

Minutes of St. Mark's PCC Meeting: 7.30 pm on Monday 22.4.24

Present: Ben King (Chair), Peter Arnold, Ann Arnold, Janet Bone, Charlotte Mouzer, Bola Ogunfowokan, Mike Richardson, Michael Semuguruka, Leonie Upson, Beth Yates, Sharon Yates.

Apologies for Absence: None

The meeting began with Ben King reading from Jeremiah 29:11 - 14, and then leading in prayer.

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous PCC meeting held on 4 March 2024 were approved as an accurate record, with the following amendment:

For the sake of consistency, the spelling of Leonie's name was standardised throughout the minutes.

a) Action Points and Matters Arising

- Church family members had been reminded to submit their stewardship response forms.
- Due to it being a busy time of year Ben King had not yet been in touch regarding the correspondence item at the last meeting but will do so as soon as possible.

b) Standing Committee Resolutions

Standing Committee had approved:

- £360 for the removal of waste.
- £175 for Beth Yates' attendance at the New Wine conference.
- £206.99 for the purchase of a new mobile phone and case for Ben King.
- £250 budget for Thy Kingdom Come materials.
- The setting up of an Amazon business account with a £2,000 limit.
- The removal of the church office landline service as part of the renewal of the contract with BT, reducing its price.

c) Brief Feedback on Lent, Holy Week and Easter

- Positive feedback on services and activities – authentic, worshipful and engaging with a good mix of things for the church and the community.
- Easter egg pick-up was well-received in the local community. Recognition of the church from previous pick-ups as a result of the investments we have made over the past few years. Something to capitalise on.
- Messy Church had gone well.
- Lectio Cards – Point made that jumping back and forwards in John's Gospel could be confusing and not helpful. Other positive feedback on these.
- Easter Meditations – Disappointment that one church was unavailable. Organisers had identified how this had happened. An opportunity to rethink how this is done.
- Silent Walk of Witness – Who was it for? Did it actually witness to the community?
- Seven Words from the Cross – positive feedback.
- Some outreach to Muslim people.

Thanks to everyone who had helped plan and organise.

2. Discussion Paper – *Looking Back, Looking Ahead*

Ben King introduced the paper. As church leaders the PCC should be sensitive to the developments in the church over the past year, engage with them and ask what God is saying to us through them. Mindful of these developments we need to ask how they inform the next 12 months.

PCC members discussed the paper for 25 minutes in the following groups:

Ben King, Ann Arnold, Michael Semuguruka.

Sharon Yates, Peter Arnold, Janet Bone, Beth Yates.

Mike Richardson, Leonie Upson, Bola Ogunfowokan, Charlotte Mouzer.

There was then a plenary session for a further 35 minutes.

Key Discussion Points:

1. Highlights and causes for thanksgiving and celebration over the past year:

- Church growth through new and returning members.
- Interaction between members through shared lunches.
- The young people's attendance at the OneLife conference.
- Spiritual growth and the presence and actions of the Spirit.
- The church's welcome to people.
- Rebirth.
- The variety of church services and activities.
- Pop-Up Cafés.
- Messy Church.
- Christmas and Easter celebrations.
- Alpha, Discipleship Explored and Lectio courses.
- Shared leadership being established as a result of our third PCC day last year and the way the church family are now invited to sign up for ministry.
- Celebrating the diversity of languages and cultures that people bring.
- Community engagement bringing new people in.
- Sowing seeds.
- New things happening and, along with older things, becoming rooted in church life.
- The Lord has brought us to a place where we are ready to receive new members, which, after a season of pruning, began happening in autumn 2023 and is continuing, leading to rising confidence because God is at work by His Spirit.
- Ben on a Box at Christmas showed the fruits of our engagement with families.

2. The current season we find ourselves in:

- Exciting, encouraging, hopeful, lively, spirit filled, feeling the Spirit at work and blessed by grants and also Sharon's and Beth's ministries.
- Spring: promise of more to come.
- Exploring the new normal in the way the church works.
- Working out God's priorities and consolidating them.
- Discipleship.
- Growth and nurture.
- Using our spiritual gifts.
- Spiritual hunger.

- People feeling our church is their home.
- Working out how to encourage people in their faith and develop their relationship with Jesus.

3. Things we do less well and priorities for going forward:

- Prayer – the engine room behind everything we do. The small numbers of people attending prayer meetings was noted. However, this does not necessarily mean prayer is not happening across the church. We could consider a prayer audit and see if Zoom prayer meetings might help with gathering more people together. Trying prayer in a different way, e.g. Celtic prayer, having a particular theme for prayer.
- Men's ministry. Discussion about the number of men. A men's group is being set up.
- Gaps in our provision regarding certain groups, e.g. 25+. This is also a C of E gap.
- Further work on discipleship, e.g. in the workplace.

4. Vision and Values:

- Jesus-focused. Jesus at the heart of everything we do, being like Jesus, and showing this through our actions and teaching and looking out for others.
- Prayer is vitally important, maybe doing prayer in a different way as well, and perhaps having a particular theme for prayer.
- Statement should be clear. Not necessarily long and wordy. Easier to remember and share if concise.
- Should link in with the developing diocesan vision to encounter Jesus, make disciples, transform the community, raising generations/young people.
- Blessed to have so many young people.
- How do we worship God and serve Him? How are we passionate about him? How do we look out for each other and build the body of Christ? And how do we serve our community as well?
- Devotion and discipleship, care and compassion in terms of looking out for each other, and sharing and serving.

Key Action Points:

- *All PCC members to consider who has God called us to be and what are the values that underpin that vision. Some of them will be generic and shared by other churches. However, this should cause us as church leaders to dig a little bit deeper and ask what God is doing at St. Mark's in this season and how that should inform our specific vision as we look ahead, and perhaps the values that underpin that vision.*
- *All PCC members to consider what we mean by a value.*
- *Ben King to bring everything together and share with PCC members what is to go on the website before it goes live.*

3. Vicar's Report

a) Men's Ministry Proposal

This will go ahead as in Ben King's report.

b) Thy Kingdom Come

Building on last year's model which worked well. A chance to come together in prayer.

c) Discipleship

Focus on this with all members of the church family.

A real appetite from a group of 10 to 12 people who attended Alpha and Discipleship Explored to continue meeting together – keen and hungry, want to spend more time together exploring the Christian faith, increasing their biblical knowledge and have the opportunity to receive, discuss, learn together, pray and share fellowship.

Sharon Yates has kept in contact with this group. They will meet on Thursday 25 April for an initial discussion about forming a new regular group. This is an exciting and encouraging development and the fruit of investing over many months into relationships and exposing people to the Christian gospel.

Would be good if further small groups were established.

There may be another Alpha course in January 2025, using those from the 2023 course as hosts.

Action Point: All PCC members to pray about ideas for a sermon series on discipleship and share with Ben King.

4. Finance Report

Peter Arnold responded to questions on his report by presenting different ways of looking at our income and expenditure. The position changes and fluctuates depending on the time of year, and Peter will keep the PCC updated on our financial position.

Peter suggested that some of the legacies could be combined to provide for the church. This will be done through the purchase of new communion linen.

There are encouraging signs, and God is our faithful provider whom we trust to resource the vision he has given us.

Thanks were offered to Peter for his work.

5. Parish Worker's Report

In addition to the contents of her report, Beth Yates reported:

- A very good youth hangout the previous day.
- Positive engagement from the young people on their stewardship fundraising, including an appeal for foreign currency and loose change.
- Interest in serving on the children and youth team.
- Two stalls at the Forest Gate Festival on Saturday 6.7.24 had been reserved for us even though stalls sold out before we could apply. This again is part of the harvest of our investment in community outreach.

Thanks were expressed to Beth for her work.

6. Churchwardens' Report

Further work has been carried out in the building and grounds as per the report.

There was discussion about providing higher chairs for members of the church family who need them. These will be similar to the chairs in the church, with an upholstered seat and deeper back pads. They have a wooden frame and arms.

Proposal: Purchase 12 chairs from Helen Rigby's legacy at a cost of £2204.40 including VAT and delivery. Proposed by Sharon Yates, seconded by Ann Arnold and passed unanimously. *Sharon Yates to action.*

There was discussion about developing the outside area to the rear of the church. The churchwardens had contacted a company and an individual contractor for quotes for decking on the north side of the area between the low wall and the vicarage garage and for raised beds alongside of the east wall. This covers the most uneven area of the tarmac and, together with the purchase of further outdoor furniture and a canopy, would allow us to use the area more fully in the summer months as per the PCC resolution of around 18 months ago. It may be possible in due course to consider grants to allow development into a community space.

The company said they would make contact for a visit but did not do so. The individual contractor, Steve Utting, a former member of St. Mark's, visited on Monday 15.4.24 and did an extensive assessment relating to the churchwardens' requirements, including accessibility via a ramp, manageable maintenance and a non-slip surface.

He has submitted a quote for fitting the decking and posts for attaching a canopy for shade, and for making and fitting raised beds along the east wall using recycled railway sleepers. The quote is for £4,695 and includes labour and materials.

In addition, Sharon Yates proposed £3,000 for a waterproof canopy, outdoor furniture and plants, repainting the wooden fence and the shed and repair of the shed door.

Sharon Yates proposed the sum of up to £8,000 for the quote from Steve Utting and purchases, from legacy money. Mike Richardson seconded this and it was passed unanimously. The churchwardens will action this.

We hope it will be complete by Pentecost ready for launch on that day with a barbeque.

Thanks were expressed to Sharon Yates and Mike Richardson for their work. Particular thanks were expressed to Sharon for all her work as a churchwarden over many years as she steps down from the role to begin her preparation for ordination.

7. Evaluation of AI Software

Mike Richardson had nothing to add to his report on this, which concluded that after evaluation of the one year trial of the software, it had not met our needs. One PCC member had expressed the view that of the solutions Mike proposed in the paper, option 4 would seem to be the best way to move forward.

Sharon Yates shared that this option will be taken up. She had approached Shanthy Chacko who has agreed to take notes at PCC meetings and to write these up. Shanthy will not be a member of the PCC. This will start from the next PCC meeting.

Ben King thanked Mike Richardson on his work on this trial and for producing the minutes over the past year.

8. Safeguarding Report

Action Point: *All PCC members to undertake the online domestic abuse training as soon as possible and send a copy of their certificate to Janet Bone.*

Ben King thanked Janet Bone for her work.

9. Deanery Synod Report

Ann Arnold suggested making use of the Newham Deanery Youth Champion. The Youth Champion has approached Ben King who will meet with her along with Beth Yates, with a view to a possible partnership.

Janet Bone reported a new energy to Deanery Synod, which is encouraging.

10. Correspondence

Ben had received an email from Radhika Bynon informing him that she was leaving St. Mark's. The PCC noted with grateful thanks the many ministries Radhika had been involved with over many years. Ben had written to Radhika.

The meeting concluded with open prayer and ended at 9.44 pm.

Date of next meeting: Short meeting on Sunday 5.5.24 after the APCM.