THE UNITED BENEFICE OF
HENLEY-ON-THAMES WITH REMENHAM

PARISH OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN, HENLEY-ON-THAMES

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parishioners and of
the Annual Parochial Church Meeting
held on
Sunday 22nd April 2007
at 6.45 pm
in the Chantry House

PRESENT

It was recorded that there were 35 people present.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from David and Diana Dew, Val Barter, Geoffrey Taylor, Anthony Green, Henry Villet, Mr and Mrs James Coffee, Andrew Butler, and Trevor and Margaret Johnson.

2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the last APCM were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3 ELECTION OF CHURCHWARDENS

Mr Richard Fletcher, having completed ten years as a Churchwarden, was not therefore seeking re-election. Mrs Carol Brook-Partridge had agreed to stand for re-election. Mr Geoffrey Taylor had agreed to stand. There being no further nominations, Mrs Carol Brook-Partridge and Mr Geoffrey Taylor were duly elected as the Churchwardens.

Carol Brook-Partridge paid tribute to Richard on behalf of the parishioners. When he had taken over as Churchwarden he inherited a church that was dark, dingy and dowdy. He had organised three major projects, namely the cleaning of the Church, the lighting and the re-flooring, as well as work to the Church tower, the west end entrance, the mobile phone masts, and the repair of vandalised windows. It was gratifying now to receive comments from visitors about how beautiful the Church was. Richard had also efficiently handled the Interregnum, and it had been a pleasure to work with him. In response, Richard paid tribute in particular to Sir William Barlow for raising the funds for the refurbishments to the Church.

The Rector reported that the General Synod had invited meetings of parishioners to consider the adoption, or not, of a new six-year rule, such that churchwardens should

only serve for a six-year term and then have to step down for at least one year before offering themselves for re-election. The idea behind this was to prevent parishioners who might otherwise be interested in standing from being put off by the prospect of being stuck in the post for many years. On the other hand, the rule could be inflexible as a new churchwarden may well take some time to settle in to the position and may want to see through a project which may well extend beyond three years. After a brief discussion, Andy Hurst proposed the motion that the parishioners meeting should not apply the rule, and the motion was carried unanimously.

This concluded the meeting of the parishioners and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting then began.

4 ELECTIONS TO THE DEANERY SYNOD AND THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

There were no Deanery representatives to be elected as they had been elected in 2005 to serve for three years. For the PCC there were two vacancies and two candidates, namely Stephen Nichols and Andrew Butler. There were no further nominations. There being two vacancies and two nominations, the above two people were duly voted on to the PCC, nem con.

The list of current Deanery Synod representatives were: Ceridwen Cranford, Andy Hurst, and Alan Tang.

The list of PCC members for 2007/2008 was therefore: Val Barter, Carol Brook-Partridge (Churchwarden), Andrew Butler, George Constantinidi, Ceridwen Cranford, Stuart Crippen, David Dew, Anne Forrest, Peter Hopkins, Andy Hurst, Stephen Nichols, Liz Preston, Alan Tang, Geoffrey Taylor (Churchwarden), and Martin Whittaker.

5 ELECTION OF SIDESMEN

The Rector reported that Vera Ashford, Malcolm and Pat Mackenzie, and Robin and Rosemary Hunter were all unavailable as Sidesmen for the coming year for various reasons. However, to the current list should be added Margaret and Trevor Johnson and, now that he was no longer a churchwarden, Richard Fletcher. The list of Sidesmen was therefore as follows for 2007/08: Cleone Augur, Sir William Barlow, Michael Christmas, George Constantinidi, Geraldine Crippen, Richard Fletcher, Anne Forrest, Sue Hockley, Hazel Howard, Margaret and Trevor Johnson, Dorothy Marshall, Lavinia Southern, Barbara Steele, Elspeth and Henry Villet, and Mary Wood.

6 REPORT ON THE ELECTORAL ROLL

Elspeth Villet, the Electoral Officer, gave a report on the numbers on the roll. The previous Electoral Roll had been terminated, as required by the rules, and a new roll prepared. The numbers on the roll had, as was to be expected, decreased from 166

last year to 137 this year. Of the 137, 53 were men and 84 were women. The congregation's thanks were recorded to Elspeth for keeping the records accurately.

7 PRESENTATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

Stuart Crippen, the Treasurer, spoke on the annual accounts. Although the accounts looked healthy, they were not as good as they appeared. Although the total balances carried forward at the year end had increased from £189,000 at the end of 2005 to £213,000 at the end of 2006, this was partly due to our holding of £6,000 which was earmarked for the Lima project, and about £5,000 which was a book value increase in the value of our investments, which we cannot sell except in case of dire emergency. There was an improvement in our restricted funds, which was good, but even then these restricted funds fell a long way short of what was needed: important works were needed to the floor of the Jesus Chapel, wire guards (estimated to cost in the region of £10,000) were needed on the stained glass windows which had been vandalised, work would be needed in connection with the Quinquennial inspection, the south wall floor needed a lot of money spending on it which would hopefully be covered by insurance (but further expenditure by the Church cannot be ruled out), and finally the organ needed work (and the quote obtained was twice the previous estimate).

Regarding unrestricted funds, against a turnover of £124,000, the surplus of income over expenditure was only about £500, and was therefore very tight. The PCC had worked very hard to keep costs down, but the regular giving was down by £6,900 on the previous year, and therefore there was a lot to make up. The cost of utilities was up, insurance was up, and professional fees were up. On the plus side, the amount brought in by donations for candles was £2,000.

The accounts had been audited and the motion for approval of the accounts was approved unanimously.

A question was asked as to whether the reduction in the number of people on the Electoral Roll would lead to a reduction in the parish share, but the Rector explained that all parishes in the Deanery had their Electoral Rolls revised at the same time, and had a similar reduction in their Electoral Rolls for the same reasons (e.g. people who had come on to the Electoral Roll for the purpose of marriage or other purposes having moved away, and therefore dropping off the list).

Grateful thanks were expressed to Stuart Crippen for the huge amount of work put in by him as Treasurer.

8 CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT AND DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

Both these reports were tabled and there were no questions on them. The Rector encouraged members of the congregation to take the reports away and read them, and to ask questions at a later stage if necessary.

The Rector expressed grateful thanks to all those who had contributed their reports and for the work that they had done.

9 RECTOR'S REPORT

The Rector thanked all those involved with the ministry of the Church at St Mary's, and in particular thanked those connected with the worship, namely the Choir, the servers, the chalice assistants, the organist, the sacristans, and the sidesmen. He thanked the flower ladies, those who keep the Church clean, Elspeth Villet and Julie Griffin in the Parish Office, the Chantry House Committee (who had created and maintained possibly the best church hall in the land), the Mothers' Union (for their excellent example in providing the "First-time Mums & Under-1s", which neighbouring Christchurch had copied), the Pastoral Group, the Junior Church (which was flourishing), all the members of the PCC and especially the Churchwardens, the Treasurer, the Secretary, those who looked after the parish magazine (its composition, and its collation and distribution), and for those (particularly Anne) who organised the parties and functions for the Church.

The Rector drew the meeting's attention to Christian issues in the wider world. The Anglican Communion was undergoing a difficult time with issues of ordination and sexual orientation. The tabloids' superficial view of the debate on these issues had unfortunately prevailed over any more theological debate. Despite hopes that Archbishop Rowan Williams might be able to exercise a role within the Communion more akin to that of the Pope in terms of providing a central authority, the Anglican Communion Office had been unable to succeed in this respect. The Primates Meeting had foundered when the American Church had elected a woman presiding bishop. The Anglican churches in Africa had reacted to this. The Canadian Church had flouted the negotiated agreement about marriage of same sex couples. Former Archbishop Runcie's prediction of an "impaired Communion" between ECUSA and the rest of the Anglican Communion had become a reality. The Anglican Communion needed to continue to apply the three-fold test of scripture, tradition and reason. The worldwide Communion needed our prayers as "no earthly power can save it".

Within the Church of England, the Rector reported that the Anglican Methodist Covenant continued in existence, but was faced with ordination issues itself. Anglican Roman Catholic relationships continued to improve, and in particular there had been an agreed statement on St Mary by ARCIC, although the Roman Catholic Church continued to reserve its position with regard to women priests and bishops.

The Rector reported that he had attended a Henley clergy away-day in Rome, where they had stayed at the English college. He related his interesting experiences there.

The appointment of a new Bishop of Oxford to replace the retiring Richard Harries had been a long time in coming. The Henley Deanery Chapter had protested at the lack of the invitation to the installation service.

Within the parish, the Rector exhorted the congregation that life should be there to be enjoyed rather than endured, and that we should live the life of Christ in this place.

Richard Fletcher thanked the Rector for his priestly ministry in the parish, and commended his preaching, his wide ministry and the generous hospitality of both him and Anne.

10 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS

Villars Hayward were reappointed as independent examiners.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no matters of any other business.

The meeting closed at about 7.30pm.

Signed by the Chairman ……

Dated ……