THE UNITED BENEFICE OF
HENLEY-ON-THAMES WITH REMENHAM

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

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parochial Church Council
held on
Tuesday 13th November 2007
at 8.00 pm
in the Chantry House

PRESENT

The Rector, Val Barter, Carol Brook-Partridge (Churchwarden), Andy Butler, George Constantinidi, Ceridwen Cranford, David Dew, Anne Forrest, Peter Hopkins (Secretary), Andy Hurst, Stephen Nichols, Liz Preston, Geoffrey Taylor (Churchwarden) and Martin Whittaker .

The meeting was preceded by a celebration of the Eucharist in St Leonard's Chapel.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Stuart Crippen (Treasurer).

2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the last PCC meeting on the 25th of September were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3 CONSIDERATION AND PRIORITISATION OF ACTIONS SUGGESTED AT PCC MORNING

The Council considered the notes of the PCC morning. After discussion, the Council decided to prioritise the development of a welcome notice board inside the Church, and to have welcomers in the Church for late night shopping in early December. It was agreed to form a working group for each of these two projects, and the Council began the task of identifying who should be part of these working groups. The Rector would give more publicity to the groups and the priorities in the Sunday services. It was also agreed that a new website for the Church should be developed, and Stephen Nichols agreed to contribute to the technical side of the website, with the design coming from Fired Up.

<u>Churchyard</u>

It was agreed to suspend the Churchyard project for the moment as the organ was the priority. It was agreed that the Churchyard is looking better now than before, in any case, but the tree work could go ahead.

The clock

It was noted that this was still failing to keep good time, but Norman Topson has been adjusting it and it was hoped that it would soon be telling the right time.

The organ

The Rector reported the latest problems with the organ, namely the fact that the reservoir leathers are reaching the end of their natural life, and so the Council faces more fundraising other than just for the console. The Council approved a resolution (proposed by Geoffrey Taylor and seconded by Carol Brook-Partridge) that "the Church Council requests a faculty for a new console for St Mary's" and this was passed nem con.

Finance and fabric

The Rector read out a report tabled by the Treasurer, as follows: -

"Our finances continue to be soundly based. We have been prudent and careful in the management of our financial affairs, which have been scrutinised by the Standing Committee. Our overall assets are virtually the same as at this point last year. Our weakest position as previously emphasised relates to the unrestricted funds of the PCC, which are showing a very slight increase from this point last year, but unfortunately expenditure is looking as though it will exceed income by approximately £5,000 at the year end. (More in the light of recent news about the organ failure).

Planned Giving, which had decreased substantially last year, has not decreased further, which is encouraging, but on the other hand we are suffering the same loss for a second year.

Whilst our finances are generally in a healthy position, I feel we must not overlook the drop in regular giving, which took place last year of approximately £6,000. We do need to concentrate at some point on increasing our regular giving. As I indicated at this point last year, I fear that soon in the years ahead our expenditure is likely to overtake income unless we take some action. This in fact looks likely to happen this year.

Salaries

We are at present reviewing the terms of employment for Julie Griffin and Elspeth Villet, as mentioned at the last PCC meeting. Time has been against us and it has not proved possible to finalise matters as yet. In view of the delay, we have felt it right to offer each a small increase in remuneration and hope to be able to report more fully at our next meeting. The Standing Committee are aware of all the details in this area.

Proposed new organ console

We have given a letter of intent and have paid a deposit of £2,480 (20%) of the price (£12,400 including VAT). This was to secure the organ console, which is for sale and because other purchasers were in the frame. We now hear from Tarquin Wiggins that this console will be too small and so he will build another at no extra cost. Quite why

he did not know the organ console in his possession was too small, bearing in mind he has been servicing and repairing our organ for at least a year, is not clear. Mr Wiggins has asked for a further payment of 70% (£8,680) on the 15th of November 2007, i.e. in two days, with the balance of 10% (£1,240) payable on completion. The total cost, including installation, will be in the region of £30,000 including VAT (we shall probably need to pay the VAT, but will apply for a grant to claim back some or possibly all). There are also some unspecified additional costs yet to be itemised. It is hoped that installation may be possible between the 18th of May 2008 and the end of June 2008.

We have funds or a promise of funds as follows: -

£1,200 in the bank
£1,000 grant on demand
A letter of confirmation of £5,000 from the Friends of St Mary's
Possibility of a little more later

A sum of £8,000 from the Fabric Fund is available as an advance if required whilst funds are being raised by the Organ Fundraising Committee from which this sum of £8,000 would then be repaid to the Fabric Fund.

We therefore have enough in hand to pay for construction of the organ console, during which time the Organ Fund Committee will be able to launch their appeal.

The more recent news regarding a £5,000 repair urgently required to the organ is unfortunate, but payment for this could come from ordinary PCC funds, although this may limit the availability of any additional funds from the PCC. Hopefully, the cost of this repair might form part of our organ appeal.

We are asking Tarquin Wiggins for a note of other organs he has built and installed so that we can obtain a recommendation of his work. The Church authorities will require certain information from Tarquin Wiggins to establish his credentials and that he is fully authorised to carry out the work, and we are seeking this as well before making any further payments. We are also asking Mr Wiggins for more precise information about the extra costs referred to but not detailed in his estimate.

Charitable Giving for 2007

Usually at this point in the year we agree our schedule of charitable donations to be paid out before the end of the calendar year. A schedule agreed by the Standing Committee of the proposed giving for 2007 is available for each member of the PCC. It is also proposed that we top up the Charitable Giving Fund (£3,332) to £10,000 before making these donations in the same way as in previous years."

Petrus van Schendel picture

The Standing Committee had also decided it was time to have another go at trying to persuade the Council for the Care of Churches to allow St Mary's to sell the Petrus van Schendel picture, which was currently being held by Sothebys. The Secretary undertook to provide the Rector with the papers relating to the picture.

Chantry House

A brief report was given about the Chantry House.

Any other business

There was no other business.

Pastoral matters

There were no pastoral matters brought to the Council's attention.

The meeting closed with prayer at about 9.40pm.

Signed by the Chairman ……

Dated ……