerings, with the majority being gift aided. The Gift Aid claim received for Jan- Apr 2022 had been £4 573.
- The account with the Monmouth Building Society was not giving the regular data originally expected, but contact with them was ongoing.
- Members were advised that our reserves policy was still being met.
- The Preschool Account was showing a deficit of £7 159.99 for the period. This was due largely to a gradual build up in numbers from Sept last year. Proportionate hire costs had also been paid. Everyone was working to contain costs, and numbers were looking good for this September, which was encouraging. An ongoing debt has been referred to the small claims court.
- The minimum wage had been increased to £9.50 per hour.
- The Church Yards Account had a surplus of £4746.97 for the period, with an account balance of £35 041.86. Ian was thanked for his continued hard work in looking after the accounts during such a difficult period.

Centre Management

Wendy reported that there are 46 groups hiring the church premises and it was hoped that this would increase to 50. The new veranda was working well and ensures an even spread of people entering and leaving the premises. This will be of even greater benefit in the winter months. General decoration of the premises is ongoing, as funds permit.

- Val Simmonds had joined the team of volunteers, and this had been of particular help while Elizabeth Bean was unable to come into the office. Elizabeth would appreciate a phone call from friends whilst she is unable to volunteer. All the volunteers were thanked for their continued support.
- Hire income is running at £5 500 to £6 000 per month.
- Wendy will continue to advise Mike Cooper details of new organisations using the premises to ensure that the Safeguarding dashboard is updated.

Worship Arrangements

The current arrangements were working well, with communion now being given by the ministers by intinction. High numbers of attendance had been seen at services with an average of over 30 views per week on our channel www.YouTube.com/stmarksbedford. A question was asked about whether we had always had a sung Eucharist in the current format and whether this would be changed to occasional services of the Word. It was noted that the service was the same as pre-covid and no additional music had been introduced to the service of Holy Communion. Charlie stated that it was required that a service of Holy Communion take place every Sunday in the parish and there were no plans to reintroduce an 8.30am service. It was also noted that with numbers attending the midweek service consistently being 15 plus this should continue in the current format.

Preschool

Currently all places are taken, and numbers are strong for the start of the September term. This was good news, given the losses attributable largely to the slow build up in numbers last September. A question was asked about Holiday Club numbers, it is currently considered important that this service is available to ensure complete child care and contributing to strong numbers overall. It is constantly monitored and staffing ratios are considered carefully. No Safeguarding issues have arisen. It was stressed that any financial shortfall to the PCC budget brought about as a consequence of the preschool operation should be balanced against the contribution of preschool to the hire income.

Chat and Play

All is going well. It had been agreed that sign in (track and trace) could now be suspended.

Junior Church

Aiming to restart in September

Pastoral Support

Following a recent meeting, and the further easing of restrictions, there was a possibility of restart the monthly bereavement group from September. As recorded previously, any specific bereavement support requests or concerns, from anyone, please advise Charlie.

Garden of Remembrance

All was going well. There have been 17 interments this year so far, and 4 reservations all in Willow. There are now 6 plots remaining in Willow and 6 in Oak. There are spaces in the columbaria and plans are in place for additional kerbs and an additional area for plots. Thanks were recorded to Avril and Jim and also to Alan, who has assisted Charlie with interments through the past months.

Safeguarding Update

There had been no Serious Incidents or Safeguarding issues. Mike also confirmed that training was up to date with members of the PCC. New organisations using the church premises are being advised to Mike to ensure that the Safeguarding dashboard is up to date. Mike advised members that The Safeguarding Policy, reviewed 9 June 2021, is current as part of our procedure to review every two years. PCC members, as trustees, are reminded that they must report any safeguarding situation to Charlie and Mike, as Safeguarding Officer. A copy of the Safeguarding Handbook is available in the church office. The PCC agreed to the current policy.

Mission Matters

The Sunday Harvest with Hog Roast would take place on 4 September. Sam advised that it was planned for the Harvest Appeal this year to be for Food Bank.

Deanery Matters

Sam updated members on matters within the Deanery and Diocese. Susan Pope had retired as Diocesan Secretary and David White had been appointed in October last year. It was planned that a member of the Diocesan team will attend at least one Deanery meeting each year. The Deanery were proposing that the formula for calculating the Parish share for each church, currently 1.3 for St Mark's, remain unchanged. This proposal was agreed by PCC Members. It was hoped that savings would be made through the Diocesan Office which would support this. It was noted that the Diocesan Office was to be renamed as the Parish Support Office, a change of emphasis it was hoped. It was planned to appoint a curate in the Elstow group of churches by July. A new minister will be installed at Christ Church, also in July. Annual church inspections will be arranged by Pauline Kendall.

Dates of next meetings

Forthcoming Meetings 18 October 2022, 10 January and 3 April 2023 all starting at 7.30pm for 7.45pm in Church. Please note that the APCM will be on 16 April 2023

With no further business the meeting closed with The Grace.