

St James's Church, Taunton
Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

held on 9 May 2023

The meeting was held in the church and was chaired by Rev. Fabian Wuyts. 37 people were present.

Fabian read from several Psalms including Psalm 95v1: *Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.* The songs *Be still, for the presence of the Lord* and *My hope is built on nothing less* were sung.

1. Meeting of Parishioners to elect churchwardens

Joyce Kirk and Nigel Bright were re-elected as churchwardens.

2. Apologies for absence

There were apologies from Roger Fenton, Marian and Joe Gentile, John Henden, Sue Lucas, Phil Saddler, Steve Smith, Nic Tall, David Wilkie and Cynthia Wright.

3. Minutes of 2022 APCM and Matters Arising

The minutes of the 9 May 2022 APCM were approved without amendment. No matters arising.

4. Presentation of the Electoral Roll.

Sue Doyle reported that there were 168 names on the revised Electoral Roll. Seven members had died during the year, and 11 names had been added since the last annual meeting.

5. Election of Deanery Synod Representatives

Richard Carpenter, Chris Rickard and Martin Wakefield were re-elected as representatives on Deanery Synod. There were no other nominations, so no vote was required.

6. Election of PCC members

There were four candidates for five places, so no vote was required. Marilyn Gibson and David Jordan were re-elected and Fiona Hope and Johan Smit were elected as new members of the PCC. The remaining vacancy for a one-year term will be considered by the PCC. Thanks go to outgoing PCC member Sheila Marlow.

7. Appointment of Independent Examiner.

Mr Anthony Porter of Messrs Amherst & Shapland was re-appointed as Independent Examiner.

8. Accounts for 2022

Richard Sainsbury presented the accounts for 2021, expressing his continuing thanks to Chris Rickard as Stewardship Officer and Payroll Officer, Rachel Knowlman for administration, Beccy Fox for IT support and to Jacqui Sainsbury for all her support throughout the year.

He highlighted the following:

- The income for 2022 was £146,361 and the expenditure was £161,891, resulting in a deficit of £15,560. There was no unusual expenditure or income this year, so the figure represents the difference between normal income and normal expenditure. This is an improvement on 2021, where, after discounting a legacy, the shortfall on running costs had been £36k.
- Income from stewardship giving had increased, but the number of income tax payers had decreased, so the amount claimed as Gift Aid was similar to 2021. Hall hire income was up on 2021, but not yet back to pre-Covid levels.
- Overall expenditure was similar to that in 2021. Wages had increased, due mainly to the cessation of furlough payments from the government. Mission giving had been reduced to nearer our pledged 10% of Stewardship income, it having increased gradually over several years; this was implemented after reviewing the financial situation of our local mission partners.
- The main item of expenditure was the Parish Share. Because the diocese was still using pre-Covid figures for the amounts requested from each parish, this had reached 70% of our income, which would have been unsustainable. We have therefore notified the diocese that we will pay a minimum of 55% of our income as part of our plan to break even in 2023 (paying more if we can afford it without incurring a deficit). We also need to take into account that our expenditure on gas and electricity will more than double due to the increase in prices.

Richard and his team were thanked for all they do.

9. Annual Report for 2022

The Annual Report was reviewed. Several questions were asked:

- The need to teach new worship songs to the congregation: Fabian observed that there had been few new songs, but several had not been sung for a while. New songs will be properly introduced.
- Forming a team to bring together all aspects of our schools ministry: Fabian said that this is being considered, along with such things as adding drama sketches for assemblies.
- Richard Lucas drew attention to the large number of school children with mental health issues, which had increased over the Covid period. Also, many children had a good grasp of faith issues on which we can build when addressing this issue.

10. Deanery Synod Report

A written report of the proceedings of Deanery Synod was presented to the meeting. Richard Carpenter then explained the current thinking regarding outreach to the numerous new housing estates being built around the outskirts of the town:

- Taunton's population is projected to increase by around 25,000 (over the period 2010-2030). We need to address this as a whole town issue rather than leave it to individual parishes.
- We need to find out what new communities need, not replicate the ways we do things now.
- While stipendiary clergy numbers across the diocese are decreasing, there is no reduction in Taunton Deanery due to the projected population increase. However, clergy are licenced to parishes whose buildings are nowhere near the new housing.
- The approach has to be one of releasing lay people to minister not only in the new housing but across the town as a whole, not constrained to propping up existing churches.

11. Any Other Business

In response to a question about evening services, Fabian said that there are outline plans to begin an evening service in a few months' time. This will be monthly to begin with.

12. Vicar's Review (On YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkOdBUdRUWg>)

Fabian began by looking at the Christian Hope that sets our vision. It looks towards the integration of Heaven and Earth, and we have the Holy Spirit as our guide. As we pray in The Lord's Prayer: *your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.*

He noted the regrowth of attendance at our 1030 services: from an average of 70 attending in June 2022, to 100 by the end of the year and 110 now. A good number of new members joined the church in 2022. Livestreaming on Facebook serves more members and friends and the recorded services on YouTube reach even more, along with the Bible Bytes podcasts on the church website, while a few members without internet are provided with DVDs each week. There has been much creativity within services, and we can look forward to an increasing participation by our young people.

Contact has been made with many new families, including the "Stable Manners" production by St James Players, at the Queen's Jubilee Fun Day and at the recent banquet in conjunction with the team from the Cross Keys pub. School links continue to grow, with church members volunteering at St James Church School, and both that school and North Town School holding services in the church building. Church members continue to serve the community through many local Christian organisations, and we also support the worldwide church through our mission links.

Our smaller fellowships, now known as Life Groups, are flourishing, including ten homegroups, the monthly Thursday Fellowship, the fortnightly Hymns and Tea gathering, and interest groups for Art, Bellringing and Ecology. A new Welcome ministry helps new members to integrate and the Prayer Ministry during and after services has been revitalised.

Fabian ended with a thought-provoking picture of the future – at the current rate of growth and with the connections we have (our friends, neighbours, work colleagues, links with St James school and the local community, etc.) it is not too far-fetched to dream of doubling our number of children and young people within the next 2 years and imagining a congregation of 300-400 members in the next 5-7 years. Having such a picture will inform the focus, choices and priorities of today.

13. Closing

Celia Wojcik thanked Fabian on behalf of the church for his leadership, and extended thanks to Dave, the churchwardens and all other officers who give of their time.

The meeting closed at 21:55 with The Grace and the song *Lord be my vision.*