

The Parish of St. John the Evangelist Newbury

Parochial Church Council Meeting held in-person on Tuesday February 6th, 2024, beginning at 7.30pm

Present:

The Revd. Gary Collins – Chair
David Oats (DO) – Churchwarden
Alison Foulkes (AF) – Churchwarden
Simon Brown (SB) – PCC Secretary
Kim Slade (KS) – Hon. Treasurer

Also in attendance:

Melanie Brown (MAB), Christopher Sears (CS), Aeron Slade (AS), Andrew Kingston (AK), Stephen Kerry (SK)

1	Opening Prayer & Welcome		
2	Apologies for Absence & Any Other Business Andy Grace (AG), Margaret Baker (MB), Jeremy Wright (JW), Jennie Marwick-Evans (JME)		
3	Correspondence SK – Climate Emergency, JW – Various, MB - Various		
4	Minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday 23 rd November 2023. The minutes were approved by the PCC with DO proposing & AF seconding.		
5	Matters Arising from Previous Minutes. No matters arising, apart from those addressed in sections below.		
6	Positive feedback since last PCC Heating still working! Christmas attendance, (over 120 at Christingle), Tuesday lunchtime and 8.30 Service is growing. Four people confirmed from St Johns. Away day was very well supported. Church illumination (feedback from SK confirmed attendees at midnight mass because of the church illumination), the illumination was agreed as a very positive initiative. Crib Service well attended. SK remarked how positive the music was (traditional carol music to the liturgy). The Dolphin public house carols were very well received. Christmas Fayre went very well also.		
7	Safeguarding update SK updated one case ongoing. Up to date CoE website links issued (they are online). Priority should be ensuring that ‘Safer Recruiting’ has been covered.		
8	H&S update (MB by correspondence) The tree near to the main church doors needs to have the lower branches cut back/removed to create more height underneath. I watched as the Funeral Directors tried to carry Anne Stead’s coffin into the Church. They had to go onto the grass and stoop slightly which is far from ideal. Also, if the lights on that tree are to be retained, they need to be re-hung and the redundant set removed because there is too much wire dangling down. DO to review.		
9	Deanery update No update since last meeting.		
10	Vicars report positive update from Revd Gary on the current state of the church. We have a unique offering in our locality. People are coming forward for confirmation which is affirming. We have new challenges this year but we are good of heart.		
11	Financials KS updated last year’s deficit was c £28k. Some was planned/acknowledged overspend (£6k on organ works, £2k Green heating feasibility study, £10k on boiler fixes/underfloor heating (though some of this was paid back by insurance)). Outside of these projects we are running c £10k-£15k which is like previous years. Investments showing £380k and a recovering benefit from the stock market. KS preparing the end of year accounts. This year we expect to spend more on organ works and boiler replacement spend. Likely to be some fabric maintenance work on the back of the Quinquennial Report. Revd Gary asked if we have investigated grants for the boiler. DO confirmed we are on the list as a Demonstrator Church. KS updated on the Parish Giving Scheme as a potential alternative for giving, primarily as an alternative to current/setting up new standing orders. Benefits are gift aid admin done by PGS and collected monthly, and		

	<p>option for givers to link their giving to inflation. To set this up there needs to be a PCC vote. To consider and then vote at the next PCC. CS updated that this works better for larger parishes (gift aid comes in every month) – such as St John’s. He also stated that the data is protected so you don’t know who to thank. Revd Gary updated that this is working well at St Georges. Revd Gary also suggested that PGS would be good for newer joiners. DO supported indicating that quite a few on standing order may be approached. KS to reforward email for SB to distribute. DO reminded that we are charity and do offer quite a few charity services. KS reminded that over Christmas we raised more than £2k for charities.</p>		
12	<p>Curate appointment Revd Gary updated that the benefice has been asked to take on a curate. Revd Gary and Revd Becky support this part-time appointment. Revd Gary asked the PCC if St Johns would sponsor this placement, its Part Time for 5 years. We would fund the cost of housing, and at the moment St Johns is being asked to fund the first year. KS updated that there is a sliding scale based on the Parish Income. Year 1 would be at St Johns so based on St Johns income, cost to St Johns is £3.5k per year, plus travel expenses. AF asked when the Curate would be starting, Revd Gary updated could be end of July. KS updated that income from Newtown Road is for the provision of a curate so the house income would cover the costs and we should support this cost. AS indicated, he was in favour, he questioned the vicarage which is being rented out and funds to the diocese. DO updated that the vicarage is owned by the diocese. AS proposed, AF second, PCC all agreed to welcome the new curate to St Johns.</p>		
13	<p>i-Cap update DO updated that Phase 1 – electrics and ramp starts on the 12th March ’24. CS asked how long the power will be off, DO updated should only be ½ a day, and only parts of the church, workmen will be in for 5 days, expect the two Sundays to be working as normal. DO also updated that on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, the Ladies Fellowship will be at the Museum, so will not be impacted by the work. AK updated that PB has gone out to 4 companies for the knock through and the ramp, expect them back in a couple of weeks. AK & DO advise that we need to have appropriate & quality electrical fittings and they represent 50% of the quote. The labour rates are very competitive. KS updated and AK responded that as a listed building we should be able to recover the VAT. DO also reminded the PCC that PB is doing a lot of work on this without charge, and we are saving considerable sums because of his assistance. It has been agreed that we will pay for his assistants services, so that we are being fair to PB company, but still ensuring that there is no conflict of interest on PB’s part.</p>		
14	<p>Boiler update DO has received two quotes £155k and £200k, awaiting further quotes. DO was advised that the current performance of our underfloor heating was fully sufficient for the heat pumps being proposed (with some headroom). Revd Gary thanks DO for all his efforts in showing contractors around and co-ordinating.</p>		
15	<p>Organ updates CS updated that he has written to the current supplier for a from the quote. DO sought clarity on whether we needed to do all the work. CS replied that we need to get, in-writing, from the DAC, what needs to be done. Revd Gary offered to support the process; CS has not replied to Oxford yet. Current work has been approved. SK asked if a faculty just related to visible fabric, CS updated no, but watch this space!</p>		
16	<p>Fabric progress – Dishwasher for the Parish room – AF updated that the recommended dishwasher is £1.5k (£3000 less 50% discount). DO was asked to obtain the cost of putting in a 32a supply and was told by our electrician, that it would be a few hundred pounds. AF is progressing quotes for re-modelling the worktops, from Chris Page. AF indicated we have been approached by the congregation regarding a dishwasher, but she recommends that the PCC does not proceed at this time, but re-visits in the future (an industrial type). The PCC did not vote in favour of progressing the industrial dishwasher, but this may be considered again in the future.</p>		
17	<p>Church lighting & Sound & East Wall (via MB and JW) The area in front of the communion rail needs better lighting. The previous halogen lights sited on the walls directed their light down and so perfectly lit readers at the lectern/pulpit and were excellent for concert performances and choir rehearsals.</p>		

The replacement LED lights are set back and only light up an area about 10ft above the ground. No light is directed down. The Cecilia Consort are rehearsing in that space now where Steve Bowey cannot see his music on the piano and singers on the other side are in a similar situation.

We also need our Vicar lit up during services and, if we are promoting the space as a concert venue, we need some properly sited spotlights. There are examples of good lighting at St Nic's (although theirs is extensive) and a St Mary's, Speen.

The current lights look more like the outside lights we have over our patio at home. Professional lighting advice should be sought.

JW advised that the lighting in the church - in the nave in particular, is too dim. Even with all the lights on it is dim. This is a barrier to people hiring the church. It is also discriminatory against people with visual impairment, and against older people in general who typically have poorer eyesight and are less tolerant of poor light conditions.

DO updated that there may be able to be a modification that may improve the lighting. AF suggested a couple of extra units to floodlight the flowers. DO stated that he is already in discussion with A.S. Electricals to find a solution to both issues.

Sound system – (via MB) his needs a proper professional review to eliminate whatever is causing the feedback type high pitched noise. It was embarrassing that we expected a guest, in this case Revd Rita, to take the service with this whistling/screeching affecting practically everything she said. I have never heard it so bad. It is also one of the things which will put people off attending the church services. DO updated that this is being investigated.

East Wall – JW wrote asking, what is the state of the East wall, of the leak that caused the issue. The leak clearly existed for some considerable time. How can it be ensured this does not recur. DO updated that a leak has reappeared after some years, from guttering previously repaired, and is being investigated. The damage to the brickwork pointing occurred years ago and will be repaired this year, hopefully. A very small leak in the Parish room ceiling, is also being investigated by a local roofing company.

- 18 **Greening Committee** – Climate Emergency briefing material been issued prior to the meeting by SK. He updated on the background to this. He mentioned local authorities, other churches and NHS have also declared a climate emergency. He updated that the declaration affirms that action is required. SK suggested we should involve the congregation in the decision. If we are ready to 'up our game' we should explain what this is and the publish it. The correspondence from JW was read out, his view is that he is against declaring a climate emergency, he thinks It is a pointless piece of politics, and hypocritical for both the parish and diocese to declare one. He also reported a specific area of a draught through the switch cupboard. DO updated that there is not a draught if the door is shut and that he would attach a notice, to the door, asking people to keep the door shut. DO said we should progress with some sort of Climate Emergency Declaration or Statement. CS stated that the word 'declare' is somewhat pompous, and his concern was with the wording, it was felt that the Shaw Church approach (which had been circulated) is more appropriate. Revd Gary reminded that we are in progress and on our own journey and more work is required, that we have a thought through process, and we are trying to effect change. SB updated that he was not comfortable with the wording or the approach, this felt very political, he did not see any practical value as it would not change what we are doing, and suggested that not everyone agreed with it, and we need to consider in the context that we are representing all our church. SK updated that this is so serious and that we should pledge our commitment, and this should promote strong response. Revd Gary encouraged us to not be shy as the church is part of society and we should encourage this. AS suggested that we show a list of the actions and activities we are already undertaking so that any Declaration is in context. AF suggested we should not go to the congregation for an answer, but somebody should explain a bit more about what 'Declaring a Climate

	Emergency' means. DO suggested that the message should be, that things need to change, and we should make a statement using a form of words we could stand behind. SC suggested a form of words to approve at the AGM. MAB said you need to be very careful how you word it and that she does not think the current wording is helpful as likely to scare some people. SK updated the words have been chosen to make people take notice. Revd Gary responded with the question that the church over many years has taken a stand on issues, and though not 'party-political' church history has always been political as we are called to support the most vulnerable, (examples, Latin America, Anti-Apartheid, Ecology), and had to balance reality with hope. DO supported the three statement options suggested by AS. AS reminded us that we need a list of actions and activities we are undertaking, with the form of words, so the declaration is in context. SK to work with the Greening Group on 3 options to review.		
19	School connection – Revd Gary updated that the St Johns school connection is doing well.		
20	NOTE: correspondence received from MB but NOT covered in meeting due to time – to be reviewed at next PCC meeting: Orange Hymn Books – Do we need some more of these? Choir Music – We need a few more books of anthem music. Christopher can give more details.		
21	Any Other Business: No Other business.		

Closing Benediction (meeting closed at 21:30)

Date & time of next meetings: 12/03/24 (Tues) Standing Committee Meeting - Zoom

21/03/24 (Thurs) Parochial Church Council Meeting - Church, Upper Room