

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST,
MALDEN Registered Charity No. 1145155
Minutes of the 734th meeting of the Parochial Church
Council held on Tuesday, 1st December 2020 by
Googlemeet, with members joining from their homes.

Present: The Vicar in the chair, Pauline Armour, Franklin Barrington, Margaret Barrington, Brian Bowers, Jane Bransgrove, Mike Broome, Milly Broome, Marilyn Burkett, Richard Burkett, Deborah Harris, Sally Josolyne, Anthony Pullen, Liz Pullen and Lynn Sanger.

In attendance: Alastair Harris (treasurer), Faith Bowers (clerk).

The Vicar opened with prayer.

7332 **1 - Apologies for absence** were received from Lisa Down.

7333 **2 - Notice of Essential AOB** The Vicar had two items.

7334 **3 - Minutes of the November PCC Meeting**

There were no corrections. The Vicar signed the minutes which were approved for publication.

CWs/Amy

7335 **4 - Safeguarding**

The Vicar had tried to contact Vanessa but had no response. Marie needs Amy's input over those to train. No safeguarding concerns had been reported.

MM

7336 **5 - Vicar's Report**

Following the November lockdown, church services would resume on the former pattern from next Sunday, with two on Sundays and one on Wednesdays. The Carol Service and Crib Service would be virtual only. Marilyn was working with the choir and Harvey getting readers for the Carol Service, which would be on YouTube on Sunday 20th December. Similarly Sally was working with the Parochial School on the Crib service for Christmas Eve.

Midnight Mass, Christmas morning worship and the two Eucharists on Sunday 27th would all be live-streamed. Attendance required booking, especially for the Midnight Service. The Vicar asked that people only book for one of these to give the maximum number the opportunity to attend in person at Christmas.

The star on the church tower was readily seen from Malden Manor Station. Two yew trees had already been decorated and three more were promised. The Vicar hoped volunteers would come forward for the others.

The Angel Project to provide needy children with a Christmas present was happening again this year, but with twice as many needy children, about eighty, at Malden Manor School. Someone else had undertaken to provide for those in need at the Parochial School.

Pat Lovegrove was appealing for help with the Christmas Day event, both with delivering food and with supplying gifts.

Looking ahead

The Vicar had circulated a paper concerned with forward planning and using the current down-time to plan ahead. There were three main areas to consider: a Eucharistic community for all; sustainability which included care of the building; and serving the community. The vicar did not want to lose sight of things being considered before the pandemic interruption, but there was scope to add and he was open to suggestions. The break might have made it easier to discard some things. It was no good the vicar having ideas if they were not owned by the church at large. Nor was it enough to talk about it, action would need to be taken.

Marilyn observed that the whole area of children's ministry ought to be refreshed post Covid.

Mike suggested the church would be on a voyage of discovery during 2021. At present it was hard to predict, but there were likely to be issues arising from mental health, unemployment and poverty, and Brexit. Anthony felt the church should work with other local bodies concerned with mental health. The Vicar was keen to develop the Bereavement Café.

Alastair observed that if successful with the Places of Worship scheme, that would help boost the presence of the church within the local community as many walkers pass along the lane.

The Vicar said it really helped when people other than him shared things with the Old Malden Residents' Association, like one of his neighbours who liked the idea of the Angel Project enough to publicise it on the online media.

Pauline asked about Tea and Chat. The Vicar did not think the extended Play Group hours would interfere with that.

Inclusion: The Vicar said there was still work to be done on this. The Church of England had published new resources on sexuality, but that was only one aspect of inclusion. It had to cover anything that made people feel they would not fit in. He would like to see a small group set up to look at all aspects of inclusion.

Post-Covid : As well as questions about what should be done and how, there would be concern about who would do it. Some of the long-active volunteer workforce may have less energy to spare by then. Would there be people willing to replace them?

There should be some succession planning, making a record of knowledge and expertise. This needed to go beyond the PCC: there were a variety of skills in the congregation, but people might need encouragement to offer them to the church. In welcoming people back to church, they should be urged to consider how they can help with the various initiatives. The Vicar hoped that when people at last felt liberated they would be keen to do things.

So far two people have offered to help seek grants for work on the building.

7337 **6 - Finance Update**

Alastair presented a 3-page update. He was reasonably happy with the current figures. Two bank donors had had to reduce their amounts, but there had been two new donors. Nevertheless, bank donations had dropped by about £500 per month this year. Giving by envelope had risen. The end of year deficit looked likely to be in line with the earlier prediction. There had been two legacies: £2000 for the Building Fund and £1000 for general purposes.

Marilyn asked if there was any diocesan help with costs of streaming services. This had been looked into but there was not. There had been costs for equipment and licences for both music and words.

There was good news on the Angel Project: donations had already reached £1100, from 40 donors.

Speaking for the Finance Committee, Richard expressed concern that the giving base was slowly eroding. Generous giving to various specific causes showed there was money around if people were moved by a need, but the church needed to find the right way to approach people about basic giving. People respond when there is a vision, so that needs to be addressed.

Richard and Sally had joined a webinar on a Planned Giving Scheme by direct debit, which offered some advantages but also some issues.

The Vicar said there was a need to hold together the need for Free Will Offerings to cover the Parish Support Fund and the need to raise 15% to 20% of the costs of work on the building in order to seek grants.

7338 **7 - St John's Hall**

Mike reported that the surveyor recommended by the Diocese had visited both the Church and Scout Halls on 13th November, and had discussed the long tenancy relationships with Beth and Alison. He would talk with the Diocesan solicitor. Mike awaited the response. With the Play Group seeking to double their hours, it was time for a new licence which had to be done through the Diocese in this way. The Scouts expected to pay the costs for theirs and the Play Group were in discussion with the Church Hall Committee. No costs should fall on the church funds.

7339 **8 - Security Project**

The information had been duly circulated and PCC members agreed to proceed, with one expressing some reservations. The application had been submitted to the Home Office and the outcome should be decided in January. Richard had sent a map showing proposed position of lights and cameras but not all had received this, so he would send it again.

The Vicar had been in touch with Merton College and there should be no objection to a light across the car park. It was hoped that the application would prove successful. If so, the work was likely to be done in spring or summer 2021.

RB

7340 **9 - Building Repair Project**

Charles Shephard, the architect, had inspected the church with Chris Benson, looking especially at the ingress of water in various places. He had now recommended that earth be moved from the outer walls, checks made on the water level, inspection under the tiles where damp inside, and the drains checked for blockages. The cause of damp needed to be established first. His fee for his work would cost about £800. The architect could recommend a suitable contractor. The church would need to seek grant money for remedial work in due course.

There were two funds for building repairs, one relating to issues raised by the Quinquennial survey, and the more general one.

7341 **10 - St John's Website**

Deborah mentioned the tab for the Angel Project, and the need to encourage people to join the Coop to support the Bereavement Café. Chris Beales had made a lovely logo for the latter, but it was not suitable for the Coop's use, so one had been made showing hands cradling a cup.

Sally said take-up had risen over the year from about 100 per month to 120 per week, with 230 in Remembrance Week. The live-streamed services had 20-25 viewers, with more during the week, so that was feeling like a steady community. She expressed thanks to Harvey and Franklin for their help with this.

The Vicar thanked Deborah and Sally for their ongoing management of the site. It had taken 5 hours of work to produce the 10-minute video, which was widely appreciated. A friend of the Vicar, usually a stern critic, had judged the video excellent.

7342 **11 - Any Other Business**

a) The Vicar said that last year the PCC had agreed to contribute £50 to the Plough Green Christmas tree, but it had proved too late. He had been in touch with the local organiser this year and understood church involvement would be welcome. The PCC agreed to this.

b) The Vicar observed that Amy continued to wrestle with the photocopier, but now he wondered if the church might invest in a good display board which could take Chris Beales' nature notes and also material on the church's history, as something distinct from the board about the worship services. Mike had asked Chris to sketch some ideas for this. It might be possible to have some general material and some of topical interest, rather like the boards in Richmond Park. Marilyn said it ought to explain why the churchyard is allowed to grow in summer, it was not just neglect. Alastair thought it would be a good fund-raising project.

c) Milly appealed for a reader for the next Sunday morning and Liz offered.

d) Margaret thought it might be worth looking at Amazon Smile fundraising. Her school parents were using it. Lynn would look into this. Richard said such means were worthwhile: the building repairs fund had benefited from over £2000 through Easy Fundraising. Brian added that Faith's contributions that way had just reached £200 and she intended to write about it for OMN.

LS

There being no further business, Milly closed the meeting with prayer at 9.28 p.m.

The next PCC meeting will be on Tuesday, 5th January 2021, 7.45 for 8 p.m.