

St Mary the Virgin East Barnet

PCC meeting

27 January 2025

Minutes

Present: Alec Corio, Alison Blunt (minutes), Steve Edwards, Roger Melling, John Savage, Margaret Cranfield, Bettina von Cossel, Angela Johnson.

1. Welcome and opening prayer. A period of silence was held to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.
2. Apologies were received from Katherine Duncan-Kerr, Victor Chan, Gail Phillips, Amy Jobson and Revd. Abe Konadu-Yiadom.
3. Correspondence
 - a. Resignations from PCC: Tom Hodgson and Angela Johnson have resigned from the PCC because of pressures of work. The PCC expressed its thanks, including for Angela's roles as eco advocate and safeguarding member, and requested that Katherine (as secretary) should write on its behalf to Tom and Angela.
 - b. Party wall issue at 54 Church Hill Road: The developer (cc'd to Alec) has received a letter from 53 Church Hill Rd about the partial collapse of the wall, believed by the resident to be as a result of construction work on the Curate's house. John reported on a site visit and said that there is no definitive evidence about the cause of the partial collapse. The resident is securing a quote for the work. Next steps will be taken when this has been received.
4. Approval of minutes of November PCC meeting – unanimously approved.
5. Matters arising:
 - a. PCC safeguarding progress: current PCC members are up to date with their DBS checks and safeguarding training. There will be continued monitoring about others required to complete DBS checks and/or safeguarding training (e.g. on leadership).
 - b. Annual reporting: Alec requested written submissions for the Annual Report so that it can be completed in good time. The Electoral Roll report should include numbers from December 2024.
 - c. The Council's care of churchyard: the Council is still interested in doing health and safety related work (Sharp memorial and fenced off tombs). Alec recommends a meeting with Council and Diocese to agree a plan. Steve Harris would like to raise this as an item at the East Barnet Residents' Association meeting in March. Roger thinks we should put pressure on the Diocesan Advisory Committee to agree a practical approach (e.g. removing the memorial). It has had a negative impact on weddings and its derelict state gives the wrong impression of the Church. Roger proposed supporting Steve in raising it at the RA meeting to galvanise the issue. Two councillors, the MP and Alec will be at the meeting and everyone is welcome to attend (10th February, 7.30 in the Community Halls).

- d. Social invitational course: this will be held in May and early June and will use resources from Church Army Faith Shared course about becoming a more invitational community.
 - e. Social media: Alec has closed the Church's Twitter account and has set up a Blue Sky account. It is useful to have the account but there is no capacity at the moment to spend time on it.
6. Being an Inclusive Church: auditing our accessibility
- Diocese of London (unlike St Albans) has a requirement for churches to have an accessibility statement and audit. Alec talked through the audit questions from the Diocese of London. The PCC noted key points, including the invitation to stand / sit if you would like to and/or feel able to at different points in services; the work of the pastoral group; the timing of different services; the hearing loop; and the significant access improvements since the completion of the building project, including the step-free entrance, the ramp to the Chancel, and fully accessible toilet provision. Following small group discussion, other points included a recommendation that the larger text versions of the hymn book and order of service should be more prominently available; that it would be helpful to read out the first line of each hymn as well as the number; obtaining resources from the Inclusive Church network; considering making tea/coffee/pastries available before the 10am services on a monthly / occasional basis; and finding out which members of the congregation have professional experience in this context. There was also discussion about wireless speakers and the use of screens, as at Brookside.
7. MAP SMART goal confirmation – the PCC agreed to focus on two SMART goals.
8. MAP SMART goal 1: steps toward appointment of a children's worker
- a. Draft of project vision, budget, role description – Steve reported that Katherine is writing text for role description and he is preparing the budget with support from Alec. The draft will be circulated to the PCC in the next few weeks to check that there aren't any omissions (rather than for detailed comments).
9. St Mary's jobs fair progress
- Paul Moon has agreed to do the energy return for the diocese. Steve and John agreed to become signatories for the bank mandate. As Angela is stepping down from the PCC, there are now vacancies for an eco-advocate (not essential) and safeguarding member to liaise with Chris Mears (essential). Margaret agreed to become safeguarding member.
10. To ask questions on written reports circulated or available to the PCC:
- a. Children's Outreach Working Group (minutes) – no questions
 - b. Communications – no questions
 - c. Events and Fundraising Committee – Alison noted that the Church Fayre and the St Nicholas Party were one week apart and asked whether it is sustainable to run both in future on this timescale. Attendance seemed lower at the 2024 Fayre compared to previous years. Gail will step back from organizing the Christmas Fayre. She will continue to organize the tabletop sales and has found someone else to lead on the plant sales. The PCC recorded its thanks to Gail for many years of dedicated service, particularly in organizing the Christmas Fayre.
 - d. Fabric – the roofing project will need to take into account all necessary repairs.

- e. Finances – Roger circulated the financial outlook for 2025 with adjusted figures, including the new figure for the Parish Share. This shows a reduced projected surplus of £7650. The new paper outlines the one-off items of income received in 2024 that we will not receive in 2025, as well as two further items (increase in Parish Share costs; no fee income for weddings and funerals has been included). These figures don't include the surplus carried forward from 2024 or the cost for roof repairs (although hopefully a grant will contribute to these costs). There is not much scope to reduce expenditure but there is capacity to increase income for renting the hall (e.g. an additional regular weekly slot). Energy prices are fixed until 1 October and then likely to increase. Roger suggested reviewing the position around appointing a parish administrator in 6 months' time. Church expenditure is listed as 'Alec's expenses' on the finance report. All items have been approved by the Standing Committee. The PCC approved paying these expenses, with Alec abstaining from the vote. The rent rate for hall is £20 / hour (charity / church community) or £35 / hour (other). There are two restrictions: we can't have more than 5% of total income as net hall income (VAT); as the Hall is on consecrated ground and connected to the building, it can't be hired for any purpose deemed inappropriate.
 - f. Halls Working Group (minutes) – no questions
 - g. Planned public events – Gail will also step back from organizing Christian Aid Week. Alec suggested focusing on one activity during the week. Notice of the installation services for Francesco (Monken Hadley) and Patrick Moriarty (Harpenden) will be in next St Mary's email newsletter. The dates for Easter services will be confirmed soon and then Margaret will be able to prepare the spring / summer leaflet.
 - h. Safeguarding – no questions.
 - i. St Mary's VA Primary School – Margaret has taken round teaching resources. Steve noted the increase of pupils with complex SEND needs, and the lack of resource for additional support.
11. PCC dates in 2025
- 17 March – advance apologies from Roger. If the accounts aren't ready by then, they can be approved by correspondence by the beginning of May before the annual meetings.
- 12 May at 8pm – facilitated session on leading Church into growth. This will be facilitated by a team rector from the Welwyn team ministry. He is aware of the constraints under which many churches operate. Advance apologies from Margaret.

The meeting ended with the grace at 9.40pm.