

THE PARISH OF ST GEORGE, BENENDEN

ANNUAL MEETING – 2021

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 24th May 2021 in St. George's Church, Benenden

Present:- The chairman of the meeting, Rev D. Commander, Rector
21 Parishioners

1. Apologies

Apologies were accepted from Deborah Jenkins, Tracy Claridge, Mary and Russell Cruse, Jackie Liffen, Ian Malaugh, Jane Davies, Clare Harmsworth, Chris Parkinson, Jan Turner and Rev Rosemary Van Wengen.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Copies of the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd September 2020 had been distributed. The meeting unanimously agreed these were a true copy and the chairman signed the minutes.

3. Matters Arising

There were none.

4. Electoral Roll Report

Mr. David Collard said the Roll stands at 113, four people having come off the Roll and four people coming on to the Roll.

5. The Annual Returns

The chairman reported that there had been no baptisms, no weddings, 12 funerals and three interment of ashes. There had been no baptisms or weddings due to the Covid crisis. Funerals were limited to a handful of people.

6. The Secretary's Report – as published

There had been only five PCC meetings since the last APCM last September. Most of these meetings were conducted by Zoom as the Covid regulations banned face to face meetings. However the average attendance since the last APCM was 94%.

7. The Financial Report – as published

There were no questions regarding the Financial Report for the year ended 31st December 2020. This shows a very small surplus due to the restraints of Covid. Collections were down and there was no Fete in 2020. Luckily expenses were down also and Planned Giving held up well, with some givers changing to standing orders instead of the envelopes. The Memorial Hall which was shut for most of the year lost £600 in takings.

We are grateful Clive Turner has continued to run the planned giving but he has been looking to step down for some time now. A plea was given out for us to find him a replacement as Planned Giving is such an important part of our financial giving. Anyone interested is urged to shadow him first.

Our thanks also go to Charles Trollope who keeps the church accounts so well. Unfortunately, he will also be looking to retire shortly and again we would like to find a replacement to shadow him in the expectation of taking over.

8. The Fabric Report – as published

The Churchyard/Glebe Footpath faculty petition has gone in and the faculty will be submitted formally after 17th June 2021 when any objections are known.

9. Deanery Synod Report – as published

There have been no Deanery Synod meetings since our last APCM.

10. Other Reports.

Planned Giving Scheme Report – as published

Benenden Memorial Hall Report – as published

Churchyard Report – as published

Ringing Master's Report – as published

After St. George's reopened on Easter Sunday with the majority of the bells ringing our neighbour made an official complaint to the police as he thought the bellringers were breaking Covid regulations. This resulted in Rev. David Commander spending a great deal of time finding the exact regulations (not available on the Diocese of Canterbury website). This has resulted in the bells being silent and Mr. Lebon suggesting he may resign as Ringing Master. We are still awaiting his decision.

Learning & Sharing the Faith – as published

Sacristans Report – as published

Worship & Spirituality Report 2021 – as published

Benenden Magazine Report – as published

Mission Allocation Report – as published

Choir Report – as published

Pastoral Group Report – as published

Coffee Shop at Memorial Hall – as published

Children & Youth Report – as published

Flower Report – as published

11. Chairman's Remarks

Rev David Commander reminded the meeting it has only been eight months since our last APCM but the extraordinary times because of the Covid pandemic have continued. It has been a time of working out how to be church when we could not meet in person, when the church building was shut, we could not visit people at home and could not have people to the Rectory for meetings.

Huge frustration was felt trying to keep abreast of all the changes in direction from Diocese at the same time as keeping worship going, albeit remotely and having to work mainly on his own at his computer. But the main 10 o'clock service has continued but recorded and put on line. Thank you to everyone who has kept things going during these extraordinary times, the Churchwardens and Ministry Leadership Team.

Many things have been put on hold as we could not meet face to face; 20/20, home groups, toddler groups and Primary School visits for example. Rev Ylva Blid Mackenzie's curate training had to be changed radically. Her priesting service will be this coming July.

Now we are approaching the time of coming out of Covid restrictions there is an opportunity for fresh ideas; to rebuild, reimagine and re-energise what it is we are as Church, and what it is we feel we are called – by God – to do in this place at this time. I would like to look at the service pattern in the Benefice and would ask you to complete the questionnaire at the back of the church. How do we attract more people to services and are we still a 'welcoming' church. We are already working on restarting serving refreshments and having social time after a service and are eagerly awaiting guidance on the resumption of congregational singing.

But we must also look at the outward looking things, the mission of the church. The Diocese recently worked on plans across every Deanery. Their document 'Towards a flourishing and sustainable future' has been published and there is a link on the website. It is a long document and not a great read because of the financial picture it paints but is a message that has to be heard and taken to heart – how are we going to be moving forwards as a church? What needs to change for The Church to be sustainable? The challenge is working out what needs to change here in our parish, our benefice, our deanery.

As we come out of Covid restrictions, as we have learnt in the last 12-15 months what is important – our relationships with other people – we have a real opportunity to be creative and positive about what the church can do to be relevant in our community. If we are relevant, then the church will start to grow once again. So here is an opportunity for us in our outreach, our mission, our relevance in the community.

We can re-launch the good things we were doing before Covid and add one or two more but we also need people to step forward to do extra things:-

- ✝ To keep our websites up to date
- ✝ Someone with IT skills: for the recording and editing of services, livestreaming, maintaining the cloud-drive on our church computer files, introducing broadband and wi-fi into our church buildings.
- ✝ A communications officer
- ✝ Fresh blood on Deanery Synod

If we want to grow our church (rather than see a gradual and continual decline) then we have an opportunity to review, re-imagine, re-energise what it is we can do, both within church and without church. But it needs two things:

Prayer and People.

Finally, thank you, everyone for your support. Thank you to the PCC for your recent unanimous support. Thank you, Helen. I have now had enough of 12-15 months of not being able to get on and do things. It would be good to start moving forwards again. But we need to know what God wants us to move forward with. So pray. Let's trust God to lead us in the right direction.

12. Elections

Sidesmen

The list of sidesmen was read out:-

Charles Trollope
Russell Cruse

David Barnes
Mike Cooper

Victor Kellet
Marilyn Hill

Dick Hill
Andrew Stowell
Ian Malaugh
Richard Stubbings
Julia Collard

Jan Turner
Tracy Claridge
Kath Malaugh
Deborah Jenkins

Clive Turner
Robin Dalton Holmes
Sally-Ann Marks
Ulli von Herwarth

The meeting was asked for approval of this list which was given unanimously.

Deanery Synod

There are three vacancies for Deanery Synod. Tracy Claridge has given up because of ill health and Sue Fisher also resigned and has now become a Churchwarden.

PCC

Three members automatically stood down this year. The names of those nominated were read out:-

Charles Trollope proposed by Martin Pexton, seconded by Robin Dalton Holmes
Jane Davies proposed by David Collard, seconded by Jackie Hutchinson
Richard Fisher proposed by Colin Honnywill, seconded by Andrew Stowell

These nominations were accepted unanimously. This leaves two vacancies on PCC for one year and one vacancy for three years plus three Deanery Representative for two years.

Electoral Roll Officer

Mr. David Collard confirmed he is happy to continue in this role, proposed by Mrs. Sue Fisher, seconded by Mrs. Helen Commander. The meeting unanimously agreed.

Independent Examiner

Mr. David Rogers has examined the accounts for 2020 and Mr. Charles Trollope expected he would be prepared to do so again, seconded by Mr. David Collard. The meeting unanimously agreed.

13. Any Other Business

There was none.

Thanks

Mr. David Collard gave our thanks to Rev. David Commander, Mrs. Helen Commander and Rev Rosemary Kobus van Wengen for everything they do for the church, especially during the last eight months which have been so trying.

14. Date of next Annual Meeting

This will be on Monday 25th April 2022 at 7.30 p.m. in the Memorial Hall

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm with The Grace.

Chairman Dated