



# The Parish Church of St George, Jesmond

## Parochial Church Council

### **Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 9 April 2024** at 7.30 pm in the Choir Vestry, St George's Church

Present: Hilary Cullingford, Joan Grenfell, Mike de la Hunt, Ian Ness, Enid Pearson, Kay Plumley, Mike Ranson (Treasurer), Nigel Russell-Sewell (Secretary), Janet Wilson (Chair).

Apologies: Donald Gaze, Lana Liu, Izzy McDonald-Booth, Margaret Vane, Sue Vernon.

1. Joan Grenfell opened the meeting with prayer.
2. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.
3. Apologies were noted.
4. **Declaration of Interests**
  - 4.1 No conflicts of interest were declared.
5. **Minutes of the last Meeting**
  - 5.1 The minutes of the PCC Meeting held on 7 February were approved. Proposed: Kay Plumley, seconded: Janet Wilson.
6. **Matters arising**
  - 6.1 None.
7. **Clergy Protection**
  - 7.1 Noted: following The Times article circulated, the Chair requested consideration of a code of conduct of parishioners with respect to the new incumbent. Discussed: the past should be put behind us to give a fresh start for the new incumbent. We should

be open-minded and not fall back on “we used to do it this way/this is the way we do it”. Do we have any ‘red lines’? Are there things that shouldn’t change?

7.2 Noted: relationship is challenging as the Vicar is put on a pedestal; but no-one can be ‘everything to everyone’ and so there is a tendency for people to pick holes if things don’t appear to be the way they would like. It is not appropriate to make comparisons with any previous Vicar.

7.3 Resolved: to be a discussion item at the Annual Meeting.

**ACTION: Chair**

## **8. Standing item: Safeguarding**

8.1 No report was received.

## **9. Standing item: Finance**

### **9. (a) Review of 2023 Accounts**

9.1 Received: the final accounts had been circulated. The Treasurer was satisfied with the process to produce the accounts and liaison with the External Auditor.

9.2 The Treasurer noted significant improvements in the finances. There are two important matters that affect the accounts: the sound system funded by Miss Ann Biles legacy; and the generous donation from the Cookson Trust. These both distort the end result and make the finances look better than they are. These aside, we are breaking even: a great improvement on the past. The Treasurer noted that the contribution to Parish Share was now at the right amount for St George’s (£90,000) at the moment, and this will be reviewed further in future. We are still short of the three months’ cash reserves required to be a going concern, and we have a quinquennial review in the near future.

9.3 The money coming into restricted funds for the Hub and Organ projects is being kept to one side. This is represented as cash in the account but can’t be used on day-to-day activities.

9.4 The Memorandum of Understanding being drawn up with the United Reformed Church is not straightforward and concern was expressed to ensure this is fair to both parties. This, however, does not affect the accounts.

9.5 Noted: we must be careful how we present our reserves situation as this can impact future fund-raising or donations. We should look to increase our reserves from day-to-day activities.

9.6 Charitable giving: we may be asked to increase this at the Annual Meeting. Noted: the amount we give is quite small and to local community organisations, which might encourage further contributions. Suggested: we should ask Paul Baird’s advice.

**ACTION: Treasurer**

- 9.7 Agreed: the Lay Chair will formally sign the accounts. A meeting will be held on Sunday 14 April to formally approve the accounts.

**ACTION: All PCC members**

- 9.8 PCC formally thanked the Treasurer for all his work, and Jonathan for all his work on the accounts.

### **9. (b) Pay Award approval**

- 9.9 The pay award recommendations to reflect the cost of living were approved as proposed. The Treasurer to write to PCC employees with details, with effect 1 April 2024.

**ACTION: Treasurer**

### **10. Standing item: Estates Group**

- 10.1 Received: notes from the Estates Group. Noted: costs of providing electricity supply to the church to get away from fossil fuels is £25,000, and the cost for supplying the new build will be at least £20,000. Positive that the Estates Group and Eco Group are working together.

### **11. Standing item: St George's Community Hub 2025**

- 11.1 Received: notes from the joint meeting with PCC.
- 11.2 Ian Ness agreed with the response that his questions were being asked "far too late" but noted that he had been trying to ask these for a number of years.
- 11.3 Reported: the tenders had come in and were significantly higher than expected, with 25% between lowest and highest. Piles would have to be driven deeper than expected due to tree roots. To reduce the cost of the tender, the interior may have to change. The best available revised tenders are now expected in May.
- 11.4 The meeting with the congregation on Saturday 20 April will focus on a major fundraising launch. We need to move away from question and debate to move on to fundraising and doing the job.

### **12. Churchwarden updates**

- 12.1 Vera Selby Tapestry: a link to the live auction will be circulated. Noted: £10,000 was set aside for new artwork in the Hub project. Suggested: once we have the new space we commission local artists to create artwork; to do something worthwhile that is fitting for the building/space. The PCC felt that the tapestry was a beautiful piece but could not see where it could hang in St George's at present. Details of the exhibition and auction are available on the [website](#).

- 12.2 Vicarage Gardens: the Diocese have paid for the grounds to be tidied, which has been completed at no further cost to St George's; taking four days to complete.
- 12.3 Lawnmower: this has been replaced. Noted that the vicarage garden is very large and the Diocese have suggested it is St George's responsibility, which was not deemed appropriate by the PCC. Concern that the incoming Vicar might be burdened by the size of the garden. The grass cutting team could manage mowing the lawns but help to maintain the garden may need to be sought from elsewhere. Recommended: a discussion is had with the new incumbent how they would like to deal with the garden, with the possibility they may wish to request funding/gardener from the Diocese. St George's would cut the grass.

**ACTION: Churchwardens**

- 12.4 Lectern steps: quotations have been received: £4,032 and £6,545 (both including VAT). The lower quotation is from a trusted source at high quality and proposed the PCC accept this. Proposed: Ian Ness, seconded Joan Grenfell. All in favour. Timescale would include removing the current steps for 10 days or so, but expect to be complete in the next couple of months.

**ACTION: Ian Ness**

- 12.5 Planned Giving Event: a leaflet will be circulated at the APCM to encourage those who don't currently give regularly to do so.
- 12.6 Charitable Giving Volunteers: the Charitable Giving committee is small and more people would be welcome. Suggested: to invite congregation at APCM for volunteers and suggestions for charities.

**ACTION: Chair**

- 12.7 Church heating: currently an issue with pressurisation, which needs to be done manually at the moment with one pump working. Estimates are expected to ensure both pumps on the heating are working and the pressurisation unit is replaced, and a new control system. Agreed that the boiler and system should be appropriately maintained such that it is reliable. The PCC await the quotations.

**13. APCM Preparations**

- 13.1 Nomination forms are available for one Deanery Synod representative and two PCC members. A notice will be put in the weekly sheet.

**ACTION: Chair**

- 13.2 Agreed: the Safeguarding Officer should be co-opted as a member of the PCC *ex-officio* rather than be an elected member, and should contribute to all PCC discussions as appropriate. The new incumbent will work closely with the Safeguarding Officer to ensure full compliance.
- 13.3 The Environmental Policy was circulated. Agreed: no amendments required.

- 13.4 Mike Ranson gave notice that he would step down as Treasurer in a year's time. PCC thanked him for all his work. A search would begin for someone who could take on the role in due course; ideally with someone shadowing over the coming year.

**14. Any other business**

- 14.1 Received: a note of thanks from Emily Brunt: "We are writing to express our gratitude for your donation, on behalf of St. George's Church for £200 to Newcastle West End Foodbank. Our charity strives to provide food for people who are unable to afford food for themselves or their families. The increased cost of living has resulted in more people using our services. We have responded by opening additional centres across the city. We now have distribution centres in Heaton, Byker, Benwell, Lemington, Newbiggin Hall and The Bede Church on West Road. Financial and physical donations enable the Foodbank to provide food parcels and support to those in need every week, with nearly half of the people to benefit from our food parcels being children, living in low-income households who would otherwise go hungry. Our work is made possible by the generosity of people who provide us with the donations that help us to sustain our services. We supplement our food distribution support with welfare services through our Pathways Team, who are trained to help clients with a range of issues including debt, housing, fuel and benefits. We are truly grateful for your support."
- 14.2 Recycling boxes will be placed at the back of church.
- 14.3 Tennis club mowing lawns on Good Friday between 2-3pm at a time of silent reflection in church. Request to be made to the tennis club to observe this period.

**ACTION: Churchwarden**

15. The meeting closed at 9.50 pm with The Grace.

## DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

<b>PCC Meeting</b>	<b>Deadline for Agenda items</b>
Sunday 28 April 2024 - ANNUAL MEETINGS (separate notice)	
Monday 13 May 2024	Sunday 05 May 2024, midday

All meetings will begin at 7.30 pm. Venue will be confirmed in the agenda papers.

### **Dates to note:**

20 April	Launch of the Hub “Big Appeal” (11.15-12.45)
24 April	Installation of Area Dean, Revd Paul Baker, St Nicholas Gosforth, 24 April at 7.30 pm.
4 May	+Helen-Ann opening Spring Fete
14 May	Licensing of Revd Ollie Dempsey, 7.30 pm, Haydon Bridge Parish Church
24 May	Summer night with ‘Elvis’
15 June	Memorial Service for Frederick Peacock, 11.30 am

## ACTION LOG

Meeting	Item	Action	Status
23-09	11.3	Kay to make application to Community Foundation	
23-09	11.4	Kay to ask Council to change their mowing schedule	
24-01	8.1	Safeguarding Officer to prepare safeguarding poster	
24-01	12.4	Enid Pearson to fulfil requirements of Parish Inspection	
24-02	7.1	Churchwardens to arrange “planned giving event” after Easter	
24-02	9.3	Safeguarding Officer to display trafficking posters	
24-04	7.3	Chair to host discussion on conduct with respect to the new incumbent at the APCM	
24-04	9.6	Treasurer to seek advice on how increasing charitable giving might be viewed by potential funders	
24-04	9.7	All PCC members to attend short meeting on 14 April to sign off accounts	
24-04	9.9	Treasurer to write to employees detailing cost-of-living pay award	
24-04	12.3	Churchwardens to liaise with new incumbent on the vicarage gardens	
24-04	12.4	Ian Ness to commission construction of lectern steps	
24-04	12.6	Chair to ask for volunteers to join Charitable Giving Group at APCM	
24-04	13.1	Chair to place notice in weekly sheet regarding PCC vacancies	
24-04	14.3	Churchwarden (EP) to request tennis club observe the final hour on Good Friday	
New action		Completed	Not yet completed (up to 4 months)
			Not yet completed (over 4 months)