

Minutes of the meeting of St Mark's Church Council
29 January 2008

Welcome and opening prayers.

Apologies: John Day, John Stubbs, Wendy Rider, Marion Prior, Rev Dr Sam Cappleman, Rev Dr Joan Crossley

Minutes of the 12 Nov 2007 meeting were accepted

St Mark's Leadership Team

Linda Parry updated members on events since the last meeting:

- Putnoe Barn Dance was attended by a number of people from St Mark's. A good evening was had by all especially the sausage and mash.
- The Christmas fayre had been a great success, over £1800 was raised. A big thank you to Avril and her team for all their continued hard work.
- Christingle service was again a well attended and fulfilling service. We thank the Guides who helped by making up the bags for the Christingles.
- The gift service was in aid of Bechar and up to now we have raised over £2,000
- Bedford Town Band played for Carols in the Car Park with mulled wine and mince pies. As before, it had been a great success bringing in people from around the area.
- Carols by Candlelight was also well attended and a wonderful start to the Christmas week.
- Putnoe had a travelling Nativity and Mary and Joseph (in the form of knitted dolls) visited a number of homes of the St Mark's congregation. Thanks to Liz Spavins for organizing it.
- We have recently had a data base produced of all the hymns sung at both churches over the four year period from 2004-2007. Carolyn Morris has agreed to continue updating this through 2008. A copy can be seen at St Mark's office on the PC or from Linda Parry.
- The Lent course will be led by each of the ministers culminating in a final session with the Bishop.
- The coffee shop is continuing well although we have lost Carla and at present it is being run by volunteers.

Centre Management

- The grant application to WREN had been approved; subject an 11% third party contribution. This meant that the major works to the Large Hall could go ahead. The project was currently with the architect for assessment.
- Bookings were going very well.
- Clubhouse funding was again at risk, with Council support only available until March. Euro funding was being sought to provide a more stable structure.
- Redecoration of the Church was under way and arrangements had been made for the 5 year inspection of electrics throughout the whole Church premises.
- A Community Centre Forum had been set up in order that any concerns or suggestions on improvements from any user groups could put forward and addressed.

Finance & Covenants

- Because St Mark's accounts were currently being audited it was not possible to circulate a full balance sheet. However, the balances were as follows:
Church Current Account £16,592.30 Cr
Reserve Account £35,218.11 Cr
Preschool Account £15,066.16Cr
Reserve Account £8,859.64 Cr (including £5,000 redundancy contingency)
- The annual Anglican Quota was now known to be £40,170 (budgeted for at £40,740)
- Offerings were on target and lettings were ahead of forecast
- Gift Aid tax claim to be made once finance records had been returned from the auditors. Approx £4,600 claim.

Pre-School

- All is going very well. There are no places available until July, it is then planned to re-promote.
- Voluntary helpers are needed while Jean Bank is away.
- Pre-School to participate in the service on Mothering Sunday.
- Invoicing to parents is all up to date.
- A great deal of enthusiasm exists among the staff. Fund raising activities are planned and it is intended to actively promote Pre-School to families moving into the new housing development off Tyne Crescent.

Chat and Play

- Thirty children plus parents now attending.
- Thanks were recorded to Emma Strangwick and the helpers for their continuing hard work.
- Additional helpers were desperately needed, and it was proposed that an announcement would be made at a future Sunday service. Janet Ibberson would possibly outline the roll of helpers.

Junior Church

- Although numbers continued to fluctuate, it was considered to be a very valuable part of our worship.
- Council members recorded their thanks to Janna for all the hard work in ensuring Junior Church was available. Wendy Waters also regularly worked with the children during the services.
- Debbie Coppenhall was also thanked for her work in running the crèche.

Pastoral Support Team

- The ongoing work of the volunteers was providing a very valuable service within our community. Sixty five contacts had been made during 2007.
- Telecare continues to work very well. Sue Marks was retiring and an additional member for the team would be sought over time.
- A people were being considered a the speaker for the Commemoration Service in November.
- Thanks were recorded for the very valuable work carried out by Mary and the team.

Churchyard Committee

- The natural pond had now been installed and the existing millstone upgraded. The seats had been secured.
- Four new plaques had been purchased on the Memorial Wall, with two more pending. One area of the columbarium had been taken up.
- The Churchyard account was currently showing a surplus of £4,000.
- Thanks given once again to Mary Stubbs, and all the volunteers who keep the Garden looking superb.

St Albans Woodland Burial Trust

- All running really well. There had been 10 burials and 6 interments of ashes. 14 burial reservation and 6 interments of ashes had been received.
- Twelve trees had been dedicated.
- A newsletter is planned for the spring: Trustees and relatives would be asked to contribute articles.
- An further open day is planned for 7 June 2008
- On the finance side, the current balance was £17,000 which would allow for the repayment of a £5,200 loan.
- A new road will be made to allow easier access into the glade
- The possible opening of two new glades is under consideration, and Skylark is to be made longer.
- Regular reporting to the Church Council is to be included as part of the Trust's formal constitution.

Ecumenical Report

- A replacement representative on Churches Together was needed to replace Graham Brown.
- It was reported that St Mark's had not yet contributed to the Connectional Fund (£400). This would be reviewed via the Treasurer.

Deanery

Linda Parry had attended the last Deanery meeting and a copy of her report is attached.

Circuit

- The Circuit Ash Wednesday Service is to be held at St Mark's
- An update on the Worship for the Elderly initiative would be given to the next Circuit Meeting.

A.O.B

- Discussion on the storage of the Church banners was referred to the Leadership Team to action.

Dates of the next meetings:

17 June 2008, and 18 November 2008. Both at 7.30pm for 7.45pm

Vision 4 Action

Linda Parry attended the meeting at Christchurch last evening (28/01/08).
2 DVDs were shown "What will they believe" and "Fresh Expressions". Both looked at different styles of worship and how we can be inclusive of all factions of society.
Discussion followed and we then outlined the outreach in our parishes, the following is my report to them:-

St Mark's Church

Reaching out in our Parish Context

We are a well used church by all ages within the community of Brickhill, literally from cradle to grave.
Over the past years we have built on our strengths and tried out new initiatives whenever they have been opened up to us. Some of our strengths are:-

- Storybox – a church based session for under 5's and their carers who enjoy a simple lunch and a bible story. This follows on from a group called Chat and Play which is for Mum's and Toddlers.
- Our church Pre-school is exceptional and has long waiting lists, they often contribute to the Family services.
- Our Garden of Remembrance brings in a lot of people from the immediate area and further afield, as does our Woodland Burial site at Keysoe. The bereaved get comfort and reassurance from the friendly and welcoming atmosphere which we engender.
- Each year we have a Commemoration service, to which we invite all those who have lost a loved one and have been involved in our Garden. It is always very well attended and this year we had almost 200 people.
- Wednesday morning Communion is held in the chapel and we have a wide variety of people who attend.
- A minister visits William Harpur House each Monday to hold a short service of Communion for those who are unable to attend church.
- The coffee shop is open each Sunday afternoon and is becoming ever more popular.
- It has been a tradition at St Mark's that we hold 'themed' social evenings. They are very well attended; usually 100+ are entertained and fed. All are welcome and some even come back to join us on Sundays.
- Our centre manager, Wendy Rider, has recently sent out questionnaires to all our 'users' and when they are returned we shall be able to collate the views and requirements of the periphery of the church family.

What are we planning for the future?

- We are currently putting together a display on how the church can influence Climate Change. Individually, as a church and locally

At the end of the meeting I did ask if there was to be an end to the V4A meetings as there seemed to be no beginning or end to the process and it has been difficult to get representatives to continue after the impetus of the whole event came to fruition.

Linda Parry - 29/01/2008