

# St Peter and St Paul Wadhurst

## Minutes of the Annual Vestry meeting (AVM) and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)

Held on

**22 October 2020 at 8pm in the Church**

*Note: the meeting was held in line with all current government guidelines for Covid safety and a list of all attendees was taken, including contact details for track and trace purposes.*

The Agenda and all supporting papers and reports referred to in these minutes had been available on the Church website in advance of the meeting for anyone to consult and raise questions.

The Vicar, Revd Dr Paul Ratcliff (PR) welcomed all to the meetings, which had been postponed from April 2020 due to Covid 19 pandemic restrictions. He reflected that the meeting on this occasion would be business-focussed rather than strategic, reflecting the limitations of social distancing

### **AVM**

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received from Anthony Dunnett, Ruth Dunnett and Michael Toynbee.

#### **2. Opening Prayer**

The Vicar opened the meeting with a reading from the Psalms and with prayer.

#### **3. Minutes of the last Meeting**

The minutes of the AVM held on 29 April 2019 were agreed and signed by PR as a true record.

#### **4. Election of Churchwardens**

PR noted that Chris Bithell was stepping down from her role as Churchwarden after six years' service covering the interregnum and his first year as Vicar. He expressed huge appreciation for her work and especially her assistance to him since his arrival. He presented a gift to show the appreciation of the whole church community. In reply Chris stated it had been a pleasure to serve and she had been grateful for the opportunity. She thanked the many other church members who had assisted her during her tenure.

Nomination papers had been submitted for Vanessa Sharman (second year), proposed by George Pulman and seconded by Penny Dobson, and John Bateup (first year), proposed by Peter Dwyer and seconded by Vanessa Sharman. Both were elected unanimously.

#### **5. Churchwardens' Visitations**

The usual service held to swear in Churchwardens will not take place due to Covid restrictions, so the Vicar will be responsible for this under an 'instrument of admission'. This will take place at the service on the first Sunday in November 2020.

## APCM

### **1. Minutes of the last meeting**

No comments or corrections had been received so these were signed by PR as an accurate record.

### **2. Matters Arising**

None.

### **3. Adoption of the Annual Report for 2019**

This report, covering all the activities and finances of the church to the year ending 31 December 2019, had been approved by the PCC in March 2020. The Treasurer, Paul Stephens, reviewed the highlights.

The financial report has been prepared in accordance Financial Reporting Standards for Charities and must show the 'public benefit' of the church as a charity and to confirm it as a 'going concern' in financial terms. Both had been demonstrated.

In 2019 income had increased by £17K (12%) over the prior year due to stewardship giving, and general unrestricted activities' expenditure had remained broadly in line with 2018. The cash surplus at year end was approximately £6K (compared with a £21.7K deficit in 2018). Unrestricted funds increased by £16K to £434K but restricted funds were down. The church aims to operate with around 3 months reserves, and it had been hoped to restore this in 2020. However, the closure of the church from March 2020 has impacted on this goal as income has fallen.

PS noted that during the pandemic the church maintained its commitments to pay salaries of employees and contractors, and to maintaining its service to the community, and it was the positive results in 2019 which allowed this to be the case. The encouraging response to an appeal for donations in October suggests that the cash deficit in 2020 will be a small one despite the challenging circumstances.

The Treasurer presented the Annual Report for the APCM to accept. This was proposed by Peter Thompson, seconded by Michael Flegg and agreed unanimously.

### **4. Appointment of the Independent Examiner**

The Treasurer recommended that Lindeyer Francis Ferguson Ltd be re-appointed to examine and approve the accounts for the coming year. This was proposed by Michael Hardcastle and seconded by Sue Hill and agreed unanimously.

### **5. Deanery Synod Representation**

PS explained that the Deanery Synod was the governing body of our Deanery, working on a triennium. It holds three meetings a year with guest speakers and decides on the Parish Share payment. Wadhurst church is permitted up to four representatives at Deanery Synod.

A nomination had been received for Chris Bithell (nominated by George Pulman, seconded by Vanessa Sharman). George Pulman confirmed he was willing to serve a further 3-year term, and was proposed by Paul Stephens and seconded by Hollie Butler. Both candidates were endorsed unanimously.

PR invited any other persons willing to take up a place at Deanery Synod to make themselves known to him.

## **6. Election of PCC Representatives**

The PCC currently has a large number of *ex officio* members (up to 15), including the incumbent and churchwardens, and can also have up to 12 elected members. Several elected PCC members had stepped down because they had completed their term or because they had moved away from the area. PR thanked them all for their service in the past year.

A nomination had been received for Miquela Walsh (nominated by Vanessa Sharman and seconded by George Pulman) and this was endorsed unanimously.

Ian Fitzgerald was invited to continue his work as Fabric Chairman as an elected member (nominated by Paul Stephens, seconded by Lesley Wardrop). Martin Lindsay was invited to serve as an elected member (nominated by Chris Bithell and seconded by Paul Stephens). Both were accepted unanimously.

## **7. Appointments**

### **a. Deputy Churchwardens**

Peter Dwyer had agreed to continue in post. PR invited volunteers but there was none at this time.

### **b. Sidesmen**

PR noted that some Sidesmen had now moved away or signalled their wish to step down. Michael Sharman, Dot Smytherman and Janet Evans had expressed willingness to serve in their place. The agreed list of Sidesmen is:

Martin Turner  
James Ward  
Paul Stephens  
Heather Woodward  
Lynn & Arthur Dewar  
Judy Alexander  
Sheila & Garth Cooper  
Peter Dwyer  
Michael Hardcastle  
Sheila & Roger Lockwood  
Lucy & Steve Swanton  
Brian Tuck  
Heather Ratcliff  
Andrew Ratcliff  
George Pulman  
Janet & John Fuller  
Michael Sharman  
Dot Smytherman  
Janet Evans

c. Electoral Roll Officer - Jean Sermon indicated her agreement to continue in this role.

d. Health and Safety Officer - Ian Fitzgerald agreed to continue in this role.

e. Safeguarding Officer - Lesley Wardrop agreed to continue in this role.

f. Disclosure Officer (also referred to as Lead Recruiter) - Penny Dobson agreed to continue in this role.

PR also noted that the PCC has an 'Executive Committee' of officers who have delegated authority from the PCC to deal with matters arising between PCC meetings. This committee consists of the Vicar, Treasurer, Churchwardens and PCC Secretary, plus up to two PCC members. Anthony Dunnett has faithfully served in this capacity for many years but has now come to the end of his PCC term. PR invited other PCC members to volunteer. None responded.

### **8. Electoral Roll Report**

The electoral roll stands at 192, down ten from 2018 – eight have joined, 10 have left the area and sadly eight members have died.

### **9. Deanery Synod Report**

Kate Burley (Stonegate) had provided a report on the Deanery Synod. Two meetings had taken place with guest speakers but two more had been cancelled due to Covid. A 'virtual' meeting will take place in the near future to consider Deanery Finances.

### **10. Reports on Church Life**

Several reports of activities in the church had been made available on the website showing the wide range of activities carried out by church members in the past 18 months; many in support of the local community. The following activities were commented upon:

PR noted the appreciation of the whole community for the work of Carillon Cottage team-leaders, volunteers and of Friends Across Wadhurst which had been 'spectacularly useful' during the pandemic. He also praised the work of Jackie Scott and the Pastoral team for their work with the older people in the parish.

He noted that the church has finally gained approval to replace the stolen lead from the vestry roof with a material less attractive to thieves and that the insurance has agreed to cover the vestry damage and decoration of the creche.

PR thanked Hollie Butler for her time, effort, creativity and energy over the past four years in her role as Pastoral Assistant for Families, putting children at the heart of our church. As she moves into training for ordination, she will continue as a volunteer for some aspects, notably School Pastors.

PR warned that work may soon be required on the fabric of St George's Hall, but no clubs are currently able to meet there, impacting on income.

The strong culture of Home Groups in Wadhurst continues and leaders have been creative in keeping them going for mutual support and study. PR emphasised that anyone is welcome to join a home group and that it is also possible for new ones to start.

Polly Bradford noted with regret that CTIW is in abeyance at present due to Covid.

### **11. Chairman's Remarks**

PR reviewed the church 'hierarchy' stressing that we have one Head - Jesus - and one mission (John 3:16) and that these inform the way in which Wadhurst Church is run. The PCC is the governing body

(with the Executive Committee acting on its behalf from time to time). The PCC has responsibility for the employees of the church, for Carillon Cottage and for other activities relating to Finances, Fabric, Safeguarding, and Pastoral care of church members and the wider community.

The Finance Committee comprises the Treasurer, the Vicar, a Churchwarden (Vanessa Sharman), plus Peter Thompson and Anthony Dunnett – who use their considerable financial experience to assist the church in this role.

Ian Fitzgerald heads a Fabric group and needs more help with this – volunteers were asked for.

The Safeguarding team is the Safeguarding Officer (Lesley Wardrop), Lead Recruiter (Penny Dobson), Hollie Butler (especial responsibility for children) and Chris Bithell (responsibility for the elderly).

A Pastoral group under PR's leadership had its first meeting in March 2020 just as lockdown was about to start. As part of her contextual training for ordination, Hollie Butler will assume responsibility for this.

A Fellowship group will resume activity to support the 'social' life of the church after lockdown.

During the year work has been done on the Terms of Reference of Carillon Cottage to clarify its governance.

As minister, PR has four primary responsibilities within the life of the church:

- Prayer and Worship
- Discipleship
- Pastoral Care
- Evangelism

Despite a difficult year we have worked hard to meet these goals. In Prayer and Worship the on-line services have been introduced and we have shared resources. In Discipleship the Home Groups in Wadhurst are held up as an example of how this should be done elsewhere. Carillon Cottage has demonstrated pastoral care and PR has himself telephoned almost everyone in the church at least once, supported by Jackie Scott's efforts to keep in touch with the elderly. Evangelism has been more difficult but the on-line services have been accessed by many more people than attend church usually.

We became a United Benefice of Wadhurst Stonegate and Tidebrook on 1 June 2020 and it will be for the church community to determine how this will work. An 'away day' is planned for all three churches to come together to set a joint vision.

## **12. Other Business**

PR noted that all that has been achieved in the last year has been through the grace of God and the action of the Holy Spirit, but that many people have contributed their part. It would be impossible to name everyone, but he noted with thanks the work and support offered by the two Churchwardens, the Treasurer, the Church Administrator and the PCC Secretary. Peter Thompson added thanks to Martin Lindsay for the excellent quality of our on-line services.

Hollie Butler offered thanks to Revd Paul Ratcliff for his leadership in very difficult times, which was endorsed by the APCM.

**The meeting closed with The Grace.**