

# **BROMLEY PARISH CHURCH**

## **St. PETER and St. PAUL**

### **Minutes of the Annual Vestry and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held in the Church following the 10.30 am Service on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

The Revd. James Harratt took the chair and welcomed members to the meeting, which started at 11.40 am. Twenty-six members were present in church, with additional participation via Zoom because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### **ANNUAL VESTRY**

For the coming year there had been two nominations for Churchwardens – Martin Cleveland and Jane Cleveland, both proposed by Brian Writer and seconded by Lynn Hedges. James Harratt thanked them for their work as wardens in the shortened year 2020-21 and in the absence of further nominations declared them duly elected for the coming year.

#### **ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**

##### **1. Report on the Church Electoral Roll**

A short report from Kate Eperon was read out. Since the 2020 APCM two members had left the electoral roll and two new members had joined. The revised roll therefore contained an unchanged total of 122 members.

##### **2. Minutes of the Annual Vestry and APCM held on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

The minutes of the previous APCM were unanimously agreed as a true record.

##### **3. Matters Arising**

None

##### **4. Chairman's Report**

James Harratt started his report by giving a series of thanks to a wide range of people who had done so much to keep the church going in such a strange and difficult year, in which a lot of changes had been borne with great fortitude. In particular he cited the current Churchwardens, and Anne Horner-Tree as warden up to the previous APCM. The leaders of BPC's music had made great use of technology in providing high-quality musical support under the constraints of Covid regulations and closures. The PCC and many others in official positions had similarly had to make unusual efforts to keep things going during the year. James said that his own ministry had necessarily been dominated by technical challenges while BPC was largely operating on a virtual basis, and many wider issues had had to take a back seat. Key newcomers to roles in BPC included William McVicker as Organist, together with his family, and Janis Roddy, who had taken over responsibilities for managing letting of the Rooms. Sadly, BPC had failed to fill the post of Children and Families Worker, which would be re-visited after the pandemic. Consideration had been given to how BPC's main buildings would be managed and maintained, and a key development was the recent employment of an independent cleaning contractor. Inevitably the number of events at BPC had been much reduced, with many of them being on-line, including Christmas and Holy Week activities and a party for Anne Townsend's Diamond wedding anniversary. However, a few live events had taken place during periods when lockdown rules eased, including using the church as the venue for a major international music festival. Also inevitably, many outreach activities had had to be curtailed, but pastoral care had become a major priority at a time of such difficulty. He was very grateful for all that had been done by the pastoral team and church members to look after each other during the uncertainties of the year. Ironically, because so much had had to be carried out on-line, BPC had in some ways become more accessible as a church. He mentioned BPC's involvement in the charity Bromley Relief in Need as an important development in the circumstances of the year. We had also maintained contact and support with our sister church in Harare.

In conclusion, James said that it was difficult to know what position BPC would be left in at the end of the pandemic. He drew the meeting's attention to William Temple's statement that the main point of a church was for those people who were outside it. Inevitably it had been difficult to maintain such a focus during such a difficult year, and many things had had to be dropped temporarily. However, we could take heart that we were still likely to be here, and there would be a need and opportunity to take a fresh perspective when a new normality was established. A number of issues for attention had been identified during the year. These included the development of the 'tree of light' concept which had been a source of comfort to many people in 2020, the potential use of our Homesdale Road property to support work with homeless people, identifying possible developments of the Youth Centre, and the continuation of streaming of BPC services as a means of widening accessibility. James said that there were still many uncertainties to face, but there are plenty of people who need BPC and value what we do, so we could end the year on a positive note.

### **5. Annual Report and Financial Statements of the PCC for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020**

Becky Chantry introduced the Report and Accounts document, saying that the narrative part was in a necessarily formal style to meet Charity Commission requirements for such reports. She then turned to the Statement of Financial Activities for 2020, which showed total incoming resources for the year as £259,961, a drop of around 11% on 2019. The biggest driver was the drop in income from the Rooms, Youth Centre and car parking as a result of the pandemic, together with a fall in income from donations and legacies after an exceptional return in the previous year. She then took through the underlying detail, which showed a fall in Fair Shares giving of about 8.5%, with a corresponding fall in Gift Aid reclaims. Inevitably the closure of the church led to a fall in income from collections, though this was partially offset by online giving. There had also been income of £12,000 from two legacies, for which BPC was very grateful. Income from 'other trading activities' reflected changes in the way quota payments were taken from facilities such as the Rooms and Youth Centre. Income from investments had held up reasonably well given the fall in interest rates generally: Becky said she intended to move more of BPC's assets into interest-bearing investments when time allowed. In contrast to generally falling income, rental from St. Paul's House had increased by some £29,000 on 2019, reflecting the timing of receipts. Other rental income had fallen with the suspension of hiring arrangements during the pandemic. Overall expenditure at £255,254 was some 14% down on 2019, the bulk of the decrease coming from 'expenditure on raising funds', relating mainly to costs associated with properties under BPC responsibility. Turning to the underlying detail, Becky said that just over £10,000 of 'investment management costs' was a notional sum set aside to recognise depreciation of properties; the remaining part of the overall £41,187 under this heading related to maintenance and running costs for the properties, which had reduced substantially during the pandemic. Running costs of the church itself had decreased by some £8,000 because of closures and savings through the furlough scheme. This was offset to some extent by additional costs of repairs and maintenance, particularly for the belltower and also an increase in the parish offer. Becky showed a pie chart of basic expenditure which was largely unavoidable, which demonstrated that it cost £508 per day to run the church. Beyond this, Away Giving was close to the levels in 2019, with details being provided towards the end of the accounts. The Statement of Financial Activities also included an unrealised gain on investments of £5,741. Taking all these figures together BPC made a modest surplus of £10,448 during the year, which meant that overall funds of £1,320,606 were carried forward to 2021.

Becky then turned to the end-of-year balance sheet, which showed how these funds were held. Tangible assets of £308,364 were BPC properties together with the audio-visual equipment in the church. Investment property of £199,739 related to St. Paul's House. Becky stressed that all the values shown in relation to properties were purely accounting figures rather than an estimate of their market value. Other investments were valued at £235,352. Some £95,000 of assets were held in repair funds, and after accounting for a modest level of creditors, debtors and accruals the remaining £491,000 was held in the form of cash and bank balances. Becky referred briefly to the various funds in which these balances were held, the main ones being the St. Paul's House fund, legacy funds and the Sandford Driscoll fund.

Becky summarised by saying that BPC had been fortunate as a church during 2020, with our overall position remaining strong despite the effects of Covid-19 on so many activities. This was due partly to the phasing of some forms of income, and partly to income from properties under BPC's control and from legacies. Despite the high cost of running the church our reserves remained adequate to support our current level of activities

for the time being. She warned, however, that in future years it was likely that expenditure would exceed income, and that BPC's reserves would not last indefinitely. Careful stewardship would continue to be necessary. She expressed her gratitude to Sue Cox for all her detailed work on the accounts and to Tim Pike for his work as Fair Shares Secretary. In turn James Harratt thanked Becky for all she did to control our financial affairs, particularly during such a difficult time, and for presenting the details so clearly.

## **6. Election of Deanery Synod representatives**

James Harratt explained that there was one casual vacancy for a Deanery Synod representative for BPC. Mike Hodge was proposed by Matthew Young and seconded by Donya Young. In the absence of further candidates he was duly declared elected.

## **7. Elections to the Parochial Church Council**

There were 6 vacancies for PCC members, following the completion of an initial 3-year term of office by four previous members. Nominations had been received for 3 previous members – Mark Beacon, Tim Pike and Frank Roddy, all proposed by John Payne and seconded by Becky Chantry. Additionally, Davina Pike was proposed by John Payne and seconded by Pat Powell, and Anne Horner-Tree was proposed by Jane Cleveland and seconded by Martin Cleveland. In the absence of further candidates all five were declared elected unopposed.

## **8. Report on the Fabric of the church**

Martin Cleveland took the meeting through his report on the work of the Premises Committee, which had been published on the BPC website. He said that because of the pandemic the committee had been unable to meet for some time, but that where necessary business had been progressed by email and the appropriate approval obtained for expenditure. Since the previous APCM the boilers had been serviced. They were long overdue for replacement, and an application had been made to an external fund for a new heating system. This had been unsuccessful, but at least BPC now had a viable plan. All fire extinguishers had been checked, a leak in the Rooms roof had been repaired, a contractor had inspected the gas boilers on behalf of BPC's insurers and a fire risk assessment of the entire premises had been carried out. Tim Pike had turned this assessment into an action plan to facilitate compliance with regulations. A dead tree in the church garden had been removed and replaced by a new crab-apple tree kindly donated by the daughters of the late Alec Thompson. A number of other activities had been postponed because of the pandemic, including the Quinquennial Inspection, a study to develop options for the use of the Youth Centre and work in the Bell Tower. The Quinquennial Inspection would start soon and a report had recently been received on an electrical inspection.

Martin then reviewed the position on BPC's property portfolio. The house in Rochester Avenue, formerly used by BPC Curates, was currently being rented out. The leasehold property in Homesdale Road was currently empty, and negotiations were under way with the charity Hope Into Action to explore the possibility of using it to support their work with homeless people, in parallel with exploration of options for the lease of the property. BPC owns the freehold of another property at Hammelton Road, but instructions had been given to our solicitors and Savills to sell it to relieve BPC of maintenance responsibilities. Finally, St. Paul's House in St. Paul's Square was let out commercially, with two leases having been renewed on a long-term basis in 2018.

## **9. Deanery Synod Report**

James Harratt informed the meeting that it was a formal requirement for proceedings of the Deanery Synod to be reported at each APCM. Synod had met twice in 2020, in February and November. The focus of the February meeting was on social action and the church. Andrew McClellan gave a presentation on the theological foundations of social action as something vital to Christian life and witness, but cautioned people to remember that loving our neighbour is second to loving God in the great commandment, and that the framework of work should be that ultimate hope lies with coming to know God's love in Jesus Christ. Caroline Clarke, the Diocesan Community Engagement and Social Responsibility Advisor, highlighted some of the different projects being supported around the diocese – the Clewer project on Modern Slavery, CAP debt centre, and community cafes. Synod was disrupted until November 2020 when a meeting was held via Zoom. The Archdeacon attended to mark the end of Alan Keeler's tenure as Area Dean. He gave an

overview of the challenges across the archdeaconry but also the positives of renewed focus on lay ministry. The living in love and faith project was introduced as a feature of the forthcoming year. Angela Scott, a general synod member, summarised the Pastoral Principles behind it: to address ignorance, acknowledge prejudice, admit hypocrisy, cast out fear, speak into silence and pay attention to power. News was shared from various churches about innovations and changes to deal with the pandemic.

The February meeting marked the end of the 3-year synod before elections took place. Anne Horner Tree and John Ross Martyn stood down as our representatives – James gave them thanks for their time and dedication in representing our church on the synod. At the APCM in 2020 Jonathan Hutton was elected as one of our representatives for the next three years, with Mike Hodge filling the remaining vacancy on his election in the current meeting.

#### **10. Any Other Business**

- Garvin Shorter registered his gratitude to Sophie Sutherland and the whole Pastoral Team for all the work they had done to support church members during a difficult year. He also singled out Alan Hughes for the work he had done to allow people into the church on Wednesdays.
- On behalf of the entire membership of BPC Jane Cleveland thanked James Harratt for his hard work, leadership and creativity during the year. She said that, in the light of all the technical demands posed by maintaining continuity during periods of lockdown, we were particularly fortunate to have a vicar from the younger generation as our leader. Her comments were endorsed with applause by members present.

James Harratt thanked members for attending and declared the meeting closed at 12.50 pm.