

St. John the Evangelist, Milford

Annual Vestry Meeting

Sunday 7th April 2024

28 members of the Church, including officials, attended the above meeting.

Welcome by Revd. Peter Hewson who then welcomed Revd. Chris Bessant, Area Dean and Rector of Haslemere, to the meeting and introduced him to the meeting as the Chair. Chris then opened the meeting with prayers.

Appointment of Miranda O'Brien to act as Clerk for both meetings was agreed.

Apologies for absence:

Nathalie Hinds; Cynthia Harrison; Chris Boynton; Jill Pitt

Minutes of Vestry meeting 2023

Minutes were approved and signed by Revd. Chris Bessant as a true record.

Matters arising

None

Election of Churchwardens

Chris thanked the Churchwardens for all they have done and do. The meeting went on to elect: -

Judy Downing – proposed by Penny Clark and seconded by Miranda O'Brien.

Jackie Hills - proposed by Penny Clark and seconded by Miranda O'Brien.

Both elected unanimously.

Annual Parochial Meeting

Apologies for absence:

As above.

Minutes of Annual Meeting 2023

Approved and signed by Revd. Chris Bessant as a true record.

Matters arising

Nothing further to add.

Churchwardens' briefing on the progress of the Parish towards a new Vicar

Jackie explained to the meeting how we were getting on in the process of choosing a new Vicar.

The PCC has had a meeting with Revd. Martin Breadmore, the Archdeacon of Surrey, as well as Revd. Paul Davies, the Bishop of Dorking.

Having looked at the various options and what we can afford we have decided to go for a half-time Vicar. This would be for 3 days and Sundays. It would mean that we would only have to pay a Parish Share of about £60,000 which we should hopefully be able to afford. At first, we had decided to go for a House-for-Duty Priest which would be for 1 or 2 days plus Sundays but then the PCC voted to go for a half-time Vicar as House-for-Duty posts were often seen as managing decline. There was an option to go for an interim minister on a 3 year contract with the specific task of achieving renewal and growth but the PCC preferred somebody more committed to the parish in the longer term.

Before we advertise, we have to have a Statement of Needs and Parish Profile document. Nathalie Hinds, with the help of Karon Sewell, plus input from various members of the congregation has put together a draft document which has been sent to Chris Bessant as well as Revd. James McKeran, the Vicar of Witley and our Patron.

Chris Bessant said that he needs to sit down with the new Archdeacon of Surrey and Bishop Paul to look at the document.

John Bickerdike asked what would happen if there was an emergency on the Vicar's off days. It was said that typically almost all Vicars would pick it up.

The new incumbent would live in the Vicarage.

The next step is probably a Section 11 meeting. Chris will check if we need to have one.

Report of the Churchwardens

As read in the report pack.

Jackie presented the Church Log and Terrier which were signed off by Chris and witnessed by Frances Cousins.

Jackie said that she and Judy had reviewed the inventory and nothing was missing.

Presentation of Accounts

As read in the report pack.

Nick highlighted some key points.

Our Parish Share in 2023 went up by £8,025 to £73,164 as this was year 4 of our 5-year transition to the current Parish Share System. This is more than our total General Fund income of £69,743. So, in 2023 we did not increase our monthly payments resulting in a debt of £8,025 to the Diocese by the end of the year as well as running down our Unrestricted Legacy Fund to a rump of £1,000.

General Fund income was up as almost all income sources exceeded budget projections except for one-off donations and hire of the Church Centre. Expenditure was fairly stable and close to budget except for our energy bills which were down on budget thanks to extra support from the Diocese resulting in a final deficit (excluding the debt to the Diocese) of £15,312 down from a budgeted £27,380.

The Fabric Fund received a legacy of £5,000 which the PCC decided could be put towards a set of new chairs for the Church Centre in memory of John and Delma Walshe. The APCM was the first meeting that we had used them.

The Glass Doors Fund to make the Church more accessible by replacing our current thick and heavy door with a transparent glass door. The fund now has £3,297 in it.

The Discretionary Fund decreased by only £139 to £2,250 as nobody deserving of a bigger grant had been identified.

The Flower Fund went up by £150 from £701 to £850.

We have two bequests in the Restricted Bequest Fund which has increased by £16,467 from £178,586 to £195,053 as share prices rose over the year. They are invested in CBF CofE Investment Fund shares. They are restricted meaning that we cannot normally spend the capital but only use the income to support the restricted purpose. There are two bequests: the Miss Price Bequest with nearly £58,000 in it and the Denyer Bequest with just under £137,000 in it.

We have 30 regular givers who give by standing order and 15 people use the weekly envelope scheme. Gift Aid is reclaimed on most of this giving.

Our General Fund income at £69,743 was up by £2,403 (4%).

Gifts for Outward Giving causes have been maintained at just under 10% of all income (excluding the incoming grants) at £6,550, up £206 (3%) on last year. Money has been given to 4 of our regular charities (The Chandler School, The Children's Society, The Samson Centre and Mission Aviation Fellowship) plus a number of medical charities benefitted from collections at funerals which helped us meet our 10% target.

We moved to year 4 of the phased removal of all subsidies, visible and invisible, from the Parish Share so our share increased by £8,025 (12%) to £73,164. Our full unsubsidised share for a full time incumbent under the current scheme in 2024 will be £82,839 or 119% of our current income.

We have this year cut right down on printed copies of the reports for the APCM to save costs.

Utilities costs (gas, electricity, and water) were £6,419 but some subsidies have been deducted bringing them down to £3,667 which was £629 (21%) up on last year's £3037.

Overall, because of the Parish Share increase, our General Fund expenditure went up by 11% (£9,552) from £83,527 to £93,080.

A question was then asked as to whether we will save money because we have no Vicar. Nick said that the Parish Share is calculated on the basis that at any time something like 10% of parishes will be in a vacancy so the savings are shared across all parishes and not specifically those in vacancy.

We have now used up all our liquid reserves so we can only afford a Parish Share of £51,600 in 2024 and still with a budgeted deficit of £5,427 so if we stayed with a full-time minister our debt to the Diocese at the end of the year would be £39,264. We have just started an interregnum but apart from saving on some clergy travelling costs our ministry costs will actually go up as we have to maintain the Vicarage during the vacancy.

Nick said that in order for the Diocese to let us proceed with looking for a new Vicar the PCC had to promise to pay off all the Parish Share debts before the new Vicar arrives even if this means de-restricting and selling off part of the Bequest Fund.

As we have now chosen to go for a half-time post, the Diocese has actually reduced our Parish Share as from April 2024 to the level for a 0.5 FTE which is an annual amount of just over £60,000. The Parish Share is very roughly split as £20,000 to support the Diocese, £20,000 for housing costs and £40,000 for the total cost of a minister and so a half-time minister is half that at £20,000 giving this reduced total of £60,000.

We had our Quinquennial Inspection in 2023. There appears to be no major issues apart from a damp problem around the West Window area. Excluding the recent Legacy, the Fabric Fund has £15,494 available to pay for these repairs although some needs to be kept back as a Fabric reserve.

There was a question about the restricted funds. Nick said that he had inherited them as restricted when he took over as Treasurer 25 years ago but was not certain as to the exact restrictions on the bequests. From an initial look it would appear that the Miss Price Bequest in particular could be made accessible.

There was a question about the gender of our new Vicar. Chris said that these days we were unable to stipulate.

Nick then asked the meeting to accept and adopt the financial statements which was done. Proposed by Nick O'Brien and seconded by Judy Downing.

They were accepted unanimously.

Appointment of an Independent Examiner

Nick said that Alison Sanderson, from St Andrew's Church, Goldsworth Park, Woking has been our Independent Examiner again this year as part of a circle of independent examiners with Nick acting as independent examiner for another church. Alison has agreed to continue for 2024. He asked the meeting for a formal vote of thanks to Alison and a vote to re-appoint her which was unanimously given.

Jackie thanked Nick for all the work he does as Treasurer.

Electoral Roll

As read in the report pack.

The number was 137 at the end of the year.

Report of the Proceedings of the PCC:

As read in report pack.

We hold about 6 meetings a year following a set agenda.

Election of PCC members:

2 members have done their 6 years so are now coming off the PCC: Nathalie Hinds and Rob Andrews. Jonathan Hills wishes to stand down so it means that we have 5 vacancies we can fill.

Frances Cousins, who is up for re-election, has said that she will continue to serve on the PCC during the Vacancy. The Churchwardens have asked 3 people if they will serve. Bill Braid and Dave Thomas have said that they will but we have yet to get Suzy Vincent to agree. If she agrees she can be co-opted and then be put up for election next year.

Bill Braid. Proposed by Jackie Hills and seconded by Miranda O'Brien.

Dave Thomas. Proposed by Jackie Hills and seconded by Miranda O'Brien.

They were both elected unanimously.

Election of Deputy Churchwardens

Peter mentioned that there were 5 deputy Churchwardens:

- John Sandy
- Tricia Boynton
- Bill Braid
- Penny Clark
- Christine Bridson

Chris said that they don't have to be elected but the names should be listed at each APCM.

Election of Deanery Synod Representatives

Maddie Murray is our Deanery Synod Representative and has done 1 year.

We could have 3 but no-one else has come forward.

Reports from the organisations (as published)

These are all in the pack.

The meeting closed at 1.07pm with the Grace.