



ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

was held in St Mary's Church on
Tuesday 23 April 2024 at 7.30pm

MINUTES

The Rector opened the meeting in prayer.

Present: Rector, churchwardens, Honorary Treasurer and 42 members of the congregation

A. The Annual Meeting of Parishioners 2024

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

Fouki Heller has been churchwarden for 6 years and Paul Teverson for one year. The Rector thanked Fouki and Paul for their inspiring and enthusiastic contributions and gave them each a gift.

One nomination was received. There being no other nominations, Peter Boyling was appointed as churchwarden.

In the absence of a second churchwarden and in light of the approaching vacancy, Fouki Heller and Paul Teverson have volunteered to be Assistant Churchwardens. No election is required.

B. The Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2024

1. **Apologies:** Lucy and Chris Hine, Caroline Georgiadis, Patrick and Rosie Findlater, Robert and Caroline Scallan, Veronica Brown, Charlie Grainger and Richard Du Parcq.
2. **Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 4 May 2023** were signed as a correct record.
3. **Elections to the Parochial Church Council** of up to five representatives to serve for three years and three vacancies from previous years each with a two year term.
Five nominations for three year terms were received:
 - William Heller, proposed by Peter Boyling and seconded by Frances Summers.
 - Philip Smith, proposed by Fouki Heller and seconded by Paul Teverson.
 - Richard Chalker, proposed by Fouki Heller and seconded by Helen Bladen.
 - Caroline Georgiadis, proposed by Phil Bladen and seconded by Peter Boyling.
 - Catherine Roe, proposed by Peter Boyling and seconded by Geoffrey Barnett.One nomination for a two year term was received:
 - Mark Glasgow, proposed by Helen Gibbs and seconded by Fouki Heller.All candidates were elected.
4. **Elections to the Deanery Synod** of five representatives to serve for three years. Two nominations were received and both were duly elected:
 - Paul Teverson, proposed by Geoffrey Barnett and seconded by Andrew Summers.
 - Fouki Heller, proposed by Wendy Kyrle Pope and seconded by Geoffrey Barnett.
5. **Report on proceedings of the PCC** was received.

6. Report on the Church Electoral Roll:

Rachel Skilbeck, the Electoral Roll Officer, reported that there were 292 on the Electoral Roll. There will be a full revision of the Electoral Roll next year. Rachel Skilbeck stepped down as Electoral Roll Officer and the Rector thanked her for all her work. Trisha Hawkins will now take over.

7. Report on the annual accounts:

The treasurer Michael Ross-McCall stated that a summary of the church's finances could be found in his reports in the church's Annual Report and also in the Report and Accounts 2023. He presented the highlights via a PowerPoint on the overhead screen, summarised as follows:

- PCC "approves" the accounts (on 10 April 2024) and members at APCM "discuss and receive".
- Net surplus in 2023 was £29,875; excluding unrealised investment gains of £59,020, St Mary's incurred an operating deficit of £29,145.
- Net contributions in 2023 from Kitson Hall and Friends net of donations were £44,261 and £29,308 respectively.
- "Faith in Action" charitable giving in 2023 was £13,770 – including Friends, the total paid to charities was £32,570; Ministry parish share was £187,272.
- 2023 Offerings, donations, legacies, appeals and gift aid aggregated to £225,964, a 6.9% increase on 2022.
- Liquid assets (cash, bank and deposits) at 31/12/23 totalled £125,377, a reduction of £103,894 in 2023 due mainly to the operating deficit and capital expenditure of £62,894; in addition, a non-endowment investment of £92,068 was available to fund expenditure.
- Budgeted net deficit for 2024 was £21,502 and liquid assets were expected to reduce by £52,646 mainly from budgeted capital expenditure in 2024 of £50,000.
- Investment portfolio at 31/12/23 stood at £721,988 including assets classified as an endowment fund of £629,920 currently ring-fenced to provide an income source to finance the Associate Priest.
- Total attendances at 216 services in 2023 of 9,203 were 2.9% higher than 2022.

Michael thanked Richard, Patrick, Michael and Pauline for their dedicated service during 2023.

8. Appointment of an independent examiner of the accounts for 2024:

Based upon the satisfactory examination by *Stewardship* of the 2022 and 2023 Report and Accounts, Michael recommended the re-appointment of Stewardship as the independent examiner for 2024 which was accepted.

9. Reports on the fabric of the church, and of Kitson Hall were received. William Heller reported that Richard Nickels will be taking over from him as Chairman of the Kitson Hall Committee. The Rector thanked William for all his work as chairman over the last 9 years.

10. Report on Deanery Synod was received.

11. Rector's reflection:

JH presented a number of images starting with St George. Today is St George's day. St George is an interesting character because he is the patron saint of England but he is actually Palestinian, which says something rather wonderful about inclusivity and what it means to be English. He is also a reminder of the very serious issues taking place in Palestine today and he is also somebody who was persecuted and martyred for his faith, so we are reminded that while we can meet in comfort and in peace here for an annual meeting like this, to do so in many parts of our world would be a very grievous thing to do. The hum drum, even things that we might think are boring, are things we need to cherish because life could be a whole lot more difficult.

These images are a reminder of some of the things over this past year, particularly around the civic role of St Mary's. We don't see ourselves as a narrowly congregational church simply representing those who are assiduous by their attendance on a Sunday. We see ourselves as there for the care of the souls of everybody who lives in the parish of St Mary's whether they come through the door or not. Things like the death of the late Queen and the coronation of the new

King are important occasions for us to mark and ones where St Mary's can play that role in representing the community, and I think has done that very well.

It is a time of tremendous challenge and there is an image there from the terrible war in Ukraine. We've had a number of times for services and prayer in relation to that conflict and we've heard from those who are refugees from Ukraine and from those who are hosting them in our community and we continue to pray for Ukraine at this time. Similarly, there are pictures of Richard Sewell from St George's College and the Princess Basma Centre which was so generously supported by the Parish at Christmas time. And an image of the cost of living crisis to remind us of the challenging times that we are living through. It's easy for us to look at all of the good things and the surface well being of Barnes often and forget how much struggle there is going on within the parish. I think a hallmark of our life as a Parish is the engagement with our local community and the support that is given to the different charities we support and I've put up images of those charities. We in fact support lots of other charities through, for example, Saturday mornings in the Melville Room we support 45 different charities through the year. Those images are of the major ones we support both financially and through our prayer and through volunteer engagement. The key sources of support for those are the work of the Friends of St Mary's, the work of Kitson Hall and the Saturday coffees mornings. Also, the support of the other fundraising work the church does, notably there is a picture of the Bike sale. It's an extraordinary community effort that takes place here.

Alongside that is our participation in the Diocese of Southwark. I've got a picture from the parish of William Temple in Abbey Wood. Reverend Ruth Turner came to speak here last autumn. This is just one illustration. We could have about 500 different pictures of the 500 different parishes who are members of the Diocese of Southwark. This map shows you that the Diocese goes almost as far as Gatwick, across to Kent and across to ourselves here in the western corner. Bishop Christopher who has been our long standing Diocesan Bishop and who has been particularly pastoral and skillful in the that way he has led this Diocese. As you will know there are great debates going on within the life of the Church of England about all sorts of things but Bishop Christopher is a true pastor to all of the different sorts of church tradition within the Diocese of Southwark. He is very caring and considerate in the way he does that, so I think we are very fortunate to have him as our Bishop. What our parish share means is that we act as a family together. We pay our amount into the Parish Support Fund which enables parishes such as Abbey Wood, although they could never support a full time priest, they are able to do that. So it means that, across all of south London and into the neighbouring counties, the church is represented in all of those 500 plus parishes.

I mentioned difficulties, this is a very challenging time. I think it is important to be mindful of the challenges which we are facing. There is a very important debate about how the church maintains itself and grows in the future. There is a logo there about the Save The Parish network. There is a sense among quite a lot of people that there has been too much emphasis on new shiny initiatives, as they would see it, which aren't the traditional parish, when actually the bedrock of church life is the parish unit and the local parish church. It's a debate where I'm not going to come down particularly on one side or another, except to say that the parish is definitely the bedrock of our ministry. But it can't be the the only way in which we reach out to our contemporary society but it is a hard one for the church to cover.

As is how we relate to the whole issue of gender and sexuality. As is well known there has been this initiative Living in Love and Faith, a period of debate which has been going on for a number of years now about same sex marriage and whether clergy can be in same sex marriages, whether same sex marriages can be blessed in church and all of the theological issues behind that. It is a long and tortuous debate. The intention is good, which is to be able to listen well to one another,

putting people of very different views in the same room together to work through the issues. If you do that it does take a long time. We're all in an age of 24 hour news, impatient for the church to come to a decision. Well, I can be impatient and I'm sure you can be impatient, but sometimes difficult decisions take a long time and I'm still confident in God's good time that the church will come to a considered viewpoint on that. We might look back to when the great controversy was whether people who were divorced could remarry in church and in the end the church came to a view on that, that it was permissible but it was up to the priest concerned and the church concerned whether they were happy to conduct those weddings or not. By and large that has worked very well as a settlement that respects people's different viewpoints and so I'm sure that we must be able to come to a position that respects different peoples viewpoints in the future.

We are all struggling to reach carbon net zero. It is a great challenge that we face as the church, that I know Richard particularly is getting to grips with at KH for us, in terms of how we reach targets for carbon net zero. The Church of England boldly said it was going to reach carbon net zero by 2030. You can come to ambitious targets in impassioned public debate and sometimes when you reflect at your leisure you think that maybe that's not quite so easy. I think we're at that stage at the moment, as indeed is the rest of society frankly. But the aspiration remains there and that's going to be a continuing feature for us at parish level as it will be for the church nationally. I've also put a picture there from one of the images from Queen Anne's Bounty, the money that the church had back in the 17th and 18th century that was invested in slave owning estates, and has led to the debate nowadays about whether the church should be making recompense for that. Again an incredibly important debate. There have been some very wild headlines and inaccurate headlines about what the church commissioners are putting money into. We're not going to go into the detail of that now, its not quite as lurid as it sounds in the press, but again its an important debate. There are debates which some of us can feel are a distraction from parish ministry, but they can be things that provide an absolute barrier to people in our parish hearing the good news of the gospel. Because they see that if the church takes a position on certain issues and does not respond, then everything else we say is blanked out. It's a really hard one for us to deal with, but it is one of the great challenges that we, as the Church of England, face. If you are a more specifically congregational church you can focus your mission on a tighter group of people and it's much easier to have a very coherent and unified position. The Church of England chooses to take the difficult path of seeking to represent everybody within its parish, and long may that continue, but it leads to all of the difficulties that we so often face as the Church of England.

But I retain great confidence as I show this picture from the 40th anniversary service, which we held back in February, as one visual representation of the wonderful parish and team of people we have here at St Mary's. I'm confident that the day in, day out life that we have here, engaging with our community, an open door to anyone who wants to come in, is the one that will continue to draw people to this place of prayer of worship now and in the future. We are continuing in the Easter season and we go on holding at the core of who we are, that miracle of Jesus making himself known in the breaking of bread and the way that he continues to make himself known, through ordinary people, through our congregation, through this place, through God in creation, he goes on making himself known and through the gift of the holy spirit (that's an image of Pentecost), that he will continue to do so. For me it's always a great joy, it's a great joy to preside at the Eucharist, it's a great joy to be able to lead worship, it's a great joy to be able to lead this parish, and I want to thank you all for all of your support, for all of your kindness, all that you do to volunteer. It's quite extraordinary. When people who aren't involved with church life sometimes look and ask, who is it who does the work? Where do you get volunteers from? Well, here you all are in spades and its an amazing thing, so thank you and we thank God for all that we have in this parish.

Fouki Heller thanked the Rector on behalf of the churchwardens and everyone for all that he has done for St Mary's and for how you've led us. We've increased in numbers and our spiritual growth has gone from strength to strength. Thank you for everything you've done for us.

JH invited questions and several questions were raised: Please could someone lower the candle in Langton Chapel. Might Barnes promote a new translation of Lords Prayer, more accessible and with a dose of plain English? Could we promote a local publication of Richard Harries sermons, as a great tribute to him and his ministry? JH referred these points for the Fabric committee and PCC respectively to consider.

12. Churchwardens' report was received.

13. Any other business – none.

14. Date of next annual meeting – To be confirmed at a later date.

All the received reports can be read in the Annual Report and Annual Review on <https://www.stmarybarnes.org/about-us/#parishcouncil>.