

# Report of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to the APCM, 28<sup>th</sup> April 2024

## 1. This Report

It is our pleasure as the PCC, accountable to the annual meeting, to present this report of our activities during the 2023 calendar year. It also refers to significant changes up to our PCC meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024 when the text was agreed. The last annual meeting took place on Sunday 2nd April 2023.

### 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 2023 were:

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

**Elected:** Martin Andrews (to April 2023), Rob Boswell (to February 2024, Angela Chapman, James French, John Hussey, Emmanuel Itoje, Karen Ledger (to April 2023), Stuart Matthews (from April 2023), Sally Minett, Kevin Swift, and Stephen Webster (from April 2023).

**Co-opted by the PCC (ie with voting rights):** Chris Redmond (Treasurer) and Debbie Sams (Parish Safeguarding Officer).

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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 2022'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 2023 the PCC met in January, March, April, June, September and November, for rather more than 2 hours at a time. These six meetings in both 2023 and the year before, compare with eight ordinary meetings and three special meetings in 2021, 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 briefing notes on the range of matters on the agenda. The Revd Dr Johnny Douglas also shares his thoughts, encouragements and challenges in priestly oversight with us. Johnny's reflections are laid before members and fully engaged with. 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 in 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 now well past 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. Since then, we have seen a steady growth across our four congregations at both St Peter's and St Paul's and in new people participating generally in the life of the fellowship. During the year the church reached and served more people than ever in recent past. This has been

achieved not just through our weekly services but significantly through special occasions such as Easter, Christmas, occasional services (Christenings, Weddings and funerals), the work of Bea Reid with children and families in the church and schools, the pastoral work of our vicar and the ministry of 'Next Door Hextable' café in particular.

Practically too, we have achieved much in 2023 having completed a major refurbishment of the back toilets and kitchen, as well as new flooring in the back hall and creche. Also, the building fund loans needed to complete the annex have been paid down significantly from £217k to £72.5k over the year, meaning the loans will be repaid much earlier than planned. For 2024 the church intends to pay a further £45k towards the building fund loans, as well as meeting its regular costs relating to staffing, new ventures, higher utility bills and the wider building fabric upkeep. None of this would have been possible without the regular faithful giving of our church congregation, for which the PCC is grateful.

The PCC would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank our Vicar, Johnny Douglas, for his leadership over another exceptionally demanding year and for the commitment of so many key team members whose service in the church continues to be an inspiration.

#### **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)
- Hospitality Team (coordinated by Lyn Moseley)
- Prayer Ministry Team (coordinated by Steve Webster)
- Life Groups (coordinated by David and Jeanna Rebel)
- Worship team (Ashley Summerhayes)
- Fabric Advisory Committee (John Wigginton) as from February 2024

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.

## **5. Staffing and volunteers**

### **a) New staff appointments**

We are grateful to Dan Wren who took up caretaking responsibilities in May 2023. However, his work arrangements meant that he had to stand down from the role at the end of the year. We were pleased to appoint a Worship Leader, Ashley Summerhayes, initially on a sessional basis but on a staff contract from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2024, combined with caretaking responsibilities, which he agreed to take over from Dan.

### **b) Staff and 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 and in the cafe. We are blessed with an excellent staff and volunteer team of workers in leadership roles, worship, outreach, administration and in the many 'unseen' but essential activities. We could not operate without the whole body working together!

### **c) Seniors' ministry**

One of our biggest regrets continues to be in not having been able to appoint someone to lead seniors' ministry. However, new day-time Life Groups have been set up to accommodate various needs, including those of older people.

## **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. Debbie Sams continues to serve as our Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO), assisted by David Pearson as a Safeguarding Officer and the safeguarding team who continue to review, monitor, and develop 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.

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.

## **7. Missions**

As a part of our parish share, monies were also donated to the Diocese. This donation includes 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.

The PCC decides the distribution of funds annually. In September 2023 it was agreed to allocate the £19,800 in the account to our established mission partners - Christian Resources in Bexley Schools (CRiBS who also work in Swanley schools), Release International, Home for Good, International Justice Mission (IJM), FEBA Radio UK and Chris White (Spain), New Wine and to local mission. In addition to funds from our mission fund, Christmas giving was divided between the church administered Community Compassion Fund and Home for Good. The money raised by the 'Growing Good' team from plant sales was split equally between BEAMS and CRiBS.

#### **8. Alterations to the existing St Peter's building.**

Commencing in 2020 we have carried out major works which involved repairs to the flat roof, installing new heating in the rear halls, constructing a new church entrance, remodelling the former lounge area, creating two small meeting rooms and reforming the worship area stage, re-equipping the main hall with quality chairs and for new seating in the entrance area. Since the last APCM the programme of work has continued with a major refurbishment of the toilets, kitchen and corridors in the old building. Once we have sufficient funds the next stage is to install a new heating system in the worship area and entrance foyer.

#### **9. St Paul's, Swanley Village**

At St Paul's various routine repairs and renewals have been carried out but there is a large body of work needed, largely identified in the last Quinquennial Report of 2020. A schedule of works needed has been prepared which will be considered by the newly formed Fabric Advisory Committee. Going forward we need to consider how best to adapt and develop the space to meet our current needs and best serve the Swanley Village community.

There have been and remain several significant challenges in relation to the management of the graveyard. In the past year the PCC have formally objected to the erection of an oversized unauthorised monument. The matter is currently before the Diocesan Consistory Court and a decision regarding future action is awaited. Health and Safety concerns have also been raised by the church, together with the school and Residents' Association regarding the use of the Glebe by archers. There have been instances when arrows have landed in the church car park and the graveyard, raising very serious safety issues which the church has needed to raise quite forcibly with Diocesan agents. The activity was temporarily paused whilst the agents negotiated with the archery club and the British Archery Association concerning future use of the site for this activity. The activity commenced again in March 2023, though arrangements going forward are yet to be agreed with the agents.

## **10. Next Door Hextable - Cafe**

As long-standing members of the church will know, most of the £1.7m needed to build the Annexe 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. The café and centre opened for business on the 23rd of March 2022, with a formal opening on the 15<sup>th</sup> May.

For legal and financial reasons, the PCC needed to establish a legally separate entity to operate the café. The Next-Door Hextable Community Interest Company (CIC) is wholly owned by the PCC who retain the powers to 'hire and fire' Directors but the PCC do not run the business. The current Directors appointed by the PCC are Martin Andrews (Chair), David Pearson (Company Secretary), Johnny Douglas, Sue Haward and Rachel Wallis. 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 any profits are covenanted to the PCC, but the church funds are protected from any losses.

Over the past two years the café has developed beyond our expectations. In February 2024 the Directors reported to the PCC:

*'The Café has just got through its first full year of trading with total sales of £219,000 (including VAT of £36,000) generating after VAT, revenue of about £184,000. This has been an excellent performance from a growing team of staff and volunteers and we are delighted with both the turnover and the ever widening reach and reputation of the Café as a warm and welcoming well-run venue to meet. It is certainly putting St Peter's Hextable on the map, so to speak.*

*We have had a new part-time Chef join us recently and we are building experience within the staff and volunteer team alike. We are particularly grateful to Rachel Woodhouse who has managed the Café exceptionally well..*

*The Café is currently generating enough income to cover its costs (in this last financial year) but the Directors need to continue to steer a delicate path between community mission and the legal requirement to trade profitably....*

*NDH Directors, no doubt echoed by the PCC, wish to place on record their immense gratitude to the many volunteers who, amongst other things, help us to keep costs under control, as we reach out to serve the community together.'*

The church provided £30,124 'seed funding' to cover set-up costs - tables and chairs and coffee making machines etc. The commercial kitchen was paid for as fixtures and fittings by the Church within the overall scheme of the redevelopment and is therefore owned as a fixed

asset by the Church. In the year ending 31st December 2023, £25,000 of the initial set-up costs were officially nominated a “grant” to NDH which left an outstanding loan of £5,124 which NDH propose to repay to the Church as soon as possible, cash-flow permitting, but no later than 31st December 2024. Rental payments to the Church of £1,500 per month commenced in November 2023 and will continue.

Whilst the operational area of the café is let to the CIC as the cafe managers, the PCC as ‘landlord’ remains responsible for the fabric of the building and its maintenance. At the request of the Directors the PCC has installed ‘noise baffles’ in the café (as we have in other rooms in the annex) and are making improvements for disabled access by providing a ramp (for the seasonal door) and an automatic opening and closing equipment to the main NDH doors.

The café is a welcoming place in the village and for some has become a step over the threshold into the church. 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 other events from time to time. Over several PCC meetings and with the involvement of others in the church, we have been considering possibilities of church missional use of the café, additional to that which the café already serves. Some church activity already happens in the café space (eg early morning prayer, youth meetings and youth alpha). The church will be aware of several initiatives that have been developed as a result in addition to occasional ‘Sunday Specials’ and many other ‘pop up’ events which have been operating since our opening.

Discussions have been within the context of some activities being funded or subsidised by the PCC and using other rooms as an extension to the café for some activities. This would allow for differential charging, permitting the PCC initiatives to run side by side with normal café operations. The PCC are committed to furthering these ideas over the next year.

The PCC wish to express their appreciation to the Directors and all the staff and volunteers. This has not been an easy project to set up and much credit is due to our excellent team led by Rachel Woodhouse. It has been and continues to be a real success story.

### **11. St Paul's CoE School.**

Chris Redmond and Lyn Moseley served as Foundation Governors through 2023. 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).

### **12. 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.

### **13. Reflection and looking forward**

We have been sustained by God and are so thankful for the growth and progress we have seen in so many areas over another year. We are thankful too for all who faithfully give to the work. As this and our financial report shows, even with significant new investments over the last few years, we are today in a totally different position from where we were with a deficit budget not so long ago. We continue to look to God to lead us forward as we navigate the year ahead.

Our goal is to build on significant achievements over the last year and 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 in the café ministry, with children, youth, and families, but urgently need more volunteers to assist in these areas, as well as a seniors' lead and others to develop our ministry with older people.

Our continued desire is to move forward together with God in 2024-25, extending His kingdom in our parish and beyond. Thanks be to God for his goodness to us!

David Pearson Secretary

Agreed by the PCC 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024