

Minutes of the Christ Church Council Meeting 24 March 2015

Present: Judith Anderson, Margaret Burrows, Mark Elliott, Matthew Jones, Sarah Kerr, David Rawlings (chair), Sharon Rawlings, Andrew Sillett, Alex Soboslay, Angela Soboslay, Brenda Wall (secretary), Malcolm Wall.

In attendance: Sarah Jones, Ian Hay Davison, Robin Kerr.

1. The meeting opened with a prayer. **Apologies** were received from Judith Bishop, Morny Davison and Bob Siderfin.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting (24 February 2015) were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising

(1) Cedar Tree. Council was delighted to learn that Janet Mahto has taken on managing the rota for the Cedar Tree café, and expressed its thanks to her for making it possible for this important outreach to continue.

(2) Training of Lay Administrants (chalice assistants) has not yet taken place because Simon Tatton-Brown has been unwell. Now that he is better, he and Angela S will organise some training, so that all are comfortable with how we distribute communion and everyone is doing the same thing.

Do we need to recruit more chalice assistants? The consensus was that we have enough to tide us over, and this could wait until we have a new Priest-in-Charge.

4. Bells and ringing

(1) Involving people. Ian Hay Davison reported that ringing has got off to a good start with a lot of interest from local ringers. On top of the excellence of the bells, one reason for this is that St Michael's tower is closed for six months. As a first step to building our own band, Ian recommended getting the Christ Church community involved by inviting the congregation to see the bells being rung between 9:30 and 9:55 on Sunday mornings, and encouraging anyone interested in trying a hand at ringing. This was agreed, and announcements will be made at our 10am service.

(2) Security. The churchwardens expressed concern that numerous strangers were coming and going, either to ring or to watch, which was a potential security risk. Brenda suggested that ringers and guests could be given badges for easier identification. David will look into getting some.

(3) Sound control. Ian feels that the sound reduction measures have been more than effective, and actually the sound is not thrown as far as he

would like – he believes the bells can barely be heard outside the Assembly Rooms and not at all up Lansdown, in the Circus or at the top of Gay Street. This limits our potential to offer ringing for local events such as weddings in the Assembly Rooms or in St Mary's RC church. He suggested that the reach of the bells could be increased by building a sound lantern on the roof of the tower, but the feeling of the meeting was that we should take things slowly and let the neighbourhood get used to the bells before starting to consider anything further.

(4) Ventilation. Our initial plans included installing opening windows in the ringing chamber for ventilation. During the work, the (cheaper) alternative of an air conditioning unit was proposed, and Ian has looked at the even cheaper solution of a fan heater for the winter and a fan for the summer. He proposed just seeing how we get on for the time being, in order to assess what is required and therefore how much we really need to spend.

(5) Finishing off. The Trustees have agreed in principle to some minor carpentry work required to finish things off, including some stairs for access in the clock chamber. Standing Committee will oversee the details.

(6) Visiting bands and extra ringing. Ian outlined the proposed programme of ringing for April, which includes a quarter peal on Easter Sunday afternoon, a visiting band on Friday 10th, ringing for St George's Day on Friday 23rd, and hosting the Bath Branch Striking Competition on Saturday 25th, all in addition to the usual practice sessions on Saturday mornings (except for the 25th) and ringing for services on Sundays.

Alex expressed concern that this was a lot of ringing when our neighbours are still getting used to hearing the bells at all, but the meeting was happy for all this to go ahead on the understanding that the sound control shutters are closed for all ringing that is not service ringing.

Ian suggested reviving the tradition of a full peal (about three hours) once a year, and proposed June or July. The meeting felt this was too much too soon, and suggested August or September instead.

In the absence of a Priest-in-Charge, Standing Committee will take responsibility for approving any proposed extra ringing or altered timings.

(7) Charges. Ian had been asked about ringing for a wedding and reported that the fees would be a standard £20 per rope (i.e., £120 for six or £160 for eight). Ringing for a wedding commonly lasts half an hour, and would normally be with the shutters closed.

(8) Finance. Ian requested a bank account for contributions from the ringers and a cheque book. It was agreed that he should take this up with

David Bishop, the Treasurer.

(9) Donor board. Ian proposed a donor board to be erected in the lobby, recording all donors who gave £5,000 or more to the bells appeal. This should be looked at in connection with the renovation of the lobby and entrance. In the meantime, Ian has written to the donors to thank them.

(10) It was pointed out that if children were to be trained to ring, this should be done by someone suitably qualified who has been DBS checked.

(11) Publicity and information. A page about the bells will be added to the Christ Church website, and ringing times publicised on the site. Ian will keep Matthew informed of these.

(12) Alex asked Ian whether he had received the formal report from the BANES environmental officer on the bells' sound levels, which would be valuable to have in case of any complaints. Ian said he would chase it.

(13) The meeting thanked Ian for all his work.

5. Recruitment of Priest-in-Charge

Sarah Jones, the new Chair of Trustees, reported on the discussion at the last Trustees' meeting, at which the Archdeacon of Bath was present.

The Archdeacon advised that we should be wary of just updating our last church profile. We're not where we were last time, so we need to ask ourselves where we want to go and what we want from a new Priest-in-Charge. Financial questions need to be carefully considered as well. As part of the process, an "away day" is proposed at which all the congregation can be involved in considering all these matters.

Sarah explained the proposed timetable for the process of discussion, drafting our profile, advertising and interviewing. The aim is to hold the "away day" in June, compile the profile by the end of July and advertise in September, with the hope of having a new priest in post by Christmas. Some members of Council asked why things couldn't be done sooner, but Sarah pointed out that we must avoid advertising at the wrong time, in mid summer, when many potential candidates are likely to be away. Mark added that the Trustees too would like it to be quicker, but we need to appoint the right person. The timetable is not fixed, and it is possible that the profile document, for example, could be done more quickly.

In general discussion it became clear that the distinct steps in the process required people with different skills – the committee compiling material for the church profile, for example, would be distinct from the interview panel. Sarah ventured that the profile group required the skills to assimilate the

views of a wide range of people and distill a consensus into something coherent. Brenda proposed, and Andrew seconded, that the two churchwardens should be involved in this. This was passed with one abstention and no votes against. At the AGM, Sarah will invite people to express their interest if they wish to be involved in any of the process or feel they have skills to offer.

6. Division of responsibilities between Trustees and Council

Malcolm (Council Treasurer) and David Bishop (Trustees Treasurer) have had meetings to put into effect the division of financial responsibilities between Trustees and Council. The principle is that Council will manage the day-to-day running of the church, expenditure on which last year was about £42,000. Income from congregational giving was £50,000, though the pattern is changing – the cash collections and Gift Aid giving are going down, while standing orders are up, so the budgeted income for 2015 is £46,000. Expenditure for which the Council will be responsible includes utilities, wages, goods, maintenance and admin costs such as printing.

Our printing bill is £6,000–£7,000 a year, and in discussion the suggestion was made that we should look at getting a printer. Would this result in a saving? Would there be someone to do the work?

Alex asked for clarification on the responsibility for wages, when legally speaking the Priest-in-Charge, verger and organist are all employed by the Trustees. The rationale, Mark explained, was that the congregation could in theory decide they don't want a verger or an organist; it's not up to the Trustees to decide our forms of worship. Hence, the responsibility for these falls to Council, which manages the running and admin of the church on behalf of the congregation.

Full financial reports are available online at the Charities Commission site. There's a direct link from the Christ Church website.

The largest single item of expenditure is our Diocesan Contribution. For 2015 (January to December), the Diocese has requested £15,250. Discussion of this was deferred to the next meeting.

7. Report on Diocesan Synod

Brenda reported on the last Diocesan Synod, held at Bath University. The keynote was "I am the Resurrection and the Life". It is important for the Church to engage with the 2.5 million students. It is estimated that 43% of students have contact with a chaplain. Brenda talked about the role of the university chaplain, which ranged from counselling the suicidal to teaching people how to cook. Bishop Peter Hancock said education must be holistic, and the role was to make Christ known to those in their care.

The Dioceses are tasked with holding shared conversations on human sexuality (see www.sharedconversations.org). We should discern and decide what our attitude is, and also the social attitudes in our area.

The synod talked about giving to the Common Fund. We are going to be expected to pay more, based on who we are and what we've got. The Church's position is that everyone should earn a living wage, not just the basic wage. This was part of decreasing inequality, and part of our duty as Christians, but it will add £220,000 to the wage bill at Wells Cathedral alone (which was why the Dean of Wells voted against).

A new Bishop of Taunton will be consecrated on 29 September.

In the discussion that followed, several members of Council expressed regret that Christ Church seems to have lost its once-strong contact with the universities in Bath. Mark noted a "demographic issue" in our congregation: we have no members aged between 10 and 34 (the age now reached by those who started coming to Christ Church as students). How do we engage with the city's student population again? Could Angela B-W be invited to address this subject at a meeting of Council? There was also consensus that we should discuss the finance issue.

8. Buildings

Robin Kerr reported that BANES had indicated it would refuse a planning application for Council's preferred changes to the West doors (Option 2) on the grounds that moving the wooden doors to the outer arch would change the historic character of the church entrance. BANES would however be sympathetic to Option 1 (rehanging the wooden doors on the outside of the inner arch and adding new glass doors on the inside, where the wooden doors are now). Accordingly he proposed we make an application for Option 1, assuming the Fire authorities will also approve it.

For the proposals for the toilet area, Robin will investigate further.

9. Charities of the Month

The committee presented a list of proposed charities. Matthew observed that these were predominantly health-related. It was agreed without dissent to nominate Brake, the road safety charity, for April, and Freewheelers (the Blood Bike volunteers) for May. The decision on charities for the rest of the year was deferred to the next meeting.

10. Home Group

Brenda suggested that since the Home Group was following the "Pilgrim Course for the Christian Journey", it should be called the Pilgrim Group. She said it offered great fellowship and it was a pity more people did not attend. She strongly urged Council members to show leadership and take

part. Meetings will be promoted in the magazine. It was noted that St Stephen's has a lot of home study groups; could we join in with any? A question was raised about Cursillo study groups in the Diocese; it seems these have to be gifted to the Diocese.

11. Agenda for the AGM

Alex presented the proposed agenda for the AGM on Sunday 19 April, which was agreed.

12. Any other business

(1) Electoral Roll. Judith A noted that people had to be on the roll two weeks before the AGM in order to be eligible to vote. She asked that a notice be added in the weekly notice sheet and an announcement made before services. It was suggested that people who have recently joined the congregation could be offered electoral roll forms personally.

(2) Publicity for Easter services. Matthew confirmed that details of our Easter service times had been sent to the Bath Chronicle, but he mentioned that the Chronicle tended to report on events that had taken place rather than publicise forthcoming ones.

(3) Meeting times. A question was raised about starting Council meetings earlier so that they might not finish quite so late. It was agreed that the new Council elected at the AGM could decide.

The meeting closed with the Grace at 21:50. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 12 May 2015.