

To be approved at the 2024 APCM

# Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Minutes of meeting held at 7.45pm on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023

at St Ebbe's Church and via Video Link.

## Present

118 attended the meeting in person and about 60 on Zoom.

## Apologies

Apologies were received from Sarah Bond, Richard Brunt, Charles Marnham, Tricia Marnham, Rahul Ravindran and Rebecca Trollope.

## 1.&2. Introduction and Bible Thought

Vaughan Roberts (VER) spoke from Revelation 1:12-13 and opened the meeting in prayer.

## Meeting of Parishioners

## 3. Election of Churchwardens

Huge thanks were extended to our current churchwardens, Al Cory and Suzanne Wilson Higgins (SWH) for their hard work over the last year, particularly to Al, as he had done so much over the last 6 years and would be standing down. SWH was continuing in post and Greg Brisk (GB) was willing to serve as churchwarden from the Summer. Al would continue in post until then. As there were no other nominations, VER declared SWH and GB elected and GB and SWH introduced themselves. SWH chaired the rest of the meeting.

## Official Business

## 4. Minutes of Annual Meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2022

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of last year's APCM.

## 5. Formal Reports

These were available online and a paper copies were available. There were two amendments to the reports: the total number of people on the Electoral Roll for 2023 should read **461** (there had been a mathematical error), and in the PCC Report. A loose 'but' after the bullet point referring to the discussion on the church's policy on Divorce and Remarriage, should be continued 'ordained staff are able to follow their conscience and may marry couples in another parish'. Amended documents would be posted on the Church website. It was acknowledged by the meeting that the reports had been received.

## 6. Presentation of Financial Statements

Trevor Rayment encouraged people to read the audited reports and come back to him with any questions. The accounts had been audited and approved by PCC. With the help of slides, TR took the meeting through 4 questions in relation to each base: What was the bottom line? Where did the money come from? How was the money used and Who made the decisions? He thanked Bev Adams, Kirsti Quarshie, Helen Gerry, Sarah Bond and Phil Cope for all their work and Tim Dossor who had oversight of it all. He asked everyone to pray that the Lord would protect all those involved in this work. 2022 had been a year of recovery from Covid and of continuing service for God. We know that the Lord prepares a path beforehand and we know that the path ahead will be challenging but we have a trustworthy Lord and Saviour and we should praise and trust Him. There was a time for questions when the budget and the PCC policy on Reserves were explained. Tim Dossor extended a huge thank you to Trevor who has been working extremely hard for us particularly since Helen Gerry has been on maternity leave.

## 7. Appointment of Auditor

Greg Brisk proposed that Wenn Townsend once again be appointed as auditors; Grant Blank seconded this and the motion was carried unanimously by the meeting.

## 8&9. Elections to Deanery Synod and PCC

Greg Brisk, Rahul Ravindran, Kate Randall, Trevor Rayment, David Sarjudeen and Suzanne Wilson Higgins had been nominated to serve on Deanery Synod and Sarah Bond, Jonathan Nicholas, Ruth Osborne, David Parker, Rob Smith, Rebecca Trollope, Carmen Tseng and Will Waldock had been nominated as new members of the PCC. As the number of candidates was not greater than the number of places to be filled, all candidates nominated were declared elected.

## Church Life Reports

### 10. Cowley

Ben Vane thanked everyone for their prayers and support. He took the meeting through the core values for Grace Church Cowley: Local, Bible and Family. He spoke of local events such as the Fun Day, the first Light Party, carol services and the Christmas Light Switch On. Grace Church has a new partnership with Friends International and together they run Grace Global Cafe to reach international students in Cowley. The schools work recommenced in 2022. Christianity Explored and Hope Explored are back and they thank God for fruit through that. There is a growing heart for people on the outskirts of Cowley and a small missional community group has moved to Blackbird Leys. Grace Church is a family of around 110 on a Sunday morning many of whom stay on for lunch. The Lord is building the house and they want to continue to grow although there are challenges and some staff are moving on. Please pray. David Parker gave an update on the Internal Review – this is very different from Central as they are a young church plant and there are many new people from different church backgrounds. David, Ben, Sarah Bond, Jonathan Nicholas and Josh Horden have prepared a few questions which will be sent out to church family soon for feedback and input, to be given anonymously. They

will be asking for another group with representation across the church family to help with the interpretation of responses, suggested outcomes and learning opportunities.

## 11. Headington

**Highlights.** Al Horn reported that there have been many encouragements across the church family to give thanks to God for and he gave examples of these. **Hopes.** (i) Us and the Gospel – the morning service and the children's work are often full on Sunday mornings and Headington want to explore whether planting is the way forward, possibly to the east beyond the ring road. (ii) Us and You – They are thankful that they have been joined to Central for the last 22 years, but they are considering whether this is the time to stand on their own two feet whilst remaining well connected. A working group is being set up to start to start a discussion. (iii) Us and the Church of England – they are watching the direction of travel in the wider Church of England and would be grateful for prayer that they would be faithful and wise as to how they assess these things and make decisions. Tom Wood then gave an update on their 'Internal Review'. He explained that Headington had held a 'Discernment Process' in 2021 asking more general questions but also asking specific questions on any concerns to be raised. They did not see the need for another church consultation but a Cultural Diversity Group has been meeting and Helen Lamb has run a 'Healthier Church Culture' evening to which all church family were invited and many came. There has been a readiness to ask questions on an ongoing basis and there was home group training in January on asking 'good culture' questions in the groups. The groups are starting to use these and next steps are being evaluated.

## 12. Central

Tim Dossor gave an overview of the year. Numbers are returning to pre-covid levels with the 9:45am service bouncing back quickest. Josh Skidmore has joined as the leader of the 11:45am congregation. There have been exciting new initiatives including the growth of the Christians Against Poverty Scheme in partnership with Hope Trust. Two new staff are working alongside Kathy Havell and the Debt Centre is continuing to see lives transformed by the gospel. The work in the local community has been growing and Douglas Igben has joined as the new Local Community Ministry Worker. Matchsticks and groups for older children have restarted and Toby Collins has joined as the new Families Minister. Great thanks were extended to Annabel Heywood, who has done an amazing work and has been a key part of our outreach to the local community over many years, she is retiring this summer. Free English classes have started on Monday nights and it has been exciting to see members of that group move into Christianity Explored, discipleship and 1:1's and see spiritual fruit from that. A number of Ukrainian families wonderfully have joined the church and there is live translation at the 9.45am. They have started a fortnightly Saturday afternoon outreach which has led to a Women's Breakfast. Tim encouraged us to give thanks and pray on for them.

## Internal Review

### 13. Internal Review

Helen Lamb gave an introduction for those who were not aware of what this is and why it is happening. There are reports available from last years APCM for those who would like them. There has been a localised, base specific approach to this second phase of questions of culture and how these play into church life. It is hoped that reflections on culture will become a part of normal church life on an ongoing basis. It is important that all continue to have the ability to ask questions and this is an invitation to do that. Helen referred us to a tool that the Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC) has produced which gives questions that serve as a catalyst for thought.

Al Cory then sought to summarise the process that has been going on over the last 12 months. He explained that the PCC had considered the feedback from last year's APCM at its Away Morning and that the Core Team then put together 3 questions to ask the church and a Communications, or Activities, Plan for the 12 months ahead. The 3 questions were: What areas of the church family are you thankful for? Which aspects of that church family do you have concerns about? And, is there anything else you want to mention relative to St Ebbe's culture? It was also felt important to take action, so there was a 'Digging Deeper' session picking up on some of the things that had come out of last year's APCM i.e., social action, class, and male and female roles, and there are more actions already coming out of those. Al explained that the description 'Building Healthier Church Culture Together' was chosen deliberately. Most importantly, it is something we are doing together, being unified in our differences and our opinions.

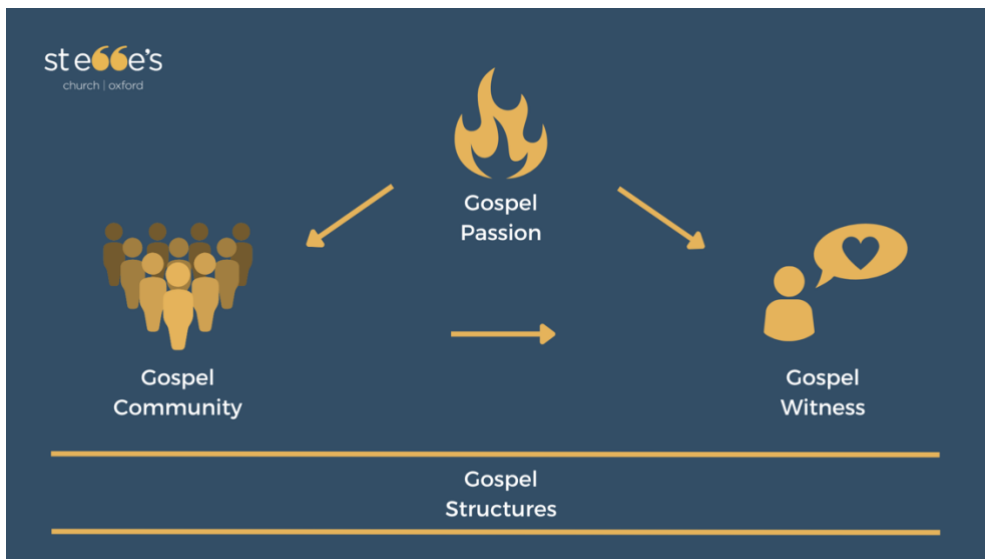
The 3 questions went to the whole church family, first to Fellowship Groups, then to the other small groups, to the Staff Team and finally to the whole church family with an open opportunity for everyone to respond. It was a huge task to anonymise and bring in all the feedback. Using slides, Al then summarised briefly some of the many things that people were thankful for. He spoke of the actions that were already in train: mixing between congregations, opportunities to serve, men's breakfasts and reading groups, encouragements to use ChurchSuite and new groups reaching out to the local community. The concerns that had come back had been summarised into 4 areas: community and mixing, class and diversity, welcome and newcomers, and staff and volunteering. These are challenging areas which we are going to work hard on together. Next steps: Groups will be formed to address the areas of concern. There is a paper being written on male and female ministry and there is always to be an ongoing openness to feedback and reporting. There was then an opportunity for questions but none were raised.

## Looking Forward

### 14. St Ebbe's and the Church of England

VER spoke of gospel passion leading to gospel community and gospel witness. Our studies in Ephesians this year have shown us that being overwhelmed by the love of God leads to a truly gospel community which in turn leads to gospel witness. We want

more and more people to be drawn into this community but we also want to go out and will be thinking about church planting looking forward. He went on to speak about gospel structures and particularly denominational structures which are designed to facilitate gospel ministry. He explained that what is happening in the Church of England at the moment is a massive hindrance to the work of the gospel. He spoke of the statement made at the recent meeting of GAFCON in response to the vote of General Synod in February, and encouraged us to look at the 'Kigali Commitment' on the GAFCON website. The bishops have not yet sanctioned the use of the prayers blessing same sex unions and are considering the pastoral guidance that surrounds those prayers. They are also discussing how to reassure clergy who cannot accept this. It would seem that very radical differentiation will be necessary that would mean a very distinct group with different bishops and ultimately a different province. He encouraged us to pray that, for the sake of the gospel, it would be possible to find a way for people to be able to stay in the Church of England with integrity. This will not happen quickly and, in the meantime, we need to act with integrity. St Ebbe's has not moved away from traditional doctrine and has no plans to leave the Church of England or its building. VER is part of the Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC) and he referred to its 'Compelled to Resist' declaration, encouraging us to pray that more would be prepared to make a stand. We all find it difficult to live according to the teaching of the Bible and must encourage each other to keep faithful remembering the amazing grace of God who forgives us in Christ for the ways in which we will mess up. He thanked the church for its support and unity even in difference at a secondary level and asked that we continue to support, encourage and pray for each other.



## 15. Questions

These were answered after each report.

## 16. & 17. Song and Prayer

Vaughan thanked all for attending and the meeting ended with a song and prayer at 9.30pm