

THE PARISH CHURCH of ST MARGARET, RAINHAM

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING 30th September 2020

This meeting was held as a Webinar using the Zoom cloud platform to meet the Covid-19 Social Distancing rules. Attendees were provided with poll and chat facilities to allow voting on resolutions and for submitting questions to the panel. Questions were allocated to the submitter (as the meetings were open to all and followed Church Representation Rules).

There were 41 people present at the meeting. All papers for the meeting were published on the church's website.

The meeting was opened in prayer by Revd Christine Allen at 7.51pm.

1. Apologies for Absence were received from 16 people.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting, held on Sunday April 28th 2019, were discussed. No amendments had been received. A poll was provided to all online attendees and the minutes were approved.

3. Matters Arising – there were no matters arising.

4. Election of people to serve on the Parochial Church Council for 3 years (or otherwise stated).

There are 6 available vacancies and 5 nominees.

Alex Brewer proposed by Pam Ormiston and seconded by Joan Pantony.

Nick Grief proposed by Denise Hazelden and seconded by Jan Lawrence.

Linda Randall proposed by Heather Baker and seconded by Gillian Fairclough.

Janet Garnons-Williams proposed by Davina O'Brien and seconded by Ann Critchley.

Charlie Whittaker proposed by Janet Garnons-Williams and seconded by Davina O'Brien.

Janet Garnons-Williams will be elected for two years, Tony Fairclough having retired part way through his term.

Charlie Whittaker will serve for 2 years because she replaces Kayleigh Ward who continues as a member of PCC by virtue of being on Deanery Synod.

Three other nominations were received but could not be accepted because the nominees have not been members of the electoral roll for 6 months.

Advice was taken about this as we thought there may be a dispensation due to Covid19, but this had not been the case.

Candidates are declared elected because we do not have more nominations than vacancies. Rule M9 (3).

There is also a vacancy for Deanery Synod and a nomination has been received as follows:

Nomination for Deanery synod for 2 years

Frank Pantony proposed by Pam Ormiston and seconded by Jodie Ward

Davina O'Brien and Kayleigh Ward still have two years to serve on deanery synod.

A poll was held, and Frank was elected unanimously, to serve for 3 years.

5. Churchwardens Report

The report was made available on the website prior to the meeting and any questions were taken after the main business of the meeting (point 9 on the agenda).

6. Fabric Report

The report was made available on the website prior to the meeting and any questions were taken after the main business of the meeting (point 9 on the agenda).

7. Report on the Electoral roll

When the roll closed this year there were 169 people on it. The roll has grown by 10 this year.

8. Presentation of the Financial Statement

Frank Pantony read out the following statement:

I hope that you have had opportunity to look at the accounts for 2019 for which I am very grateful to Bob Moon preparing for us. As many of you will be aware, Bob has looked after our accounts for many years and it was with his great support that I took on responsibilities for finance as churchwarden. All “good” things come to an end, as they say, and with Bob’s health not being too good we mutually agreed to both call it a day. I am not a qualified accountant and do not have the qualifications or skills to be one. All this came about alongside the PCC voting to introduce a new accountancy system which was recommended to us by the Diocese and it is a system which they can support us with. I remain confident that finances are left in good hands and wish my successor all the best for the future.

The analysis for the year 2019 shows an overall income of £277,525 which is roughly split into giving of £124,000; Millennium Centre and Bookshop of £121,000; rents of £12,000 and fees of £20,000.

Expenditure for the same period was £298,789 which equates to a deficit of £21,266. However, what must be borne in mind is that the Charity Commission requires us to put in expenditure for depreciation which was £26,313. So, in actual terms income against expenditure, there was a surplus of £5,000.

I am happy to take any questions in principal but may have to get back to you at a later date if it is about detail.

I commend the accounts to you.

9. Appointment of Independent Examiner for 2020

A proposal was made to keep Beak Kemmenoe as the Independent Examiner for 2020.

Proposer – Frank Pantony

Seconder – Janet Garnons-Williams

A poll was held, and a vote in favour of the proposal received.

10. Questions from the participants.

A question was submitted by Richard Davies:

Ageism – in relation to the policy not to use over 70s paid and volunteer – is this the position of other churches in the area?

Nathan Ward responded:

To give some context to this, one of the things we have done as a PCC in order to make the church building as safe as possible and church activities carried out under the authority of the PCC, was to write a Risk Assessment on our response to the pandemic. In doing this we consulted all of documents produced by HM Government and the Church of England, and it is to the Government's guidance updated 24th September, which contains the following point 5 on Places of Worship:

Individuals aged 70 years and over attending a Place of Worship – certain groups of people maybe at increased risk of severe disease from covid-19 including people who are aged 70 or older regardless of medical conditions, individuals who fall within this group are advised to stay at home as much as possible and if they do go out, to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside of their household. You should consider informing these groups in particular of the symptoms of covid-19 and current stay alert and social distancing guidance.

Therefore as a PCC we applied the Health & Safety policy HSG65 – how organisations should manage risks, and obviously this Government guidance highlights the risk of those aged 70s and older in regard to covid-19 and the first thing we are compelled to do under the H&S at work act 1974, is to eliminate all risks as far as practicably possible. Therefore the PCC decided that we wouldn't engage the services of anyone of 70 years or older to undertake voluntary or paid activities for the PCC because in doing so would be accepting us increasing the risk to those individuals who we care about and have legal responsibilities and duties towards. Therefore, the safest way at this time, albeit one which we do reservedly is not to engage those groups of people in activities at this time.

In relationship to what other parishes and churches are doing in this area I haven't undertaken any form of correspondence with them. We have simply taken the letter of the guidance issued by the Government. It should be noted that that paragraph is not contained within the Church of England guidance which has been published, but the Government would in my opinion have greater weight moving forward. It should also be noted that if we took the WHO guidance, their age of significant risk is set at 60 or 65 years but because we are in England we are following the

letter of the guidance published by our Government, and will continue to do so.

Janet added as the guidance is changed, the PCC have undertaken to review it whenever there is a significant change so that we keep this policy fresh.

A further question was submitted asking if that policy relates to those who hold PTO (Permission to Officiate).

Nathan answered that the policy relates to everyone at St Margaret's Church.

No other questions had been submitted.

11. Revd. Nathan Ward – Comments

This year we have faced the biggest challenge to the people and Parish of Rainham since the Blitz. To date, 1240 people have tested positive for COVID in Medway of which 194 have tragically died. Some known to us here at St Margaret's.

As we approach Christmas, there is great uncertainty. And yet, like that first Christmas, within great uncertainty there is great hope. It is that hope which we as a church have borne witness to throughout this time in new ways and old.

During the first 37 weeks of covid-19 we held 721 services which reached an unprecedented 167,162 people.

Before covid-19 we reached on average 199 people each week. That figure now stands at 4517 – an increase of 2169%.

This has been done through fearless commitment to our mission here in Rainham as well as the sterling work of the staff team and church wardens who should be commended and whom I personally thank.

The challenge we have faced has been enormous. Tough decisions have had to be made. And yet we gather here today with a clear vision for the future, a new structure which supports it and extraordinary success on which to build upon.

Moving forward not only do we have the continued challenge of covid-19, but we also have significant work that needs to be undertaken to the building of the church and the Millennium Centre.

In order to make the Millennium Centre building fit for purpose there is significant work that needs to be done to improve the ventilation to the premises, the fire compartmentation as well as the food preparation areas which are now beyond that required by regulation. The first phase of this work will cost in the region of £300,000 and will start in 2021.

The church building also requires significant structural work within the next three years. A structural engineer as well as a conservation architect have stated that the church requires an entire new roof.

Many of you will remember that it was only recently that the church had a 'roof project' but it should be noted that this was a limited piece of work which during the design and implementation phase was reduced from a £1m project to around £500,000.

Some of the work done at that time stands us in good stead whilst other parts of the project with the hindsight of engineering advances and knowledge was misguided.

Any one of these projects would be tough at the best of times. We need to deliver both in extraordinary times. We won't be able to do this alone – we will need considerable external support if our vision is to be made reality. Our help is in the name of the Lord who has given us the skills and talents of many people who are amongst us in our congregation.

Excellent progress has already been made with Archaeologists already completing scoping work within the crypt and I am already in initial discussions with some funders.

Therefore, I call up on you the members of St Margaret's to be fervent in prayer as we enter this new phase of our life together.

To not lose sight of our commitment to mission – everything else is secondary. And finally, to never forget that in all things we face, God has gone before us.

Questions were taken by Nathan.

The more information will be given in due course for both the Millennium Centre and church building projects.

AOB

Janet asked for a public record of her thanks to the 2 members of PCC stepping down this time – Tony Fairclough and John Gilkison, who have

given unstintingly of their time and talents over many years, we are extremely grateful to them and wish them well for the future.

A question was submitted by Barry Kemp: Who signed off the previous roof work and how much will it cost this time?

Nathan responded: In regard to signing off the previous project, that was done by the PCC because that is how it would work. You would have applied for a faculty. There is no external person apart from the PCC as the authority which signs the work off at the end. There is no sign at the moment that any of the work that was undertaken wasn't done as per the specification, the question is whether other work needed to have been done or the work that was done should have been done in a slightly different way. For example, the advice of the conservation architect and structural engineer is that you shouldn't patch, replace, segment roofing on buildings of the age of St Margaret's because it unbalances the weighting that is on the roof. That was done unfortunately, during the last tranche of work on the roof.

In relationship to how much it will cost this time – we are working with the architects to get a quantity surveyor in to give us some estimation of cost but my estimation (and it is only an estimation and I am not a qualified engineer) is in the range of £3m.

There were no further questions and no other business to be discussed.

The meeting closed at 8:23pm.