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 15th September 2009
at 8.00 pm
in the Chantry House

PRESENT

The Rector, Sarah Bell, Brian Brent, Carol Brook-Partridge (Churchwarden), Andy Butler, George Constantinidi (Deputy Warden), Stuart Crippen (Treasurer), David Dew, Anne Forrest, Liz Holdsworth, Alex Lakatos, Stephen Nichols (Secretary), Geoffrey Taylor and Martin Whittaker (Churchwarden).

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

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Ceridwen Cranford and Mary Wood.

2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the last PCC meeting on the 9th June were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

4 MATTERS FOR DECISION AND REPORT

a) A tender report has been received from Oxley Conservation regarding repairs to the East Gable. Four contractors were invited to tender, and Richard Oxley recommends we accept the tender from Ward & Co of High Wycombe. This was the cheapest quotation at £37,381.24 and Ward is an experienced firm. The price is significantly more than we were expecting, and includes a contingency of 15%, due to the increased risk of unforeseen work. We do not have the funds to pay this much at present, and must raise them. George Constantinidi asked if we can get the VAT back on the repairs. We should certainly be able to apply, but there is no guarantee a refund would be made. David Dew asked who controls the contingency; this would be under the control of Richard Oxley. Fr Martyn proposed we accept Ward's tender – all agreed with one abstention. Martin Whittaker will speak to Richard Oxley to see if the scope of works and therefore the price can be reduced, and the works delayed. We cannot go ahead though until we can pay.

The PCC discussed how the money could be found. We have previously received grants from various grant-making charities – applying for them is a time-consuming and laborious task. The Friends of St Mary's have between £4000 and £5000 which we could request. Other than this, we must ask the congregation and local community to pay. The buildings sub-committee will estimate costs for the other urgent items noted in the Quinquennial report, so that an appeal can be made for all urgent works, not just the East Gable repairs.

b) The PCC has been offered a statue of the Trinitarian Madonna. The statue was made in bronze resin by a local sculptor, and could be placed in the churchyard. Members of the PCC asked to view the sculpture, to see if it would fit the setting. We would need to pay for installation of the statue, but the statue itself would be donated to us.

c) Clare Convey has been appointed as Director of Events and Fundraising for the Friends of St Mary's. She has started working 1 and a half days per week, in the Parish Office. Her salary for one year was donated; in future years it is to be raised from charitable grants, rather than from personal donations.

d) The Diocese has asked if we would like the boundaries of the churchyard to be registered with the Land Registry. This will make no difference to who is responsible for maintaining the churchyard, and cost us nothing.

5 TREASURER'S BUSINESS

Stuart Crippen presented the accounts to the end of July. As mentioned at previous meetings, a loss of £5-10,000 can be expected for the year. An application has been submitted to HMRC for the reclaiming of VAT paid on the repairs to the organ, but this has not yet been acknowledged. Chantry House teas were successful this year, raising around £4,000, and the finances for the Chantry House are looking in good shape. Stuart is being assisted in his work as Treasurer by Kathryn Turner, who will take over as Treasurer for the Chantry House from 1st January 2010. The PCC agreed expenditure of £44 on another copy for Kathryn of the software used to keep the church's accounts. Stuart proposed a pay rise for Philip Aspden, our Organist, of 4% (£223), which brings his salary to £5,567.

6 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

a) Fr Martyn reported that a new guide to the history of the church building has been written by Trevor Johnson and Geoffrey Taylor and produced by Russ Newlands Publishing. This will go on sale in church. The PCC expressed its thanks to Geoffrey and Trevor for their work on this.
b) We have made donations in the past to St Luke's Hospital for the Clergy, but the Hospital is no longer running.

7 AOB

a) The PCC discussed which charity should receive our donations from the Harvest Festival on 3rd October. In the past, we have supported "Send a Cow", and "Feed the Children". The PCC decided to support "Feed the Children" at Harvest, and to send a donation from our annual charitable giving to "Send a Cow". The PCC will decide at its next meeting in November how to split its annual charitable giving between this and other charities.

b) Various members of the choir have requested that a loudspeaker be installed in the chancel, so that the lessons, prayers and sermons can be heard easily from the choir stalls. Fr Martyn agreed to get an estimate of how much this would cost.

c) Members of the choir had also asked if the lighting could be improved in the chancel. Fr Martyn will check that all the lights there are working correctly and pointing in the appropriate direction. The lighting at the lectern is also poor at times. Geoffrey Taylor offered to get a small light which can be fixed to the lectern to improve this.

d) A visitor to the church recently asked if wheelchair access to the church could be improved. It is not easy for a wheelchair user to open the glass doors at the East end of the church without assistance. One solution would be to fix an electric motor to one or more of the glass doors, with a button inside and outside to open and close them. Brian Brent had spoken to some companies which provide such motors, and offered to investigate this further. The cost could be about £2000.

e) The PCC discussed earlier in the year asking the Royal School of Needlework to restore a decaying altar frontal. The cost of the repairs would be several thousand pounds, and the frontal is currently being stored for us by the RSN. The PCC agreed that we could not afford the repairs at present, and if the RSN cannot store the frontal any longer, we will find another place for it to be stored safely.

f) Sarah Bell asked if the church could get a lighter processional cross, which all the servers would be able to carry. The church has two, both fairly heavy. Fr Martyn agreed to talk to other churches to see if one of our crosses could be exchanged with a lighter one from another church.

g) George Constantinidi asked if, since St Luke's Hospital is no longer offering medical care to Clergy, the PCC thought that we should pay for a medical checkup for Fr Martyn. Geoffrey Taylor suggested that we should also offer to pay for a checkup for Anne. Martin Whittaker seconded the proposal, and the PCC agreed unanimously.

The meeting closed with prayer at about 9.35pm.

Signed by the Chairman ……

Dated ……