

Bridge Benefice, Parishes of Canley and Westwood

Minutes of the Meetings to elect Churchwardens and the Annual Parochial Church Meetings held on 30 April 2023

These meetings were held in the context of a Sunday service.

1. Welcome

Revd David Hammond welcomed everyone and thanked the Joint Council for their work during the year. He said that Arun Mathani was stepping down as churchwarden and Matt Jermyn was stepping down as Secretary, and thanked both of them for their work.

Meetings to elect Churchwardens

2. Minutes of the last meetings

The minutes of the meetings held in 2022 were approved.

3. Election of Churchwardens

Ben Packwood and Carolyn Howarth had been nominated to be the two churchwardens for Westwood parish, and Katie Western and Tom Hickinbottom were nominated to be the two churchwardens for Canley. As there were not more candidates than places all four were elected without the need for a vote. Sarah Packwood led prayers for the newly elected wardens.

Annual Parochial Church Meetings

4. Minutes of the last meetings

The minutes of the meetings held in 2022 were approved.

5. Treasurer's report

Jeff Smails gave a report on the Joint Council's finances. He thanked everyone for their generosity in giving and Stuart Torpey for his work, and said the accounts were stable and in good order, but that there was an ongoing deficit.

At the end of 2022 the Bridge had £78,000 of unrestricted funds in the bank, £36,000 designated for building work on St John's. Jeff gave an overview of the major items of expenditure. £76,000 had been given as parish share and £22,000 to organisations the church supports. £88,000 had been spent on staffing, and Jeff said that overall the Bridge employed a number of part-time roles which added up to the equivalent of three full-time people. About £11,000 had been spent on meetings, while buildings, utilities and administration came to £45,000. Total income during 2022 had been £222,000 against total expenditure of £243,000.

Jeff said that in 2023 so far giving had stayed level. The Joint Council had taken a step of faith and planned to spend £270,000 during 2023, which was the amount needed to run St John's and St Stephen's, pay staff and parish share and continue giving to other organisations. That led to a projected deficit of £45,000, and Jeff encouraged everyone to pray and think about creative ways to raise money.

There were major building projects coming up, with St Stephen's working on plans for a new building and the main roof at St John's in a very fragile state. Overall Jeff said that finances were a stretch, but that this was where our faith in God came into play.

6. Vicar's report

David spoke about some key recent developments. The vicar at St James Fletchamstead, Steve Burch, would be stepping down, and for some time St James had been exploring the idea of joining the Bridge. David said that the Joint Council and St James' PCC were both positive and work was ongoing on how it should progress.

David spoke about children, youth and students. He said that overall the approach had to be in keeping with the Bridge's approach of being missionary disciples with staff facilitating volunteers, rather than employing staff to do everything. He explained that the proposal for Children's work was to move from having two posts for St Stephen's and St John's to having one person with more time enabling work in both churches. On youth, he acknowledged there was very little going on for youth in the church, and said there were plans to start a connect group for Youth in September. He also hoped to recruit a youth worker in partnership with Reign Ministries, and a Student worker, both of whom could facilitate work across the Bridge.

Sarah Ashelby would be moving on as curate. David said there was money in the deanery budget to fund a half-time post at St Stephen's and he was looking for funding for community work to make a full-time post. Adding St James to the Bridge would add that clergy post into the Bridge as well, along with their congregation.

On buildings, David said that alongside St Stephen's work on plans for a new building, it was possible that the roof at St John's would begin to fail. He and Erin were talking about how to adapt if meeting in St John's were no longer possible, and if that happened he encouraged everyone to see that as an opportunity for God to be at work. He also said that he had planned to write a letter giving an update on what the Church of England was doing about human sexuality, however he had not yet done this as, while there had been a lot of discussion, no changes had yet been made. He encouraged everyone to focus on being God's people in the place we're called to be.

David finished by reading Genesis 26 and saying that now was a time to re-dig our spiritual wells. A common issue in the church is the desire to draw boundaries around who's in and who's out. Instead, his vision was for the church to be centred around the well which is Jesus Christ, and welcoming everyone who is drawn to him. He closed in prayer.

7. Election of Deanery Synod members

There were two places for Deanery Synod members from Canley, and three for members from Westwood. Abigail Baxter and Laura Dawson from Canley and Sarah Packwood, Nick Romney and Jan Sayers from Westwood were nominated and, as there was no competition for places, elected without a vote.

8. Election of Joint Council members

There were three vacancies on the Joint Council. Two were for members from Westwood, one of which had to be filled by a churchwarden, and one was for a member from Canley. Laura Dawson (Canley), Graham Thomas (Westwood) and Ben Packwood (Churchwarden, Westwood) were nominated and, as there was no competition for places, elected without the need for a vote. David prayed for everyone who had just been elected.

The service the meeting was held within continued.