THE UNITED BENEFICE OF
HENLEY-ON-THAMES WITH REMENHAM

PARISH OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN, HENLEY-ON-THAMES
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Minutes of a Meeting of the Parochial Church Council
held on
Tuesday 16th September 2008
at 8.00 pm
in the Chantry House

PRESENT

The Rector, Brian Brent, Carol Brook-Partridge (Churchwarden), Ceridwen Cranford, Stuart Crippen (Treasurer), David Dew, Anne Forrest, Stephen Nichols (Secretary), Liz Preston, Geoffrey Taylor (Churchwarden), Martin Whittaker and Mary Wood.

The meeting was preceded by a celebration of the Eucharist in the Jesus Chapel.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Andy Butler and Peter Hopkins.

2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the last PCC meeting on the 10th of June were approved. The minutes were signed by the Chairman.

3 MATTERS ARISING

Paragraph 8 of the Minutes of the last PCC meeting say that we recently received £1000 from a film company who filmed from the Tower. The figure was in fact £200, although at the time we expected to receive £1000.

Anne Forrest had not been contacted by the Additional Curates Society, and Fr Martyn agreed to follow this up.

Fr Martyn had received a cheque for a legacy from Joan Glanville of £5027.12.

4 TREASURER'S REPORT

Stuart Crippen presented a report on the church's finances, which had been scrutinised by the Standing Committee at its last meeting. Our total assets stand at £214,724, which includes Coif shares valued at £53,889. Given the current stock market volatility, we should consider instead our assets excluding these shares, giving a figure of £160,815.

Balances in our Restricted Funds are largely unchanged from the last PCC meeting. Any increase is due to Chantry House Teas, which have raised the sum of £4,393 net

of all costs. This is a brilliant result due to much hard work by several dedicated people.

The Organ Fund stands at £52,789. We expect a VAT refund of around £3,000, making approximately £55,789. The total bill is expected to be £57,483, so we are almost there – another brilliant result.

We may well be losing £10,000 per annum income from one of the mobile phone masts in the Tower. We expect the cost of utilities to rise substantially, costing an extra £2-3,000 per annum.

Unrestricted funds total £72,348. At this point last year the figure was £79,394. However the PCC has already paid out the expected £3000 VAT reclaim on the organ renovation and so our total without that cost would have been £75,348 – about £4000 down on this point last year. This point in the year always shows our maximum balances in our accounts.

We have received a legacy of £10,000, to be split equally between the Fabric Fund and Unrestricted funds. This and the Glanville legacy of around £5000 will improve our figures.

Stuart asked the PCC to approve a salary increase of 5% in the Organist's salary. The PCC approved this unanimously.

Geoffrey Taylor asked Stuart about the state of planned giving. Stuart reported that last year, we received £34,175 in planned giving, and that we have received £23,505 to the end of August 2008. Planned giving has been diminishing for the last few years.

5 MATTERS FOR DECISION AND REPORT

Following the previous report on planned giving, Geoffrey noted that the Quinquennial inspection is due, which is likely to lead to a series of "fabric" projects which will require funds. He proposed that a finance sub-committee of the PCC be formed to scrutinise expenditure and investigate revenue opportunities, such as the rental of the Chantry House and concerts in church.

Fr Martyn said that the Standing Committee had proposed that six sub-committees be formed over the next few months to cover all aspects of church life. A lot of work falls on the Rector and Churchwardens which could be shared between more people. This is a busy parish, and a lot of work is being done by many people. These sub-committees or action groups would formalize a lot of what is already being done, and enable the work to be developed further. The proposed action groups would be:

Liturgy and Music
Discipleship
Mission and Hospitality
Finance
Buildings and Churchyard
Events and Communication

The Rector and Churchwardens would discuss with PCC members and others in the congregation over the next few weeks who should be in each group. The PCC agreed unanimously that these groups be formed.

6 HEALTH AND SAFETY

There was an accident in the Tower in March 2008, which was reported to the churchwardens only this week. The Tower Captain lost part of her right thumb while ringing the bells. There was no negligence on the part of the PCC, and the Tower Captain said she was entirely responsible for the accident. She has been able to continue to ring since the accident.

7 PASTORAL MATTERS

There were no pastoral matters to be discussed.

8 AOB

Julian Elkington, Steeplekeeper, has produced a report for the Standing Committee, in anticipation of the Quinquennial inspection, identifying items for repair, renewal and maintenance in the Tower.

Martin Whittaker presented a proposal from the Chantry House Management Committee for the installation of a lift in the Chantry House. This had last been discussed at the March 2008 PCC meeting where there had been unanimous agreement to assess the feasibility of this proposed building alteration. The stairs in the Chantry House are steep and many people who want to use the Chantry House are unable to climb them to get to the upper room. The proposal was to install a vertical lift at the north end of the Chantry House to carry those in wheelchairs from the lobby, next to the stairs, to the upper room. The existing stairs would be retained and their width reduced by about six inches. The partition at the end of the lower room would be moved 1 metre into the room. The cupboard would be slightly larger. Upstairs the lift, which is simply a platform within a rectangular vertical tube, would rise through the floor beside the stairway. There would be a lift enclosure on the upper floor which would be about 1.1 metres high. The cost would be about £94,500, of which £50,000 would come from the existing Chantry House funds of £65,646, and the remainder from various council funds.

The PCC discussed this proposal at length. Some members were concerned that the proposed vertical lift was neither suitable nor appropriate for the building. The lift would interfere with the appearance and character of the ancient building and take up a lot of space. Alternatives were mentioned and it was explained that both a Stannah chair lift and an Incline Platform Lift had been discussed by the CHMC and for various reasons rejected as unsuitable. Stuart was concerned that the funds of £65,646 were at the highest at this time of the year, and that is was likely that we would need to spend much of that money on repairs and maintenance in the near future. The proposal was not approved, for three reasons which were summarised as follows by Fr Martyn: 1) Visual Impairment, 2) Necessity, 3) Ongoing maintenance costs (of the Chantry House). Brian Brent, Mary Wood, Geoffrey Taylor and Ceridwen Cranford will attend the next meeting of the CHMC in order to explain in detail their concerns about the proposal for a vertical lift.

Brian Brent offered a piano to replace the unusable one in the choir vestry. The PCC agreed to pay the costs of moving it.

Stephen Nichols reported that the PCC will need to register with the Charity Commissioners from next year, as the PCC exemption is being removed for PCCs with an income of more than £100,000 per annum.
Fr Martyn proposed that the church be opened again during the town Christmas Fair (to be held on Friday 28th November). The PCC agreed.

The Organ console renovation is complete. There will be a celebratory recital on 18th October, and a concert to raise further funds given by Neath Male Voice choir and the Newlands Singers on 14th March 2009. The Son et Lumière will be held on 14th and 15th November. Geoffrey proposed that the PCC retain the Organ fund as a Restricted fund to pay for future repairs. The PCC agreed.

Geoffrey said that the design for the statue of Our Lady had been finalized. A copy of a 1930s sculpture by Anne-Marie Roux would be purchased, named "Vierge présentant l'enfant". Brian Brent has designed and would build a wooden column on which it would be displayed, in front of a fabric backdrop. The altar in the Lady Chapel would be moved slightly so that it is centred on the window above it, with the statue in the corner. The column would be secured to the floor, and the statue secured to the column. Stuart proposed that the statue be bought and installed, a faculty be applied for, and the Lady Chapel be re-ordered in this way. Carol Brook-Partridge seconded the motion, which was agreed unanimously. The statue and Lady Chapel will be re-dedicated in March at the festival of the Annunciation.

Mary Wood asked if any news had been heard from Bishop William and our Link Diocese of Lima. Fr Martyn said that Bishop William is still recuperating after illness, but is now back in Lima. We have received some pictures from Fr Aurelio, of the church of St Mary in Lima. Our money has helped to found some mission churches, and build a house for Fr Aurelio.

The meeting closed with prayer at about 9.35pm.

Signed by the Chairman ……

Dated ……