

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 10.30am service on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

The Revd. James Harratt took the chair and welcomed members to the meeting which opened at 12.12pm. Nineteen members were present in church with others joining via our YouTube channel where the meeting was being livestreamed. Apologies were noted from the following members: John Payne, Mark Beacon, Gillian Million, Donya Young, Gill Thompson, and Kate Eperon.

**Annual Vestry**

James informed members that Lynn was taking minutes on behalf of John who was unable to be at the meeting this year and thanks were given to her for doing this.

James gave sincere thanks to Tim Pike for all that he has done as Churchwarden throughout the past year and said that he was greatly indebted to Tim for his magnificent and sterling efforts and for his willingness to stand as churchwarden for a further year. No other nominations had been received and Tim was duly elected.

**Annual Parochial Church Meeting**

1. Report on the Church Electoral Roll

A short report from Kate Eperon was read out. Since the 2022 APCM six members had been removed from the electoral roll and no new members had joined. The revised roll contained a total of 117 members.

2. Minutes of the Annual Vestry and APCM held on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022

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

3. Matters Arising

None

4. Chairman's Report

James Harratt started by extending his very grateful thanks to individuals who had taken on specific roles during 2022. He was particularly grateful to Tim Pike who had served tirelessly as Churchwarden, and there had also been outstanding contributions from Sophie Sutherland, Peter Cheshire and Mike Cox on the Ministry Team and Lynn Hedges who had held BPC administration together so well and ensured the smooth functioning of the church. Frank Roddy, William McVicker and the choir had provided beautiful music throughout the year, and the entire PCC had handled the complex matters of church life

excellently. Beyond this, James expressed his deep appreciation for everyone who had acted as volunteers on committees, worked in pastoral groups and in many other ways that often went unnoticed, but were nevertheless crucial to the life and sustainability of the church.

The year 2022 had marked a return to normalcy after the pandemic, and in the last few months James had felt that things were finally starting to run as they should be. Among highlights of the year Easter had been particularly joyful, and in May the deanery confirmation service had included confirmation of seven young people from BPC. The Platinum Jubilee in June had gone exceptionally well, with a civic service and a delightful afternoon in the churchyard, enabling many visitors to notice what happens in our church and encouraging them to participate. The patronal festival in June had been another memorable occasion. However, there had been a contrast with the passing of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth in September: BPC had commemorated her life and addressed the pastoral and civic considerations surrounding her death. Other significant events in the autumn had marked Remembrance Day, All Souls and baby loss awareness.

James had been encouraged by the significant increase in attendance and participation in services as BPC entered the Advent and Christmas period, and by the wider general growth within the church. This had included the welcome given to new families and individuals, although James recognized that there was still much work to do to build on this foundation to improve integration.

James acknowledged the arrival of Becky Willoughby as ordinand in training attached to BPC and thanked her for the contribution she and her family were already making. He then turned to the initiatives taken within BPC to help meet the needs of the wider local community, citing BRIN, Starter Packs, support for Shelter and other charities, and the meals project, which had provided over 1,000 meals to those in need around Bromley. He was also pleased that the Homesdale Road project had finally come to fruition, bringing positive change to the community.

Looking ahead, James said that there were many challenges to be faced. These included the financial situation, although he recognized that BPC was in a fortunate position in comparison with many other churches. The arrival of a new Archdeacon and a new Bishop would lead to reappraisal of our vision for change, growth and service, although he felt that BPC was already striving towards these goals. He reiterated the points that he had made the previous year about the importance of being a warm, friendly and inclusive church, saying that we were striving to provide an atmosphere of relaxed formality in our worship, accompanied by thoughtful preaching. The aim was to make a practical difference to those around us through our faith, providing a space where people's lives are positively impacted socially and spiritually. He felt that the fruits of these efforts were already being witnessed. As we look ahead we should take a moment to appreciate what we have achieved so far, and what has been done to recover from the lingering effects of the pandemic. There is much to be celebrated in our church, and while we should be mindful of the challenges we face we should express gratitude for the blessings and the good things we have experienced. This would enable us to build on our

strengths and extend them, seeking to become an even warmer, friendlier and more inclusive church that serves our town faithfully.

#### 5. Annual Report and Financial Statements of the PCC for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022

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 2022, which showed total incoming resources for the year as £204,737, a drop of around 8% on 2021. The biggest driver was the lack of legacy receipts, compared with over £20,000 the previous year. The £8,000 decrease in bank interest was offset by an increase of £11.7k in rental income, driven by Rooms income. She then took members through the underlying detail, which showed a fall of 5.9% in Planned Giving, with a corresponding drop in Gift Aid. Collections from all services had decreased by 10%, with a similar decrease in sundry donations. Overall 'Other trading activities' had increased by 16%, mainly as a result of an energy grant from the Diocese.

Overall expenditure at £271,686 had increased by 9.2% against 2021, and in the accounts was split between 'Costs of Raising Funds' and 'Charitable Activities', the majority of the increase being in the latter. The overall cost of the Ministry of the Church had increased by £24,970 against the previous year – owing partly to higher costs of cleaning, utilities, administration and sanctuary requirements and partly to repairs and maintenance costs arising mainly through electrical work. The figures also included architects related to the Youth Centre. Becky showed a pie chart of basic expenditure which was largely unavoidable, which demonstrated that it cost £551 per day to run the church in 2022.

Becky then turned to Rental income and bank interest, saying that significant efforts had been put into maintaining cash surpluses in interest-bearing accounts and investments, despite the continuing low level of interest rates. Key points were an increase of £13,802 in Rooms income and receipts of £2,975 from interest and dividends.

Details of Away Giving showed a reduction in restricted giving of some £4,000, driven mainly by the effects of a one-off donation in the previous year. Non-restricted Away Giving of £4,425 included payments to the Town Centre Church and Welcare.

The overall financial position for BPC was affected by a loss of £48,187 in Unrealised Investment Funds, arising from revaluations of BPC's holdings in CCLA Investment Funds. These reflected the volatile stock market position and in effect removed the gains made in the previous year. When this sum was taken together with other income and expenditure figures BPC was shown as making a net loss before transfers of £115,136 for 2022, which meant that overall funds of £1,225,586 were carried forward to 2023.

Becky then turned to the end-of-year balance sheet, which showed how these funds were held. Fixed assets of £701,816 were BPC properties together with the audio-visual equipment in the church and investment property 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. Some £107,000 of assets were held in repair funds, and after accounting for a modest level of creditors, debtors and accruals the remaining £460,895 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.

Beryl Ross Martyn noted that a payment had been made to Housing Justice and asked who they were. James explained that Housing Justice are a small Christian charity that works in partnership with churches, community and faith groups to alleviate homelessness in all its forms.

Becky ended her report with thanks to all who helped with the church finances: Lynn for Rooms bookings and Parish Clerk's account; Tim for Fair Shares; Sam for car parking permits and to Sue for all her hard work and support in her role as Assistant Treasurer.

James thanked Becky for continuing care and sterling efforts looking after the church finances.

#### 6. Election of Deanery Synod members

Jonathan Hutton was willing to stand for election: his election was proposed by Peter Cheshire and seconded by Ovid Busette. In the absence of further candidates Jonathan was duly elected for a one-year term

#### 7. Election to the Parochial Church Council

Lynn Hedges had completed an initial three-year term of office and was willing to stand for re-election: her election was proposed by John Payne and seconded by Frank Roddy. In the absence of further candidates Lynn was elected for a further three-year term.

#### 8. Deanery Synod Report

Three meetings were held in 2022:

- 30 March Christ Church, Chislehurst

Claire Boxall the Diocesan *Called Together* Manager gave an encouraging presentation on the call to grow initiative and facilitated the meeting into group discussions to discuss what was working well in parishes and what wasn't working so well.

Bromley Deanery Confirmation service took place in here in church on 8 May 2022. Seven candidates from BPC were presented for Confirmation.

- 5 July Christ Church, Chislehurst

Anna Khan CEO of Welcare gave a presentation on the history, background, and work of Welcare and spoke about current opportunities and challenges.

The deanery said goodbye to Revd Daniel Whiffin, Curate at St. John's Bromley who was moving to take up a post as vicar in the Edmundsbury & Ipswich Diocese

- 24 November St Nicholas, Orpington

A joint meeting with the deaneries of Beckenham and Orpington. The new bishop of Rochester The Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs was present and spoke about *Called Together*, his vision for the Diocese for the next five years which will transform and change the way the Deanery Synod runs. There was an opportunity to ask questions.

Next meeting Tuesday 16 May 2023

9. Report on the Fabric of the church

Tim Pike said that by agreement with the Vicar most of his work as Churchwarden during the year had been to do with the fabric of the church. The Premises Committee had not yet been reconvened following the restrictions of the pandemic, but would be soon to get a wider view of the best way forward. A start had been made on tackling issues raised in three major reports from the last year – the Quinquennial inspection, the Fire Risk Assessment and an Electrical Test and inspection – but there was still plenty to do. Ideally much of this could be done by BPC members if a working group could be formed. There was also a need to form a small group to look into the likely uses of the Youth Centre and to inform the internal design of the space.

Tim explained that the overall approach had been to use trusted contractors wherever possible. This had proved very helpful, with some new names being added to the list. The main projects on the site had been as follows:

- extensive roof repairs to the Rooms following damage from a large falling branch. It subsequently emerged that the roof tiles had an asbestos component
- significant work on all the mature trees in the churchyard following a detailed tree condition survey
- further repairs to external lighting, including bollard lights and uplighters
- investigation into the intermittent and deteriorating functioning of the solar panel system, resulting in the need to replace the inverter
- a change of contractor for the tower clock, with Cumbria Clocks due to investigate the latest failure soon
- remaining work on the belfry, leading to installation of a sound control system on all four aspects of the tower

Tim also mentioned the ongoing battle with the squirrels in the church roof, which had yet to be fully resolved. With regard to the future, key priorities were to move forward with renovation of the Youth Centre and to replace the cage at the rear of the Embassy room with a wall/door combination in keeping with the church building but suitable as a fire escape from the choir vestry, the Embassy Room and the boiler room area. It was also hoped that we could move forward on re-designing the Garden of Remembrance, thanks to generous legacy donations.

The wider property portfolio for which BPC is responsible remained the same, although the sale of the freehold of 17 Hammelton Road was nearing completion. It had taken much of the year to sort out the tenancy arrangements with Hope Into Action for the Homesdale Road flat to be available to them and to carry out a range of work needed for the flat itself to meet the standards required. Tim thanked the team of people who had helped clean and arrange furniture and maintain the garden. It was hoped that a new

tenant would be in place shortly. The Rochester Avenue property had had some serious repair work carried out to resolve long-standing issues and to replace all the double-glazed windows. The relationship with the tenants themselves was excellent and the agents had been helpful. Finally, St. Paul's House continued to provide a valuable source of rental income, with the charges increasing to reflect local market conditions. This asset had been particularly helpful in supporting BPC through what would otherwise have been very difficult times financially.

No questions were raised. James thanked Tim for his report and for all his work maintaining and improving the church premises and all other members that helped out with this work.

#### 10. Any Other Business

Pat Powell raised the subject of having children in church during the service and the difficulties older members are experiencing because of the resultant noise level. Pat had received complaints from some members and asked if the children could leave the service for play or Sunday School style teaching. James replied that how we deal with children in church is an ongoing issue that is being worked on. Evidence suggests that by keeping children in church it becomes a familiar place to them and one they are comfortable with, which encourages children to stay as they grow older, something that Sunday School has not been proven to do.

Steps had already been taken to reduce noise by removing noisy toys, adding coverings to tables and providing children with crafts relevant to the service and having a member of the church sit in the children's area to engage with the children which also allows the parents to take part in the service more fully. James acknowledged that there is more work to do to find ways to make this work for all, but this is a lovely problem to have and one that many churches having no regular children would love to have.

James thanked Pat for her question and said he is always grateful for honest feedback.

James thanked members for attending and declared the meeting closed at 1.08pm