

LITTLE ST MARY'S CHURCH SUNDAY 24th April 2022 (Low Sunday)

THE ANNUAL VESTRY MEETING

1. Minutes of the 2021 Annual Vestry Meeting.

The minutes were approved, except that the spelling of Colin Townsend's name was corrected to remove a superfluous letter n.

The acceptance of the minutes were proposed by Richard Morgan and seconded by Robin Osbourne.

2. Matters arising from these Minutes.

None

3. Election of Churchwardens.

Two valid nomination were received for Geoffrey Howe and Jo Wibberley.

Both were therefore elected.

THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

1. Minutes of the 2021 Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

The minutes were proposed by Colin Townsend and seconded by Ray Adams.

2. Matters arising for these Minutes.

None

3. Presentation of the Church Electoral Role.

Anne Auger did not wish to add to her written report. The electoral role had been reduced by ten from 202. There were 192 names on the electoral role by the year end. Eight people are resident in the Parish. 18 people left and eight people joined.

4. Appointment of the Electoral Roll Officer.

Ann indicated that she was willing to continue in this role.

Ann was proposed by Shirley Dex and seconded by Richard Martin.

5. Presentation of the Annual Church Report.

The Annual Church Report was presented. There was one correction.

Christine Tipple's term of office on the PCC comes to an end at this meeting, not next year. There were no further corrections.

6. Vicar's Report.

Two years ago today I was celebrating Mass alone in my study and attempting to broadcast it to you on Facebook using my mobile phone. Today we have just come in to the parish centre from church where we celebrated a

full High Mass in which we could all participate more or less as we used to, after a Holy Week which was almost entirely normal. There were times during the pandemic when I wondered if 'normal church' would ever return. I praise God with you today that it has.

A vicar's job is in part simply a business of asking people for things and then thanking them. On your behalf I ask a lot from our musicians, servers, sacristy team, sidespeople and churchwardens, our children's group volunteers and our safeguarding officer, not to mention all who assist with hospitality and refreshments, and of course our splendid parish administrator, Elaine Shield. Today is a chance to say thank you to them all, not least because over the last year everyone has had to manage on limited resources and gaining and losing volunteers at short notice. Planning has been something we've not been able to do and that is exhausting and I thank all of you who have had to do far more than your fair share of tasks in these 12 months, without the support you'd usually have or expect. Thank you.

In the last year we have said goodbye to our Assistant Organist, Alex Coplan, because of injury and we wish him a good recovery and thank him for his work and hope we may see him again in the future. But we've also gained Greg Morris as his replacement and we praise God for that, not least because Greg is a very fine organist indeed. It's especially good given that Rachel his wife and Anna, Joseph and Maddie his children already worship with us and are very much part of the parish family.

I want to thank my clergy colleagues, especially Fr Mark, and also Fr Max who celebrates our Friday Mass and Fr Jeremy who celebrates the Tuesday Mass. And of course here I can not only thank Fr Philip but also say how good it is to have him, together with Kirsty and Thomas and Hilda, here at Little Saint Mary's. He and they are a great gain of the last year and having had the Bishop to Confirm in December we are having him next month too, to do so again, the fruit of having an additional priest with time to seek out and prepare people for baptism and confirmation; a true building back better!

The financial cost of an additional stipendiary priest is something met in large part from the Michael Waring bequest which produces about £40,000 of income each year. What it doesn't cover is the cost of housing a priest and here I want to thank our wonderful Treasurer, Richard Martin, for his great work at managing and balancing our books and doing so not just in an efficient and practical way but as a part of his ministry and apostleship as a baptised and confirmed Christian. Thanking Richard leads me to thank all of you who have responded positively to our first Christian Giving renewal in three years; responses are still coming in but we have topped £10,000 in increased giving and, with the blessing (as they say), we might increase our

income sufficiently to be able to pay for housing our associate vicar without needing to dig into our capital.

The vast majority of our congregation have now returned to church, at least sporadically; there are just a handful of people whom we've not seen at all since Lent 2020 and Fr Philip and I are in contact with them to encourage them back and to visit them at home with the Blessed Sacrament if that's helpful. We keep them in our prayers. Some of those people are confined for physical medical reasons but plenty because this dreadful pandemic and all that went with it has damaged their mental health and they are very fearful. I pray that our love and concern and, perhaps above all, time, will be a great healer for them.

I'm delighted to say that no one has died from Covid in our congregation; I haven't officiated at a single Covid funeral over these 24 months. But I'm not alone in noting that many people seem to have aged more than two years since the pandemic began and Keitha Jones and Fr Nigel Hancock are now in care homes and many others are looking markedly older.

Since our last APCM six of our congregation have – in the words of the Salvation Army – been promoted to glory. Cherry Dainty, Gordon Woolveridge, priest, Ian Robins, Judy Swan, Sally Richardson, and Joyce Bishop have received a Christian funeral and their mortal remains have been honoured with Christian burial. Let us keep silence now and commend them to almighty God. Rest eternal...

Cherry, Fr Gordon, Ian, Judy, Sally and Joyce have of course not left the church but simply moved from the militant to the expectant part of it, reminding us that the church is never getting smaller, only bigger, because the dead are also part of us. The Church is the true democracy because we include the faithful departed as well as the living.

Yet there is much work to do in rebuilding our life: from the summer our Forum Lunch Club for the elderly resumes and I should note here the new Concordia Club and I thank Mary Ward and Fiona Blake for their efforts in establishing this support group over the last six months. And I'm delighted that from the autumn, thanks to Fr Philip's initiative, we will be beginning a series of talks on aspects of the Christian faith, jointly with our friends at S. Bene't's, to provide additional nourishment beyond the Sunday sermon and our Advent and Lent Groups. War in Europe should remind us that we cannot take goodness, beauty and truth for granted but these are disciplines, virtues, muscles that need exercising. All that it takes for evil to flourish is for good people to do nothing.

All that remains is for me to thank you all for the great honour of being your vicar and parish priest, to rejoice with you on this Octave Day of Easter, to commend this next year to God's guidance and mercy and to pray with and for us all this prayer:

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light,
look favourably on thy whole Church,
that wonderful and sacred mystery,
and by the tranquil operation of thy perpetual providence
carry out the work of our salvation:
and let the whole world feel and see
that things which were cast down are being raised up
and things which had grown old are being made new
and that all things are returning to perfection
through him from whom they took their origin,
even Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

7. Presentation of the Annual Accounts.

Richard said that the overview sheet is an accurate representation of the state of our finances and if any body has any pressing questions you can speak to him directly or email or phone him.

Sheila Bennett asked what is the state of our finances at the moment.

Richard replied that the value of the assets that we hold have increased over the year by about £51,000. However, our expenditure exceed our income by £5,000. Michael Waring's bequest is in two parts, his house at 8 Portugal Place and his share portfolio is £793,000. These going towards paying for Fr Philip.

8. Appointment of an Independent Examiner of the Accounts.

Geoffrey Mann has agreed to continue to act as Examiner. His reappointment was proposed by Richard Martin and seconded by Jo Wibberley.

9. Election of members to the Parochial Church Council.

We have six vacancies. The Vicar has received six nominations who are duly elected. They are: Anne Auger, Franco Basso, Sheila Bennett, Patricia Boulhosa, Patricia Davis and Lucy McKitterick.

10. Appointments of Sidespeople.

The Vicar thanked those who had stepped down and those who had stepped up.

The formal list of sidespersons were: Janice Adams, Chris and Irene Beecham, Patricia Boulhosa, Clive Brown, Chris Burlinson, Andrew Corrie, Simon Jarvis, Ben Night, Ciri Night, Charles Moseley, Rosanna Moseley -

Gore, Robin Osbourne, Adrian Savin, Heidi Thomas, Stephen Thomas and Stuart White.

The following were added to the list: Jeremy Musson, Dee Price, Steve Sidall, Mark Patrick.

Jo proposed the acceptance of these names and seconded by Steve Sidall, all were in favour.

11. Any other relevant questions or remarks.

We need a person to hold the gate open for the procession on Palm Sunday from Laundress Green.

We closed with the Grace.