

**Hertingfordbury St Mary with St John Parochial Church Council.**  
**Minutes of the meeting held Thursday 23rd November 2023 at 7.30 pm in the**  
**Brace Room and on Zoom**

Present: Rev Alan Stewart (Alan), Robin Bishop (Robin B)(chair), David Gorton (David), Philip Juniper (Philip), Rachel Carter (Rachel) (Secretary)  
Attending via Zoom: Stephane McCarthy (Stephane)

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**

Paul Attridge (Paul), Robin Densem (Robin D), Jean Skinner (Jean), Ritchie Copues (Ritchie), 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 from the minutes**

3.1 Item 5.1 Alan had now met the new Baptist pastors and looked forward to working with them.

3.2 Item 5.1 Alan confirmed additional Christmas dates: Handbells and Carols at the White Horse on 14 December at 7.00 pm. The Lessons and Carols service would take place on 21 December at 7.30 pm.

**4. Correspondence**

4.1 There was no correspondence to report.

**5. Priests' Report**

5.1 Alan reported that following the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of advertising, one person had expressed interest but did not come to the interview and the other withdrew. Another lead was being followed up. If that was not successful, the post would be readvertised in the New Year.

5.2 Forest Church at St Joseph's had met twice and both times about 20 people had attended. It was still early days and they were working out the shape of it. There would be lanterns for the next one. Stephane noted that there was a Forest School in Panshanger park, which Mudlarks were involved in and suggested that that might be something to explore.

5.3 Nick Hoyle was training to be a Lay Leader, mainly for Zoom services.

5.4 Beth and Jean Rose had agreed to decorate a Christmas tree on behalf of St Mary's for Hertingfordbury Cowper School's Christmas Tree event.

5.5 The Christmas card was almost ready to go to press. Kath Oates and Stephane were planning to deliver some on the new estate. Other parish cards could be

delivered in the village and to the schools.

5.6 Hertingfordbury Cowper were consulting on a change to their admission policy, from requiring church attendance once a month, rather than twice a month. This was also recommended by the Diocese and supported by the governors.

5.7 PCC Secretaries in the Hertford Team had received notice of the Vacancy of Team Rector. Alan outlined the history of the Hertford Team, but noted that he and the other members of the team had argued for the team to be disbanded as, although the team members supported one another, it did not operate as a team and there was no hierarchy. It was agreed to look at this again in the New Year, when there was more clarity.

5.8 Alan noted that the Diocese had asked for a document on spiritual abuse to be circulated. He outlined the nature of spiritual abuse as psychological/emotional abuse in a spiritual context. Stephane noted that the document was far too long. He added that there were other kinds of abuse, including financial abuse and this was more likely where there was an imbalance of power.

## 6. Mission Morning

6.1 Some of the ideas from the Mission morning were being taken forward.

## 7. Reaching New People

7.1 Stephane reported that he and Kath Oates were planning to meet up to discuss the numbers of new houses occupied and to distribute Christmas cards.

## 8. Friends of St Mary's

8.1 Robin reported that Helen Bishop had made an application to register as a charity. The criteria had been accepted apart from the wording. Revised wording had been agreed and submitted to the Charity Commission. Once this application has been approved, a membership scheme can be set up.

## 9. Churchwardens' Reports

9.1 David reported that St Mary's had now taken possession of the Yarnbombers' Poppy net. This was much appreciated and he thanked all those who helped.

9.2 He thanked all those responsible for the Christmas market which had been very well attended.

9.3 On the church fabric: mould had appeared on the Brace Room ceiling. There had been a leak from regular small amounts of water. The repair had involved removing some panels including sealant. Unfortunately there had been some heavy rain during the time they had been removed. All had now been replaced and there had been no problems since then. The mould had probably dried out and David would put sealant on it and at some point redecorate. The cost of the repair was 3 days' work: £2000. The invoice had not yet been received. Robin noted that the insurance policy would not pay out because of an exclusion clause.

9.4. The lock on the wall safe replaced after someone had attempted to force it. A new lock had been fitted. There had been another attempt to force it again and so it had been decided not to replace it again. Instead a card reader could be installed.

Unfortunately the CCTV didn't record people entering the church, only when they arrived to the middle of the church. A new camera/motion sensor could be considered.

9.5. There was a drainage problem in North West corner. There was some discussion about the need for an archaeologist and the possibility of paving this area. The question of redoing the path was also discussed. The cost would be around £35,000. The possibility of applying for grants to improve access and inclusion was discussed.

## 10. Churchyard Manager's Report

10.1 David reported that there would now be no monthly group meetings until next spring. Meanwhile, the equipment would need to be serviced.

## 11. Monuments Sub-Committee Report

11.1 There were three significant graves which had been assigned to receive basic attention. These were all ones we had a legacy for and would be worked on them with the team. There were some shrubs which had got out of hand and would be removed.

## 12. Treasurer's Report

12.1 Robin referred to his report which had already been circulated. He reported that the finances were in a reasonable position owing to some legacies and repayment of VAT. However, it would be necessary to keep an eye on expenses.

12.2 Fees had been set at a certain level in 2021, but needed to be looked at on an annual basis. There was a need for a more structured approach looking at the inflation rate. Fees for vergers should be increased to £68 for weddings and £62 for funerals. Organist fees should be upped to £148, £172 for a wedding and £98 for funeral. Bells should be £148, choir £130. Diocesan figures would be out in December. Fees could be reviewed in January, if that was not too late.

12.3 There was some discussion about the change in takings now that there was a card system in place. Robin noted that many of the congregation now contributed via standing orders and the Parish Giving Scheme.

## 13. Deanery Synod

13.1 Robin had not been able to attend, though it would have been an interesting meeting because it was about growth.

## 14. Churches Together

14.1 The minutes of the AGM had been circulated. Rachel had not been able to attend.

## 15. Safeguarding

15.1 Robin had circulated the checklist and safeguarding policies in advance of the meeting. He noted that he and David were required to do a level 3 course, but there were none available at the moment. Once the PCC had agreed to adopt the policies, all the criteria would be met.

15.3 He would check public liability insurance for hiring out the church premises and develop a hire agreement for possible regular hire.

15.4 David proposed reviewing and accepting all 14 policies. This was seconded by Philip and agreed by all present.

#### 16. Events

16.1 These were published in pew sheets, in the magazine and on the website.

16.2 The next Friends event was to be Race Night.

#### 17. Any other business

17.1 Eco Church. Rachel noted that information on this initiative was due to be published in the magazine in the new year. It was being encouraged by the Diocese. It was hoped to get a small group together to take this forward.

17.2 PCC membership. Jan Pearson had stepped down and was thanked for her contribution to the PCC. There was now a need for 2 or 3 additional members to represent different parts of the congregation. An article on PCC membership would be published in the Parish magazine in the new year.

17.3 Parish magazine: Philip raised the question of whether to revisit delivering the magazine to whole village. He noted that 12 or 15 copies were left with the Four Rivers coffee shop. It was suggested that people could ask for a hard copy posted through the door. It was agreed to discuss this next time.

#### 18. Date of the next meeting

This was confirmed for 18 January 2024.