

Hertingfordbury St Mary with St John Parochial Church Council.
Minutes of the meeting held Thursday 21st September 2023 at 7.30 pm in the
Brace Room and on Zoom

Present: Rev Alan Stewart (Alan), (chair), David Gorton (David), Paul Attridge (Paul), Robin Densem (Robin D), Philip Juniper (Philip), Rachel Carter (Rachel) (Secretary)

Attending via Zoom: Jean Skinner (Jean), 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

Robin Bishop (Robin B), 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 3.4. Philip now had his DBS and Stephane was progressing through the process.

3.2 Item 5.4 The first Forest Church service was due to take place on 25 September.

3.3 Item 5.6 The Bible course had been well attended, mainly by members of St Mary's.

3.4 Item 5.8 The latest round of advertising had not produced any serious applications. Alan was pursuing a lead from another avenue.

3.5 Item 5.10 Paul Rowbotham, a parent at Hertingfordbury Cowper had been unanimously elected as Foundation Governor by email agreement from all members of the PCC.

3.6 Item 9.2.2 Paul had checked whether VAT could be reclaimed on the path replacement costs, and had found that this would not be possible.

4. Correspondence

4.1 There was no correspondence to report.

5. Priests' Report

5.1 Alan set out some important forthcoming dates:

23 September – Alan and Helen Ward, new Pastor and Youth Pastor to be inducted at Hertford Baptist Church

25 September – Forest church at St Joseph's in the Park

1 October – Pet Service

8 October – Harvest Festival
5 November – Annual Bereavement service at St Andrew’s
12 November – Remembrance Service at St Mary’s and St Andrew’s – Bill to lead as Alan will be leading the Remembrance Service at All Saints, as the Mayor’s chaplain.
Beer and carols at St Andrew’s
18 December – Mindful Christmas (previously Blue Christmas)
21 December (Thursday) – St Mary’s Carol Service
23 December (Saturday) – Beer and carols outside 4 pm
24 December – Crib Services at 12.30pm and 2 pm. No Eucharist. Midnight Mass at St Andrew’s
Christmas Day – 9.15 am All Age Service

5.2 2024 Dates confirmed in 2024:

24 February Race Night
27 April Village Breakfast
27 September? Pet Service
?Harvest Festival
?November Market

6. Mission Morning

6.1 This had mainly been given over to a SWOT analysis:

St Mary’s strengths were considered to be: its beautiful building; the unthreatening size of congregation, all the teams involved – the ministry teams, all those involved in welcoming, arrival and coffee; the Vicar; the traditional but open minded approach, the school links, financially solvent, its music, the all age services focusing on children, other activities such as handbell ringers, bellringing, flower arranging, communication, its relationship with St Andrew’s.

St Mary’s weaknesses were considered to be: succession planning for the clergy and churchwardens; low percentage of local people; low numbers of young people; too few people doing too many things

There were thought to be the following opportunities for mission: the 9.15 am service was thought to be good for younger families; a whole new housing estate built close to St Mary’s; great outside space; schools; Forest church; Lay involvement

The following threats were identified: Clergy movement/retirement – would a new incumbent be able to manage both St Mary’s and St Andrew’s? changing society; long term finance; demographics.

6.2 The following objectives were identified for taking forward:

1. Use of churchyard outside space for events such as beer and carols
2. More advertising of events such as an events card

3. Coffee for parents after school services
4. A social for younger families – children’s tea party
5. Sedilia area – the possibility of making a remembrance garden could be explored
6. Panshanger dogwalkers’ event?

7. Reaching New People

7.1 Stephane reported that he and Kath Oates had contacted as many people as they could (about 100), with just a few to go back to. Having made the contact, it was a question of waiting to see what would transpire. It was interesting to see that the Sunday congregation had grown, though it was not clear whether that was connected. Alan asked whether RNP could deliver Christmas cards.

8. Friends of St Mary’s

8.1 There was no written report this time. David noted that there had been a Friends’ meeting on 19 September to confirm committee membership for the coming year. There was enough money in the bank account to apply for charitable status.

8.2 It was suggested that the Friends might take on the project of creating a memorial garden in the churchyard, by the sedilia.

9. Churchwardens' Reports

9.1 David reported that the Brace Room roof investigation would start in October. The damage to the main gate pillar had been repaired and the lock to the wall safe had been replaced. A repair to the Marquee cover had been sourced and that was now in working order. Two bell ropes had broken. The cost of replacing them was very high as they would have to be specially made. Instead, someone from St Andrew’s had agreed to splice and repair them. The annual inspection by the Assistant Rural Dean, Rev Ysmena Pentelow had taken place and everything was up to date including the MAP.

9.2 The cost of hiring the Brace Room for a few hours was discussed. It was agreed that there should be a fixed fee of £40 to cover a morning’s hire including setting up costs and a smaller additional fee for extra hours.

9.3 David had been asked by the Yarnbombers whether St Mary’s wanted the poppy net and was able to store it. It was agreed that this was wanted and a donation of £150 would be given to the Yarnbombers.

10. Churchyard Manager's Report

10.1 David reported that the churchyard was in pretty good order. It was good to have new recruits. The mower had been repaired and extra equipment sourced for the new recruits to use.

11. Monuments Sub-Committee Report

11.1 The proposal to develop a memorial garden around the sedilia had already been discussed.

12. Treasurer's Report

12.1 Robin B's report had been circulated earlier.

12.2 It was noted that Grants for listed places of worship and grants only covered repairs.

12.3 The energy supplier had overcharged on VAT and this had now paid back.

13. Deanery Synod

13.1 No meeting since the previous one.

14. Churches Together

14.1 The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated. Rachel had attended.

14. Safeguarding

14.1 Robin's report noted that DBS checks were continuing. Some members would soon be asked to renew..

15. Events

15.1 A date could be sought for handbells and carols at the White Horse, perhaps Wednesday 13 November to avoid White Horse party nights. Jane Eldred could be contacted to check if she would be available.

16. Any other business

16.1 There was no other business.

17. Dates of the next meetings

This was confirmed for 23 November.