

ST BARNABAS CHURCH, EMMER GREEN, READING

Minutes of PCC 03-2023 held on Tuesday 21st March 2023 at 7.30pm in the Parish Centre

1. Present

Revd Kevin Lovell (Chair), David Howell (Churchwarden) (DH), Joy Abel (Asst Churchwarden)(JA), Wendy Howell (Asst Churchwarden)(WH), Bob Abel (BA), Mark Burton (MB), Felicity Chapman (FC), Richard Cunningham (RC), Susie Downer (SD), Irene Lindsay (IL), Roger Moore (RM) (PCC Secretary)

2. Apologies for Absence

Noel Drury

3. Opening Remarks, Welcome and Prayers

Revd Kevin Lovell opened the meeting with the sad news that Revd Leonard Onugha had died suddenly the previous evening. The PCC members prayed for Leonard's family, friends and the Parish at Finchampstead and California.

4. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of PCC 02 - 2023 were agreed and signed.

5. Actions and Matters Arising

No specific issues, not covered by the Agenda, were identified.

6. Health and Safety

No issues were reported. RM stated that in the absence of a Health and Safety Officer he was updating the H&S Policy, and Statement for the noticeboard. The Policy would be submitted to the PCC for review and agreement. A matter to be addressed was the vacant H&S Officer post.

Action: RM to update H&S Policy and submit to PCC for review and agreement.

7. Safeguarding

JA reported that training was proceeding well. Revd Kevin emphasized the importance of developing an effective culture, noting training was a necessary but not sufficient condition.

8. Vicar's Report (Annex A)

Revd Kevin drew PCC members' attention to his report which had been circulated. He added that the first of the 11.30 am communion services had taken place on the previous Sunday. Two families each with two children attended with the addition of eight older members. Revd Kevin thought this was a good start to his plan of having a diversity of worship offerings

9. Finance

- BA explained that he and RC had been working together to enable a smooth transition when RC takes over the Treasurer role.
- Review of Financial Controls. BA explained that the Financial Controls set out in the paper (circulated to PCC members) are procedures to meet the needs of the External Examiner and the Charity Commission. In response to a query from RM, BA confirmed that there had been no material changes to the extant controls.
- The Financial Controls were agreed unanimously.

10. Building Maintenance

DH reported that he had received two quotes for the pointing work needed on the top of the external walls of the Parish Centre. Each was around £1200. He explained he was awaiting a third quote.

11. Coronation

WH opened discussion of this topic reporting that a Coronation Cake was planned. Revd Kevin reported that high resolution photographs of the King were available which could be used in posters etc. and that prayers and other material would be available in the run up to the event. In discussion it was suggested that a “party atmosphere” could be created by showing the coronation in the Parish Centre, offering cake and coffee and inviting those who might otherwise be watching by themselves. Revd Kevin raised the question of the Monday after the Coronation which had been nominated as Volunteering Day. WH suggested cleaning the church. No conclusion was reached.

12. APCM

RM explained that the two formal meetings: the Meeting of Parishioners and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting should take no longer than 40 minutes to complete. RM further explained that following a short break the informal part of the mornings meetings would start at around 10.45 with the aim of finishing at 12 noon.

Revd Kevin explained that his ideas for the informal session were evolving and he intended to sit down with Rhodri Bowen to explore how best to structure the session. Building on some current thoughts, he suggested the themes of:

- Where is God at work?
- What resources do we have to do God’s work?
- Where do we have opportunities?

Action: Revd Kevin to produce an outline of the informal session by 1st April

13. Living in Love and Faith

Revd Kevin rehearsed the background to the issue and noted that the consultation which lasted 6 years, was probably the longest the Church of England had ever had. Revd Kevin noted that already two members of the congregation have left even before changes came into effect. The issues can give rise to strongly held views and there is a need to be considerate of

individuals positions. Revd Kevin explained that Bishop Olivia felt it to be important that PCCs consider the issues and together with the minister, came to an agreed position.

RM reported that he had seen Ben Bradshaw MP introduce a 10 Rule Bill "Same Sex Marriage (Church of England) in the House of Commons that afternoon. He noted that of particular interest were the changes in other Christian communities in Britain which Bradshaw identified where same sex marriage is now allowed: the Methodists, URC, Episcopal Church in Scotland and the Church of Scotland. RM suggested that the Church of England was out of step with society as a whole and other Christian communities.

IL asked who is society? She indicated that we should engage lovingly with the aim of influencing. DH felt that the congregation at St Barnabas would be content with the proposals. FC suggested that it would be useful to find out discretely the views and feelings of the congregation. IL was of the opinion that it would be a good exercise for the congregation to talk about this. Revd Kevin wondered if everyone knew what was being proposed and why? He noted that there were several courses available.

In response to a question, Revd Kevin indicated that he would do a blessing if and when it became permissible. But he would want PCC approval.

Action: Revd Kevin to take on board the discussion and decide how the issue should be taken forward.

14, AOB

The PCC agreed unanimously that Lisa and Matt Williams and Gail Houghton could become chalice administrators.

ANNEX A

Vicar's Report:

St Barnabas' PCC Tues 21st March 2023

Comments against my three priorities. There is much that is not mentioned here – these are highlights only. There will be an opportunity for questions at the meeting.

1: Reach out into Caversham Park

I recognise this is will take months or even years to develop, I keep the title in order for us to remain focused on the goal.

Concerning outreach in general, I continue to build contacts in the community: this month including Tonya Crossman (Emmer Green Primary), Wendy Robins (Emmer Green Pre-school), Helen Lambert (CADRA), Katherine Shepherd (Transform Reading) and Phil Chatfield (Caversham Bridge). David Howell, Roger Moore and myself attended the launch of a Reading-wide 'listening campaign' facilitated by Citizens UK, to which Reading Deanery is a partner. This provided food for thought in terms of how we hold 1:1 conversations with people in our community in order to understand the needs of our community.

Morning Prayers online (Monday, Wednesday and Thursday) are attracting a small and varied congregation. From an initial 3-4 it is now 4-6 (devices) and includes people not part of our regular congregation, plus the video posts are seen by our 300+ followers on Facebook. Praying for people in our community such as schools and teachers, local MP, shops and businesses and street by street makes our concern for the community more tangible in conversations I have with others.

I have (re?)-introduced an intercessions prayer list which allows us to pray for individuals in public worship (subject to their consent): this not only supports church members and their families, it is valued by those baptism and wedding couples we are engaging with. It's another way we can show care for them, and helps build up those trusted relationships.

I invited Ian Macdonald (the Archdeaconry Discipleship Advisor) who visited in January (apologies, I forgot to mention previously). The significant findings of that visit were 1) there are no quick fix, off-the-shelf solutions to mission and growing congregations, 2) look at what God is already doing here, and 3) build relationships with people.

The closer you are to our buildings, the easier it is to engage with people on a missional basis. This is reflected in the contacts we have in our iKnow database (see below), where roughly 60% of our contacts are in Emmer Green, 20% in Caversham Park and 20% outside the benefice. In contrast, from the nine baptisms and three sets of banns expected this year, almost half of those families are from Caversham Park. Something we need to think creatively about is how we develop our presence in Caversham Park: it's a lot easier to do that in Emmer Green where we have a place to be and be seen.

2: Build up our work with Children and young Families

Pleasing to see numbers at Busy Bees and recent All Age Worship rising compared with recent past (from

my limited experience), also 2 young people are regularly attending our Sunday 9:30am worship. Our Sunday 9:30am congregation attendance is steady at 50±5.

I've said my intention is to work towards 'every Sunday at 11:30' as a time for family-accessible worship. With this in mind, the first of our experimental 'Simple Celebrations' of Holy Communion begins on Sunday 19th March and on subsequent third Sundays: informal, distinct (in style) to the 9:30 service, open to all.

I am joining the Scouts on Sunday 23rd April for their St George's Day Renewal of Scout's Promise (at 11am). The Guides are planting a tree in the churchyard (to replace the one which snapped off) in memory of our late Queen. I've also begun a conversation with uniformed organisations about the possibility of a Remembrance Sunday service in November at St Barnabas.

We have school and pre-school visits lined up in the last week before Easter holidays, but not as many as I (or David) had hoped. Our schools are doing a fantastic job, albeit under tremendous stress for a variety of reasons: this seems to be affecting both their capacity to come to us and their capacity to invite us in. We need to pray for our schools and think about ways we can support them (and their students) in what they do.

3: Infrastructure

Making 'infrastructure investments': putting in place structures and processes to effectively handle regular/ongoing tasks.

1. Church management application: iKnow, is steadily rolling out with access being given to those who will need it.
 - The handling of Baptism bookings, Wedding Banns (also funerals) is streamlined and working well.
 - The central people database is now established, with distribution lists for All Age, Busy Bees, Read All About It and provision for a weekly 'Pewsheets' communication (which hopefully will start around Easter). Chiefly for email, but the plan is to provide paper copies for those who need them.
 - I believe the consent form for GDPR/DPA compliance could be simplified and updated, given our current usage.
 - Further functionality which could be introduced (calendar, room bookings etc.) will be explored in due course.
2. Conscious of our significant budget deficit this year, as we turn into Easter season (and with Richard taking over as treasurer), I am thinking about approaches to improve our financial position:
 - Embedding financial messaging into collateral for baptisms, weddings and funerals. I have produced an 'Arranging a Baptism' leaflet available on our website here: <https://www.saintbarnabas.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/EGCP-Baptism-Brochure-FEB23.pdf> and will prepare something similar for funerals and weddings.
 - Making it easier for people to make donations (via online PGS, exploring contactless card readers, etc.) and also providing physical cards, signage, maybe QR codes in orders of service, to help people make donations and understand why it is a good idea to support St Barnabas church financially.
 - Likely to have some kind of generous giving initiative in the May-June timeframe.

- I am conscious we have spare letting capacity across our buildings. There is a balance to be struck between our missional imperative and our financial reality, nevertheless my hope is to find ways to increase the income from our buildings: I would welcome ideas to improve our visibility in terms of advertising and promoting to likely hirers.

Living in Love and Faith (LLF)

You are no doubt aware of the recent decision at General Synod to proceed with plans to offer prayers of blessing to couples in same-sex civil partnerships or same-sex civil marriages. I do not know the timetable for the legal process, but I anticipate the Church of England publishing such prayers (along with pastoral guidance) for use some time in the latter half of 2023. Reaction to this decision in our parish churches varies, it seems most churches are experiencing some level of turbulence. Sadly, St Barnabas is no exception.

Given this change is likely to happen in the coming months, now might be a good time to consider what engagement St Barnabas needs to have with this matter. Without wanting to seem prescriptive, but to help you in this, I suggest there are two broad areas for conversation. One might be to help people understand this from a faith perspective. Another to explore how we can live well and flourish with disagreement. There may also be consideration about the way in which any conversations may best take place (size of groups, use of external sources of input/expertise, etc.). And you may have other ideas.

At the PCC meeting I will open up for discussion about your thoughts on what would be helpful for us at this time.