

THE PARISH OF ST GEORGE, BENENDEN

ANNUAL MEETING – 2022

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 4th April 2022 in the Memorial Hall, Benenden

Present:- The Chairman of the meeting, Rev. D. Commander, Rector
20 Parishioners

1. Apologies

Apologies were accepted from Mr. & Mrs Russell Cruse, Rev. Ylva Blid Mackenzie, Tracy Claridge, Deborah Jenkins, Aurea Gregory, Martin Pexton, Alice Munro-Faure and Clare Harmsworth.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Copies of the minutes of the meeting held on 24th May 2021 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 being added.

5. The Annual Returns

The Chairman reported that there had been 4 baptisms, 7 weddings and 30 funerals (made up of 19 cremations, funeral services or memorial services) and 11 interments since the last Annual Meeting.

6. Secretary's Report – as published

There had been only five PCC meetings and two Standing Committees since the last APCM. The average attendance was 85%.

7. The Financial Report – as published

Mr. Charles Trollope reported a very satisfactory year with a surplus of £16,000 made possible by the church fete which made £14,000. Money was also saved as one of our organists does not take a fee and the choir is managing very successfully without a choir master/mistress.

It was noted the Mission Fund/Fabric Fund split in the accounts was not even this year. This was because the PCC had agreed on 31st January 2022 had agreed that £4,000 could be reclaimed (from the church's unused donation) from the Benenden Action Team fund.

Planned Giving was down by £2,000 and it was requested that planned givers review their giving this year as the church's day to day expenses, especially for energy, are going up. The meeting was also reminded that if wills are being discussed a legacy to the church might be considered.

It was also noticed that the blue envelope collection scheme is coming to an end. It is suggested instead a monthly standing order from your bank account could be used.

The meeting thanked Mr. Charles Trollope for all the work he puts into looking after the church finances. We realise this is a very big commitment to the church.

8. The Fabric Report – as published

Mr. David Barnes had nothing to add.

9. Deanery Synod Report – as published

10. Other Reports

Planned Giving & Gift Aid Report – as published

Benenden Memorial Hall Report – as published

Churchyard Report – as published

Ringing master's Report – as published

Sacristans Report – as published

Learning & Sharing the Faith Report – as published

Worship Committee Report – as published

Parish Magazine Editorial Report – as published

Our thanks were given to Dick Hill and his 29 stalwart helpers who ensure the magazine goes to every house in the village.

Mission Allocation Report – as published

Choir Report – as published

Coffee Morning at Memorial Hall – as published

Children & Youth Report – as published

Pastoral Group Report – as published

Flower Report – as published

11. Chairman's Remarks

Last APCM was at the end of May 2021. I said last time that it was good that it looked like we'd soon be coming out of Covid restrictions; but it took a little longer than we expected! And we're still not fully back to pre-Covid times. But we are back to the pre-Covid service schedule through the month; congregation numbers have returned pretty much to pre-Covid numbers, though interestingly, not all the same people. We have a number of new faces at St. George's – which is lovely to see; but there are still some who do not wish to return to public gatherings, or who have got out of the habit of regular worship. What has not returned to pre-Covid times yet is the sharing of the common chalice (I think that will be sometime yet), and the passing around of the collection bags. But we are back in church, worshipping, singing, receiving Communion, and sharing fellowship and refreshments afterwards.

Since our last APCM we have also lost some dear members of our church family. We remember them, with fondness and with gratitude, for all that they contributed to the life of St. George's Church over the years, whether that was serving in some way or as part of our worshipping community. We remember and give thanks for the lives of: Charles Lennox-Connyngham, Alan Pickett, Lesley Attwood, Heather Trollope and John Hare.

Here is our opportunity – and my opportunity - to recognise and say thank you to everyone who makes St. George's Church work as it does. The number of people involved is quite incredible, and every single person's effort and contribution is appreciated. Some people, of course, wear a number of different hats in order to get the work done! The number of people involved, and the number of tasks that are undertaken for our church to function and thrive is astonishing. I am going to thank people for their work for our church; but we also need new recruits for some of these roles – so if any of these strike a chord of interest, volunteers are always welcome!

My thanks, our thanks to:

- The Ministry Leadership Team: Revd Dr Rosemary Kobus van Wengen (priest with PTO), Revd Ylva Blid Mackenzie (our curate, now priested for 9 months, and over halfway through her curacy), David Harmsworth (Reader Emeritus), Lyn Hayes (ALM), Vicki Young (Ordinand), and Sue & Richard Fisher. This team lead our worship and preach week in, week out. Across the benefice this works out, on average, at 18 services per month (216 services pa), plus the “specials”!
- Our Churchwardens: David Collard and Sue Fisher
- The following are in no particular order of importance, but the people and the tasks are quite incredible:
 - Our Sides-people, welcoming people to our services
 - Our Intercessors and those who read the scriptures
 - Our organists
 - Our choir members
 - The Treasurer; and those supporting the Treasurer on the Finance Group
 - The Gift-Aid and Planned Giving Secretary
 - The Electoral Roll Officer
 - The PCC members
 - The PCC Secretary
 - Those on the Fabric group, looking after the fabric of the church (the buildings)
 - The Parish Administrator
 - The Safeguarding Officer
 - The Parish Disclosure Officer
 - Those who maintain our large, open, churchyard so beautifully
 - Those who maintain the churchyard records
 - Our Archivist
 - Our flower arrangers
 - Our cleaning team
 - Those who serve the refreshments (coffee!) after the services
 - Our team of Sacristans, preparing for Communion services every week
 - Those who prepare a weekly “reflection” on a piece of scripture (which goes on the church noticeboards..... for non-church-goers to read and engage with!)
 - The rota preparers!
 - The team who unlock and lock the church every day of the year
 - The bell ringers and those who look after the on-going maintenance of the bells
 - The group who look after the maintenance of the church clock
 - Our verger (for weddings and funerals)
 - Those who look after the Memorial Hall: looking after bookings, and cleaning, and maintenance.

- Our Toddler Group leaders and helpers; flourishing again!
- Our Worship Group members
- The Parish Magazine editorial group, and the contributors and the distributors
- The organisers of the Wednesday Coffee Morning
- The Hospital-lifts coordinator and team
- The Pastoral Group members
- The leaders of the Home Groups on a Monday and Tuesday evening
- The members of the 20/20 Group, which has been revived and re-energised now we are coming out of Covid. (We hope to have a display/presentation shortly – by the end of April(?) of progress on the project towards sustainability and future-proofing St. George’s, with a concept plan, ready for discussion)
- Those who have recently started up “Connect Four”, the informal monthly family service/event at the Mission Church
- The Fete Committee members, working hard towards another successful fete.
- Carla Smith who runs the “Rhythm of Life” community choir that meets weekly in St. George’s
- Those who make sure we have enough oil for the heating system, and those who program the heating timer every week so we are warm in church.
- Those who advise on the charities that we support each year
- Those who make our support of Christian Aid work every year
- Those who are involved in the RBL service every year
- The Friends of St. George’s, for the concerts that they arrange each year
- And, of course, those who come and worship at the church!

Without all these people making all these things happen, St. George’s Church wouldn’t be the warm and welcoming place that it is. You may not have been mentioned by name, but thank you. Thank you from me; thank you from the church family. Pretty much every single one of these groups/tasks would not say “no” to new blood. If any of the activities have piqued your interest.....speak to me, please!

An extra thanks this year to the MLT and the Churchwardens for your support that is allowing me to have a sabbatical later in the year. It is hugely appreciated. Their support means that the normal schedule of regular services will continue whilst I am away, apart from one adjustment. In order to reduce the work on our other two priests, Rosemary and Ylva who will carry the load of sacramental ministry and marriage ceremonies, both PCC’s have agreed to alternate the 8 o’clock service across the benefice for the duration of the sabbatical. “Normal service” will be resumed in October, once I am back and refreshed following my sabbatical

One other mention of thanks is to our “Full time, unpaid, ministerial support worker”.....i.e. Helen Commander. Not only for everything she does with making both Toddler Groups work and flourish, but being there, always supportive, encouraging, and keeping me going!

We have a good future ahead of us at St. George’s; I am positive about that. I hope to come back refreshed and ready to help move things forward. But as is abundantly clear from all the “thanks”, it is not a “one man job”! It needs everyone to contribute to the life of our church.

It would still be good to be able to have:

- A communications “officer”
- An IT person to maintain the Cloud-drive of our church computer files; maintaining the performance of the office computer and clergy computers.

We are also in need of Deanery Synod reps from this parish. (If you’re not happy with the Church of England, don’t grumble, get involved! Deanery Synod is a place to do that.)

Since we have returned to the more normal pattern of worship post- Covid restrictions, there are quite a number of new people who are regularly worshipping at St. George’s. I am sure that many people in church are unaware of all that goes on to make our church run smoothly. I wonder if a service speaking about “service” might not go amiss, and see if we can encourage some new people to take on some of the tasks?

The Vision of the Diocese (...and *we* are the Diocese!) is:

By God’s grace we want to be a people who are:

...confident & creative disciples of Jesus Christ

...rooted in scripture & drenched in prayer

...living gratefully, giving generously, caring for creation & sharing the gospel

...growing in number & expectations – of God & ourselves

...motivated by justice & love, open to the Spirit & ready for adventure!

And it concludes: “*Therefore we will.....*”

It is a sentence that is deliberately left unfinished. This is for us to complete; “Therefore we will.....”..... do what?

Personalise it; “Therefore I will.....” – get involved; make something happen; pray; worship more often; help in one of the many ways.

We have a wonderful church family at St. George’s. Thank you all for all that you do.

Thanks

Mrs. Sue Fisher gave thanks to Rev David Commander for the huge amount of work he does during his ministry at St. George’s.

12. Elections

Deanery Synod

None of the three vacancies has been filled.

PCC

Ian Malaugh automatically stood down this year. One application for the PCC was received:-

Richard Stubbings proposed by Julia Collard, seconded by Alice Munro-Faure. This was accepted unanimously.

These nominations leave three vacancies on the PCC for three years and one vacancy for one year plus three vacancies on Deanery for one year.

Electoral Roll Officer

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

Independent Examiner

Mr. David Rogers has examined the accounts for 2021 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

Memorial Hall

Mr. David Collard reminded everyone the Memorial Hall is underused at the moment and hoped that more users could be found. It is an ideal room for small gatherings.

Open Church

It was suggested we hold a coffee morning/newcomer's event in the church. It could be linked to the 20/20 Group who are shortly to launch their findings and appeal.

14. Date of next Annual Meeting

This will be on Monday 24th April 2023 at 7.30 pm in the Memorial Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm with The Grace.

Chairman Dated