



The Parish Church of St George, Jesmond

Annual Meetings 2024

- Chair: Professor Janet Wilson, Lay Chair of the Parochial Church Council
[The Benefice of St George and St Hilda, Jesmond, is in interregnum]
- Present: 36 members of the Parish community
- Apologies: Jean Davies, Jon Davies, Joan Grenfell, Linsley de la Hunt, Roy Large, Alison Mattinson, Julian Plumley, Kay Plumley, Mike Ranson, Peter Rodgers, Ian Spencer, Malcolm Toft, Sue Vernon.

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners held on Sunday 28 April 2024

at 11 am in the Church Hall

1. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.
2. Dr Nigel Russell-Sewell, Honorary Secretary to the Parochial Church Council, was appointed Clerk to the Annual Meetings.
3. Two nominations were received for the role of Churchwarden: Enid Pearson and Janet Wilson (proposed: Joan Rooney, seconded: Hazel Jones-Lee). They were appointed unopposed.
4. The meeting closed at 11.04 am.

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on Sunday 28 April 2024

at 11.05 am in the Church Hall

1. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.
2. The Minutes of the meetings held on 30 April 2023 were approved.

3. The Electoral Roll: 206 names recorded, an increase of five from last year. Noted: the Roll renews in 2025 and everyone will need to register afresh.
4. The list of Sidespeople circulated was noted, with the addition of Sue Melbourne.
5. Election to Deanery Synod: there is a vacancy following the resignation of Alex Walker. No nominations were received. The vacancy may be filled at a later date.
6. Election to the Parochial Church Council: there are two vacancies on the PCC. Two valid nominations were received:

Brent Swinburn (proposed: Jack Burn; seconded: Graham Rutt)

Alison Mattinson (proposed: Hazel Jones-Lee; seconded: Barbara Peacock)

Both were duly appointed to serve on the PCC for a period of three years.

7. The following reports were received: the proceedings of the PCC; Churchwardens; Fixtures and fittings; and Proceedings of Deanery Synod. An amendment was made to the Churchwardens' report: the reference to Children Northeast receiving 400 items of school uniform in the September entry should be amended to say that "the 400 items of school uniform were donated equally between Children Northeast and Christchurch School Shieldfield".
8. An overview of the Honorary Treasurer's Report and Accounts for 2023 was presented by Rachel Oswald, representing the Independent Examiner. The very positive impact of the generous recurring support from the Catherine Cookson Foundation for our day-to-day expenditure was highlighted. Thanks were offered to the Honorary Treasurer for all his work.
 - Q. Why did we pay £450 in bank charges?
 - A. We have a business account for which monthly charges and transaction charges apply.
 - Q. Is all the money that has come in for The Hub shown in the accounts?
 - A. Yes. Donations and grants received since end-December 2023 do not appear in these accounts.
 - Q. Who is looking after our investments?
 - A. CBF Investment Fund and Epworth Investment Fund.
 - Q. What do we see as the impact on Diocesan activity of our reduced Parish Share.
 - A. The Charity Commission requires organisations to have a reasonable period of running costs in an accessible fund. For us this means £45,000. We are now at £30,000 thanks to the industry of the Honorary Treasurer turning around several years of successive losses. Furthermore, the Honorary Treasurer identified historic inconsistencies in the derivation of what had been our Parish Share until a few years ago and he will be happy to discuss his research one to one on his return.
9. John Oswald of Stephenson Coates was appointed Independent Examiner (proposed: Izzy McDonald Booth; seconded: Geoff White; approved unanimously).

10. The Safeguarding report was received. The Safeguarding Policy was reaffirmed unanimously.
11. The Inclusive Church Statement was reaffirmed unanimously.
12. Reports from St George's community committees and groups were received. Noted: the Children and Young People's group would welcome further support.
 - Q. The accounts show just over £12k in a restricted fund for the Family and Youth Worker. Can we not use this to support the group?
 - A. The group is not in a position to appoint a worker. Activity is low at the moment. The group is thinking through options for long-term support.
13. The Environmental Policy was reaffirmed.
14. The Hub Steering Group will have a public meeting in the coming months.
15. The Chair made some remarks (see below).
16. The meeting closed with The Grace at 12.07 pm.

Chair's Remarks

Vacancy

Enid and I are on the Appointments Committee together with the wardens from St Hilda's, Bishop Mark (the Bishop of Berwick) and the Venerable Rachel Wood (Archdeacon of Northumberland). We are now in a position to interview in early June. We cannot really say much more about it than that so please do not embarrass us and yourselves by asking! Although we have clearly identified potentially applicants following our re-advertisement, the fact that we are interviewing does not necessarily mean we shall make an appointment after this first round of interviews. We agree with Bishop Mark that it is much better to spend a little longer on the search than to rush into a suboptimal appointment.

At its last meeting the PCC considered a newspaper article in The Times, Friday 9 February, the headline is "Vicars being hounded out by bullying parishioners". Strapline 'aggressive behaviour and harassment campaigns prompt calls for Church of England to bring in code of conduct to protect priests and lay members'. Copies of this article are available on request from myself or the PCC Secretary. In the article, the Venerable Mark Ireland (Archdeacon of Blackburn) said he had been inundated with distressing correspondence from clergy and clergy spouses who have been subjected to bullying and harassment. At the same time there are many disturbing examples of lay officers bullying other members of the congregation. A second motion been presented to Synod calls for a new code of conduct for PCC members.

What is perhaps depressing is that looking back you can see that in 2008 very similar parishioner bullying was reported by the BBC. The PCC had a very open discussion about this problem and some very interesting points were forthcoming. We agreed the best thing perhaps would be to open up this discussion with yourselves as representing the parish at large and I welcome your comments.

Noted from the floor: if someone has a complaint about the Vicar they should go to the Churchwardens in the first instance. The Churchwardens have a duty of care towards the Vicar. This will be highlighted in The Lance.

Thanks

At about this point in every APCM the Chair offers thanks. I am a new warden and Enid is an experienced warden and I think it's wonderful that we have very complementary areas of specific interest and think we would both agree that we have had a tremendous amount of support from all sorts of people who are working very hard. In fact, it seems that it would be easier to mention people who aren't doing anything than to thank all of you who are.

If you feel that you are not working very hard you are in the minority and please step forward and jobs will be found! For the willing majority I think all that Enid and I could say is 'thank you' and draw on the comfort that the Lord loveth a cheerful giver.

I feel I am duty bound, however, to mention the band of church cleaners. We are an enthusiastic band of assorted sexes. If we have a reasonable turnout it is a relatively quick job – each person has a task: somebody polishes the pews; others deal with windowsills; the choir stalls or steps. As we have a borderline quorum, if one or two people don't turn up then the job for those who are left becomes quite big. People have commented, "don't you have cleaners to do that?". Obviously we pay for Hall cleaning and I'm sure you all agree that Gosia does a first-class job considering the level of foot-fall. Due to the size of the church were we to hire in a team of professional cleaners once a month even if we could find a team guaranteed to handle the fragile elements of our heritage respectfully, the bill would be hundreds if not thousands per annum. Please do consider joining the team at 9.30 am on the third Saturday of the month getting the church ready for the next day when we have Choral Evensong. It is a privilege to get very up close and personal to the fabric of our marvellous building.

The other thing I must mention is the annual fête. Tom Furness and Tom Klenka, leading on organisation and health and safety among many other commitments in their lives, are doing a fantastic job. Thank you for everyone who has helped or will help.

Planned giving

It has been the policy of the PCC not to embark on a formal stewardship campaign when we do not have a vicar. Nonetheless Planned Giving has been falling in real terms year on year. Caroline has put a lot of work preparing the Planned Giving documents. I thank her enormously, having stood down as Treasurer after a long term of office, for carrying on with GiftAid management. One of the things that makes Caroline's life a lot more simple is the use of Planned Giving because of the way GiftAid is reclaimed. This is all set out with Caroline's customary clarity. Please read carefully her short summary and consider whether if you're not using this form of donation it might work for you. Or if like myself you find that your quantum has become rather stagnant consider giving it a nudge if you are able.

Charitable giving

This appears as a £4500 expenditure in the calendar year 2023 however this is because there was late payment of the donations from 2022. £2500 is new so to speak for 2023, representing a £500 increase on 2022. The PCC were keen further to

increase charitable giving in 2024. At the December PCC a further increment to £4000 to be donated in this calendar year was approved. The PCC were also keen to see a more even distribution of giving throughout the year rather than galloping to look for good causes in the late autumn or early winter. The bottom line is that we look to increase the number of people involved in choosing charities particularly now this sum is effectively doubled from what it was in 2022. If anyone is interested please contact the PCC Secretary or myself. Our recipients in 2023 were:

- Angel tree Christmas gifts for offenders children
- Open Door International
- Children Northeast
- Dementia Matters
- Trussell Trust Food Bank
- United Society Partners in the Gospel
- Friends of Jesmond Library
- Jesmond Street Pastors
- Transforming Communities Together Tyne to Tweed
- People's Kitchen
- Jesmond Community Forum
- Support for refugee children by Pauline Magnay

Assistant Treasurer

A related matter is the ongoing search for an Assistant Treasurer. We are all very grateful for the vast amount of work that Mike Ranson has put in together with Jonathan and the auditors represented today by Rachel Oswald from Stephenson Coates. When Mike agreed to become Honorary Treasurer the original pact was that he would serve two years. He has now served three years and very magnanimously has said he will not abandon us in an interregnum. Mike however plans to demit office a year from now and I think this advance notice is very helpful. It's obviously going to be difficult for us to replace him but if someone can step forward now, and work alongside him as a *de facto* Assistant Treasurer, it would make the job much less daunting. So anyone who can manage an Excel spreadsheet and has a reasonable level of financial literacy might then please consider this post; John Oswald and Mike are not going anywhere soon so anyone who took on the job would have friends in the background. The relationship with the Treasurer and the PCC is that the Treasurer is an elected member of the PCC.

Professor Janet Wilson
Lay Chair St George's PCC
28 April 2024