

Hertingfordbury St Mary with St John Parochial Church Council.
Minutes of the meeting held Thursday 20th July 2023 at 7.30 pm in the Brace Room and on Zoom

Present: Rev Alan Stewart (Alan), Robin Bishop (chair), David Gorton (David), Paul Attridge (Paul), Robin Densem (Robin D), Philip Juniper (Philip), Stephane McCarthy (Stephane), Rachel Carter (Rachel) (Secretary)
Attending via Zoom: Jean Skinner (Jean),

Rev Alan Stewart opened the meeting with a prayer.

Items are recorded in the order they were taken at the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence

Ritchie Copues (Ritchie), Jan Pearson (Jan), Rev Bill Church (Bill)

2. Minutes of last meeting

2.1 The minutes were deemed to be an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Item 3.1 There had been a good take up of the free hot drink scheme at the Golden Griffin and so it was agreed to continue it. Robin noted that the pot of money could be topped up from donations given to the scheme.

3.2 Item 3.4. Philip and Stephane were progressing through the DBS/safeguarding process.

3.3 Item 5.1 Alan reported that he had done one session of Mindfulness and Meditation with the staff of Hertingfordbury Cowper, and would do another one next term.

4. Correspondence

4.1 Correspondence had been received from Members of the Order of St George (<https://orderofstgeorge.co.uk>) regarding a base for their charitable Order in the area. In the past, St Mary's had been used by the Military and Hospitaller Order of St Lazarus of Jerusalem, but that relationship had lapsed during Covid. Bill had agreed to be chaplain for the Order of St George and it had been agreed to allow the Order to make use of St Mary's.

5. Priests' Report

5.1 Despite the windy weather, Family Fun Day had been a success with a good number of people attending. Barry Goodey had taken some great photos with his drone. Although it had been too windy for the marquee, it had been nice to get people into the church. The craft activity had been enjoyed and perhaps could be bigger next time: something to be discussed at the Mission Morning.

5.2 The Easter Dawn Eucharist had been well attended and it had been nice to have

breakfast in the Brace Room afterwards. While Rachel's breakfast in the Vicarage had been much appreciated in the past, possibly more people stayed when breakfast was on site.

5.3 Adrian Walter, the new lay leader of worship, was being commissioned on 23 July.

5.4 A new service, Forest Church, for St Andrew's and St Mary's was being introduced. It would take place mostly on the last Sunday of month in the afternoon, for everyone, not just young people. An introductory meeting at St Joseph's in the Park was scheduled for 7.30 pm on Thursday 3 August to plan the themes. Kath Oates would be talking about various activities such as storytelling, bushcraft, making things and campfire singing with instruments.

5.5 There would be a Mental Health Awareness workshop for churches on Mon 2 October 7.30 pm.

5.6 An eight week course on the bible was planned for the autumn term at St Mary's on Tuesday or Thursday night involving lay leaders and readers.

5.7 The next Awayday would take place on 14 April at St Joseph's in the Park. There would be a small charge of £5/£10 to cover cleaning. Sessions would take place in the classrooms with bigger chairs and it would be possible to use the dining room for a bring and share lunch. The Headteacher was very keen to support. Bill would cover 9.15 and 10.30 services and there would be no Zoom service that day.

5.8 A third round of advertising for Tracy's replacement was being undertaken. It had been decided to be more specific and advertise for a Children and Families worker. In the meantime, Tracy continued to support with services at the three primary schools.

5.9 There was a need for more Foundation governors at Hertingfordbury Cowper school.

5.10. Alan suggested that St Mary's could participate in Hertingfordbury Cowper's project to design Christmas cards, with a winning entry being used for St Mary's Christmas card. It was important to start this early, perhaps in October.

6. Mission Morning

6.1 This was scheduled for 9 September from 10.00-12 noon. Geoff and Kath Oates would be attending. After some discussion, it was agreed that it should be open to all in the congregation who wished to be there, including Pastoral Visitors.

7. Reaching New People

7.1 Stephane reported that he and Kath Oates had been going door to door on Thieves Lane new housing estate offering a card and biscuits in ecofriendly packaging. They had met about half the new inhabitants (40 people) so far and the conversations had gone very well.

7.2 Robin noted that the proposed Birchall Green development near Cole Green could also provide an opportunity for mission.

7.3 It was noted that over the last few weeks numbers at the 9.15 service had been well over 40, sometimes up to 50. Having coffee afterwards every week made a big difference.

8. Friends of St Mary's

8.1 Members noted Helen Bishop's report which showed that the Friends were dropping into a pattern of events such as the Parish Breakfast and concerts. She would be happy to have any comments.

8.2 Philip asked whether the Friends were broadening their appeal beyond regular churchgoers. It was noted a small number of non churchgoers had offered to help and David had also recruited some to the churchyard maintenance working party.

8.3 Philip proposed that the Friends could have had a stall at the Hertingfordbury Fete? Robin suggested that this might be a possibility for next year. Paul noted that concerts such as the upcoming Sirinu concert on 15 September, also introduced new people.

9. Churchwardens' Reports

9.1 David thanked all those involved in the Family Fun Day. Unfortunately the marquee had been damaged by the wind. He would be checking the repair situation.

9.2. The Fabric of church

9.2.1 David reported that the question of a replacement path was mentioned at the last meeting. As it had been two years since original quote, a new quote had been sought., The previous quote was £32,000 plus VAT. The latest one is 6% increase - £35,000 plus VAT.

9.2.2 Paul agreed to check whether the VAT could be reclaimed. Robin asked if money could be re-allocated from the Brace Room fund, but it was noted that the Brace Room roof needed work. An initial investigation by Lodge would be £2000: hopefully there would not be too much to fix. Stephane asked if any of the other restricted funds could be used for the work. It was noted that these were for the upkeep of the graves.

9.2.3 There had been some damage to main gate pillar and David was waiting for the contractor to fix it. There had been some dampness in the ringing chamber caused by a blocked downpipe, which was now corrected. The ringing chamber would need to be redecorated. There had been a failed attempt to break into wall safe. The step on Maurice Hall gate had been fixed.

10. Churchyard Manager's Report

10.1 David reported that a new churchyard team had been developed including three younger people from the village. More tools were needed and a new strimmer had been bought. The cost of repairing or replacing of the current mower would be discussed with Robin: it might be possible to pay for it from funds for grave maintenance or the Friends' funds.

10.2 Progress was being made tidying up the lower churchyard. The question of a wildflower area was raised.

11. Monuments Sub-Committee Report

11.1 David noted that this was no longer a sub-committee, but there were a couple of things which needed attention. One of these had a legacy attached and repairs could be considered. With regard to the sedilia, one plan for this had been to cover it and

make a memorial garden – this could still be developed.

12. Treasurer's Report

12.1 The Treasurer's Report had been previously circulated. Robin highlighted that the VAT on gas bill should be levied at 5% not 20%. The refund process was extremely convoluted.

12.2 In general, despite the increase in energy costs, St Mary's was breaking even. Philip noted that the CofE was trying to be more competitive on weddings. It was noted that churches had always had discretion to reduce fees in case of need.

13. Deanery Synod

13.1 Robin had not been able to attend the most recent meeting.

14. Safeguarding

14.1 Robin reported that DBS checks were ongoing. There had been Level 3 safeguarding training on Zoom.

14.2 Robin noted that he and David had recently pledged allegiance as Churchwardens.

15. Events

14.1 These had been covered under the Friends item.

14.2 Philip reported that Kay had heard from Hugh Smith at Welwyn Garden City Male Voice Choir that they would like to do a concert and maybe invite Hertingfordbury Cowper and/or St Joseph's school to be there. Thoughts about this were at an early stage. [Secretary's note: this item is recorded under the appropriate item of business, though it was mentioned earlier in the meeting.]

14.3 It was noted that Mayflower Place was currently interviewing for a new manager, so might not suit as a venue for the Parish Lunch.

16. Any other business

16.1 There was no other business.

17. Dates of the next meetings

These were confirmed for 21 September and 23 November.