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 9th June 2009
at 8.00 pm
in the Chantry House

PRESENT

The Rector, Sarah Bell, Carol Brook-Partridge (Churchwarden), Ceridwen Cranford, Stuart Crippen (Treasurer), David Dew, Anne Forrest, Alex Lakatos, Stephen Nichols (Secretary) and Mary Wood.

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 Brian Brent, Andy Butler, Geoffrey Taylor and Martin Whittaker.

3 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the last PCC meeting on the 31st March were approved and signed by the Chairman.

4 MATTERS ARISING

a) Brian Brent had asked before the meeting whether the volunteers identified during the stewardship campaign had started doing the tasks they had offered to do. Carol Brook-Partridge reported that she had spoken to some of the volunteers, who had started various tasks, and she would be speaking to the others in due course.
b) At the last PCC meeting, the PCC had discussed selling the eagle lectern, but not come to any decision. Brian Brent had said since then that he now thought that the eagle lectern should be retained, and offered to re-polish and re-lacquer it. The PCC concurred.
c) At the APCM on 26th April, only one of the two vacancies on the PCC was filled, with the election of Sarah Bell. Since Martin Whittaker was appointed as Churchwarden at the Emergency Meeting of Parishioners on 7th June, a further vacancy had arisen. Fr Martyn proposed that Alex Lakatos and Liz Holdsworth be appointed to fill these vacancies until the next APCM in April 2010. The PCC agreed nem con, and Alex Lakatos formally joined the meeting.

5 MATTERS FOR DECISION AND REPORT

a) The recent Quinquennial inspection of the church identified that the coping stone at the top of the East Gable has slipped. Some water has penetrated into the wall, damaging the lime mortar and causing the wall to bulge. To fix this, builders need to erect scaffolding, remove the coping stone, rebuild the bulging wall, and put the coping stone back. Richard Oxley, who conducted the inspection, estimated the work would cost in the region of £20,000, and identified three contractors who could do the work. The buildings sub-committee had looked at Mr Oxley's proposal in detail. The fabric fund contains around £20,000, but some of this money has been allocated to other repairs.

At Fr Martyn's proposal, the PCC agreed to apply for a faculty from the Diocesan Advisory Committee for these works. Fr Martyn will write to the DAC, noting that this work is reasonably urgent, and that we aim to complete it by the end of 2009.

b) The church owns a painting by Petrus van Schendel which is too valuable to display in church. The PCC had discussed its sale in the past, but not passed a formal resolution to sell it. Stephen Nichols proposed that the painting be sold, seconded by David Dew. The PCC agreed – all were in favour, with one abstention.

c) The Friends of St Mary's are advertising a job vacancy for a Director of Events and Fundraising, for which several applications have been received. Geoffrey Taylor had asked before the meeting how the Friends spend money they raise. Fr Martyn reported that the Friends of St Mary's is a separate charity, which aims to raise funds to be used to look after the church building and preserve its heritage. The Friends give money only to the PCC, in response to a request for a specific piece of expenditure. The PCC is not liable for any loss made by the Friends. The trustees of the Friends are the committee – Clive Hemsley (Chairman), Anthea Redmond (Vice-chairman), Jim Coffee (Treasurer), David Dew (Secretary), Fr Martyn Griffiths, Trevor Johnson and Alan Tang.

d) Stephen Nichols had asked before the meeting how the PCC could improve its communication (amongst the PCC and congregation) of matters to be discussed at future meetings. He felt that too many items are raised under Any Other Business, which doesn't give members enough time to consider the matters under discussion. The PCC discussed this, and made two suggestions. On the Sunday morning after each meeting, a summary of the matters discussed and decisions raised should be distributed to the congregation. This newsletter should also ask the congregation to let the Secretary know of any matters they would like discussed at the next meeting. The Standing Committee would then prepare the agenda for the next PCC meeting, which would be distributed to the congregation, who could discuss them with PCC members before the next meeting. The PCC agreed to do this.

e) The PCC needed to appoint a Treasurer and Secretary for the year ahead. Carol Brook-Partridge proposed that Stuart Crippen be re-appointed as Treasurer and Stephen Nichols be re-appointed as Secretary. Anne Forrest seconded the proposal. There being no other nominees, Stuart and Stephen were duly re-appointed.

6 TREASURER'S BUSINESS

Stuart Crippen read to the PCC a letter he had received from our accountants, Villars Hayward. The letter reported that the accounts for 2008-9 contained no material weaknesses and no problems were raised.

Stuart then reported that the PCC's assets at the end of May were £179,563, with unrestricted funds at £48473. This is a decrease on the previous year, as we have had lots of expense, and income has been hard to generate. Income is looking like it might increase, but expenditure is also increasing. The forecast at present is for a £10,000 deficit by the end of the year.

Geoffrey Taylor had asked before the meeting that Stuart report on the cost of electricity and gas for the church. In 2007 the cost to the end of May was £4279. In 2008, it was £4542, and in 2009, £5855. We may spend nearly £10,000 by the end of the year. The PCC then discussed briefly what measures might be taken to increase income and reduce expenditure, but without a firm conclusion.

Stuart reported that the Organ renovation is now complete, and the final bill has been paid, bringing the total expenditure to £57,400. The fund will stay open to continue raising funds for expected future repairs. Stuart proposed that Norman Topsom's salary for winding the tower clock be increased to £700 per annum. The PCC agreed.

7 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

Fr Martyn noted that the job of churchwarden involves an awful lot of work, and proposed that the PCC appoint two deputy wardens to do certain tasks. The deputy wardens would join the Standing Committee. The PCC agreed, appointing George Constantinidi as deputy warden, with particular responsibility for the Chantry House. The PCC will appoint a second deputy warden when a suitable candidate is found.

8 AOB

a) Anne Forrest asked about the subcommittees, which the PCC agreed to create at a previous meeting. Fr Martyn said that he will get them started so that we can develop their work.

b) Alex Lakatos asked if the church had a list of email addresses for members of the congregation, to whom news and information can be distributed. Stephen Nichols agreed to add to the PCC newsletter an invitation to anyone who wanted to receive future newsletters by email.

c) Carol Brook-Partridge reported on the series of Saturday lunchtime concerts held in church recently, organised by Geoffrey Taylor and Philip Aspden. The concerts are free, with a retiring collection, and the performers are being paid travel expenses. Each has had around 30 or 40 people in the audience. The series seems to be a success, and will continue.

The meeting closed with prayer at about 9.10pm.

Signed by the Chairman ……

Dated ……