

Report of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to the APCM, 22nd May 2022

1. This Report

It is our pleasure as the PCC, accountable to the annual meeting, to present this report of our activities during the 2021 calendar year. It also refers to several significant changes up to our PCC meeting on the 25th April 2022 when the text was agreed. The last annual meeting took place on Sunday 23rd May 2021 in person and by 'zoom'.

The powers and duties of PCCs

For those who are new to the church, the prime duty of the PCC is *'to co-operate with the Vicar in promoting the whole mission (of the church) - pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical'*. PCCs are recognised as charitable bodies by the Charity Commission and members therefore have all the duties and responsibilities of charity trustees. Although administrative business must be undertaken, we are required to consider everything with the primary task of mission in mind. One of the requirements under the Rules is for the PCC to make an annual report on its activities to the APCM.

Membership

The PCC consists of some members by virtue of their office (ex officio), those elected at the APCM and co-opted members. Serving members for 2020 -21 were:

Ex officio: Revd Johnny Douglas – Vicar (PCC Chair), Sue Haward and John Wigginton – Churchwardens; and Julie Douglas (to November 2021) and David Pearson (Secretary) - Deanery representatives.

Elected: Martin Andrews, Barbara Ball, Andy Birmingham, Angela Chapman, Mike Connold (to May 2021), James French (from May 2021), Jane Gay (to May 2021), Karen Ledger, Sally Minnet (from May 2021) and Kevin Swift.

Co-opted by the PCC (ie with voting rights): Chris Redmond (Treasurer).

Based on a resolution passed at the October 2020 APCM, a limit of 2 x 3-year terms applies for elected PCC members.

Churchwardens, who have lead responsibilities for the day-to-day functioning of the parish, are a much older institution than PCCs (dating back to the 14th Century!) which is why they are elected, annually, under different legal provisions - the Churchwardens Measure 2001. The election of Churchwardens is, therefore, technically a different meeting from the APCM. Their term of office is one year, and they may serve for up to nine consecutive terms of office as agreed at our APCM in 2019. Both Wardens are eligible to stand for re-election this year. There is a PCC resolution before this AGM to revert to the national CoE position with no limitation on service. If agreed the new church rule will operate as from next year.

As charity trustees, all PCC members are required to sign a declaration that they are willing and eligible to act as trustees (ie not legally disqualified), that they understand their charity's purposes and have passed any checks required if the charity works with children or vulnerable people (we, of course, do).

In March 2019, the PCC approved a pack for prospective members and Wardens providing information on the legal requirements and expectations and within the context of St Peter's and St Paul's and the work plan for 2019 – 2022. All PCC members are expected to comply with their legal responsibilities as trustees of the Church and abide by the codes set out in the pack supplied, with nomination forms or otherwise available from the Secretary.

2. Our meetings

During 2021 there were eight ordinary meetings of the PCC (ie each month except May, August, September and December), for rather more than 2 hours at a time. Special meetings were held in January (to discuss church closure in the light of the pandemic) and two meetings in May (re the tenders for the annexe). Some meetings were in person, some via 'Zoom' and some hybrid. Other matters were agreed by correspondence between meetings. All meetings were conducted with most members present. Minutes are available on request from the PCC Secretary once they have been agreed at the next PCC meeting.

Each meeting is planned, providing members with full briefing notes on the range of matters on the agenda. The Revd Johnny Douglas also shares his thoughts, encouragements, challenges and vision. Johnny's thoughts and plans are laid before members and he expects them to be scrutinised and approved (or varied) as appropriate by the meeting. The PCC and the staff group each routinely review our activities and services as soon as possible after an event to ensure any lessons learned are applied for the future.

As PCC members, we each seek to exercise both our spiritual and legal responsibilities seriously and in love, working together as a team to best serve Christ, our church fellowship and community. We have a very busy programme, and it is always a challenge to get through the business. Within the agenda we ensure enough time is allowed for items that need a full discussion to achieve the best outcome or matters on which it is known there will be different views. We often stop to pray about decisions and sometimes matters will be deferred to a future meeting to allow more time for prayer and reflection, as we are very conscious of our need-to-know God's mind and guidance in all that we decide and do. Through prayer and discussion, we are able so often to reach a common mind; on occasions where a majority vote is needed, this has not affected our fellowship. There is respect by all for a majority decision and each other when that happens.

3. An overview of the year

From March 2020 to the time of writing this report two years later, the pandemic has totally impacted the activities of the church and the daily lives of the whole community. It has been

the most extraordinary time any of us is likely to experience, bringing so many challenges to us as a church, in our families, community, nation and of course, internationally. As a church we believe we have responded well to the challenges. People have shown agility and adaptability as we moved quickly between in-person and on-line worship and back again, several times. With Johnny Douglas acting as Care in our Community COVID-19 Sevenoaks District Council Area Lead, we have experienced wonderful teamwork with others in our villages, including the Parish Councils, in caring for the vulnerable and isolated and in many other ways. Some 14 of the 31 volunteers working with Johnny were church members.

We have seen lots of new faces at both St Peter's and St Paul's during the year. We thank God for all we have been able to serve and particularly for those who have come to faith or been strengthened in their Christian walk. Despite the challenges, there was significant progress over the year in building alterations and the Annexe development plans at St Peter's. As this report is finalised in April 2022, the doors of 'Next Door Hextable' and the café have been open for about a month and, after very many years of real challenge and heartache, we are at last able to welcome the community over the threshold. We look forward to the formal opening on the 15th May.

Our buildings might have been closed at various times, but we were "The Church" more than ever!

The PCC would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank our Vicar, Johnny Douglas for his leadership over another exceptionally demanding year, particularly given the additional demands of the pandemic and in bringing the annex and café 'into land'. The time given as project lead for the new building and in fundraising was very significant. All this was, of course, in addition to maintaining all his busy duties as a parish priest, without other clergy support, with an increased number of christenings, weddings, funerals and other demands. We are also thankful for the commitment of so many key team members whose service in the church continues to be an inspiration. Thanks to all who have contributed through your hard work and financially over the past year. We so appreciate the increased regular giving and additional building fund gifts which has enabled us to end the year in a reasonable financial position. Thank you also to everyone who has made provision for a legacy gift to the church in their Will.

Public Worship and 'Online' church

The last two years has been somewhat of a 'roller coaster' in terms of trying to maintain 'in-person worship. The pandemic resulted in church buildings being closed by order of the government during a national lockdown from the third week of March 2020 when, like many other churches across the country, St Peter's and St Paul's became an 'on-line' church. This included recorded services on Facebook and YouTube and live informal 'Zoom' meetings each Sunday morning 'after church' and through our Life Group programme. Some

21 households unable to access the internet were supplied with weekly DVDs and print material and the weekly church e-news material.

After March 2020, weddings (when permitted), and funerals, continued at St Paul's in line with government restrictions on numbers. During the first week in August 2020, St Paul's was re-opened for an hour a week, for private prayer. The St Peter's building remained closed until both buildings opened for public worship (with special socially distanced measures in place) on the 4th October 2020.

Both buildings were again closed by decision of the PCC on the 19th December 2020, following the Prime Minister's statement on national measures to counter new threats posed by the increased infectivity of the new strain of Covid19 (first seen in Kent) and placing the county in tier 4 status (the highest). Our parish Covid rates were particularly high at that time. On the 24th December the PCC decided to formalise the closure by recommending that the Bishop agree to the suspension of church services; this was immediately granted by Bishop James.

At the PCC Meeting on Monday 18th January 2021, members reviewed matters. They agreed that given the worsening situation locally and that online, DVD and print material continued to serve people well, to recommend that the Bishop extend the suspension of 'in person' services. The Bishop extended authority to suspend to the 12th April, 2021, subject to any government or diocesan recommended revisions. With a considerable improvement in the situation both locally and nationally and with most vulnerable people by then having had one vaccination, no further extension was sought, and public worship resumed in both buildings on the 18th April 2021, on a socially distanced basis, in compliance with all current regulations and guidance. With the new 'Omicron' variant Covid rates rose considerably in the winter 2021/2022 but with precautions in place we have continued to maintain public worship and have seen growth in that time. The period of online services enabled us to reach people in the local community and beyond with several 'first timers' at services in both church buildings. Significantly at St Paul's attendance at the traditional 8.30am service has more than quadrupled compared to pre-covid times.

4. Working groups/Committees/Teams

The church and charity rules under which we operate allow for the appointment of working groups (or, in our terms, 'teams') to discuss certain subjects thoroughly in detail and they may co-opt members from beyond the PCC. It is a charity law requirement that all such 'Committees' are required to report to the PCC, who retain the legal responsibility for decision-making. There is also a requirement that the Incumbent (Vicar) is an ex-officio member of each. The current teams are:

- Vicar and Churchwardens (coordinated by Johnny Douglas)
- Annexe development (coordinated by Johnny Douglas)

- HR and staffing (coordinated by Di Birmingham)
- Pastoral care (coordinated by Pauline Pearson)
- Safeguarding (coordinated by Andy Birmingham)
- Welcome team (coordinated by Di Birmingham)
- Worship team (coordinated by Adam Graver)

It is proposed to establish new teams to lead our work in in other areas in due course. In addition to these appointed Teams, which have a visionary mandate, many other valuable non-decision-making working groups exist in the church, undertaking and coordinating a variety of essential activities, for which the PCC are also very grateful. Several 'teams' and other groups have provided reports for the APCM.

Seniors' ministry

John and Lorna Kahan resigned their leadership of Thursday Fellowship and from the church in January 2021. The PCC expressed their appreciation for their significant ministry to seniors and in other capacities over many years. New day-time Life Groups have been set up to accommodate various needs, including those of older people. So far it has not been possible to re-establish the seniors' ministry as such and the Vicar and PCC will be reviewing the future direction of, and appointment of new leaders.

5. Staffing and Volunteers

a) Future of Children's and Youth Mission post – proposed appointment of an Associate Pastor

In considering the future of the previous Children's Ministry post, a questionnaire was sent to key leaders and families of children and youth in the church. Of the 19 responses received, 16 stated that they wouldn't wish a temporary like-for-like replacement, namely a postholder for another year (assumed to be the period before we could operate 'normally'), preferring a more permanent appointment. The PCC considered this within the wider context of staffing needs and decided instead to pursue an Associate Pastor role with responsibility for Children and Youth, with some wider responsibilities too, given that we had repeatedly been unsuccessful in obtaining a curate from the Diocese. We didn't manage to recruit to an advertised position in the summer of 2021. The balance between children/youth and other activities has been under review and we have now opted for an 80/20 ratio. A job description has been agreed and we hope to begin a recruitment process when we can be sure of the finance available on completion of the annex.

b) Adam Graver

We are grateful to Adam Graver for his valuable contribution in music and media in the church, over nearly 4 years. He had originally joined us over the summer 2019 in an unpaid role, having helpfully assisted us in musical ministry on several occasions the previous year was appointed as Worship and Online Ministry Leader, a 15hr post, in September 2020. He served in that capacity until December 2021 (when he increased his hours with a local

charity) and continued as worship leader on a voluntary basis. In October 2021 it was a joy to witness the marriage of Adam and Anna, a long-time member of the church. In March 2022 we were sad to see them leave to serve in a newly planted church in Hampshire.

c) Volunteers

The PCC would like to record their thanks to all who have given of their time to serve the church at St Paul's and St Peter's in so many capacities. We are blessed with many who freely volunteer in leadership roles, worship, outreach, administration and in the many 'unseen' but essential activities. We could not operate without the whole body working together! In particular, we are grateful to Julie Douglas who served in very many voluntary capacities in the Church and on the PCC from January 2018 to November 2021, and Peter Gower, a professional Civil Engineer, who has been assisting with the construction elements of the Annex. Their contributions to the life of the church have been immense.

6. Safeguarding

As a PCC we are responsible for ensuring compliance with national safeguarding requirements set for charities and organisations working with children and adults at risk and those of the Church of England and the Diocese. The Parish Safeguarding Officer, Andy Birmingham, with safeguarding team, have continued to monitor and develop policies and best practice for the PCC and ensure, so far as they are able, safer recruitment of workers and practice, and appropriate responses when concerns have been raised.

Under Part 9 of the Church Representation Rules (2020), the PCC are required in this annual report to the APCM to confirm that we have complied with our duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, to have due regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. We are happy to confirm our full commitment to following government and Church of England safeguarding practice requirements. Whilst we cannot afford to be complacent in such matters, we believe we are in a good place in terms of the procedures we are following. We would like to record our thanks to our hardworking safeguarding team and the leaders of activities with children and older people, all of whom, without exception, have cooperated fully in the safeguarding arrangements. In February 2022, Andy Birmingham informed the PCC of his intention to stand down as the Parish Safeguarding Officer and from the PCC as from the date of the APCM. Andy was first elected to the PCC some 13 years ago and has served as the PSO for the last 7 years. Over that period the role has developed significantly. The PCC recorded their sincere thanks to Andy for his hard work over the years in such a demanding role and for his grace, dignity, and willingness in service.

Missions

In 2018 we commenced a review of our missions giving. Until then some 80% of our missions' budget was allocated to one organisation. At the end of 2019, the PCC discussed at some length the strategy for 2020 onwards. Taking account of the fact, as a part of our parish share, monies were also donated to the Diocese for 'mission' both at home and overseas, we decided, having paid the Diocese, to allocate 10% of the remaining non-

designated income of the church to mission. This is based a 'thirds' approach ie to local (parish), regional & national and international causes. Priority is given to funding individuals, missions and causes known to the church and therefore given in the context of loving and prayerful support.

Through 2021 we also funded people in need locally through the Community Compassion Fund, specific church and NDH outreach projects through our 'refresh' fund, Christian Resources in Bexley Schools (CRIBS – who also work in Swanley schools), seniors work, parents and toddlers' activities, a local women's refuge, Release International, Home for Good, International Justice Mission, New Wine, Interserve, Chris White (Spain) and Dan Wren (OM).

7. Alterations to the existing St Peter's building.

Following on from major works in 2020 which involved constructing a new church entrance, remodelling the former lounge area, creating two small meeting rooms and reforming the worship area stage, the PCC agreed plans to re-equip the main hall with quality chairs and for new seating in the entrance area. This was put on hold until the completion of the annex and will therefore be completed shortly. We are very mindful of the need for some refurbishment works in the old schoolhouse part of the building going forward.

8. Construction of the new Church Annexe - Next Door Hextable

Previous annual reports have stressed that the challenge of completing the annexe and the opening of 'Next Door Hextable' was a priority for the PCC. This has presented the church with a considerable financial and logistical challenge. Faith, favour and finance have been key themes in our prayers and discussions together as a PCC. 'The harder it gets, the more God will get the glory', is the truth we have held to, and it has been a very hard road to get to where we are, but we can now joyfully report that the goal has been achieved. The café and centre opened on the 23rd of March 2022, and we look forward to the formal opening on the 15th May. We are delighted that Rachel Woodhouse has been appointed Café Manager, together with other staff and many volunteers from the church and community. A huge thank you to all who are helping us in this process.

For those who might not be familiar with the history, 'Next Door Hextable', a £1.6million project, has been many years in the planning and the project has occupied a large proportion of our time in PCC meetings over the last few years as we have sought to bring the vision to fruition. Phase 1 building works undertaken in 2015 was for the construction of the shell (foundations, walls, roofing, windows etc).

Two special PCC meetings were held in May 2021 when the PCC considered six tenders to complete the remaining work ie to finish and furnish the interior, including the mechanical and electrical works and fixtures and fittings, with a community café, a large function venue, a kitchenette, an accessible toilet, a lift for easy access by all and a small chapel-cum-quiet space to replace the current chapel, which has become a full industrial-size catering

kitchen. Five firms bidding were Kent firms. Theobalds', a long-established local family builder, based in Gravesend, were eventually appointed as our contractors. Goldsmiths, who built the core and shell, were magnanimous and helpful in offering support to Theobalds with technical data etc, despite not winning the bid. A 20-week timescale was agreed to complete the work. Later in the year the contract was extended to complete the exterior works – renewing boundary walls, surfacing the car park and landscaping the site to Main Road with the cooperation and full support of the Parish Council and the highways authority. We could not have wished for more support from these bodies!

Work commenced on the site in late June and the building was handed over mid-March 2022. Theobald's work has been of an exceptionally high standard and the PCC are very appreciative for their timely delivery of such a quality building and surrounds.

There has been much appreciation from the local community on the vast improvements achieved in the centre of the village, demonstrated by the donation of hundreds of pounds worth of plants for the flower beds, through the Parish Council.

Most of the finance needed was donated by members of the church over some years. A second gift day was held in March 2021 March which produced £69,300 from 41 households, before Gift Aid was considered. We also developed a wider community patrons' scheme which is ongoing. We have been successful in raising a few grants too.

In order to get the project underway, the PCC applied for a substantial loan, to ensure we could complete the work as a single phase whilst fund raising continued. The loan had been agreed in principle by a finance organisation, subject to a letter of support from the Diocese (they legally own the building in trust for the PCC), because as a Parish Church we are not able to offer security. Unfortunately, the Diocese only felt able to support our application if we agreed to cut our missions giving substantially and forgo the appointment of an Assistant Pastor, so that we could increase our voluntary contribution to the Diocese from £45k pa to what they felt we should contribute ie £66.4K for 2021 and £73.4k in 2022. (We increased it to £50k for 2022). The PCC did not accept this as we felt our missions giving and the proposed staff replacement appointment was vital, particularly given the lack of clergy support from the Diocese, given the size of the church. The needed letter of support was therefore not forthcoming, and our loan offer was withdrawn. Despite their unwillingness to support the loan we did receive a Diocesan grant of £40,000.

There have also been significant difficulties with the Diocese in obtaining faculty permissions for the various works and actions needed to complete the project. Thankfully all the necessary permissions are now in place. Despite these Diocesan organisational difficulties, we are indebted to Nigel Pope, lay Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance and our Bishop, the Rt Rev Simon Burton-Jones, who have been and remain personally very

supportive. They are enthused by the vision and advocates for what we are seeking to achieve. Both will be present at the opening.

To finance the shortfall, we were able to obtain private, anonymous, relatively short-term loans, totalling £250,000 which we drew at the beginning of 2022 and remain hopeful of securing grant application funds for a further £100,000 to offset these over the course of the next few months. The building fund remains open and continued contributions are welcome.

Alongside the building and financial developments, work has also been progressed on the business aspects. A Coffee and hospitality consultant, Josh Brown, has been working with the church Annex Development Team to develop a comprehensive business plan. The team led by Johnny as the project manager has been involved in very significant amounts of work over the year. This has ranged from liaising with the architect on building detail and exterior works, to finance, governance, interior design, menu planning, staffing, furnishing, equipping etc and many other aspects. We would like to thank Martin Andrews, Di Birmingham, Johnny Douglas, Julie Douglas (to November 2021), Dawn Freeman, Peter Gower, Sue Haward, Jane Roberts, Lyn Mosely and David Pearson for their significant contributions.

For legal and financial reasons, we have established a legally separate entity to operate the café. This is because the PCC as a charity cannot run a trading concern and there is a need to maintain separate accounts and to protect church funds in the event of business failure. Out of the several models available to us, we have chosen to set up a Community Interest Company (CIC) which is wholly owned by the PCC who have the powers to 'hire and fire' Directors but not run the business. The staff and volunteers are the responsibility of the Company, though we have a resources sharing agreement between the two bodies which does what it says and helps to ensure that we work as one so far as we can. The founding Directors appointed by the PCC are Martin Andrews (Chair and finance lead), Di Birmingham (HR lead), David Pearson (Company Secretary and governance and safeguarding lead) and Johnny Douglas (Project Advisory lead). Other Directors will be appointed in due course to cover other areas of expertise and responsibility. The CIC is registered with Companies House in the following terms:

The company's activities will provide benefit to ...

All members of the community in and around Hextable, Kent (including the local church and wider community) with the aim of providing space for community use including a community café and building a more cohesive and socially inclusive community.

Community benefit

The company will provide a community café which will form part of a multi-functional community facility built to relieve need and provide opportunities for training and education to all who use the community space..

The café will be available to all individuals and groups.

It will provide economic, social and environmental benefit to the local community. In particular, it will create job opportunities for the local community and provide a place for people to come together who are isolated at a time when individuals have been disadvantaged due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

By providing the community café, the company aims to enhance the opportunities and facilities available within the local area, and to promote and develop the relationship between the local church and the wider community.

Reflecting and looking forward

We are going through a time of post-covid recovery, reimagination and reset with the pandemic seemingly having shifted the goalposts several times. Planning the way forward in such an uncertain environment has been quite a challenge, but at the same time, as has been said, it has provided us a unique 800 years' opportunity. The important first stages have been undertaking deep listening across church life and considering our shared values. Ultimately, we seek not just to be leaders of activities but of a body that majors on people of presence, not just projects.

God is faithful, and he has not only sustained us through a difficult year, but we are thankful for the growth and progress we have seen in so many areas. As a PCC we recognise that we can't go back to "how it was before", but we look to God to lead us forward as we navigate the year ahead.

A goal as a PCC continues to be one of developing the spiritual leadership of the church; one that is less and less operational and more directional and oversight. We want to establish healthy leaders and build flourishing teams, increasing the resources to extend the mission of the Kingdom. We plan to take forward our work with different groups within the church, particularly with children, youth and families, and seniors too.

With the new opportunities on the completion of 'Next Door Hextable', we look to welcoming people from across our community and to seeing the centre and the café become a parish meeting point where we as church can more effectively reach and meet needs in our communities of Hextable and Swanley Village. We want the centre and church to be a place where people feel 'at home', are valued, accepted and thrive together.

Moving forward together with God in 2022-23, extending His kingdom in our parish and beyond is our desire. Thanks be to God for his goodness to us!

David Pearson Secretary

Agreed by the PCC 25th April 2022