

Minutes of a Meeting of St Matthew's, Harwell PCC held remotely via Zoom on Tuesday 1 September 2020 at 7.30 pm

Present

Jonathan Mobey
(Chair and present for items
1-7 & 17-19)

Sid Gale

Allan Macarthur (churchwarden)

Tony Hughes
(Chair for items 8-19)

Pam Rolls (items 1-7 only)

Rebecca Lewis (churchwarden)

Eliza Wheaton

Gordon Gill

Andrew Keene

Jane Woolley (Secretary)

Phill Johnston (Treasurer)

St Matthew's, Harwell and All Saints', Chilton PCCs were present together for Items 1-7. For the other items, only St Matthew's PCC members were present.

1. Opening & Prayer

The Rector (Jonathan Mobey) read Romans 12: 9-21. Some themes which are particularly relevant at this time jump out in this passage:

- We are called to share together in life's highs and lows
- We are called to be one body, living life together
- We are encouraged to provide for the needs of others and we should be hospitable
- We are called to rejoice in hope, to be patient in suffering. Patience is a key issue at this time of so much uncertainty
- We should persevere in prayer, always

Jonathan then led the meeting in prayer.

2. Update on arrangements during/due to Covid-19 pandemic

Current arrangements

Paper A refers, and further detail was added during the course of the meeting.

"Routine" provision at the moment consists of:

- Weekly pre-recorded services comprising an introduction and blessing by service leader, song videos, reading(s), sermon and prayers; hosted on YouTube and linked to via the church website and publicised on local Facebook pages
- Weekly Sunday 6pm gathered services alternating between Harwell and Chilton (Evening Prayer/Night Prayer). These have had a steady number of attendees – around 20 per week at St Matthew's and around 15 per week at All Saints'.
- Monthly Zoom 'Pebbles Family Service' and regular Zoom children's Sunday groups (Chilton/Harwell combined) and Pathfinders
- All Saints' and St Matthew's are now open daily 12-7pm
- Pastoral care has continued through home groups and on an individual basis; Fledgelings WhatsApp groups and blog

The following "special events" have taken place recently:

- Holiday Club was run in Harwell Church Hall over three consecutive weeks across July and August with three bubbles of 15 primary school aged children. This was well received. There were encouraging spiritual conversations with some children. There were no logistical or Covid19 security issues

- A cream tea was delivered to Generation Gold members on 20 and 21 August, consisting of c.60 deliveries across the two parishes with a message on the theme of “The feeding of the five thousand”. A couple of months prior to this, we delivered tea bags to the same group with a message about still meeting together in spirit. A PCC member reported receiving positive feedback about the cream teas, and noted the particular opportunity for pastoral care in the conversations that were had during their delivery to people’s homes.

PCC members raised the following further points, which were then picked up again under Item 3 on plans/options for autumn 2020 and beyond:

- Could we do more to advertise the 6pm services? Jonathan Mobey said that he had been thinking about whether we should deliver the Ridgeway Broadsheet again in order to reach a wider group. It was noted that many Broadsheet deliverers are in the older age range and might be more cautious about the risk of catching Covid19 when out and about. So we might need to broaden the group of deliverers.
- Is it now time to think about introducing morning services as well as evening?

3. Plans/options for services, autumn 2020 and beyond

Paper A refers.

Sunday services

Social distancing and restricted numbers with limitations on communal singing is likely to continue for some time, and many of our congregations will not feel comfortable gathering in church. Online services have picked up people beyond our regular congregations. Each ‘mode’ has pros and cons, e.g. relationship and interaction of physical gatherings versus convenience and ease of access/anonymity of online.

So how can we take the best of each mode with a variety of service offerings and/or mixed mode/hybrid services?

(Hereafter the term “hybrid” is used to mean a church service which is also simultaneously broadcast live online/livestreamed).

Paper A proposed the following:

- September: continue as currently i.e. alternating weekly evening services in each church, weekly pre-recorded online services, and monthly interactive (Zoom) family services and children’s groups
- October: Work towards hosting hybrid morning services in St Matthew’s with accompanying children’s groups in the Church Hall and in the downstairs and upstairs meeting rooms; continued evening service provision
- November onwards: As October, and consider hybrid Sunday morning services in Chilton too

Tony Hughes asked if the proposal is that the hybrid services would replace the current online service or be in addition to it? Jonathan Mobey clarified that the proposal is that hybrid services would **replace** the current online services. However, hybrid services would be recorded and be accessible online after the event. Hybrid services could also contain some pre-recorded elements. There can be no congregational singing in church at the moment so we would continue to play YouTube song videos as now.

Allan Macarthur was asked to comment on some of the technical aspects of a hybrid service.

Extensive discussion on the pros and cons of hybrid services then ensued. In summary:

Pros:

- Interaction with the live audience present in church. The service leader does not get any feedback about how engaged people are during a purely online service

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- Provides an opportunity for those unable to attend church to still feel connected to the live services and provides a greater feeling of normality

Cons:

- Difficulties with filming a live service such that those online can really engage with it i.e. see what's going on properly and see the service leader's face properly. Gordon Gill said that the advice he had at the Deaneries Conference was to keep online and live services separate for this reason.
- Service leaders need to be aware of the online audience, which will include those who are less familiar with standard patterns of church worship. The service leader would need to signpost particularly clearly for this online audience. Some might be good at this, some not so good.
- Possible problems with internet reliability during services
- There is limited benefit whilst church attendance is restricted to such small numbers

The following amended proposal was then agreed:

- Until further notice: Continue with the current recorded online services
- October: Trial a hybrid 6pm service at St Matthew's with the online audience by invitation only. As already planned, each church's Annual Meeting will also be held as a hybrid event.
- October/November: Hold a monthly morning service plus children's groups in St Matthew's. This would not be a hybrid service – at least until we have reflected on the trial of hybrid 6pm services

Post-meeting note: a couple of different whole-family options are actually being trialled from *September*, initially with a number of invited families meeting in St Matthew's churchyard, and latterly with families meeting inside the church

Remembrance Sunday arrangements

A proposal for this will be drawn up in due course.

Christmas arrangements

Paper A listed some possible options:

- Travelling carol services, e.g. musicians on a tractor trailer. The idea would be to make a joyful noise e.g. playing carols as it goes round the streets
- Communion services with recorded music and/or small choir on Christmas Night, and on Christmas Morning, e.g. 8am Harwell, 9.30am Chilton
- Pre-recorded or hybrid services on Christmas Morning

Jonathan Mobey clarified that a 'travelling carol service' would be different to the 'travelling crib' event held in Chilton last year. The travelling crib involved a relatively large number of people congregating at a series of village locations. That might well fall foul of the rules about how many people from different households can gather outside together and create some social distancing challenges.

Paper A also raised the issue of whether we should have a toy collection this year, and could that be combined with travelling carol services.

Jonathan Mobey invited comments and questions. The following points were raised:

- There are some practical challenges with the travelling carol service idea e.g. what if the weather is poor; some roads are too narrow for a tractor
- Christmas Night services tend to attract some who we never see at other services. We might need to reduce the number of pre-bookable spaces and allow some 'turn up and go' spaces for people who are unaware of the pre-booking system
- It should be possible to organise a Covid19 secure collection and delivery of toy donations even if there is no Toy Service. Places at women's refuges are still very much in demand - calls to domestic violence helplines have increased significantly during lockdown.

Action: Jonathan Mobey to liaise with the Church Administrator to organise:

- A Ridgeway Broadsheet in October/November – which will help to make the availability of 6pm Sunday services more widely known
- A Christmas card in December – to clarify Christmas services arrangements

Action: Jane Woolley to contact Oxford Women's Refuge to ask if they can accept donated toys this year

4. Small groups

Paper A refers.

Most home groups have kept in touch with one another informally, e.g. by phone, and some have met via Zoom; one has just started to meet socially-distanced in person in St Matthew's. We have run a successful Zoom-based evening Alpha Course, and plan to follow it up with a Zoom-based evening Christianity Explored Course (September to November); this could be opened up to a larger group, and/or we could run a different Zoom-based course/meeting on a weekday evening.

Small groups could meet, socially-distanced, in the churches/Church Hall if they feel it is not feasible to meet via Zoom. Rebecca Lewis relayed that it was difficult to interpret the guidance about the circumstances in which small groups could use the church building to meet. Rebecca emphasised that groups should only use the church building as a last resort.

5. Christian youth work in greater Didcot area

Paper A refers.

Agreement has been reached by four Partner Churches (Didcot Baptist, Ridgeway Community, Great Western Park, and ours) to explore setting up an independent youthwork trust with the ability to employ workers and co-ordinate the work of making disciples of children and young people across the Greater Didcot area.

Each of the churches has funds allocated to these activities and workers, some of whom are available to work for more hours than the current funds permit. Match-funding from the Diocesan Development Fund (DDF) and other funds in due course could enable an expansion of the existing work to beyond the Partner Churches into the local schools and community. The next application deadline for the DDF is 30 September and this is in hand.

Our commitment would be to employ our Children & Families Workers (C&FWs) by the Trust and channel our funding through it; this needn't affect their current pattern of work but would open up new collaborative possibilities. This new arrangement (and establishment of the Trust) could correspond with the renewal of the CFW contracts in January.

Jonathan Mobey and Hazel Benton have discussed this with the C&FWs. They said at that point that they would be happy to continue in their current role and to be employed via the Trust. However, Jonathan needs to double check this is still the case.

Jonathan Mobey invited comments and questions. The following points were raised:

Q: What is the process for making a decision about employing the C&FW via the Trust?

A: The plan would be to establish the Trust by 1 January 2021. From that point onwards it could employ people. We would move the C&FW to the Trust at that point. Their current contracts end on 31 December 2020. It would make sense for the new contracts to be with the Trust. The PCCs would formally make this decision, and they would need to do so by November/December.

Q: Would we be able to pay the C&FW via the Trust if the money for this comes from restricted giving that has been given on the basis that we are the C&FW's employer?

A: We would need to ask donors if they are happy to continue and we would need to explain that the funds would be passed on to the Trust but that the end purpose is the same.

Q: How can we reassure people that the C&FW will continue to do the same work as now and under our direction?

A: Keeping the current job description is one safeguard. Another is that we have to use donations for their intended purpose. Our ultimate safeguard is that we can stop paying into the Trust if things don't work as we expected.

- Another point of reassurance is that each of the churches involved already has its own children's/youth workers. Our C&FWs would become part of a larger group.
- The C&FWs would benefit from mutual support if they were part of a larger group
- Jesus prayed for his Followers to be united. So if we could do something like this which unites different churches, that would be a step in this direction.
- Local churches have collaborated successfully on the CAP Debt Centre

6. C&FW and other fundraising activity

Paper A refers.

At the January Combined PCC meeting we agreed a fundraising plan covering CAP, St Matthew's roof repairs, C&FW and general giving. This plan was not fully enacted due to Covid19. The proposal now is that we:

- combine these items into one broad appeal to the congregations to coincide with the presentation of the annual reports in September and October
- make an appeal to the Harwell community and to the Friends of St Matthew's for the roof repairs

Jonathan Mobey invited comments and questions. The following points were raised:

- We should be cautious about fundraising because many people are moving into a time of financial insecurity. Any appeal needs to be framed very carefully

Q: Would we just be appealing to the congregation via 6pm Sunday services?

A: No, we would use other channels too e.g. Rector's emailed newsletter; Ridgeway Broadsheet

7. Action from previous meeting

Action: *Jonathan Mobey and Pam Rolls to identify church members without internet access and supply a printed copy of the sermon to those who would like one*

Pam Rolls explained that this action had progressed as far as drawing up a list of names and addresses, but not as far as delivering hard copies of the sermon to people.

Action: **Jonathan Mobey** to include mention in the next Ridgeway Broadsheet that a written copy of sermons can be downloaded from the church website, and that anyone who cannot access the website should contact the Church Office for either a paper copy or a copy on a DVD

8. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Jan Radford. Michelle Walker was absent.

9. Minutes of the meeting on 5 May 2020

The minutes of the PCC meeting on 5 May 2020 were signed as a correct record.

10. Decisions requested of Standing Committee between meetings

1. To apply for a grant from Historic England towards the cost of repairs to the roof. We did apply but found that we were ineligible because we would be able to pay for the repairs without a grant
2. To host a Harwell Helpers community fridge/larder from the Church Hall. Essentially we agreed to the larder element of this, with various stipulations. We were not so keen on the fridge aspect. Paper C refers.

11. Matters/actions arising from the previous meeting, not covered elsewhere

There were none.

12. Treasurer role

Phill Johnston confirmed that he and Jonathan Mobey have corresponded about his status as Treasurer. Phill relayed that he feels unable to give the role sufficient time and so he thinks the church would be better served if he were replaced. However, he is willing to continue until someone else can be found.

Tony Hughes asked PCC members to let Jonathan Mobey know if they could think of anyone suitable. They could be co-opted if they weren't on the Electoral Roll.

PCC members expressed their gratitude to Nick Clarke for his work as Book-keeper. Phill Johnston reported that he spoke to Nick on 30 August and Nick is happy to continue as Book-keeper.

<p>Action: Phill Johnston to relay the PCC's thanks to Nick Clarke for all his work as Book-keeper</p>

13. Finance reports

Paper D (Fund Balances figures) and Paper E (Income & Expenditure versus budget figures) refer.

Phill Johnston made the following remarks:

- By the end of July we are 58% through the year. So income/expenditure below this is under-budget and above this is over-budget
- We have not yet distributed the Missions Giving budget. Presumably there will be a proposal about this tabled at the October Combined PCC meeting
- Income and expenditure are both below budget due to Covid19. However, these do not cancel each other out because there are two or three substantial items of planned expenditure yet to come. Therefore the situation is likely to deteriorate compared to now and we are likely to end up with a bigger deficit than budgeted.
- We will use funds in unrestricted reserves if income does not match expenditure
- The Fund balances figures haven't changed much recently – apart from that we are now the custodians of the Harwell Helpers fund

The Chair thanked Phill Johnston for his oral report and work.

14. Buildings Committee report

Paper F was noted

15. North aisle roof - update

Paper F refers.

The Faculty for replacing the north aisle and extension roofs with terne coated stainless steel was granted on 11th June and VWHDC Planning Permission was received on 2nd June. It is hoped that the contractor Q&M Ltd can carry out the work starting in September, but before it can be done an asbestos survey of some parts of the roofs has to be made. At the moment this is on hold, since in June a swarm of bees decided to make a new home under the north aisle roof and action to deal with them by a pest control firm has not yet been completed.

Tony Hughes relayed that he is meeting with a pest controller shortly to review the situation with the bees.

16. Porch glass doors - update

Paper F refers.

The porch glass door project has been in abeyance due to Covid19, but the firms that made or promised quotations in January have now been contacted again to obtain the answers to technical queries. There are several issues that need to be addressed to see if satisfactory solutions can be found at a reasonable cost.

17. Church Hall management - update

Paper G refers.

PCC members discussed the following enquiries about possible booking/uses:

Rock band weekly practice

The major concern around this request is the potential impact on neighbours. The Rector has agreed to a trial session on condition that they pre-warn the closest neighbours and invite feedback from them. We would want to see this feedback before deciding whether or not to make this a regular booking.

It is not clear when the trial would be and whether the band still wants to go ahead.

Irish dance lessons

The teacher of this group would like classes on Saturday morning to re-start on 7 September. She has done a risk assessment for Harwell Village Hall where she also runs classes, and this – combined with the risk assessment we did for Holiday Club – could form the basis of a risk assessment for the Church Hall.

PCC members agreed with the Rector's recommendation to give permission for these classes to re-start on 7 September subject to full compliance with statutory regulations and a satisfactory risk assessment.

It was noted that we should:

- add compliance with the Government's Covid19 requirements and guidelines to the Terms & Conditions for hirers
- make hirers responsible for Covid19 security/cleanliness because it is not affordable/practical to ask the Hall cleaner to clean after each use

Ventilation

In response to a question about ventilating the Church Hall during use, Tony Hughes reminded PCC members that the Hall has a fresh air circulation system. The user instructions for it are in the church office. The system was last checked several years ago when the Hall was opened up to non-church users.

Action: Jonathan Mobey to arrange for the Hall ventilation system to be serviced and for users to be briefed on using it

18. Health & Safety

There were no items to note or discuss

19. Future dates to note

8 August – 9 September: Electoral Roll review period.

Jonathan Mobey reported that there was an announcement at the St Matthew's Sunday service about this on 30 August and there will be a similar announcement on 6 September at All Saints'. Jane Woolley asked Jonathan to also include a note about it in the next Rector's email newsletter.

Wednesday 7 October at 7.30pm: St Matthew's Annual Meeting

20. Any other business

Gordon Gill highlighted that Bishop Colin is retiring soon. Services to mark his retirement will now be held online.

Tony Hughes closed the meeting at 10.00pm.

CHAIR

SECRETARY

DATE

DATE