

Parish Church of St Luke - Holmes Chapel (Church Hulme)

Minutes of the Parochial Church Council Zoom meeting

Monday 8th March 2021, 7.30pm

		Actions
	Present: Canon Rob McLaren (Vicar and Chairman), Alastair Cragg, Jayne Weaver, Peter Cotton, Val Cragg, Tim Fryer, Stephen Haigh, William Hall (Treasurer), Yvonne Janvier, Trevor Jenkins, Paula Lavin, Wendy Macdonald, John Oram, Fiona Pullé, Alan Rickards, Barbara Smith, and Steve Smith (Secretary).	
1	Welcome and Opening – Rob welcomed everyone to the last Church Council meeting of the current, short term as the Annual Meetings will be on 9 th May this year. He then set the context by reading from Romans 5, v1-5, followed by prayers including the Lenten collect.	
2	Apologies for absence – Rachel Copley, Alison Dale, Ray Davies, and Lee Hardy.	
3	Chairman's report - This Report (<i>reprinted as Appendix 1</i>) had been circulated before the meeting and was taken as read. There were no specific questions. Rob added that St Luke's representation on the Churches Together Committee needed to be supplemented. As our vicar he is an <i>ex officio</i> member and Peter Shackleton chairs the Committee. However, Jane Thomson and Anne Smith, who had previously been members have now withdrawn. He asked Council Members to consider who might fill the gaps they have left on this important ecumenical group which organises joint church activities during the year including at Easter and Christmas.	Council members
4	Minutes of meeting on Monday 11th Jan 2021 – these had been circulated and were adopted <i>nem. con.</i> as a true record of the meeting (as proposed by Jayne Weaver and seconded by John Oram); the minutes will be signed by the Chairman in due course.	
5	Matters arising from previous meeting – there were no specific items other than those dealt with during the rest of the meeting. Regarding the sale of the old vicarage, Rob added that there had been a hold-up as the original purchasers had withdrawn at a late stage. New purchasers had now been found and a request would be made to the Diocese once the sale was completed for an allocation to the parish of 10% of any profit (this is subject to a cap of £20,000).	Chairman Wardens
6	Standing Committee, Churchwardens', and Treasurer's Reports These Reports (<i>reprinted as Appendix 2 and 3</i>) had been circulated before the meeting and were taken as read. There were no questions. The Chairman thanked Alastair, Jayne, and William for their continuing effective management of parish affairs effectively during the continuing difficult situation.	

		Actions
7	<p>Organ & Lighting Projects</p> <p>a. Organ Replacement - Steve reported that refurbishment of the Heswall organ in Cartwright's workshops has now started, following issue on 19th Jan of our faculty to proceed with replacement of the existing organ in St Luke's. Construction of the new console incorporating the new pedalboard and adjustable stool has also started at sub-contractors P&S Organ Supplies in Suffolk. The overall project is on track to complete during August avoiding the dates already committed for weddings but will entail closure of St Luke's for up to three weeks during the removal and installation of the organs.</p> <p>b. Lighting Project - Alastair reported that earlier that day he and Rob had met in church with Gerry Browne of Lighting Dynamics and his contract installer to review and update our requirements for lighting inside church. A revised project specification and quotation including an option for coloured lighting of the sanctuary has been promised for the end of March. Once this is agreed, a new application for faculty approval for the work will be started.</p> <p>c. Organ & Lighting Appeal - Rob reported that steady progress continues to be made with the Appeal which has now reached over £55,000. Letters have been sent to local businesses with limited response so far. Copies of the Appeal leaflet were also included with the free Village Magazine. Perhaps as a result, a Northway resident has undertaken to raise some funds for the Appeal through sponsored activity.</p>	Alastair
8	<p>COVID-19 restrictions – Rob introduced a discussion of the implications of the February announcement by the Prime minister of a roadmap for the progressive relaxation of restrictions over the coming months. As was agreed at the previous Church Council meeting, St Luke's church has remained closed for communal worship because of the difficulty in ensuring everyone could be kept safe. A special motion was passed, enabling temporary suspension until Sunday 7th March of holding in church the services required by the Canons of the Church of England. However, this motion needed review following the increased vaccination of older age groups and the clinically vulnerable in the UK, coupled with the significant reduction in the number of COVID-19 cases locally.</p> <p>After initial review and discussion in the Standing Committee, it is proposed to restart limited communal worship from Palm Sunday, 28th March, with the usual safety arrangements such as wearing face-covering and keeping social distancing. As previously, there would be a service of Holy Communion (restricted to consecrated bread – gluten free wafers will be available) at 9am on Sundays and at 10.30am on Wednesdays. After the services, the church would remain open for individual private prayer. Given the likely increased numbers wishing to attend over the Easter period, the churchwardens will ensure proper social distancing is maintained by extending use into the gallery and, if necessary, the churchyard.</p> <p>The proposed restart of communal worship was unanimously agreed by the Council. Zoom services will continue as at present. In these circumstances no continuation of the special motion previously agreed allowing temporary suspension of services in church was needed.</p> <p>Rob set out the services envisaged over the Easter period in church: Maundy Thursday, short service at 7.30pm; Good Friday, quiet contemplative service at 2pm with homilies with music from the Messiah; Easter Day: restricted service of Holy Communion. There would be a special All Age service by Zoom at 11am on Good Friday.</p>	

		Actions
	Details of all the services in church and on Zoom over the Easter period will be widely advertised on the Church website, Facebook page, noticeboards and by email.	
9	Safeguarding Matters – Paula Lavin reported that all but two Council members had now sent certificates confirming that they had completed the basic C of E safeguarding awareness course. The certificates are now stored securely on St Luke’s shared drive. More detailed training will now be extended to those in the parish with particular involvement with vulnerable/at risk individuals/groups.	
10	Deanery Synod matters – the Congleton Deanery Synod (CDS) had not met since the last Council meeting. However, Barbara Smith was able to report the welcome news that the Diocesan Synod had approved an earlier CDS motion advocating that faculty fees should be paid at the diocesan rather than parish level as was the case in many other dioceses. This will apply to future applications for faculty approval.	
11	Any other business - no items had been received.	
12	Date of future meetings¹: Annual Church Meetings: Sunday 9th May – time and venue to be decided in the light of COVID-19 restrictions. PCC: Monday 10th May – 7.30pm, venue to be decided.	
13	Close of Meeting – there being no further business, Rob closed the meeting with the Lord’s Prayer at 8.35 pm.	

¹¹ Post meeting note: Standing Committee agreed these meetings would be by Zoom telecommunications.

Appendices to the minutes of PCC meeting 8 Mar 2021

Appendix 1

Chairman's Report

It has been disappointing to be without the previously appreciated restricted services in church through January and February, and it is good that at least we have Zoom services. The number of screens has averaged 50 in recent weeks, with a good consistency among those who join. We shall aim to restart the restricted services on Sundays at 9am and Wednesdays at 10.30am as soon as it seems wise to do so, hopefully in time for Easter, when shielding is due to finish.

We have continued to benefit from a flourishing structure of Small Groups in St Luke's. Small Groups are usually good for fellowship and good for reinforcing spiritual growth, so they directly help with two of our parish goals: love to learn, learn to love.

In November 2019 we had one housegroup which met fortnightly on Monday evenings. After lockdown it started meeting weekly. In January 2020 we formed a 6-week Christianity Explored Course on Sunday evenings, which has continued ever since focussing on the Jesus-100 reading programme. In February 2020 we started a new Daytime housegroup in church on Thursday mornings to coincide with the teaching series on Ruth. This group went well but was stopped by the Covid lockdown. In April 2020 we started a Zoom housegroup on Tuesday evenings, which was called a Growth Group, because it didn't meet in a house and had the aim of helping spiritual, social and numerical growth. In July 2020 we started Tuesday evening Exodus on Zoom, with a Bible Study as a regular weekly feature in the programme, following the same passage as the Growth Groups. In February 2021 we started another new Zoom Growth Group on Monday nights.

All of these small groups meet weekly during term time with a half-term break, then a longer break in main holidays. In this way we build good momentum through termtime, while providing good rest for everyone too.

Canon Rob McLaren - March 2021

Appendix 2

Standing Committee and Churchwardens' report

Since the last PCC meeting in January the Standing Committee has met three times via Zoom.

For the period of Lent, a letter from Rob and a copy of 'Life' magazine, has been delivered to those members of our congregation who do not access the Zoom services. Members of the Planned Giving scheme who donate by weekly envelope have also been contacted with a request for them to return their envelopes to our Treasurer, or alternatively set up a standing order to make a regular donation.

It was agreed that Palm crosses and a letter from Rob would be delivered to all active members of the congregation by a group of volunteers.

The Standing Committee discussed resuming limited services in church on Sundays at 9am and Wednesdays at 10.30am when the time is right. Social distancing measures etc would need to remain in force, but limited services in church are currently legally permitted. The matter needs to be discussed by the PCC.

'The Story of St Luke's – Church Hulme' written by the Local History Group of Holmes Chapel & District U3A, has sold well and went to a second print run. The profits have been donated to the organ and lighting appeal.

The faculty for the replacement of the organ was granted on 19th Jan 2021 and the work must be completed within 12 months under the supervision of the church architect.

A meeting has been arranged with Rob, Alastair, and the lighting contractor on 8th March to discuss the design and installation of an enhanced lighting scheme in church.

We have had a few recurring issues with the time controller for the outside lights at church. We will continue to monitor the situation and replace if necessary.

Alastair will write to George Colville, Treasurer at the Diocese to apply for a contribution from the proceeds of the sale of the old Vicarage.

We need to appoint two new representatives on the Churches Together committee as Jane Thomson and Anne Smith have stood down.

Lee Hardy will be recording the short sermons which are featured on the website leading up to Easter on 14th, 21st and 28th March.

The branch of HSBC in Congleton is closing and so it was agreed that William should move the current account to Barclays in Holmes Chapel for ease of banking cash. The new signatories on the account will be Rob, William, and Jayne.

Alastair Cragg and Jayne Weaver: Churchwardens - March 2021

Appendix 3

Treasurer's Report

Despite the lockdown and the absence of services in church so far this year our income is just over £24,000 which includes the Gift Aid tax repayment of £11,900. Last year we received income of £30,600 for the first 2 months. We are hopeful for another £3,000 or so of Gift Aid which is due in April or May. The PCC is grateful to Jayne for her efforts in keeping our tax repayments up to date.

Our expenditure so far this year has been much higher than usual due to the need to meet a substantial council tax bill on the Old Vicarage (no.74). Due to a series of misunderstandings on the part of Cheshire East Council over the periods when the vicarage was empty after Paul vacated and the calculation of council tax due to the date Rob moved into the new building a liability of just over £2800 has accumulated. We are paying this off by monthly instalments, the last of which is due in March this year. We also had to pay over £1500 in council tax on the new vicarage (no.74A) for the present council tax year.

I enclose a schedule setting out the results of 2020 in detail. I have also included budget figures for 2021 based on likely income and expenditure based on a return to normal services etc by July.

Last year we had an overall deficit of just under £6,500 on our day-to-day expenditure. Just before the first Covid lockdown I transferred £6,000 of surplus cash to the Organ and Lighting appeal and, if we discount that transfer then our shortfall is only £500. We received a special grant from Chester of £2,000 without which our deficit would have worse. However, our run of annual deficits has continued, and we have again had to draw on our reserves to balance the books. The last time we had a surplus was in 2017 when we were in the black to the tune of nearly £6,000.

Our Parish Share continues to increase year on year by 2½% and in 2020 we had to pay £80,505. Back in the heady days of 2017 we only paid £74,758, a mere 92.5% of the sum we pay now. The Covid crisis has delayed this year's increase so that the extra Parish Share will apply only from 1st April 2021. In past years we have tried to ensure that our level of planned giving meets our parish share with all other income covering the remaining outgoings, but that principle does not apply for 2020 and we have sought extra donations from our members to tide us over.

Organ and Lighting appeal

The appeal has been running since the beginning of October and now stands at just over £55,000 or nearly 69% of our target of £80,000 which is very encouraging. The fundraising committee is approaching local businesses as well as the general public in Holmes Chapel to help us reach our target.

William Hall - Hon Treasurer - March 2021