

Minutes of the Christ Church Council Meeting 25 November 2014

Present: Judith Anderson, Judith Bishop, Margaret Burrows, Morny Davison, Mark Elliott, Matthew Jones, Sarah Kerr, David Rawlings, Sharon Rawlings, Andrew Sillett, Alex Soboslay (acting secretary), Angela Soboslay, Brenda Wall, Canon Angela Townshend (chair).

In attendance: Robin Kerr.

1. The meeting opened with a prayer. **Apologies** were received from Malcolm Wall and Bob Siderfin.

2. Minutes and matters arising

The minutes of the previous meeting (14 October 2014), with three amendments, were accepted and signed (proposed David, seconded Andrew, passed without dissent). There were no matters arising not already on the agenda.

3. Trustees' Report

(1) Trustees requested some dates for the proposed joint meeting of Trustees and Council concerning buildings work. Council proposes Tuesday 9 December or Tuesday 16 December.

(2) Fabric.

a. Bells finances. David Bishop, the Treasurer, will shortly apply to reclaim VAT and Gift Aid. This will still leave a shortfall, but fundraising is continuing and Trustees expect the shortfall will be met.

b. Car park wall. Trustees are considering whether we should be proceeding via a faculty application rather than planning permission.

c. Choir vestry lighting upgrade is still being considered.

(3) Lower Mews lettings.

There's the prospect of a mental health charity wishing to use the Lower Mews. We should also advertise the availability of the space a bit more.

(4) Car park control.

Trustees noted Council's suggestions for managing the car park, and said many of them have been tried in the past. Mark noted that the parking problems were massively reduced when the gates were properly locked, so we should try this first. Possibly a few even more prominent signs would help, warning potential chancers that their cars could be locked in.

(5) Organ repair.

The swell box needs repair. This would cost about £3,500. Trustees have

previously agreed that organ maintenance was a matter for Council to decide, but wish to inform Council that Trustees decided several years ago to set money aside each year for organ maintenance, so there is nominally a fund for it. There was consensus that the work should be done.

The question of moving the organ blower inside was raised again, so that cold air isn't constantly being drawn into the church. Mark said the estimated cost of the work, £30,000, seemed prohibitive, but Trustees need to look at this again when it comes up.

(6) The PA system needs attention. It is just about manageable but not really satisfactory and needs looking at. There was agreement that this is important and we need to get it sorted.

(7) Forthcoming Trustee vacancy. There was some discussion about how this would be filled. Should Council put some names forward for Trustees to consider? There was a time when this was the practice, but these days the trustees quietly talk to people. It is not the most transparent of processes, admittedly, but in accordance with the Trust Deed the Trustees are a self-appointing body.

Alex asked again for clarification of the relationship between Council and Trustees: what responsibilities fall to each body?

Action: for the agenda for the next meeting.

4. Children receiving communion before confirmation

Alex asked for this to be deferred so that there was more time to read and consider the 29-page discussion document from the Diocese, which had been circulated to Council members at only 10pm the night before, but Council voted 7:5 to bring this up the agenda.

Canon Angela presented an outline of the course she'd use to prepare children to receive communion, the message being "everyone's invited to the Jesus feast". She said the children who'd be involved (aged about 7 or so) would already know much of the material.

David referred to the guidelines in the document from the Diocese, which set out the procedure for deciding and implementing a policy to admit children to communion before confirmation. Canon Angela said we do not need to follow this because the decision has been made and admitting children to communion has been the standard practice of this church: she read a memo from the Bishop's Chaplain saying Christ Church made this decision on 14 September 1999. This predates the current Diocesan policy of November 2006, which could explain why no register of admitted children seems to have been kept as required by the current policy. Some members said the question hadn't arisen recently, if only because there

have been few children of appropriate age among the congregation, and we've never adopted the 2006 procedures, so there's no reason not to review our position, but Canon Angela said there has been enough discussion. Andrew forcefully said we should stick with our existing practice, as decided in 1999, and moved that we do so. Morny seconded.

The meeting became increasingly heated as some members pressed for further discussion and attempted to raise questions. Mark claimed there was a strong feeling among parents that continuing discussion was damaging and perceived as "anti-child". Some members worried where this perception has come from and suggested we needed a wider discussion about the reception we give to children, and in particular what provision we make for toddlers. Mark said that the parents of small children could be sensitive to just a disapproving look. Alex proposed that Andrew's motion be not put, and Brenda seconded this.

Mark protested strongly and at this point the meeting briefly broke up. It reconvened with a short prayer, following which Andrew again moved that Council retain our policy of admitting children to communion before confirmation, but under the 2006 regulations. This was passed with 10 in favour and 4 abstentions.

5. Diocesan Giving

Having established that we are not required to pay "parish share", Council decided at its meeting of 29 April 2014 to make a voluntary contribution to the Diocese of £5,000. The Diocese is now asking if we plan to make another contribution this year. After brief discussion, Council decided without dissent to contribute a further £5,000.

Action: David Bishop (Treasurer) to be informed so he can make payment.

6. Charities for 2015

Canon Angela, Angela S, Sharon and Andrew will act as a committee to collect nominations for "charities of the month" for 2015. They will report to Council at our January meeting.

7. Pastoral care

Keri Chivers, Jane Fletcher and Simon Tatton Brown have offered to assist Canon Angela with visiting people who are ill or in hospital.

8. Cedar Tree

There have been no concrete offers so far to take over running the Cedar Tree café on Fridays after Keri gives it up.

9. Buildings

(1) Bells. Open Day for people in the area to come and see the bells before they are lifted up into the tower: Friday 19 December.

(2) West end works. The Trustees have accepted Robin Kerr's offer to act as project manager. He presented some sketches, cost estimates and information from the architects. Comments and feedback included the following:

- Front steps: need a handrail on side walls.
- Glass doors: automatic opening? If it's the wheelchair access, it needs some way to open the doors, such as a motion sensor?
- Will glass doors have frames? Frameless doors make wind seal difficult.
- The new access platform and steps will result in the loss of one and a half parking spaces.
- The toilets need further discussion.
- Phasing: order of priority should be toilets and interior, then ramp?
- Timing: the architects propose briefing the DAC at its December meeting, completion of drawings February, followed by a planning application. There was some discussion that with so many details still to be decided, this is too ambitious. It was provisionally agreed to approach the DAC at its January meeting, with the present drawings as a starting point.

Action: Robin to pursue details with the architects and report further.

A vote of thanks was proposed to Robin and passed by acclamation.

10. Any other business

(1) Heating. It was noted that the church is still not warming up as quickly as we'd want. We'll try setting the system to come on an hour earlier.

(2) Charity of the month for December. Brenda conveyed a message from Malcolm suggesting that this month's collection should not go solely to Open Christmas, which seems to be very well resourced, but be split between Open Christmas, Genesis and Julian House. This was agreed.

The meeting closed with prayer at 21:46. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 13 January.