



# St. Mark's Church Parochial Church Council

## Minutes of PCC Meeting 9 June 2021



The PCC of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Mark, Bedford Charity Number 1164416.  
All minutes are available on our website [www.stmarkschurch.com](http://www.stmarkschurch.com)

### The meeting was proceeded by Morning Prayer online on Zoom

The meeting began with prayers

21 people attended the online meeting

#### Apologies

Helen Harpin, Liz Jackson, Jean Kirk, Wendy Waters, Avril Williams

**Minutes of the previous meeting** Minutes of the 10 February online meeting were agreed with no matters arising.

#### Leadership Report

The Leadership Team had met on 27 May. Mike agreed to be our Safeguarding Officer following the decision by Janet Day to step back from the full roll. She will continue to co-ordinate DBS registrations and support Mike. A meeting is being set up to arrange the handover. Confirmation of all PCC member full names will be advised to the Charity Commissioners by Sam. A report will be given later and is part of the PCC set agenda.

Ian gave an update on the financial position and the report will also be included later on the agenda.

There has been ongoing discussion on our planning for post 21 June. A number of questions have been raised in regard to what is now allowed to happen in church services and meeting of church groups, and church outside activities etc.

The Leadership Team have always taken measures which work within practices allowed by the rules for dealing with the pandemic and have always maintained a cautious balance between what is allowed and what we consider to be safe for St Mark's.

There has never been a time when we have considered it safe to open any of our church groups including Bereavement Support, Chat and Play, Storybox etc. Part of the reason for the latest decisions has been the elevated levels of COVID in Bedford, which had the third highest rates in the country. In recent weeks there was concern expressed by public health that the rates might be so high in Bedford that it would be necessary to advise the closure of public worship.

#### Worship Arrangements

Following on from the Leadership report, throughout the pandemic we have consistently acted to put in place measures which have kept our congregation safe. The format of our services and the split times have ensured this, and reinforced the decision to continue with this format. We are not aware of any person contracting the virus at St Mark's and no member of our church family having been ill with COVID.

We are represented on the Faith Leaders Group, established to maintain contact between Public Health and all religious groups in Bedford, which keeps us exceptionally well informed on the weekly reports from Public Health. We have reinforced our own safety first approach with regular messaging to our congregation. The Leadership Team will continue to regularly review and make decisions, informed by medical and scientific advice, appropriate to our own church context and as previously agreed with the Church Council. Members supported this action.

The 4th and 5th September is on the calendar for a Harvest/Mission weekend with Hog Roast. It is hoped that this can also be a celebration of some return to pre pandemic activity.

## Finance

Ian gave details of the Church finances for the financial year to date (Sep-May). On the main account income totalled £113 114 and expenditure of £111,624 giving a small surplus.

YTD Budget on Main Ac was Income 80.02% Expenditure 74.6% . Ian thanked all members of the congregation for the generous financial support given throughout the past 18 month which, coupled with grant support for loss of rental income, had enabled St Mark's to meet all of its commitments.

Additionally, a £4 176 Gift Aid payment had been received from gifts made by the congregation during the Jan-Apr 2021 period. In addition, we had received two legacy gifts, and would be looking at ways in which to invest these. Recommendations would be brought back to a future meeting. The Preschool account for the period had income of £109 745 and expenditure of £127 015. The shortfall had been covered from reserves and the expenditure had included approx. £13 000 in premises hire payments. We were still compliant with our reserves policy. All Preschool staff were now off furlough. Numbers for the term from September were encouraging. The Churchyards account had income of £20 949 and expenditure of £9 464. Ian also reported that the signed Church accounts for the last financial year had been sent to The Charity Commissioners and HMRC

## Centre Management

Wendy reported that she was delighted to be back from furlough for one day per week. We had been able to welcome two groups back who, as part of nationwide groups, must meet their own and our risk assessment criteria.

Before any group returns, they have to complete a risk assessment to meet the current restrictions.

We have had confirmation that most of the groups plan to return as and when restrictions allow.

Unfortunately three groups have cancelled due to lack of numbers but we have one new group started.

We continue to fog the building and have hand sanitizer at the entrance to the Wren & Biffa rooms and in the foyer of the main building. I am delighted that all the office volunteers continue to ask me when they can return.

During the shutdown we have taken the opportunity to re decorate most of the building.

Plans are in hand for all the paths to be re-laid in the near future.

## Preschool

All is running well under the ongoing Covid restrictions, with the children split into age groups by 'bubble'. Muriel Skeoch will be retiring at the end of the summer term after many years with Preschool. Interviews for a replacement will be held later this month. Numbers are looking for September so far.

## Storybox

No report due to lockdown closure.

## Chat and Play

No report due to lockdown closure.

## Junior Church

No report due to lockdown closure.

## Pastoral Support

Charlie thanked Wendy Waters for all her commitment to the Pastoral Support Team as she steps aside and all of the members of the group for the important work that they do. Under the current restrictions contact has continued to be maintained through by the Telecare Team. Any specific bereavement support requests or concerns, from anyone, please advise Charlie.

## Garden of Remembrance

All is going well. There were 5 interments in May and a further 6 during June, as a result of arrangements being delayed earlier in the year. Jean and Malcolm continue to keep the garden looking so well. As mentioned earlier, some of the path areas will be improved over the coming weeks.

### **Safeguarding Update**

Mike confirmed that there had been no Safeguarding or Serious Incidents.

Following a meeting he had had with Janet, he thanked her for the detailed and organized records she had passed to him. Members thanked Janet for her expertise and hard work in ensuring our responsibilities were met over the many years as our Safeguarding Officer.

It was restated that, as trustees, we all have responsibility to report any Safeguarding or Serious Incidents, to the ministers and Mike.

PCC members will be advised dates for online training as they become available.

Members formally ratified the appointment of Mike Cooper as the Safeguarding Officer for St Mark's.

### **Mission Matters**

Sam confirmed that 5 September had been reserved as the date we would work towards for this year's Mission Project, although this would be subject to circumstances nearer the time. The social aspect would include a hog roast. Some ideas had been suggested, Emmaus and The Kings Arms, but no firm decision had been made and other suggestions would be welcomed.

### **Deanery Matters**

The next meeting is to be held on 22 June.

### **Dates of next meetings**

It was agreed that we would not set any meeting dates until the current situation locally was known

With no further business the meeting closed at 11.10 with The Grace.