

Minutes of St Michael's Church APCM, 26 May 2024 in the WCC at 11.40 a.m.

Attendees: Rev'd Derwyn Williams (DW) (Chair), Claire Conquest (CC) (Churchwarden), Gillian Johnson (GJ) (Churchwarden), Caroline Galwey (CG) (minutes), and about 30 members of the Congregation.

The meeting opened with prayer led by Rev'd Derwyn Williams.

DW thanked all those who had helped to prepare for the meeting, particularly Christine Solway and Katharine Stanley.

Apologies were received from Martin and Diane Pettitt, June Knight, Nick Hughes, Alison Jordan, Vivian Emmett, Jenny Savage, Katharine Stanley, Kathryn Aitken, Angela Weeks.

Vestry Meeting 2024

Item 1 – To receive the minutes of the 2023 Vestry Meeting. The 2023 minutes were received with minor corrections: proposed by DW, seconded by proposed DW, seconded GJ, unanimously accepted.

Item 2 – Election of Churchwardens. GJ and CC were nominated and elected to serve a third year as Churchwardens, 2024–2025.

The Vestry Meeting was declared closed at 11.50 a.m.

The APCM followed immediately.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2024

Item 1 – To receive the minutes of the 2023 APCM. Proposed DW, seconded GJ, unanimously accepted as a true record.

Item 2 – Matters arising from the minutes. None were raised.

Item 3 – Vicar's Report (circulated).

DW introduced his report and invited particular attention to the future nature of worship at St Michael's in the context of the wider Church of England. Should we look towards commissioning lay leaders of worship, as many parishes have done, in order to develop lay

people's gifts as well as to compensate for the scarcity of clergy? (4 of 9 benefices in our deanery are vacant). A questionnaire was circulated asking for parishioners' comments on the general idea of establishing a team of Lay Leaders of Worship (LLWs), on what aspects of our current worship we wish to see continued, and what areas of development LLWs might enable. Comments were invited from the floor.

Comments from attendees:

Margaret Fox: please reinstate the 8 a.m. Sunday service; retain first and third Sundays (8 a.m.) as clergy-led Holy Communion services; second, fourth and fifth Sundays, offer a lay-leader led Service of the Word at 8 a.m., but without any hymns. This would utilise the Readers' Rota to the full and would encourage more commitment and regular attendance at the service.

Jack Brear and Nathan Collins asked questions about the potential role of LLWs in preaching. DW clarified that LLWs would not be authorised to preach sermons of their own but to read reflections authored by someone else, or lead a short discussion. Training for this is included in the diocesan LLW course.

Lynn Graseman: could St Michael's LLWs be asked to officiate at other churches: DW: only with diocesan agreement.

Samuel Solway: would a lay person be allowed to lead choral evensong? DW: yes, in principle.

Val Ashwood and Mark Johnson?: what is the training course like? DW: it consists of six Zoom sessions and the diocese makes it available twice or three times a year.

Jack Brear: what liturgical guidelines are there? DW: St Michael's is a liturgical Church and this will be retained as a norm – but it is a journey and may lead to some development.

There being no further comments on the Vicar's Report, its acceptance was proposed by DW, seconded by GJ, and passed unanimously. Some feedback forms were submitted for ongoing consideration.

Item 4 – Safeguarding Report (circulated) and PCC Statement to the APCM.

Dotun Akinde introduced himself as safeguarding officer, encouraged parishioners to raise any safeguarding issues with him, and reminded the meeting that any individuals involved with young or vulnerable people should undergo training. DW thanked DA for stepping into the role, and also thanked Bill Macdonald for his ten years' service.

The report was accepted unanimously, proposed by DA, seconded by Peter Rixson.

Item 5 – Election of up to 5 members for the PCC to serve 2024-2027

Nomination forms were received for two new members: Jack Brear and Ben Adeyemi. Two previous members are nominated to return: Rosemary Thomson, James Hellis. All were unanimously elected. DW thanked Martin Pettitt and Caroline Galwey, who have come to the

end of their three-year terms of service on the PCC. Caroline Galwey will, however, continue to attend meetings as Minutes Secretary.

Item 6 – Sidesmen

The Sidesmen's Report by Carole Macdonald had been circulated. There were no questions. Further volunteers would be welcome. DW proposed and CC seconded the motion that the existing sidesmen should continue in post. The motion was passed unanimously.

Item 7 – Electoral Roll Report (circulated)

GJ reported that there are now 150 members on the electoral roll (not 145 as stated in the report). Next year (2025) the electoral roll will be recreated from scratch. There being no comments, GJ proposed and CC seconded the motion that the report be received. The motion was passed unanimously. DW thanked Katherine Roy, who maintains the roll.

Item 8 – Secretary's Report (circulated)

Christine Solway proposed and DW seconded the motion that the report be received. The motion was passed unanimously. DW thanked her for her work.

Item 9 – Treasurer's Report (circulated)

Graziana Maddolozzo, Treasurer, introduced her report (circulated with papers), first thanking the Finance Committee and others who support her role.

St Michael's has met all financial obligations and fulfilled Charity Commission conditions.

Income: excluding the Bells Restoration Fund, our income in 2023–4 was £226,000 and expenditure £230,000, thus there was a deficit of £4,000. (£11,000 including the deficit of the bell fund.) The shortfall is largely due to a decrease of 4% in regular donations to the Church giving scheme: parishioners have died, families have moved away, lockdown took a toll (previously, regular giving had been increasing). Gift aid claims were reduced by 6%, and the diocesan quota exceeded our income from the giving scheme by around £5,000. However, one-off donations increased by 15% and the donations received through the contactless machine are very promising. As social and musical activities have still not reached pre-pandemic levels, there are fewer hirings of the WCC. However, the Charities Support Group is better supported financially than pre-Covid. Dividend income is steady and rising. Rent from Cowell House is reliable. Wedding and funeral income is increasing. Several valuable legacies were received. A high level of reclaimed VAT is due to bills for quinquennial work done falling due during this year.

Expenditure: inflation and increasing activity have increased utility bills by some 53% and salaries by 24%. Running expenses (printing etc.) have increased by 29%. Major repairs have been needed due to the quinquennial, and repairs after a lightning strike cost £15,000

although insurance paid the whole of this last. The bell restoration project is still ongoing, with £8,000 of funds still held, but most bills were paid during 2023.

Assets and liabilities: a new photocopier was needed after the lightning strike. For the value of investments on 31 December 2023, see attached papers.

The Finance Committee and PCC have approved the accounts, signed by the independent examiner Peter Watson.

The Vicar thanked GM and invited questions. Gary Jones congratulated GM on obtaining a 9.5 per cent return on the church's investments. In response to a question from Graham Savage, GM explained the procedure of setting money aside in the budget to pay for quinquennial fabric maintenance and maintenance work on Cowell House. Jack Brear suggested that church members should consider the Scriptural injunction to tithe.

GM proposed the motion to receive the audited annual accounts for 2023 and a statement of funds and property. Peter Rixson seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

On the budget, Gary Jones proposed to vary the allowance towards charity support giving, raising it to £15,000, arguing that we have substantial investments and should not reduce the amount we allocate to charity work. DW explained that the proposed figure is calculated as a proportion of parish income as decided by the PCC about three years ago. A vote was taken on the proposal: 11 voted in favour, 11 against. DW used his casting vote to defeat the motion, and will bring the question of CSG funding to the PCC.

The unaltered budget for 2024 was brought forward, proposed by GM and seconded by PR. It was passed by a large majority with 4 votes against and 3 abstentions.

DW thanked GM on behalf of parishioners to loud applause.

Item 10 – To Elect the Examiner for the Coming Year

GM proposed and PR seconded that Peter Watson be elected Examiner for the coming year. The motion was passed unanimously, and DW thanked Peter on behalf of the parish for taking on the task and for all his work in the past year.

Item 11 – Churchwardens' Report on Fabric, Goods and Ornaments (circulated)

DW thanked CC and GJ for their report and in particular for their work related to the building in the past year. Also the deputy wardens, Peter Rixson, Terry Pigram, Jonathan Inglis and others whose help has been vital, for example Martin Pettitt. GJ thanked DW for his support. There being no comments from the floor, GJ proposed that the report be received. The motion was seconded by CC and passed unanimously.

Item 12 – Reports from the Charities Support Group, Education Group, St Michael's School, Churches Together in Bishop's Stortford, Windhill Churches Centre, TLC Club, Tower, Director of Music and Ukranian Support (circulated)

Representatives of the various groups briefly introduced their reports:

CSG: Val Ashwood

Education: Mark Johnson as Chair of Governors of St Michael's School reported that a new website will shortly go live. Numbers in the lower years of the school are declining. Parishioners were asked to make any families they know aware of the school.

Churches Together: Margaret Fox.

WCC: CC, with thanks to Terry Pigram for his close supervision of the building.

TLC Club: Rosemary Thomson. The group is expanding, a good example of outreach, in particular the monthly service at Elm View care home. Margaret Fox commented that there are more opportunities to visit Elm View and be a 'befriender' to those who live there.

Tower Report: Nick Hughes. There is more bell-ringing and open days that have engaged many members of the local community.

Director of Music Report: Nathan Collins.

Ukrainian Support Group: Margaret Fox.

GJ proposed and Peter Rixson seconded that the reports be received collectively: the motion was passed unanimously.

Item 13 – Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be in late May 2025, tbc.

Item 14 – Any Other Business

DW: with regard to the budget and parish finances, we will be looking to have a giving season in the next couple of months to address the decrease in regular giving if possible.

DW thanked all parish members for their endeavours.

The meeting ended with the Grace at 13.23.