

Benefice of BCMU: *One Church PCC Meeting - Zoom*

A Community of Spiritual Disciples Leading our Benefice through Worshipful Working

MINUTES

Date: Monday 15 November 2021

Time: 7:30pm

Venue: St Andrew's

Who is Gathering

Roles	St Andrew	St Bartholomew	St Michael	Co-opted
Priest	Simon Lewis ✓			
Readers	Gene Joyner ✓ Nikki Burns	(non voting)		
Churchwarden	Margaret Speirs ✓	Judith Longhurst ✓	Kate Reynolds ✓	
Churchwarden		Diana Coles ✓	Jonathan Reynolds ✓	
Deanery Synod	Penny Crawford ✓	Nigel Crocker ✓	Jean Lockett ✓	
Deanery Synod	Helen Barnes ✓	Helen Fenn ✓		
Elected	Ben Wiggins ✓	Muriel Cole ✓	Gill Durbin	
Elected	Lynsey Hatherall (late: 8:30om) ✓	Gerald Coles ✓	Lucy Hemsley (Ap)	
Elected		Charlie Fenn ✓	John Allen (Ap)	
Notetaker				Laura Williams ✓
Secretary			Sue Owst ✓	vacancy
Treasurer				vacancy
Total PCC	7	9	9	
Majority	4	5	5	
Quorum (1/3)	2	3	3	
Total at Meeting	7	9	6	
Quorum	Y	Y	Y	

Note: This is a One Church Meeting

7.30pm: We Gather in God's Name

1. Welcome

Chair

2. Declaration of Quorum for each Parish

- A candle was lit announcing our gathering in the presence of God

7.45pm: We Celebrate Our Past

Chair

3. Communication and Correspondence - none

4. Approval of past Minutes

- Inaccuracies - Charlie Fenn was there!
- Approval vote - Proposed SL, Seconded CF, Approved 16/18 (one late, one abstention)
- Matters arising - St Andrew's accounts need to be sent out to the Electoral roll members and a date organised for them to meet (*subsequently arranged for Sunday 5th December*).

5. Progress updates from last meeting

Chair

- Messy Church - this is growing slowly. There are regular attendees and a small Team of helpers. The atmosphere is very positive and we hope that other families will join.
- Cafe Church has been very poorly attended so we are suspending this form of worship whilst we review.
- Simon Lewis is in conversation with the Cafe Church team and the Baptist Church about offering a combined Seeker Worship.
- Mini Melodies is growing and is well attended (across the generations) - drawing from across the Benefice and beyond
- Thank Cake it's Friday has begun in CM Old School Room (JL) Picking up momentum.
- Schools. Simon has visited both Schools recently to build up the partnership. Blagdon school had visited for Remembrance and Ubley School are hoping to resume collective worship in St Bartholomew's (following increased covid measures). Simon is working with John Miles to build a partnership with Blagdon School and the church community.
- Working the Harptrees: We have invited E and W Harptree and Hinton Blewett to worship with us on the fourth Sunday of each month as part of a shared partnership with our neighbouring parish. We will be looking at the advert for the interim priest and the job description profile at the next meeting for discussion.
- Current Accounts:
 - St Andrew and St Hugh: £21,029 (although over £3,000 just paid in parochial fees for Qs 1-3.)
 - St Bartholomew: £13,032, less Benefice expenses of c.£2,000
 - St Michael's: c.£7,500 in the current accounts
- Jim Hanmer has committed to doing the end of year accounts for 2021 for St A and St B

8.00pm: We Present Our Offering

SL

6. Consent Agenda - none

7. Discussion Agenda

Finance Structure of the new PCC

LW

- 3 different financial models were sent to the PCC in advance of the meeting. PCC members were asked to familiarise themselves with these. Introduction by Simon Lewis (please see separate attachment)
- There was a pause part way through the discussion to dwell in God's Word

Option One: Discussion points and questions raised

- Do we know what the approximate running costs would be for the Common Mission Fund (with or without the Parish Share)? What is the sum of our annual shared (Benefice) costs? (It was agreed to ask JH for a current breakdown.
- When will we know what our new parish share will be? Not knowing makes it difficult to make a decision about our own finances. It was hoped that this would be shared by the diocese soon. The amounts paid are not currently the same in each of our three churches. If we paid a collective parish share with the current model, Blagdon would pay half, CM a third and Ubley a sixth, which does not reflect current church attendance/ finances/ membership. We would need to look at a fairer way of apportioning this. The ratios would have to be looked at again because our churches have changed since these were set up.
- Whichever option we chose, things would have to be reviewed and the PCC would need to address this

- Option 1 is a way of giving each village control over its church finances but the PCC is still the ultimately responsible body. We have a shared responsibility for all our churches. Within option 1 we have the capacity to use CMFs towards any of our buildings if necessary, but on the whole the villages would retain control.
- Moving to one parish would allow us to streamline and become more efficient. Option 1 adds another layer of complexity. It defeats the object and the issues to resolve seem huge. One parish was supposed to be about mission
- We have achieved so much in the past year and we do not want to lose this because of financial differences of opinion. Option 1 allows us to move forward by keeping our finances the same.
- It was also felt that Option 1 does not allow us to be one church and one family together. It is a model that keeps us separate - the CMF is an extra layer. Why would we want to keep everything we have now. Option 1 was not viewed by many as a valid option.
- Option 1 does not feel progressive or meet our aim of a unified church. It requires more time and cost and looks more complicated than what we have at the moment. It feels like a backward step. It's right that it's included but not felt to be a viable option.
- Option 1 required more resources.
- The PCC discussed delivering change in our parishes. Some people do not deal well with change and we need to offer them a fall-back option and give them options. Option 1 offers the least change. We shouldn't dismiss it before we've had a forum
- The important thing is that we worship together and grow together. We are not of one mind yet! Do we have to go for a more complete option now or should we be cautious? We should be worshipping and working together. I would rather have a more conservative (or less progressive financial scheme) if it meant that we continued to travel in the right direction and took people with us.
- There are some who only feel an attachment to their own village and their own church building.
- It is the pace of change that we need to be careful with. We need to bring everyone along with us.
- Individual PCCs needed to discuss all the options - not all members were present all should be involved because we represent our community and there will be implications for generations to come. We need to share these ideas at a forum - to involve everyone in what's happening - They need to know about how the PCC feels. It is not an easy role.
- The process for discussing Worship was very productive and we should try to follow that mode of operating again. Communication is a good thing. We should be prepared to share.
- Finances can also seem overwhelming. PCCs should be prepared to offer their parishes some guidance and support.
- We should be open even if we cannot get everyone to agree. We need to have clarity of process - so that people are consulted as part of a process - and we have decision making. If a favoured model is presented to parishioners PCC members need confidence in the reasons behind the choice - to be able to justify and explain it.
- The idea of becoming one parish is to free up people and their time and effort to devote to mission when we are currently weighed down with three sets of admin and finance.
- We need to have finances to manage in the first place. We have suffered considerably through covid. There have been no opportunities to fundraise and involve our parishioners. We must remember to continue to raise the money.

- There is a lack of awareness about how finances are currently managed. Lots of people still think that when they give to the church, it goes to a building, not on mission. Our income does not just go to the building. In terms of communication we are behind the starting line because many people do not currently have a strong grasp on how parish finances work or how ministry and the parish share are organised financially. We need to be better at helping other people understand finance.
- We should explain to people, where their money goes. We need to be honest and helpful. The PCC are elected representatives and are there to guide people.
- Are financial differences just an opportunity for people to back out of being a single parish? We know that some of the elements of being one parish are hugely beneficial. We need to remember the benefits of our vision to become one. Is finance being used by some as a way of stalling things?
- A year ago, the vision towards becoming one parish was widely supported both at the PCC and the APCM (from more widely in the parish). It would be sad to abandon all that progress and enthusiasm because of disagreements over money. Option 1 means 'lets still become 1 even if finances are a barrier. Some people will not want change. We should not dismiss them, we need to allay their fears and listen to them and offer a solution that will preserve all the things that they honour and feel committed to, but also simplifies the organisation of finances. At the moment we all pay for each individual church. Paying one set of bills would be much simpler and we would not have to maintain so many accounts. We need to answer people's concerns and look at what they feel protective about but also let us think about our vision and a way of moving forward. Life is full of change, but the church has always been bad at change because they take the view of the few people who do not want it. We have to step out in faith.

Option 2 and 3: Discussion points and questions raised

- If more than one thing was accounted for within the same account, would you be able to tell how much was in the account for each thing?
- It is usual in accountancy practice to organise the allocation of income and expenditure for each amount that goes through an account. You do not need to have a separate account for each pot of money- eg two separate bank accounts for music and bells. Restricted funds can only be spent when a resolution is passed. This is a bookkeeping issue not a bank account issue.
- Q: Ubley does not have any restricted funds. Where would they get the money to maintain the church? Would they have to apply to the PCC for money

A: It would have to come from the shared funds. You can only spend money in restricted funds on the specified items. Most things would have to be paid for from the shared pot of money because very few things that we spend money on match the qualifying criteria of restricted funds. Just as now money would be spent on necessary work it needs to be done. Money would come out of restricted funds when we had a project that allowed us to spend them.

- All the churches in Option 2 would have a village fabric committee. If there are restricted funds VCCs would advise on when to spend them. If there are no restricted funds, the VCC advises the PCC on the work that needs to be done and the funds (from the common fund) that will be needed.
- At the moment as a parish we all make small decisions. Who will be making these decisions when we become one parish with the option 2 model? Option 3 allows us to build up a reserve of money for our individual church buildings. Many preferred this way of working.

- Option 2 is about people who are responsible for premises - like a fabric committee. We already have this in that people (not on the PCC) advise us on how to maintain our buildings and we follow their advice.
- Not all spending currently requires discussion. We accept that there is a certain amount of necessary spending - eg tealights, paper, etc. Option 2 allows people who live in villages who have given money for a specific purpose to retain some control on the spending of their funds
- It allows them to be interested in their local buildings
- Option 2 welcomes the input of local people and their expertise, even if they are more interested in the buildings than in other aspects of church life. The Village Fabric Committees could also be accommodated into Options 1 or 3.
- If a church has built up a reserve to put towards a certain cause (such as a quinquennial report) how do we deal with this - if the finances are not currently restricted, but just designated? (eg if Ubley was designating £1000 per year towards building repairs). Option 2 would not help us because there is no fund available for us, but Option 3 would be much better because it allows us to build up our own funds in a general sense (designated funds). The PCC needs to build up some reserves to safeguard our churches for the future. We should be planning for the future and unforeseen expenditure no matter which Option we go for.
- Whilst respecting the need to take people with us, in 20 years time, if we have a successful united parish, it was felt that we would be closer to model 3 than model 1. Separate bank accounts are not a sign of a united church. We should be aiming for Model 2 or 3 for the future. Some liked the village representative element of option 2, as it brings in more people who care in the community. But really this should not be about money at all, it should be about how we care for our community.
- This evening has helped us to understand things in more detail. Lots of questions have arisen. Would a village fabric committee be viable? Could they work with other options? Our PCCs need to be able to discuss these things again separately - they are complex issues and we shouldn't rush to make decisions. We need to address the practicality of choices. Then we would be in a position to justify our choices to our wider community.
- There was a concern about how dominant the issue of money will become.
- We followed a clear process when discussing worship. It was helpful and informative and shaped our decision making. We should have faith in this process and use it again. Take our discussion about finances to an open forum and allow everyone to be part of the process. However it is important not to overwhelm people with too much information.
- It was proposed that we discuss it in our individual PCCs on 6th December where there is space to discuss it individually (as well as other issues). At the January PCC meeting, we will discuss the options again based on our PCC meetings and hopefully come to a decision about a preferred option. This will then be put to an open forum.
- This was unanimously agreed upon.
- We must not lose sight of why we are working towards a single parish and we must be good at communicating. This must be about God and our spirituality. The money is God's money and it is a tool to our mission. Another Pathways newsletter would help people to understand.

Meeting concluded at 10:00pm