

St Andrew's Church, Girton, Parochial Church Council
Minutes of meeting held in the North Room on 21st March 2022

PCC members present: Michael Bigg (Rector, in the chair; = M.B.), Dugald Wilson, Sheila Hiley, Martyn Johnson (= M.Jo.), Wendy Hunter, Bruce Hunter, Robin Bradford and Jenny Knights.

Also present: John Hall (Secretary).

1. Apologies for absence were reported from Geoff Burt, Alastair Lorimer, Christina Deacon, Malini Jesudason and Chris Barrow.

2. Opening prayer was led by M.B.

3. The minutes of the meeting of 17 January 2022 were approved.

4. Matter arising from the minutes: proposed curtain for the North Room window (minute 8d). Wendy Hunter spoke in favour of this, saying it would make the room pleasanter and more homely, and that she thought the curtain would cost about £80. Other PCC members expressed no strong feelings for or against. It was decided to come back to this at a later meeting.

5. Ratification of the appointment by online vote of Helen Wilson as Safeguarding Officer. The PCC unanimously ratified this appointment. Sheila Hiley expressed her thanks to Helen for the intensive training she is undertaking before taking up this position, and the meeting thanked Sheila for her past work as Safeguarding Officer.

6. Life and worship

a. Services between now and Easter will be as previously planned. There will be services at 7 p.m. on Maundy Thursday and at 11 a.m. on Good Friday. On Easter Day there will be B.C.P. Holy Communion at 8 a.m. followed by the Easter Breakfast in the Cotton Hall. Setting up of the breakfast will be from 8 a.m. onwards, the final clearing up can be after the 10 a.m. service. There will be no coffee served after the 10 a.m. service, but there will be an Easter Egg hunt for the children. Donations of Easter Eggs and similar prizes were requested as prizes for this hunt.

b. The Lent course. Dugald Wilson reported that this is going well. New people are attending it, and everyone is contributing to the discussions.

c. The annual report. The PCC approved the draft report, subject to some possible "tweaking". Dugald Wilson was thanked for his work in putting it together.

7. Mission and outreach

a. Recruitment of Children and Families Minister. Four candidates applied, two have been short-listed and will be interviewed on Tuesday, 29th March. After meeting the Bobtails group the two candidates will come to the North Room at 11 a.m. PCC members are invited to come and talk to them there over coffee for half an hour. Bruce Hunter will then collect PCC members' impressions of the candidates and pass them on to Wendy, who is on the selection panel. (It is currently a common practice for the candidates for a post to meet in this way.) One of the two candidates is very local, the other fairly so.

M.Jo. is currently investigating the administrative work that will be a legal requirement when someone is an employee of the parish church.

b. The Bobtails group is going very well. Twenty nine children attended last week. A £2 donation is made for each child attending, so that the group is virtually covering its costs.

8. Finance

a. The accounts for 2021, which show a surplus, are included in the draft Annual Report. M.Jo. reported that the independent examiner has approved the accounts.

b. The current position. Rising energy costs are a serious worry. Use of the new electric heaters has resulted in a great reduction in our use of gas, but the price of electricity is also rising. However, the church is currently in the black for 2022.

c. Lawn mowing. The church has agreed with the Parish Council to pay 40% of the cost of mowing as from April 2020, so a considerable bill for past mowing must be paid, as well as our share of the bill for this year's mowing: the churchyard will be mown twice a month for three months, less often in subsequent months,

d. The Churchyard Fund (from which the costs of mowing should be paid) is receiving all the fees for burials, for interring of ashes, and for erection of headstones (but fees for services in the church go to the General Fund).

9. Fabric, fittings and churchyard: re-ordering the west end of the church

a. The north west corner. Wendy Hunter said that the proposed plan for the mobile server is impracticable. It would rarely need to be moved, and when this was needed it would be sufficient that it might be moved back against the sink and the units adjoining it along the north wall. There will be a cupboard against the west wall in this corner, but it is proposed that the sink and adjoining units on the north wall should extend right up to this cupboard, making part of it unusable. The sink, etc., should be repositioned so that there is space for an opening door for that part of the cupboard. We must ensure that the dishwasher is of the appropriate type.

b. The west end of the nave. There will be eight cupboards here, with a gallery above. The proposed arrangements for the camera, which enables services to be broadcast, are unsatisfactory. It was suggested that M.Jo. should discuss this directly with the architect.

c. The south west corner. Wendy Hunter said that the suggested cupboard between the pillars is not needed and would reduce the available space. Shelves would be more useful than a cupboard against the south wall (possibly an inch or two away from the wall, so that they should not be affected by damp). The food bank collection point should be adjacent to the south wall, immediately west of the south door.

d. Other points. The cupboards, etc., will be of light oak. The conservation bodies must now be consulted. The plans can be announced to the congregation at the APCM.

10. Safeguarding

a. Endorsement of safeguarding documents. The PCC has seen and noted the current version of “Following through on safeguarding concerns” (unchanged since it was last seen by the PCC) and the “Activity list” (now revised). Minor alterations may be needed.

b. The current position. There are no outstanding safeguarding concerns. PCC members are being asked to make sure that their Safeguarding Basic Awareness is up to date.

c. DBS checks were originally declared to be valid for five years, but it is now said that they must be renewed after three years. There was a discussion whether it is only new DBS checks which have to be renewed after three years (so that checks originally stated to be for five years remain valid for five years – this was a widely-held view), or whether all DBS checks have to be renewed after three years, including those originally declared valid for five years. [After the meeting Sheila Hiley ascertained from the responsible person at Ely that DBS checks ought to be renewed after three years, even if originally declared to be for five years. From other e-mails it is clear that churches have up to 3 January 2024 to get all those on five year DBS certificates onto a three year cycle.]

11. Data protection policy. Approval of the policy document (copy attached) which had been circulated to PCC members was proposed by M.Jo., seconded by Jenny Knights, and agreed unanimously. The PCC was reminded that we must be careful not to disclose individuals’ e-mail addresses unless they are already known to the other addressees of a message: we should use the “blind copy” option.

12. Complaints and grievance policy. Approval of the policy document previously circulated to PCC members (copy attached) was proposed by Jenny Knights, seconded by Wendy Hunter, and agreed unanimously.

13. Matters of report

a. Action Abroad. We are looking forward to the art exhibition to be held in May. The church holds copies of a photograph of the church from above taken by drone. It was suggested that we should sell them at the exhibition and use the proceeds to pay the photographers, who originally made no charge. Against this it was objected that the photograph shows an undesirably good view of the lead on the church roof, and that we may have no right to sell the photographs.

b. Friends of St Andrew's. Alastair Lorimer has e-mailed that a programme of events will shortly be arranged.

c. Deanery. Sheila Hiley had previously circulated a report of the latest synod meeting. A proposed meeting with the bishop on 26th March has been cancelled, as the bishop is unwell.

M.Jo. is our nominee on the Deanery Planning Group. The group has no record of our answers to a questionnaire which the group sent to the parishes. M.B. is sure that he sent our answers, but will resend them.

14. Any other business

a. Security of keys. The “secret drawer” in which most keys are kept (but not all, e.g. not the vestry key) is not secure. It was left open last Sunday morning and a child took the key to the door to the tower stairs and was preparing to go up them. It was agreed that we must keep an eye on the drawer and ensure it is not left open, and see that children do not try to go up the tower.

b. Questions we should be thinking about. M.B. proposed two questions for consideration. (1) Should the PCC have a lay chair? (It is common practice in organisations that the chair of the governing body is a different person from the “chief executive officer”.) (2) Should we submit a questionnaire to the members of the congregation to find out what they think about how the church is working? And, if so, what sort of questions should be asked? Some PCC members expressed support for the suggestion of a questionnaire.

15. Future meetings will be on Monday, 16th May, at 2 p.m. and on Monday, 11th July, at 7.30 p.m.

The meeting closed with prayer by Dugald Wilson and the recital of the Grace.