

The Barnes Team Ministry
The Parish Church of St Mary, Barnes

THE ANNUAL MEETINGS

Minutes of the Meetings held in the Church on Wednesday, 29 April 2009 at 8 pm

Present: The Rector (the Rev'd Ross Collins) in the chair, the churchwardens and 39 members of the parish.

A EASTER VESTRY

For the purpose of electing churchwardens to serve for the coming year.

Nominations for churchwardens had been received as follows:

Fiona Barnett, proposed by Peter Boyling and seconded by Tony Dundas;

Rosie Findlater, proposed by Celian Cleave and seconded by Fiona Smith.

There being no other nominations, these two people were elected churchwardens for the coming year. The Rector thanked Peter Boyling and Fiona Barnett warmly for their work as wardens over the last year.

B THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

1. Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 April 2008

The minutes had been displayed on the porch notice board for the past year and also reproduced in the 2009 Annual Report. The meeting unanimously approved them as a true record on a proposal of Michael Murison, seconded by Juliet Hogan.

2. Church Electoral Roll

Anna McGowan reported on behalf of Rachel Atwell, the Electoral Roll Officer. There were 337 people on the roll. This was a net increase of 9 on the 2008 Roll. Of the 337, 216 were resident within St Mary's boundary. Of those non resident within the parish, 54 were resident within the boundaries of the other two churches of the Team Ministry (an increase of 4) and 67 outside, an increase of 5.

3. Elections

(a) Parochial Church Council (for five representatives to serve for three years).

The following nominations had been received:

Peter Boyling, proposed by Fiona Smith and seconded by Celia Cleave

Juliet Hogan, proposed by Richard du Parcq and seconded by Phil Bladen

Nick Bryant, proposed by Phil Bladen and seconded by Tim Budgen

Rose Robertson, proposed by Patty Darke and seconded by Claire Boyling

These persons were elected unanimously.

The Rector welcomed Anna McGowan as the new PCC Secretary in succession to Marilyn Walker.

(b) Election of Sidesmen for 2009-2010

The Rector thanked Tony Dundas warmly for his service as he stepped down after five years as Chief Sidesman, and welcomed Tiziana George who had volunteered to succeed him. He proposed the following be elected as sidesmen for the coming year: David Barrie, David Blacklock, Claire Boyling, Elizabeth Casson, Brian and Celia Cleave, Tony Dundas, Patrick Findlater, Ken and Tiziana George, Charles Goldsmith, David Greenwood, David Heyhoe, Ken Hitchcock, Wendy Kyrle-Pope, Desmond and Josephine MacDermott, Alistair Mackie, Nigel Makepeace, Alan Mitchell, Nick Phillips, Ferialith Reay, Peter Siddall, Fiona Smith, Andrew Summers, Joan Wheeler-Bennett, Emma Wilson and Marjorie Wing.

On a proposal of Iain Radford, seconded by Margaret Collenette, election of these persons was approved unanimously.

4. Report on proceedings of the PCC

The Rector noted the written report of the PCC for the year. There were no comments from the meeting. He thanked Peter Boyling for his chairing of the meetings of the PCC at his request.

5. Report on the annual accounts

Richard du Parcq, PCC Hon Treasurer, reported. He noted that cash turnover had risen substantially over recent years. Expenditure had risen from under £250,000 five years ago to £401,000 in 2008, and if it rose to £500,000 we would again be required to undergo full audits of our accounts. Expenditure on installing our new heating system could bring this about.

It was a common misconception that St Mary's was comfortably off, but our current assets were less than six months' expenditure, and this was uncomfortably little. He summarised the position on the reserves listed in the annual accounts. Our net current cash assets had declined by over £30,000 in 2008; in particular the last of the capital money left over from the sale of 10 Brookwood Avenue had been spent on two major projects, the Garden of Remembrance and the new heating system.

We were relying on support from the Friends, the Kitson Hall surplus and events, to meet our commitment of £166,000 to the diocese, and this cost would rise by £30,000 in the coming year. There was a lot of work still to do to raise the funds we needed through the 2010 appeal; we needed a number of new gift aided standing orders, but these had not so far been achieved. While there was much to celebrate in our church life he was pessimistic about our ability at present to balance our budget.

In comments from the floor the following points were made:

- a) Kitson Hall's financial reserve seemed modest taking account of its potential spending commitments. The Treasurer confirmed that this was so; the PCC General Fund now depends on a much larger contribution from the Kitson Hall surplus; the Kitson Hall has significantly increased its revenue, but at the cost of a major and continuing programme of improvement works; and this circle had been squared by drawing on nearly half of the Kitson Hall Reserve. The Rector said that this concern would be reported to the PCC;
- b) the PCC should address the current position on regular giving by the congregation;. The Rector agreed, noting that we had tried a number of approaches. He added that other large churches like ours with many new members were facing financial problems greater than ours;
- c) the lack of new financial giving was disappointing. The Rector agreed and said that suggestions would be welcome;
- d) one off donations, such as legacies, were also being used to meet running costs;
- e) was there scope for cutting running costs? The Treasurer suggested that these were limited, without ceasing to employ key staff. Turning down the heating would make minor savings. The Rector noted that we were now spending £73,000 a year to run the church and the equivalent figure 17 years ago in 1992 was £75,000, so we had restricted our expenditure considerably;
- f) the format we were required to use for the accounts made it difficult for an accountant present at the meeting to understand the situation. The Treasurer agreed that the division between "general", "other designated", "restricted" and "endowment" funds, with only a single aggregate comparison column for the previous year, was unhelpful. He would attempt a more informative presentation for 2009. For 2008 the individual fund reports, on the following pages, go some way to explain exceptional 2008 expenditure, notably on the churchyard works.
- g) if it were easier to raise funds through events should we do more events? The Treasurer noted that it was our policy to make more funds from events wherever possible, but the sums required seemed out of reach through that route.

The Treasurer was congratulated for a very clear presentation and an extremely good job over the year.

Andrew Summers proposed the adoption of the accounts subject to independent examination, seconded by Joan Wheeler-Bennett, and this proposal was carried unanimously. The Treasurer undertook to ensure that the accounts were duly displayed publicly.

6. Appointment of an Independent Examiner for 2009 accounts
On a proposal of Iain Radford, seconded by Claire Boyling, the meeting approved unanimously the appointment of Alastair Cameron to examine the 2009 accounts.
7. Report on the fabric of the church
The Rector drew attention to the written report. A major issue, replacement of the heating system, would be considered later in the meeting. Another major project, expansion of the Garden of Remembrance, had been completed. He thanked Nick Phillips, who was standing down from the chair of the fabric committee, for an exceptionally good job on behalf of the church in various roles for over 25 years. He was delighted to welcome Michael Murison as the new chair of the fabric committee.
8. Reports on the Deanery Synod and on Churches Together in Barnes
The written reports were noted by the meeting.
9. Rector's review of the year
In his review, printed at the end of this report, the Rector reported on his sabbatical, and in particular the hope for the future he found in churches abroad. He suggested that opportunities arose from a flexibility they enjoyed; there was less flexibility in our own diocese. Nevertheless our community at St Mary's enjoyed a fundamental health. Our strong support of the Under Tree Schools charity had culminated in his visit to share in the opening of the new girls' school. This had been a very special time. Both the local people and the state authorities had made clear how important the project was in an area where educational opportunities were so limited. A little girl's announcement of her ambition to be a doctor had been a very moving incident. He closed by thanking those who had shared the responsibilities in St Mary's in his absence.

Peter Boyling thanked the Rector for his leadership, care and commitment for our church over the last year, and welcomed him back to parish life.

10. Consultation on the proposed new heating system for the church
Peter Boyling outlined the proposals drawn up by the fabric committee with our architect. A new system was proposed for the nave, as the hot air blowers were beyond their design life. Problems with the current system included the rapid rise and fall in temperature which damaged the fabric and put the organ out of tune, as well as the noise it was now making. The new system would follow diocesan advice to raise the temperature slowly and maintain it steady. Hot water radiators would be sunk in trenches below the floor, covered by grids. Three existing trenches would be used, ie those along the north wall and that across the Langton chapel; and some new trenches would be needed. Two would run down the side aisles of the nave and one across the opening of the tower. Costings were not yet clear but we envisaged a cost of the order of £100,000. It could take about 12 weeks to complete the work. A lot of dust would be raised and we would need to use Kitson Hall and not the church for this period. We were envisaging closure of the church over the first part of 2010.

In response to questions he noted that the boiler to heat the water would be behind the north wall; and the new system would be silent. It was suggested that we could do something interesting in place of the wooden structures currently housing the vents of the hot air into the nave, and it was agreed that this be looked at. It was also noted that perhaps half of the cost could be funded by the Friends of St Mary's.

No problems were raised in questions, but the Rector noted that when final plans were available there would be scope for another meeting if the congregation wanted one.

11. Any Other Business
None.
12. Date of Next Meeting
Agreed as 28 April 2010. The Rector thanked the team who had done a superb job in providing refreshments and information about church activities.

Annex

RECTOR'S ADDRESS

Having spent the first part of this year enjoying the fortunate privilege of a sabbatical (albeit the first one I have taken in 17 years of ministry) and coming back on duty, I find myself a little less informed on what has been happening at St Mary's and in Barnes than normal. However, a period away does give a chance for reflecting on one's day-to-day life from a different perspective and that has been true for me over the past three months.

My time has been spent on various foreign trips or preparing for them and each has given me an insight into the nature of the Anglican Communion across the world and its reality that is not often reflected in the media stories about possible schisms over issues such as homosexuality. Indeed, if anything, each place I have visited, especially Africa, while aware of the global battles, has a long list of priorities far ahead of human sexuality and despairs of the naked politicking we hear so much about.

One thing that I kept seeing and hearing was the great possibilities that exist for different Anglican churches and the Communion as a whole. In Zimbabwe, this emerged from a clear sense of hope in the future. I visited the Diocese of Matabeleland for the consecration of its new bishop, Cleophas Lunga, and was impressed at the plans they have for the future. The new economic circumstances have given them the chance to plan for expansion, training and deploying more clergy. I spent some time in Spain where the two local Anglican chaplaincies are expanding rapidly (with the close involvement of two former St Mary's parishioners, Martin and Angela Tomlins), doubling in size and in places of worship in three years. In Southern Sudan, where a small group of us were able to see the school we have been instrumental in helping be built, the engagement with the local community and government that is developing through the project is quite remarkable. Even in Davos, in the slightly different context of the World Economic Forum, there was considerable openness both in what the Church has to say on our current financial crisis and on the possibilities of working with the Church on the ground through initiatives such as microfinance projects.

A key common feature about these was that opportunities exist where there is flexibility. In Zimbabwe, because the end of inflation has enabled normal budgeting to be resumed and money to be accessed. In Spain, because the Church uses other church buildings and can go quickly to wherever there is need. And that brings me back to Barnes. Although this church is by far the most wealthy church I have engaged with this year, as part of the Diocese of Southwark, it has the least flexibility and the least positive options for the future. The Diocese has long held on to a policy of retaining 330 stipendiary clergy (and in almost the same places as was the case 10 years ago) and the parish share has kept on going up to ensure this happens. One result of this is that a number of the most prosperous and flourishing churches have been digging deep into their reserves to cover the increases – and this at the top of an almost unprecedented financial boom. There is no fat left to cover us now that the good times have gone. The other result is that, at a diocesan level, there is no room for meeting new needs and supporting new opportunities. At our local level, our parish share having more than doubled in my time here, we have to raise an extra £110,000 just to stand still, with no spare funds to support our own opportunities (such as, resourcing our children's and youth work properly). The Diocese is now realizing the precariousness of the position but it is uncertain whether they can deal with the issues at this stage in a way that does not cause significant disruption. For ourselves here, we will continue to see if we can expand our fund-raising activities, be they through stewardship and Barnsey, substantially growing our revenue from the revitalized Kitson Hall, the Ball, amongst other things.

There is also the small matter of our heating system which is overdue for replacement. The design of the new church 25 years ago inevitably involved compromises because of the funds available, but we are working on installing a system which will have a long lifespan.

The financial context of our church life raises challenges and it can be easy to forget all that has been achieved over the years and the fundamental health of St Mary's as a Christian community. Congregations remain strong, the family service in particular thriving and gaining from broader leadership both from Emma Powell and Geoffrey Barnett as well as the triumvirate which now looks after what I rather cheekily call 'front-of-house'.

Music goes from strength to strength under another exceptional musician (I was very sorry to miss the Buxtehude Palm Sunday service) and we have been fortunate to have been given the new mass setting by Howard Goodall (and you seem to be rising to the challenge of singing it very well). Pastorally, we have gained from the arrival of David Thomas as a curate. Organisationally, the office has been well-staffed by Rachel Attwell while awaiting a permanent appointment and it is good to welcome Anna McGowan here tonight. The new Garden of Remembrance looks wonderful and will be an important element of our ministry for a long time to come.

I'm also very grateful to those who took the brunt of the responsibility during my absence. Raymond is always the most supportive and loyal colleague you could ever hope to have and he has been joined in the leading of more services by Richard. It is a very rare privilege to be served in such a generous way by the bishop who ordained you. Peter and Fiona have been marvellous as always and my particular thanks must go to Peter for

undertaking a short second stint as churchwarden. He has done a huge amount of work with his traditional efficiency, competence and calmness. With Rosie taking over, we can release Peter to the more important joy of being a grandfather.

And, of course, to thank all of you for your continued support over the past year.