

St Bride's Church, Fleet Street

Minutes of the Parochial Church Council meeting Held on Thursday 24 July 2014

Present: Ven David Meara (Priest-in-Charge & Chairman), Peter Silver (Vice-Chairman), Emanuel Adeniji, Gerald Bowey, Geoffrey Burgess, Chris Cottrill, Eric Davies, Paul Dyson, Clive Hill-Archer, David Lowish, Ashley Painter, Ingrid Slaughter, John Smith, Terence Smith, Mary Walker, Jerry Wright

Also attending: Christopher Betterton (Secretary), James Irving, David Smith, Revd Bill Wilson

1. **Opening prayers**
The meeting opened with prayers.
2. **Apologies for absence**
These were received from Guy Black, Rachel Corp, Helen Fraser, Valerie Locks, Janet Kitchen, Peter Longland, Janet Smith, Grace Stedman and Katharine Wilkinson.
3. **Business matters**
 - a. **Conflicts of interest.** There were no reported conflicts of interest.
 - b. **Statements of Non-disqualification and Conflicts of Interest.** Council members were reminded to complete the form if they haven't already done so.
 - c. **Non members in attendance.** Christopher Betterton (Secretary), James Irving and David Smith were in attendance. The Priest-in-Charge also welcomed Revd Bill Wilson, who would be covering much of the interregnum, to the meeting.
4. **Minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2014**
The minutes were signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.
5. **Matters arising not on the agenda**
Clive Hill-Archer and Alec Hithersay had received their permissions to act as lay chalice assistants. The permissions for the remaining assistants were due to be renewed.
6. **Report by the Priest-in-Charge**
 - a. The Priest-in-Charge reported that this was his last meeting as Rector and now Priest-in-Charge of St Bride's. Since the last meeting the main item of business has been the appointment of a new rector, now satisfactorily concluded with the appointment of the Revd Canon Dr Alison Joyce. But the life of the parish has continued, with the usual round of services, weddings every Saturday, baptisms on Sundays, and a run of memorial services during the week. We commemorate Ray Barnes Harman on Sunday at Choral Evensong. We have also held our third Wren Talk given by Peter Rees, celebrated Ian Locks' election as Master of the Stationers' Company, and held a very successful summer party in the churchyard. Looking back over 14 years we have together achieved a lot, but inevitably there are tasks left unfinished and things still to be tackled. The Inspire! Appeal project has got off to a good start, Phase 1 has been completed, but the second and third phases are still in the pipeline. Our weekday ministry to those who work in the area needs a fresh look

and there is the continuing challenge of keeping connected to the fast changing media world. Your new Rector will face challenges, but it will be in the knowledge that she can build on a firm foundation and with resources of people and talent that make her task that much easier. I shall leave with many very happy memories, especially of the people at St Bride's. So thank you for your work as members of the Church Council. Being a PCC member is a lot more challenging than it used to be because you are trustees of the church work and finances. I hope you will give your wholehearted support to your new Rector, so that this church can continue to grow and flourish. I wish St Bride's well in the years ahead.

- b. On behalf of the Council the Vice-Chairman warmly thanked the Priest-in-Charge for his work, guidance and support during his time at St Bride's.

7. **Succession planning / Interregnum arrangements**

- a. The Vice-Chairman thanked the Revd Bill Wilson for agreeing to cover the interregnum and noted that he would be in the church most Fridays and would also be leading Sunday worship. The Revd Canon Bill Christianson would also take some Sunday services.
- b. The institution and induction of the new Rector would take place on Monday 3 November at 7pm.

Item 10 on the Agenda was taken at this point

10. **Architect's report**

- a. The Architect reported that there had been feedback from the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC), who had not fully understood the proposals for the works in the Crypt. These issues had been resolved and the Architect noted that he fully supported the Wren Centre scheme.
- b. It was noted that the floodlights to the spire appear to have been restored, although it was not known who was responsible for this, or who would be paying for the electricity used.

8. **Financial Report**

- a. James Irving, Head of Operations, reported on the half year accounts and budget forecast. It was noted that the 2014 H1 deficit was c. £86,000 in line with the 2013 figure of c. £89,000. It was hoped that the interregnum costs (including redecorating the Rectory) would be about half of the budgeted £40,000. It was noted that choir and salary costs were lower than their 2013 comparators. Income was projected to be maintained at the budget estimate; although grants receivable and church rates would be lower than budgeted (the latter would probably raise c. £60,000 rather than c. £115,000). It was also reported that Goldman Sachs had agreed to make a donation to the church of £10,000 (£8,000 less than the company's voluntary rate would have returned) but that the company would no longer pay church rates to any of the City churches.
- b. **Common Fund contribution.** The Council had received a letter from the Priest-in-Charge asking it to give further thought to the decision to suspend the Common Fund additional voluntary contribution (AVC) during the interregnum. He felt that the church would be better served by writing a letter to Richard Antcliffe, the Diocesan Head of Finance, detailing the Council's proposal and the reasons behind it. The Priest-in-Charge also asked the Council to consider delaying the implementation until later in the year when a clearer picture of the financial outcome for 2014 would be available.

In discussion, members of the Council agreed that the proposal had been made as a way of mitigating the projected 2014 deficit, not as a direct response to the issues surrounding Martin Sargeant's intervention with the Goldman Sachs 2013 church rate demand. It was noted that some Council members had thought the Treasurer was minded to agree to the proposal, whereas she had not supported it and had resigned rather than agree to write to the Diocese as directed. As a result, the Diocese had not yet been informed of the decision and the AVC had continued to be paid.

The Council was reminded that all of the Common Fund contribution was a voluntary commitment but that it was likely the Diocese would not record the parish contribution as being split in the way the parish recognised it, despite having been advised over a number of years that part of the contribution was paid as a voluntary top up.

The Council members who had abstained or voted against the proposal in May, along with some members who had not been present at the meeting, re-iterated the views that the decision may be seen as being reputationally damaging or ill-timed, whilst acknowledging that there was a deficit which needed to be addressed.

The Council directed James Irving to write to the Diocese explaining the proposal agreed at the May meeting. It was agreed to review the financial aspect of the proposal, and whether to continue with the suspension of the AVC, at the September meeting.

- c. **Appointment of Treasurer.** A number of people had expressed an interest in being appointed to the role and the Churchwardens and Head of Operations would review these. It was noted that, in the absence of an appointed Treasurer, the Churchwardens had the responsibility to carry out the duties.

9. **Inspire! Appeal report and Wren Legacy update**

The Council had a report from Gerald Bowey detailing the proposals for an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to assist with the funding for the Wren Centre. It was noted that any HLF funding would need to be matched by the church, but it was felt that providing a creative, sustainable and educational facility, based on a good business model, would be the best way to attract further sponsorship for the work required to the building. The working group had met with representatives from the City Corporation, the V&A, St Paul's and RIBA who supported the project. The Council was reminded that the proposal was the culmination of a decision made in 2012 to appoint an architect to create a 'master plan' for Phase II of the proposed works.

Council members raised questions with particular regard to the financing of the project. It was proposed that the project would be funded by grants and donations and that the Council would not be required to provide funds. It was noted that a number of case studies of similar projects had been reviewed and that the funding proposal included proposed running costs for five years. A number of sources of income, including potential US benefactors had been looked into. It was also noted that the proposed Phase II works to the building were now estimated to be less expensive than had been previously thought. The DAC was due to meet the following day and it was thought that its underlying commitment to the project was strong.

The Council was advised that if the HLF application did not yield results, the money would need to be raised in its entirety by the Appeal. However, it was hoped that a successful application would allow other potential donors to support the project.

The Council agreed to proceed to the next stage and supported the application to the HLF and requested that the details be presented in a consistent manner to the congregation and via the church website.

11. **Safeguarding report**

- a. Ashley Painter reported that no safeguarding issues had been raised since the previous meeting.
- b. **Appointment of safeguarding officer.** An officer was required to replace Katharine Wilkinson, who had become Children's Champion, and an advert would be produced for the Sunday Service sheet. It was noted that the new Rector may have views on how the programme for children and vulnerable adults would progress going forward.
- c. **CRB checks.** Ashley Painter would deal with ensuring the checks were carried out.

12. **Electoral Roll**

On behalf of the Electoral Roll Officer it was reported that the roll stood at 323, with nine additions since the previous meeting. The Council noted that applicants self-certified their eligibility for application to the Roll.

13. **Database update**

Ashley Painter reported on the progress of the database project. The project was further delayed and it was hoped to be fully operational by October.

14. **Any other business**

It was noted that Open House weekend was on 20 and 21 September. Volunteers were sought (and were forthcoming) to open and staff the church during the weekend.

15. **Closing prayers**

The meeting ended with the Grace.