

St. Mary the Virgin, Houghton with Wyton Parochial Church Council

Minutes of a meeting held in the St. Mary's Centre on Thursday 26th September 2019

Present: The Rev Geoff Boucher, Mike Batchelor, Joy Bell, John Daines, Sarah Holden, Liz Lee, Guy Morton, Simon Summers, Jenny Thompson.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Trish Hawitt Palmer
2. **Minutes of the previous meeting** on 19th July 2019 were not yet available but would be circulated separately.
3. **Matters arising:** see 2 above.
4. **Children's Church:** Activities continued to go well, with a prospect of one or two new children joining the group. The course based on the book of Jonah was continuing. A new set of study books had now been delivered. The continuing need for further volunteers was still a concern and possible candidates to be asked if they would be willing to help were under consideration.

5. Committee Reports:

Fabric Committee

- The Fabric Committee had met immediately before this meeting.
- Most of the work on the bells and the tower had been completed. The exception was the delivery of new bell ropes, without which ringing could not recommence. It was hoped that they might be delivered, as originally planned, in time for the wedding which was to take place on Saturday 5th October; if this did not happen, the ringers had kindly offered to ring a peal in honour of the couple on another occasion. The Committee recorded its thanks to the Bell Captain and Tower Warden for planning this work.
- The improvements to the sound system – an extra speaker, additional lapel microphones and an enhanced multimedia system – had been installed, and it was agreed that they had resulted in a substantial improvement. The media player had already proved its worth and a new set of CDs had been purchased for times when the existing set was in use at Hartford.
- Agreement had been reached with the Parish Council on the amount to be paid to the PCC for help in maintaining the churchyard.
- A local firm had been approached to quote for installing a screen and projector at the chancel arch. Having inspected the church, they had concluded that this was beyond their technical capability, but they had recommended another firm

in Biggleswade which had installed screens in a number of churches in south Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. That firm had been approached and a visit was to be arranged.

- The damp-proofing work on the inside of the St. Mary's Centre had been carried out. It was agreed that Polly Hudson should be asked for a quotation to repaint the interior once the new plaster had dried out.
- The painting work on the outside of the St. Mary's Centre had also been substantially completed. The only outstanding item was that one of the windowsills had proved to be rotten. This had now been replaced and would be painted shortly. The removal of the scaffolding had not yet been fully carried out and we were continuing to press the firm concerned to finish this. The Committee agreed to authorize the Rector and Churchwardens to take all necessary action to achieve this, include recourse to legal proceedings if required.
- The replacement fire alarm system in the St. Mary's Centre had been installed and was now in operation. The installing firm had reported that the automatic doorstops on the fire doors needed to be replaced on a different electrical circuit, or with battery power, and the Committee agreed that this should be done.
- As regards the tree in the corner of the Wyton churchyard, referred to in earlier meetings, the tree surgeon was to carry out a further inspection and prepare a letter in support of an application for a faculty to remove the tree.
- There was some discussion of whether Wyton churchyard was officially closed, as the Parish Council were reported now to believe. It was agreed that we should investigate further whether this was the case and, if not, the procedure for closing it.
- A letter had been received from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission asking for our permission to install signs drawing attention to the war graves in Wyton churchyard, the cost of installation and maintenance to be borne by the Commission. It was agreed that permission should be given and that steps should be taken to co-operate with the Commission on the location and wording of the signs.
- The Committee noted with satisfaction the great amount of work that had been successfully completed this year and recorded its thanks to those involved, in particular to Mike Batchelor for his hard work in making most of the arrangements.

Pastoral and Worship Committee

- The recent Pet Service had been a success and well attended.

- The Harvest Festival service would take place on 29th September. The Houghton School Choir had been invited, but were unfortunately unable to participate this year.
- There would be an ecumenical evening service at 6.30 p.m. on 6th October in the St. Mary's Centre, with the Free Church leading on this occasion.
- The Remembrance Day service would be as usual.
- Arrangements for services for Advent and Christmas would be as follows –
 - 1st December: Café Church at 9.45 a.m., Advent Carol Service at 6.30 p.m. (*post-meeting note: the Advent Carol Service will be in the St. Mary's Centre this year*).
 - 8th December: Christingle Service, 4 p.m.
 - 22nd December: Nine Lessons and Carols, 3 p.m.
 - 24th December: Crib Service, 4 p.m., Midnight Communion, 11.30 p.m.
 - 25th December: Family Communion, 10 a.m.
- The dates for carol singing round the village would be 12th, 17th and 19th December.
- Work was continuing on a revised version of the Family Communion booklet for use on fifth Sundays.
- People had expressed interest in holding an outdoor service next summer, in addition to the Feast Week service. It was provisionally agreed that we should consider holding the 9.45 a.m. service on Sunday 2nd August 2020 outside the St. Mary's Centre, with the option of moving inside the Centre if the weather so required.

Social Committee

- The cake stall on 24th August had raised £120.
- The Christmas Coffee morning would take place on 30th November starting at 10.30 a.m. (as in previous years, no later date was available because of other village events). It was agreed that we should consolidate the raffle prizes into 12 larger prizes.

6. Treasurer's Report:

- The current cash balance on the PCC's current account stood at approximately £3,947, which was satisfactory, and reflected the large amount that we had spent on planned projects this year.
- The invoice for the Parish Council's use of the St. Mary's Centre would be issued shortly, and their use of energy was being checked for that purpose.
- It was agreed that £3,000 to £3,500 would be an appropriate level for the charitable donations that we usually make at the end of the year. The Pastoral and Worship Committee would make recommendations to be considered by the PCC at its next meeting.

- We had paid 8/10ths of our Parish Share and the Treasurer was confident of our ability to pay the remainder when due. There had been some discussion at Deanery level of whether parishes which were able to meet their Parish Share might be asked to consider providing additional help to those who were not. It was agreed that this should be discussed further at the next PCC meeting.
7. **Charitable giving:** as noted above, it was agreed that donations would be considered at the next meeting.
 8. **Diocesan Synod report:** the Synod had not met since the last PCC meeting.
 9. **Deanery Synod report:** the Synod had not met since the last PCC meeting.
 10. **Correspondence:** there was no relevant correspondence to report other than the letter from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission referred to in paragraph 5.
 11. **Any other business:** It was noted that produce brought to the Harvest Festival would be donated to the Salvation Army at King's Ripton Court, as in previous years, and we should ensure that help would be available to take it to them after the service. (*Post-meeting note: thanks to Richard Ashford for doing so.*)
 12. **Next meeting:** The next two meetings would take place on 21st November and 30th January 2020, in each case in the St. Mary's Centre at 7 p.m.
 13. There being no further business, the meeting closed with the Grace at 8 p.m.

Attended by :

Rev. G Boucher (GB)
Mike Batchelor (MB)
Guy Morton (GM)
Joy Bell (JB)
Simon Summers (SS)

1. Matters arising

- Items covered within minutes below

2 Church Building and Churchyard Matters

- Sound System – work completed and from reports received it is a great improvement.
- Bell Tower – Drain to be reviewed during next Churchyard Clean-up.
- Bells/Tower – new ropes on order and expected delivery early October
- Lead Roof Alarm –Smart Water to be painted on the lead roof. **MB** to action when weather permits.
- Free Green Bin still delivered
- Churchyard Maintenance agreed with Parish Council and had been paid.
- MB reported that a meeting had been arranged with a company to advise on a projector and screen.

3 Chapel Building matters

- Damp proofing works complete and a quotation sought from Polly Hudson for repainting.
- Overhanging vegetation discussed with John Talbot (Tree Specialist) who advised weedkiller may be available which would alleviate the problems associated with the bushes removal. John Talbot will review and advise.
- External painting – work complete including replacement window board, scaffolding still to be removed.
- Fire alarm System –wireless system installed but a letter received re new door release mechanism, **MB** to investigate and also to arrange training.

4 Wyton Churchyard matters

- Cracks in wall bounding the Wyton Graveyard, John Talbot to carry out further investigation works to establish if the tree is responsible for the damage.
- Discussion took place on the possibility of closing of the Graveyard, **GM** to investigate.
- Fence Panel replacement – work complete.

5 Administration

- Health & safety Documentation - **MB** to discuss changes with PCC Secretary and have policies represented for approval.
- Website/Pew Sheets – now active and webmasters are Pat & Haleema Hawkins from Hartford.

6 Any Other Business

- War Graves Commission – letter received re plaque available for churchyard, **GB, GM, MB** to review location.
- **GM, MB & JB** to carry out Inventory of church assets.

7 Date for Next Meetings

- Next Meeting set for Thursday 21st November 2019 at 6 pm in the St Mary's Centre.
- Meeting also arranged for 30th January 2020 at 6 pm in the St Mary's Centre