

Minutes of a Meeting of the St John's Church Council held on Tuesday 17th January 2012, in the Schoolrooms

The following council members were present:

Edward Armitstead, Bob Banfield, Eddie Brooks, Ros Bush, Simon Corner, Ian Croxford, Rob Dean, Roger Fox, Alan Irwin, Phil Juggins, Tim Lewis, Iain Maitland, David Matthew, Joy Neville, Keith Ovenden, Helen Peace, David Preston, Jenny Salberg, Nick Scorer, David Upton, Kath Upton, Martin Warr, Anne Wicks, Chairman: James Dudley-Smith

1. Opening worship

James opened by talking about the making of Saul as the first king of Israel and then his rejection as king and God's spirit taken from him. Saul offered up the burnt offering which he should not have done as he was not a priest. Samuel arrived and said that he had acted foolishly as he had not kept the command of the Lord your God. Saul had the word of the Lord but did not heed it but he was so anxious that everyone heeded his word. James's prayer for our church was that in our church life we read, speak, believe and obey the word of the Lord rather than obey our own thoughts and desires. This was followed by a prayer.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from: Ed Bangay, John Brookes, Paula Rollason, Robert Warr

3 Minutes of the previous meeting

Minutes of the meetings held on 20th September were approved without amendment.

4. Matters Arising

Storage in the Church

Keith Ovenden said that this was a particular problem when the nave altar had to be moved so frequently. However the nave altar had not been used since the beginning of December and the movement of equipment had not been such a problem. James asked for our views on the recent non use of the altar rails which had been done to save having to move them so frequently during December and to speed up the administration of communion with larger congregations. Views expressed were about the need for more prompting to ensure a smooth flow of communicants. We should not feel pressurised to take the wine before we had consumed the bread. Martin said that he preferred to kneel at the altar as it was part of the process of expressing our reverence to God and perhaps the high altar could be used for the 8am service.

5. Finance

Martin said that he would produce the accounts for consideration at the Finance committee meeting at the beginning of February. However we will have a substantial surplus in the order of £13,000. This including the gift day income of over £12,500 but is after increasing our charitable and missionary giving for the year by £6,000 plus £1,250 in respect of a shortfall in 2010. This was a very satisfactory result and there was also an underlying increase in the general giving of about £9,000 which should continue into the current year. We should be set reasonably well for 2012 as our Parish Share of nearly £80k is not increasing and there should only be inflationary increases in our other costs apart from gas which under a new 5 year contract will go up by 1/3rd. James expressed his gratitude at how our finances had changed since this time last year when we were facing a significant deficit and were planning to reduce our charitable

and missionary giving. There followed open prayer thanking God for all that he has done for us in meeting our needs.

6 Fabric Reports

Tower

Rob Dean reported that he had met with John Beauchamp, the architect, who would conduct the quinquennial survey in February to enable his report to be produced in time for the AGM. This would enable us to send a grant application to English Heritage by 30th June. They will probably visit the church during September/October to carry out an on-site inspection and we should hear whether they will give us a grant by 20th December 2012. We then have 12 months to complete stage 1 which is to obtain all the permissions, complete the tendering process and agree contracts etc. If we do not meet the deadline then we lose the grant for that year. If we then go ahead it will probably be in the first 5 months of 2014. The estimated cost of the project is £300k. Our accounts will be scrutinised to determine the grant that we are likely to get which we hope will be 75% for phase 1 and 50% for phase 2 which is the reconstruction part. Although one option is that we do nothing we would need to leave the fencing in place and the ultimate cost would increase. It was therefore agreed that there was no point in delaying the work and we should go ahead with the grant application.

Font cover

Phil Juggins said that we now have the Archdeacon's license to take down the font cover and store it on the floor in the north transept for 15 months. After 15 months we can display it on a table. We now need to arrange for it to be safely taken down and to procure a removable replacement cover of some sort.

Other Fabric Items

Phil said that someone had thrown a large tree stake through one of the stained glass windows and there was now a 6 inch hole. The police have been informed. The flag pole on the tower blew down in early January and Roger was dealing with its replacement. Both items will be subject to an insurance claim.

Upgrade of the church amplification system

David Matthew said that the system was now complete and 2 speakers have been installed in the gallery. One area still to be covered is the south transept. James asked about the chancel and choir and David said that it would not be too difficult to put speakers there. David said that the next area to look at is video and projection equipment especially now that we are having a Sunday evening service. Martin said that the new equipment had been mostly funded by the Friends together with a donation of £1,000. The Friends may be willing to help with the cost of projection equipment.

Screen for the South Transept

Jenny Salberg said that she had received both positive and negative comments about having the crèche in the south transept. There did not appear to be a cheap option to screening off and sound proofing the area and it was also quite a small area. If we cannot do this then one solution is to only use it for children under 3 years old and make provision for older children to have colouring materials elsewhere in the church. It would be an advantage if the service could be re-laid to the crèche room in the schoolrooms and David agreed to look into this possibility.

Church Lighting

Roger said that the equipment had been ordered and should be installed in the next few weeks. The estimated cost is £1,000 per light and he hoped that donations may be forthcoming.

Bells Refurbishment and Enhancement

Roger was still looking into the best way of dealing with this and would obtain detailed estimates so that he could pick and choose what to do. The cost would be met from the Tom Setter bells fund and members of the congregation would be invited to buy a bell and have it inscribed. He hoped that this work would be completed before the external work on the tower.

Schoolrooms

Helen Peace said that they were focusing on refurbishing the down stairs room to make it more comfortable and a friendly area for the use of the youth group. There would be an opportunity for folk to help with the redecoration.

There followed open prayer for the crèche and for work on the buildings and fabric.

7. Parish Youth Work

Simon Corner said there had recently been a youth leader's review meeting.

Pathfinders on a Sunday morning is well attended and if it continues to grow it is hoped to split it into two age groups. It is hoped to have more bible input into meetings. On Friday evenings it is hoped to have a Youth Christianity Explored course for the CYFA group interspersed with social activities. Three new leaders have started since Christmas. Simon asked for our prayers for a monthly assembly that he is taking at Milford school, for the Christian Union at Westfield school which he is helping to run and that more adults will come forward to lead the children's groups.

8. Other Church Activities

CAP Report

Ian Croxford said that following Christmas several new clients had come forward and they were now up to client number 35. At the end of 2011 10 clients had completed the process to enable them to become debt free. There has been quite a high drop out rate particularly amongst young men under 25 who were not prepared to commit themselves to changing their way of life. There was a need for more people to volunteer as befrienders to accompany Ian and Frances when visiting clients.

18 to 30 Group

Tim Lewis said that this was going well and a new person had come at the last meeting. He hoped to run a Christianity Explored Course in the Spring. Open prayers were said for these activities.

9. To Review past events

a) Christmas Services

The carol service was very good apart from the noisy baby. This was a difficult issue to deal with but we need to be tolerant and it does not happen very often. We need to emphasise that it is not a service for young children who have their own service on Christmas Eve. James said how grateful he was for all the work that Fiona Bennett had put into leading the choir. The school services were excellent with full churches. There was a view that it would be good to have some organ led carols at the Christmas morning service. We need to have the Christmas services cards available earlier in future years with a clearer colour and type face. The children's Christmas craft day was well attended and it was a good opportunity to make contact with parents. Helen said that they were always willing to provide puppets for a service.

10. Forthcoming events

a) BYG Event on 24th February

Phil Juggins said that they were hoping to have someone from CMS and concentrate on Tanzania with the possibility of a video link with Ruth Hulser.

b) Easter

There will be LEP led lectures on Sunday evenings during Lent at the Baptist church. The LEP have produced a booklet containing bible readings and reflection for use during Lent and will be on sale at £1 each. We will continue with our service on St. John's. On Good Friday James is considering a family service in St. John's which would precede the walk of witness. There would be a reflective service in the afternoon.

c) AGM on 17th April

Apart from the wardens who are elected for one year only the following members retire and can offer themselves for re-election. Bob Banfield, Keith Ovenden and Paula Rollason. David Matthew said that there was a big gap during the summer when we don't have any Church Council meetings.

d) Parish Weekend Away

Helen said that about 75 people had signed up so far. She was planning to visit the site beforehand. She was looking for volunteers to lead workshops. James was hoping that the Urban Warriors would help with youth work. Rob Dean's son-in-law, the Rev Phil Jack, is leading the weekend.

e) Sunday Evening Service

The first Sunday had been a great success. Perhaps we need to put a notice board outside the church whilst the service is on and also have someone to welcome people who arrive late. David Matthew said that the sermons were being recorded and would be available on the web site. The visibility of the screen will be an issue if the congregation grows. The bells were much appreciated. James was discussing with the Town Council the date and time of the Civic Service and we may need to change the timing of our service. James was considering having a communion service on some occasions.

11. Any other business

a) Church Fees

It was agreed to increase wedding fees as follows:

Verger £25 to £30, ringers £100 to £120 for before, after or both.

b) Church Statistics

Phil reported that the attendance at the Christmas services at about 1,000 was 50% up on last year. Also average attendances for October were adults 160 (135) and under 16 32 (32), 2010 figures in brackets. – This is very encouraging.

12. Dates of future meetings

PCC on Tuesday 20th March

AGM on Tuesday 17th April

The meeting finished with prayer at 9.30pm