THE UNITED BENEFICE OF
HENLEY-ON-THAMES WITH REMENHAM

PARISH OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN, HENLEY-ON-THAMES
www.stmaryshenley.org.uk

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parochial Church Council
held on
Tuesday 20th January 2009
at 8.00 pm
in the Chantry House

PRESENT

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

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

1 PRAYERS

The meeting began with prayers.

2 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Peter Hopkins and Mary Wood.

3 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the last PCC meeting on the 11th of November were approved and signed by the Chairman.

4 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

5 MATTERS FOR DECISION AND REPORT

a) Elspeth Villet, the verger, has decided to retire as from the end of March 2009.

b) The churchwardens have received the Quinquennial Inspection Report from Richard Oxley. In general, the church is in good condition, yet there is still lots to attend to. As the report is so detailed, a buildings sub-committee will be convened by Fr Martyn and Geoffrey Taylor to scrutinize the report, meet the architect and report to the PCC. There is nothing in the report which needs addressing very urgently.

c) The PCC discussed the Stewardship Campaign. As many people are suffering financial hardship at present, the Standing Committee felt it was not appropriate to run a large fundraising campaign. Instead, it would be more appropriate to start a campaign of raising awareness of our financial situation. Members of the

congregation should be asked to include St Mary's in their regular domestic budget, and to make donations including Gift Aid, where this is possible. They should also be asked to give regularly through a standing order or weekly envelope. We should also ask people to donate their time and talents. There are a lot of tasks which need to be done in the church on a daily or weekly basis. Many of these are done at present by the verger, or fall on the churchwardens to be done. The list of these tasks is being reviewed, so that we can ask members of the congregation to volunteer to do them.

d) The Chantry House Management Committee has applied for Listed Building Consent for the installation of an incline platform lift. Approval of this is expected within a month. If this approval is granted, full plans for the lift will be drawn up and presented to the PCC for their approval.

e) Lady Chapel re-ordering. The Diocesan Advisory Committee had written to Fr Martyn, suggesting a gold backdrop hang behind the altar, rather than a blue backdrop, and repeating their request that we purchase a one-off piece of art. Fr Martyn will reply to them, stating that we have a donation which will cover the chosen statue, but not a newly-commissioned statue. Anne Forrest is due to collect the statue from the Louvre workshop shortly. The PCC was asked to approve the purchase of cloth to make a backdrop to hang behind the altar, at a cost of up to £1500, and the purchase of carpeting to cover the plinth on which the altar will stand, at a cost of about £200. Mary Wood has agreed to make the backdrop, which will need to be fireproof. The PCC agreed to this expenditure, with one abstention.

6 TREASURER'S BUSINESS

Stuart Crippen presented a summary of the church's finances for 2008. The draft accounts are being audited, and will be presented formally to the PCC at the next meeting.

Income for the year exceeded expenditure by about £3000. This gain was bolstered by legacies, which make our financial position appear better. The surplus includes a sum held temporarily in our current account in preparation for the final bill in connection with the Organ Renovation. Planned giving has decreased by about £6000. The fabric fund stands at about £20000. The value of COIF shares will have been affected by stock market volatility, which would skew the accounts greatly, so have been excluded from this analysis. The dividend income they produce has been roughly constant.

The organ repairs are almost complete, and a final bill of £6,750 must be paid when the work is complete. So far we have raised about £56,000, and paid £50,733. This will mean we have a small shortfall, which should be filled by future fundraising and reclaim of VAT which we can claim once the work is complete.

£1778 has been sent to the Diocese of Lima, which was received with thanks.

The Chantry House is in a good financial position. There is £12,562 (income from lettings) in the current account £7,683 in the deposit account, and £44,500 in the repair deposit account.

In summary, we must look to reduce our expenditure where we can, and brace ourselves for a challenging few years ahead.

7 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

a) Fr Martyn has received some correspondence from the Diocesan Surveyor, who recently inspected the Rectory. Double-glazed windows are due to be fitted in 2011, and the parish has been asked to contribute. The cost is estimated at £11-12,500. The PCC agreed that the Rectory should be double-glazed, but was concerned at being asked to help pay for this work, which should be paid for from the Parish Share given to the Diocese. The churchwardens will write to the Archdeacon to discuss this matter. During discussion of this matter with the surveyor, Fr Martyn was told that the PCC is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the Parish Office and garage beneath it, rather than the diocese.

b) A resident of the almshouses next to the churchyard wrote to Fr Martyn asking that the hourly chimes of the church bells be turned off. Fr Martyn replied, saying that many visitors and parishioners say they are pleased to hear the chimes. The PCC agreed that the chimes should remain.

c) Fr Martyn reported that The Friends of St Mary's are looking to employ someone for about 1½ days a week to develop the use of the church building for concerts, exhibitions and the like.

8 AOB

a) Geoffrey Taylor reported that he had spoken with the Organist, Philip Aspden, about promoting a series of monthly lunchtime concerts in church, and Sunday afternoon concerts during the summer. Philip will talk to colleagues at other churches to seek advice on this.

b) Stephen Nichols has been sent information from the Diocesan Secretary about registering the PCC with the Charity Commissioners. The registration must be completed by April 2009. Once registered, we must state that we are a registered charity on all public documents – cheques, invoices, advertisements etc. Each PCC member must sign the registration papers.

c) Liz Preston reminded the PCC of the fundraising concert on March 14th, and asked for help with organising it and selling tickets. The Neath Male choir and the Newlands Singers will be singing, raising money for the Organ fund.

d) Anne Forrest asked what happens when visitors fill in welcome cards, asking for more information about the church. Carol and Geoffrey said that when given these cards, they will ring the person soon after, but this is a task which could be done by someone else.

The meeting closed with prayer at about 9.20pm.

Signed by the Chairman ……

Dated ……