

## **PCC Meeting 13th June 2022, held in St Mark's church at 7.30 pm**

**Welcome:** Rev Ben King read Luke 11:9-13 and opened in prayer. He welcomed everyone and especially Bola for whom this was her first meeting.

**1. Apologies:** There were no apologies because all members were present.

### **2. Minutes of meeting held on 25.4.22 and APCM on 15.5.22 and Matters Arising:**

**From 24/4** there was a query about whether co-opted members could vote in meetings. It was generally felt that this was allowed but will be checked. There was unanimous agreement otherwise that the minutes were correct.

**The APCM minutes** were also passed as a true record.

**In Matters Arising** the Forest Gate festival (page 2) was highlighted and it was re-iterated that volunteers are needed. Ben said that he would mention this on Sunday 19th June. The Polling Station (page 5) was reported by Mike to have run much more smoothly this year but that the invoice is yet again overdue. This was felt to be disgraceful because they had had a very good service from St Mark's. It was decided, and passed by the PCC that the council be reminded of their commitment by letter, from Mike, and that he would send another invoice marked as overdue. Mike will report back at the next meeting.

**a) Standing Committee Resolutions:** Two resolutions had been passed: an upgrade of email storage boxes arranged by Mike Richardson, for Ben King and Bethany Yates at a cost of £117.36 for three years.

£50 agreed for a gift to Natasha Dorrington at the Slate Yard who has been very generous to St Marks with her help and use of the trailer van for the past two Christmases.

### **3. Policy Statements Review:** (all docs had been sent to members beforehand)

**a) Data Protection** document was reviewed and agreed. It is in line with the CofE GDPR.

**b) PCC Privacy and Confidentiality** statement was reviewed and agreed.

**c) Safeguarding Policies** were reviewed and agreed (see Safeguarding section)

**d) Roles and Responsibilities** were agreed and were looked at in the Safeguarding section.

### **4. Vicar's Report:** (sent before the meeting)

**Platinum Jubilee Review:** Ben King told the meeting that he had received thanks from many people about the Jubilee tea and also the street party. A neighbour had sent Ben an email of thanks and encouragement. There seems to be a great deal of goodwill for the future play cafe and proposed seniors' group. Ben said he felt that this confirmed the way we plan to go and that it is the right direction.

Bethany Yates said that several parents had said how lovely it was to see children playing in Lorne Road and she wondered about the possibility of it becoming a play street. There had been no objections to the closure for the Jubilee party and in fact only part of the road had been closed off. Even the Police constables seemed to think it might be an idea for the future. Sharon Yates said that Play Street Status would mean that we wouldn't have to go through the process again and we wouldn't have to pay to close it. Free status would ensue. One member said they were struck by how lovely it was that what we produced for the tea party was of such good quality. It was 'the best' and showed both care and generosity. People came from further afield than just Lorne Road. A comment was made that quite a lot of sharing went on which gave a feeling of love and welcome. Ben reiterated his thanks and asked that everyone be encouraged through this outreach.

**b) Worship Review:** Ben said he was pleased with the responses to the different services in May, particularly the **healing service**. It was felt by several people that the prayer area had been a bit noisy and whilst it was good that individuals could not be heard, some of them found it difficult to hear the person praying with them. A question was also asked about whether people had felt they had enough time. There is clearly a need for this kind of service. Ben thanked Yvonne and Michael who had been pray-ers and several others in the church family.

The meeting then discussed the **Thy Kingdom Come service** where people broke into groups after the sermon. Ben said he thought that profound conversations had been forthcoming. Members felt that people had been comfortable doing this, partly because the video stimulus had been of good quality. Beth said that the youth group had talked about how they felt if they were being prayed for. A buddy system of prayer was suggested which we have instigated in the past. We were reminded by Sharon that we are in a new season and that the Holy Spirit is moving within us.

The service on 5th June introduced a **Ministry Time** after the sermon as a way of deepening our relationship with the Holy Spirit. Ben said he had felt that there had been a high level of engagement. It was suggested that perhaps staying seated while responding to prayer might help people to feel even more relaxed. Another member said that they were very happy to have this sort of prayer but that when Ben walked up and down, he became less audible. This was recognised as something to rectify. Many people found the Thy Kingdom Come journals very helpful with the daily notes. Ben thanked people for their feedback.

#### **5. Parish Worker's Report:** (sent before the meeting)

Bethany Yates spoke about her plan for **Messy Church Mondays**, the idea being that there would be three focus dates during August where people had to book in so that we will know how many to prepare for.

There is also a plan to run **Girls' Drop-in** on three Monday evenings in June (20/6 and 27/6) and July (4/7) where year 6 girls will be invited along for fun activities and finding out about Girl Guides or other Youth group opportunities, along with Catherine and Helen. At the moment there has been no response to emails sent but they will give it a go and see what the appetite is.

**Firepit Fridays** have been revived although numbers were down by about half at last Friday's event. Beth said that this was not a bad thing, in that more intimate conversations tend to happen with fewer people. It was good to see one church member who has moved, coming to Firepit Friday and then to church the following Sunday.

The **Pop-up Cafe** is in the planning stage and the bike has now been ordered. Ben brought to the meeting's attention that we only had one quote before ordering the bike when three would be usual. Beth explained that this is obviously rather a niche item and although she did look at the one other company, the bike was huge and cost considerably more money. Ben said that this was completely understandable but that we should have waived getting two other quotes and would consequently have to approve it at this meeting. He therefore made a motion to approve a single tender waiver. This was approved by 12 members with 1 member against.

Beth said she felt very encouraged by reflections on the Platinum Jubilee weekend and feels confident that at the two events we did indeed "launch out and get a catch". She feels that this is confirmation from God that we are making the right decisions in honouring Him through our faith.

Ben thanked Bethany and said that the L.O.B application which was put together so well by Beth and Mike to support the coffee bike project was submitted late, not by us but by Sue Lucas at St Bart's. However, this will go forward again for consideration in the Autumn.

## **6. Treasurer's Report** (sent before the meeting)

Peter Arnold reported to the meeting that last year's agreed accounts have gone to the independent examiner and hopefully will be signed off. Members had received details of the income and expenditure but Peter said that our income from January to May was £33,499 and his notes give a more detailed breakdown. Our expenditure from January to May was £41,374, so considerably more. Major items were Parish Share, Ukraine donation and Mission and Outreach costs. The current account is down by approximately £7,700, compared with Peter's last report, due to the payments noted. There was a belated gas bill of £807 which came from the current account.

Peter told the meeting that he had updated the Charity Commission with details of PCC changes, from this year's APCM.

The Ukraine appeal was sent £2,905 - £1000 of this donated by PCC and £1,905 given by church members for this purpose.

Two people have dropped out of church giving from June 2022.

## **Financial Standing Orders:** (taken from Peter's report)

We need to renew our financial standing orders, which empower the vicar, wardens, parish worker, and standing committee to spend limited amounts of money between PCC meetings and without further authorisation. Currently these read as follows:

- The Vicar, Churchwarden(s) and/or Treasurer, (3 people acting together), are authorised to incur expenditure in amounts up to and including £500.
- The vicar, parish worker, and each of the churchwardens are individually authorised to incur expenditure of up to the following limits per calendar month for the purposes of church activities, ministry and maintenance: up to £200 for any single item, subject to a maximum of £250 per calendar month.
- For the purposes of church activities and ministry, the Standing Committee are authorised to incur expenditure in amounts up to and including £1,000. For the purpose of maintenance, the Standing Committee are authorised to incur expenditure in amounts up to and including £1,500, provided that at least two quotes are obtained and considered; however, if the maintenance item is urgent, then a single quote may be approved by a majority of the Standing Committee. For the purpose of responding to requests for financial support, the Standing Committee are authorised to incur expenditure in amounts up to and including £500. Between any two PCC meetings the Standing Committee shall not authorise total expenditure exceeding £2,000.
- Any expenditure of amounts exceeding £1,000 must be approved by the PCC, except as above. Are any changes required? If not, is the PCC willing to renew these financial standing orders until the date of the June 2023 PCC meeting?

Peter Arnold

Peter asked the meeting if any changes were required to these standing order powers. They can be renewed as they are until June 2023. Questions were asked about the adequacy of the amounts and about expenses for activities. The meeting agreed to leave the current thresholds in place unanimously.

The Discretionary fund was brought to the attention of the meeting with a need to clarify what money is available to Ben who said that he wants it to be entirely transparent. The PCC need to know the amount previously agreed and Peter said that he would look back at the agreed figure.

**Contactless Giving:** Peter said he felt that we should probably catch up with the 21st century in terms of how people donate money these days. A sum up machine is available and Peter had looked into this in some detail with Mike. (See Peter's additional paper on this) Peter suggested that this could be sited on the right of the church door with a locking device. It would also be possible to use it with the pop-up cafe should people want to donate or indeed any other event. He suggested that we go through the Parish Buying scheme with Sprout Products. The machine would cost £328 inclusive of a lock and extra battery and Peter felt that we would recoup this by June 2023.

Members felt that it might encourage givers from outside the church and Janet Bone said that the former Bishop of Barking had very much given approval to such devices.

Peter Arnold put forward a resolution that this be bought for the church and Charlotte Mouzer seconded. It was passed unanimously by the meeting.

## **7. Churchwardens' Report:**

**Premises:** Mike Richardson reported that the church boiler had been serviced that day (13th June) and it had passed but we do need to have some radiator valves replaced with thermostatic valves. The meeting approved this expenditure.

There has been positive feedback from people about the new outdoor furniture and Mike thanked Helen Palmer for her donation of the new planters. There has been quite a strong complaint that the space is now not being used as a car park. (More detail in Mike's report) We need to keep disabled access in mind going forward.

As far as church cleaning is concerned, Bethany and Charlotte are happy to continue. The point was made that we now must not use the term "honorarium". If we employ somebody it has to be done properly and we are getting this right now. For the moment Bethany and Charlotte are carrying on from Kathy in her role but we need to consider all this as we look to employ a new cleaner. In the longer term, from a Safeguarding point of view we need to advertise jobs beforehand so that we cannot be criticised for letting a situation roll on indefinitely. The meeting agreed that the cleaning situation be continued until December.

**Services:** Mike said that Helen Palmer has very kindly offered to pay for the overhaul of the organ which has now not been played for over a year. It is possible that Joo Young could then play it on some services which would be lovely. Thanks were given to Helen. The meeting was informed that in services where we use recorded songs, we are refining the choices in consultation with those providing our music in church and those operating the pa system. Mike also referred positively to the services we have had since our last PCC meeting.

**Fresh Expressions:** Sharon Yates then spoke about the Firepit Friday sessions which had gathered in some church members who seemed to have stopped attending. What began as a social gathering is now changing into a fresh expression of Church. Sharon said she hoped that this would encourage people back to Sunday services as well but that these sessions are still very much a form of church.

**Covid Safety Measures:** Mask wearing changes will be in place from next Sunday (19th June) The arrangements for the Peace will stay as currently practised and the tape markers will stay in place down the central aisle. Numbers in rooms will still be restricted due to ventilation. For the purposes of numbers, children will count as half of an adult! Mike said that there is a little Covid surge at the moment but that they will keep an eye on the data and may have to put changes in place for the Autumn, depending upon the situation then. Sharon and Mike are to be admitted as Churchwardens in a service at St Bart's East Ham on 22nd June and asked for prayers to support them during the forthcoming year. Ben thanked Mike and Sharon for all the work that they do for St Mark's.

**8. Safeguarding:** Ellen Kemp told the meeting that the **Safeguarding Policy - promoting a safer church**, has to be agreed by the PCC which it was, unanimously, and then to be signed by the vicar and churchwardens, dated 13th June 2022 and to be displayed in the building.

Ellen's report included a list of points for a **Recruitment Pack** (taken from the e-manual) and a timeline for appointing someone to a new post, whether paid or as a volunteer.

**A volunteer agreement** will also have to be written and made operational with other role relevant documents. When a volunteer is appointed, the letter of appointment needs to be signed and authorised by someone other than the Safeguarding team and this letter will change according to the job. Anyone who volunteers needs such an agreement.

Ellen proposed that one booklet containing all these letters and forms be available in the church office. The PCC needs to approve all of this because it is accountable for all activities in the church.

Activities need to be identified and sent to Jane Ridout as Secretary

Ellen also included a **Parish Activity Plan** for working with children and an activity risk assessment form. She and Bethany said that they would get together to discuss children's activities and how to log them on the relevant forms.

**9. Deanery Synod:** No DS meeting since the last PCC meeting.

#### **10. Correspondence:**

The meeting discussed at some length, a letter sent to the PCC from Radhika Bynon about the coffee bike project and her thoughts about it. Radhika was to be invited to contact Bethany so that they could discuss the project. There was a discussion about how much involvement had been sought from church members but at the same time recognising that the PCC is a representative body. However, some members felt that it was right to note that there were some serious concerns about the coffee bike project. Bethany Yates agreed that we are not quite there on explaining this to the church yet but that it is quite an abstract project that will develop as time goes on. Ben encouraged the meeting to pray that this project flourishes and members assured him that they would support it even if they had been reluctant to accept it initially. There was also felt to be a need to engage other people as we move ahead and to keep talking to each other in faith.

Grateful thanks were given to Jackie Randall, who is now living in Buckhurst Hill, for her past work on the PCC.

A letter of thanks was received from Christian Solidarity Worldwide for a gift of £200 which we sent to them.

The meeting was informed that Tom Ward, and his wife Barbara, are now retiring after thirty-four years of ministry in Newham with the Asian Christian church. They are returning to Minneapolis on 1st July and Jane Ridout will send a card to them on the PCC's behalf.

The meeting ended in prayer at 10.00 pm.