

The Parish of St. John the Evangelist Newbury

Parochial Church Council Meeting held in-person on Thursday 21st March 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), Andrew Kingston (AK), Stephen Kerry (SK), Margaret Baker (MB), Jeremy Wright (JW)

1	Opening Prayer & Welcome		
2	Apologies for Absence & Any Other Business Andy Grace (AG), Aeron Slade (AS)		
3	Correspondence SK – Climate Emergency, JW – State of electrics & East Wall, KS – Parish Giving Scheme		
4	Minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 6 th February 2024. The minutes were approved by the PCC with DO proposing & AF seconding.		
5	Matters Arising from Previous Minutes. Orange Hymn Books – MB asked whether we had enough orange hymn books - DO updated we have 100 Orange books, Revd Gary asked DO to check. Choir Music – We need a few more books of anthem music, Christopher will progress.		
6	Positive feedback since last PCC Heating still working! I-CAP work has started. Congregation numbers are growing and diversifying. Revd Gary updated that the 8.30am service is growing in number. AF gave feedback from Rita B that was very complimentary. Forest church was well attended (despite the weather!). Soup lunch continues to be successfully, and Wednesday coffee is growing with more people coming consistently. JW suggested that some people are returning to ‘normal’ post covid. Revd Gary updated that his aware that more people are seeing St Johns as their local church. JW updated that we had a recent marriage in the congregation which is great news.		
7	Safeguarding update. One case still ongoing. SK asked us to take a minute to think through the church week and identify any safeguarding issues to report. SK asked if there have been any unsupervised activities? Revd Gary asked us all to keep an eye and ear open especially at diary events such as the soup lunch. Revd Gary updated that after the APCM we will undertake a revisiting of the safeguarding status and SK will maintain a spreadsheet. MB updated that she has completed one module this week, that it takes longer to complete than initially advised, she also asked if DBS checks is compulsory. SK updated that it’s not compulsory. The Basic training is the one that is required for the PCC, Revd Gary reminded the PCC of its importance.		
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 (as reported last PCC). 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. GC to review. MB Also noted that they have moved the barriers to enable a walkway but there is a board which is not secure, so needs a new board. (DO stated that there was no access to the path, when the contractors left, so barriers must have been moved by others). MB and CS fed back that we have a significant number of electrical connections in a location where children are often in and using the room. As a temporary arrangement some trailing cables are being used because the electrics work are being undertaken, one circuit cannot be moved. JW also fed back that there is far more electrical appliances so would it not be sensible to review the number of electrical sockets we have. Revd Gary agreed		

	that more sockets could be implemented. DO to follow up with the electricians, can they provide advice on extra sockets, what is required and how much. SK brought up the hygiene certificate for the kitchen, AF will follow this up.		
9	Deanery update No update since last meeting. Revd Gary updated that the Area Dean, David McLeod, is leaving in June. The division of the Parish Share is still an active topic at Deanery level.		
10	Vicars report positive update from Revd Gary on the current state of the church. I-CAP starting, Leanne will be starting at the end of June. Revd Gary updated that as she is part time she will be with us for at least 5 years. Busy season with Easter soon. Easter Sunday is also when the clocks go forward 1 hour. Work in the community continues and Revd Gary thanked the PCC for its support.		
11	Financials Financials KS updated, accounts are with the accountants (2023) they will get first draft back early next week providing a couple of weeks to review before the special PCC for approval on 22 nd April. Highlights of 2023 – we had incoming of £110k and a deficit of £27k. However, of that £6k was organ improvement works agreed and monies spent on fixing the boiler (additional to insurance). Hence, accounting for these extraordinary spends, the deficit which could be compared to previous years was £18k. This is still £5-10k larger than normal. For why the deficit was so large we had a large increase in gas and electricity bill (up by £10k) and in general church maintenance (brickwork repairs and quinquennial report findings). Good news on an increase in income - big increase in room hire, £10k up from 2022, thanks to DO for managing this. Good Exchange giving for essential running costs was largely flat YOY. Good news is that for i-CAP the amount of funds that we have in the bank increased by £16k last year. We have not yet received our earned match funding yet, but we should soon be able to show invoices/photos to unlock the extra £20k funding. Highlights so far for 2024 - KS has organised a £5k draw from KG Legacy but the share prices have risen so it's still growth in the fund. Upcoming bills will be for the accountants and the work from the Quinquennial Report. We have a CCLA invite (free lunch!) charity investment seminar on Tuesday 30 th April, anybody who wants to attend please let KS know. Also discussed was KS's proposal to sign up St John's to the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) – an alternative way for people to donate. If we want to encourage people to give, we should give options. The Good Exchange provides match funding (so is KS' preferred way for people to give), but this requires online transactions and setting up a GEx account which some people are uncomfortable doing. We should provide many options so there will be one that's good for the individual. The PGS enables gift aid collection throughout the year and enables the donor to provide an increase annually with inflation. Potentially this could replace standing orders for newcomers to the church (and eventually those already on standing orders who would be willing to change). The PCC was asked through a resolution to set up the Parish Giving Scheme. MAB asked if there is a cost to this, CS indicated that there is a charge for administration of a single donation, but no charge for regular. KS proposed, SB seconded – We the PCC of St John's request the PGS commence operation of the scheme on our behalf - passed by the PCC. Revd Gary passed on thanks to Kim for her efforts.		
12	Curate appointment Revd Gary updated Leanne's ordination 29 th June, good news!		
13	i-CAP update AK updated that Phase 1b– started and the electrical work is ongoing and provided the PCC with an update to the next stage of the works. The ramp work starts after Easter. MAB commented that they have moved the light switches. DO agreed that this is an issue, that we may have to put in a new light on a sensor to illuminate the steps. Revd Gary agreed and long term the area will be sorted out but in 6 months it will be OK but meanwhile we need to resolve. MB asked if there will be a temporary door, DO believes that they will seal the area to prevent draughts. Revd Gary updated that so far the quotes have come in lower, so good news. DO asked MAB and SK whether we could move the flower arrangement on the small grass roundabout, as the builders are planning to place the skip there. MAB asked that we recycle		

the milk carton installation. SK asked DO what the timescales – DO updated the skip comes 2nd April. SK will re-cycle.

14 **Fabric updates - Boiler** DO has received three quotes from £155k to £220k, awaiting further quotes. Going very slowly, funding from the demonstrator church scheme does not kick in till July. **Guttering** JW asked how long has the dehumidifier been in place, and said it seems like months. JW asked what has caused the wall to get so wet. DO replied that the area was highlighted as being in need of re-pointing during the last Quinquennial Report (October 2023). DO stated that the guttering started to leak again in the winter which has washed out more of the mortar. The guttering has been repaired but there still seems to be a very small drip from a section of guttering. In fact several guttering joins have had very small leaks in the past, as can be witnessed from the discoloration on the brickwork. JW is really concerned that the wall has got so wet, we need to fix the immediate issue. DO agreed it needs to be done. This section of guttering was fixed 5 years ago. Re-pointing is now required in several areas around the church as was mentioned in the QR. MAB noticed some wet patches up the stairs, DO suggested with the downpours we can see some wet appearing on solid walls inside. SK suggested that we should consult other churches on finding a guttering specialist, and that resolving the guttering should be a priority for us.

15 **APCM Update** – Revd Gary updated that the reports will be required soon. DO will contact AG for the electoral role update. Four members of the PCC come to the end of their three year term in May (MB, MAB, JME and JW) plus we will have two other vacancies that were not filled last year.

On another matter (not on the Agenda) JW reflected that he was very unhappy with being asked to vote for a motion without prior knowledge and unhappy that so many people voted yes, without questioning, suggesting a herd instinct within the PCC. Revd Gary responded that there is trust relationship between the members of the PCC. DO updated that he had assumed we had been automatically enrolled into the Phase 1 scheme after our nomination by the Diocese, and that it was not clear that we had to have a PCC resolution and vote, until reading through the 71 questions in the Application Form which arrived on 4th March. The deadline for submitting the application was 17th March, which was before the next PCC meeting. Other churches have had to follow a similar course of action because of the short notice of a deadline for applications. DO updated that we are on the Parish Buying Scheme and we are on a green energy tariff for our electricity. AF reminded us that there was a urgency to the voting and decision. In future the PCC will be asked to vote in the allotted meetings, but if an emergency happens in future then as much information is provided as possible.

16 **Statement of intent** – SK offered two options of wording for our own version of a “Declaration of Climate Emergency”, following a request from the Greening Group, for a statement of intent. MB did not understand why we have to do this. SK updated that we are trying to find some wording for the church. JW asked why are we doing this at all? SK replied that many organisations are indicating that they have a statement to provide urgency. DO updated that on the Climate Action Toolkit website, there is a map of the country showing all of the churches that have already signed up. Revd Gary updated that it is a statement of intent. SK pointed out that many commercial organisations are making a statement of intent. Revd Gary reminded the PCC that at the last meeting we agreed for SK to produce two sets of wording and if we agree the two statements then we will go to the congregation to ask them. DO asked for clarification on the date either 2030 or 2035 (SK advised 2030). JW also asked for clarification over the targets and provided critical feedback on the first statement. SK was asked to clarify specific wording within the two options. Revd Gary

	suggested that there is an imbalance between the two options and maybe look to edit so there is a comparability between the two sets of wordings. SB suggested that JW and SK and Revd Gary work together on refining the wording. SK indicated, that would not work. SB then suggested we look at the wording from the Diocese of Oxford declaration and SK agreed to circulate the link after the meeting. SK suggested that Intent B mirrors the church. AK suggested the APCM is not the right platform to agree a statement of intent. Revd Gary reminded the PCC that the work we are doing will not change and we need to have a re-think. CS recommended that the 'big' subjects should be covered at the beginning of the meeting so more time can be given to such topics. Revd Gary stated that he and SK would re-group.		
19	School connection – Revd Gary updated that the St Johns school connection is doing well.		
20	Any Other Business: No Other business.		

Closing Benediction (meeting closed at 21:45)

Date & time of next meetings:

24/04/24 (Weds) Zoom PCC meeting to approve Financial Report prior to APCM

02/05/24 (Thurs) APCM