

Report of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to the APCM, 2nd April 2023

1. This Report

It is our pleasure as the PCC, accountable to the annual meeting, to present this report of our activities during the 2022 calendar year. It also refers to several significant changes up to our PCC meeting on the 6th March 2023 when the text was agreed. The last annual meeting took place on Sunday 22nd May 2022.

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 2022 were:

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

Elected: Martin Andrews, Rob Boswell, Barbara Ball (to May 2022), Andy Birmingham (to May 2022) Angela Chapman, James French, John Hussey (from May 2022) Emmanuel Itoje (from May 2022) , Karen Ledger, Sally Minett 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 at a time. A resolution was passed at last year's APCM, to adopt the national CoE position to have no limitation on service.

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).

All PCC members must comply with their legal responsibilities as trustees of the Church and abide by a code of practice adopted by the PCC in 2019.

2. Our meetings

During 2022 the PCC met in January, February, April, June, September and November, for rather more than 2 hours at a time. These six meetings compare with eight ordinary meetings and three special meetings the previous year, reflecting a marked reduction in workload as a result of the completion of the annexe building project (with café management responsibilities transferring to a NDH Board of Directors) and the ending of the various pandemic 'lockdowns'. Any urgent matters are agreed by correspondence between meetings which is permissible under the Church Rules. 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 fully discussed. 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. 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

We are so pleased that during 2022 we were at last able to move away from the closures and special arrangements of the pandemic years which had totally impacted the activities of the church and the daily lives of the whole community. Looking back, we believe the church responded well to the challenges. We are grateful for the agility and adaptability shown by people and the teamwork with others in our community in serving the vulnerable and isolated and so many ways. We believe this partnership has been and will continue to prove a real blessing to our mission as demonstrated in the enthusiastic welcome received from the village

(after years of negativity) on the opening of 'Next Door Hextable' in March 2022 and the ongoing popularity of the café. The café was formally opened on the 15th May by the Bishop of Tonbridge in the presence of local dignitaries which include Laura Trott MP and village and district councillors.

The pandemic effectively forced the church to stop its routine activities and for periods of time we became a church without walls, learning afresh that, essentially, the church is about people, rather than buildings. 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 when they reopened. Significantly at St Paul's attendance at the traditional 8.30am service more than quadrupled compared to pre-covid times with attendances maintained at that level through the year with many new to church attending St Peter's too.

At the beginning of 2022, the PCC and other leaders used the break to prayerfully consider how we might re-set the church, rather than just resurrect activities, which had laid dormant. We were very conscious that one of the biggest impacts of Covid had been on the lives of children and young people and their families. This had also had a severe impact on our work and for many months, even when we were beginning to regather as church, it wasn't possible for young people's activities to recommence. Apart from the Covid restrictions we hadn't the numbers of workers we needed. We are so pleased that in the summer of 2022 we are able to appoint Bea Reid as Children, Family and Youth Pastor who took up her post on the 1st August 2022. From September Bea set up several weekly groups – Youth Hangout, Babies and Toddlers and the After School Club and leading Sunday children and youth activities. In addition to these church-based groups, Bea also works with our two local schools. All these groups are proving popular.

The PCC would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank our Vicar, Johnny Douglas, for his leadership over another exceptionally demanding year and in bringing the annex and café 'in to land' on top of all his parish responsibilities with the additional demands of the pandemic. 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 again 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.

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)
- Pastoral care (coordinated by Pauline Pearson)
- Safeguarding (coordinated by Debbie Sams)
- Welcome team (coordinated by Helena Redmond)
- Prayer Ministry Team ((coordinated by Steve Webster)
- Life Groups (coordinated by David and Jeanna Rebel)
- Worship team (coordinated on an interim basis by Johnny Douglas)

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.

Staffing and Volunteers

a) Appointment of a Children's, Family and Youth Pastor

As mentioned above Bea Reid was appointed to this position as from 1st August 2022 and completed her probationary period with 'flying colours'. The PCC are so appreciative of Bea's work. She 'hit the ground running' and in such a short while has established a very credible work with children and families and presence in our local schools.

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, having helpfully assisted us in musical ministry on several occasions the previous year and 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 March 2022 we were sad to see Adam and his wife, Anna, leave to serve in a newly planted church in Hampshire. We are grateful to them for their continued support in occasionally leading worship at our Overflow services.

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!

d) Seniors' ministry

One of our biggest regrets is in not having been able to appoint someone to lead seniors' ministry. We are committed to reflecting further on how we might develop leadership in this area. However, new day-time Life Groups have been set up to accommodate various needs, including those of older people.

5. 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. As from last year's APCM, Andy Birmingham stepped down as the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) after 13 years' service in that capacity, and as a PCC member. Debbie Sams was appointed in his place, assisted by David Pearson as a Safeguarding Officer. The new safeguarding team have been reviewing, monitoring, and developing policies and best practice for the PCC ensuring, so far as they are able, safer recruitment of workers and practice, and appropriate responses when concerns have been raised. This has been of particular importance as we enter a new season of activity following the pandemic. One of the priorities on which they are working currently is the development of consistent practice across church life in the recruitment of volunteers and staff to what are known as non-regulated positions ie those not meeting the legal criteria for DBS criminal record checks, but for which we have nevertheless have a responsibility for following 'safer recruitment' best practice. The team will be making recommendation to the PCC shortly.

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 leaders of activities with children and older people, all of whom, without exception, have cooperated fully in the safeguarding arrangements.

6. Missions

As a part of our parish share, monies were also donated to the Diocese, include funding for 'mission' both at home and overseas. The policy adopted by the PCC a few years back is that having paid the Diocese, to allocate 10% of the remaining non-designated income of the church to mission. This is based on 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 2022 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, Release International, Home for Good, International Justice Mission

(IJM), New Wine, Kevin Wren Feba Radio UK, Chris White (Spain) and Dan Wren (OM). In addition, the PCC decided to allocate special offerings over Christmas on a 50:50 basis to the Parish Community Compassion Fund and IJM. The money raised by the 'Growing Good' team from plant sales was split equally between BEAMS and CRIBS.

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. 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. As long-standing members of the church will know, most of the £1.7m needed was donated by members of the church over some years. We also developed a wider community patrons' scheme and have been successful in raising a few grants too. 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.

Work commenced on the site in late June 2021 and the building was handed over mid-March 2022. Theobald's (the builders) 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. The café and centre opened for business on the 23rd of March 2022, with a formal opening on the 15th May. We were delighted to welcome Rachel Woodhouse as Café Manager and later in the year Gemma Bedford as her Deputy, together with other staff and many volunteers from the church and community appointed during the year. Initially the cafe was open from Wednesday to Saturday but from the beginning of January 2023, it has been open from Monday to Saturday with varied opening times and for occasional 'Sunday Specials' and other 'pop up' events. A huge thank you to all who are helping us in this process.

For legal and financial reasons, we have established a legally separate entity to operate the café. Out of the several models available to us, we decided to set up a Community Interest Company (CIC), wholly owned by the PCC who retain the powers to 'hire and fire' Directors but not run the business. The four founding Directors appointed by the PCC were Martin Andrews (Chair), David Pearson (Company Secretary) Di Birmingham and Johnny Douglas. In January two additional Directors were appointed – Sue Haward and Rachel Wallis. Sue has attended Directors' meetings from the outset and has been extensively involved in the day to day running of the café. Rachel is a member of the SV Life Group and the St Paul's 8.30 congregation. She runs her own accountancy practice.

The staff and volunteers are the responsibility of the Company, though we have a resources sharing agreement between the CIC and PCC, which does what it says and helps to ensure

that we work as one so far as we can. The Company is structured in a way that means that profits are covenanted to the PCC but the church funds are protected from any losses. The café has got off to a very good start and is developing beyond our expectations. Financially, the Directors anticipate an annual turnover in the region of £150k going forward and to at least break-even. The Directors are hopeful that at some stage during 2023 the Café will be able to start paying rent to the PCC (£1,500pm), even if not the full amount in the early stages.

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 from local people, through the Parish Council. By the time of our annual meeting the café will just have celebrated its first year. The PCC wish to express their appreciation to all the staff and volunteers. This has not been an easy project to set up and much credit is due to our excellent team. This has been and continues to be a real success story.

9. St Paul's CoE School.

Chris Redmond and Lyn Moseley served as Foundation Governors through 2022. Johnny Douglas continues to meet regularly with the Executive Head and other staff. Bea Reid participates in the weekly School Assembly held in the church and in other school lessons. Additionally, there are regular St Paul's/Swanley Village coordination and planning meetings between the church, school, and residents' association at which the church is represented by Johnny (who chairs the meetings) and David (who acts as Secretary). The PCC is very appreciative of the close working relationship we enjoy with the school (and in a different way with Hextable Primary School).

10. Deanery and Diocese.

David Pearson represents the PCC on the Deanery Synod. David and Johnny Douglas are also Deanery representatives on the Diocesan Synod. This provides the PCC with an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the church.

11. Reflection and looking forward

During 2021 and into 2022 we went 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 was quite a challenge, but at the same time it provided us with a unique opportunity. We have been sustained by God and are so thankful for the growth and progress we have seen in so many areas. We are thankful too for all who faithfully give to the work. As the financial report shows, we are today in a totally different position from where we were with a deficit budget a few years back. We continue to 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. We want to continue to grow healthy leaders and flourishing teams, increasing the resources to

extend the mission of the Kingdom. We are encouraged by the developments in relation to our work with children, youth, and families, but urgently need more volunteers to assist, as well as a seniors' lead and others to develop our ministry with older people.

Amongst the priorities for the PCC in the year ahead are:

- the appointment of a Verger/Caretaker at St Peter's for a few hours each week. With premises of the size we are now responsible for, the many external bookings, the logistics of setting up for various activities and site security, someone is needed to undertake and oversee these responsibilities.
- appointing a Worship Leader. Finding someone to lead each Sunday remains a huge challenge. We urgently need someone to lead this vital ministry and taking responsibility for developing and coordinating a team.
- Undertaking some necessary repair and refurbishment at St Peter's to the flat roof, heating and modernising the kitchen and toilet blocks in the old schoolhouse.

These needs were communicated to the church in January 2023 and the PCC have been greatly encouraged by the response. We hope to be able to report more on this at the meeting.

Our continued desire is to move forward together with God in 2023-24, extending His kingdom in our parish and beyond. Thanks be to God for his goodness to us!

David Pearson Secretary

Agreed by the PCC 6th March 2023