

**Minutes Bishop's Team Meeting
With St. Andrew's PCC
24th March 2021 at 6.30pm
Zoom Meeting ID: 982 9109 1213**

Present: Anne Lofthouse (AL) (Churchwarden), Sarah Rees (SR), Sarah Bankhead (SaB), Patrick Busby (PB), John Lofthouse (JL), Sharon Blackshaw (ShB), Yvonne Haigh (YH) (Secretary) Bishop David Williams, Archdeacon Venerable Richard Brand, Revd Derek Gurney & Revd Brian Pritchard (Both Deanery Leadership Team), Revd Mark Collinson (Director of Ministry), Jayne Tarry (Pastoral Secretary)

Welcome by Bishop and Archdeacon

Prayers by Bishop

Introduction by Churchwarden AL: AL set out the summary of responses received from members of this parish. A summary of responses had already been sent to the Bishop for consideration. Many people wished to remain part of the Benefice, and there was a strong wish to remain traditional in churchmanship. She hoped that the Bishop's team would consider these when making their decision following the meeting.

Bishop's Response to Introduction: In response to the introduction by AL Bishop D. explained that the Northern Ministry was being reduced from 61 to 50 priests. They would be saving 7 stipendiary posts, which is why changes have to be made. Everyone must have access to a priest, and making this fair, is what this consultation is about. They are not forcing anyone into anything, and everything is directed towards consultation and listening. "You have a voice which has to be heard". "We do not want to destroy anything. We are paying attention."

He understood about the Benefice connection and said that they would wait to see what the others said at their meeting, (BLS 29th March, Four Marks 29th March) and if necessary, they would revisit the Plan. They will get back to us.

He apologised for the short time allowed, but explained that this is a long process of consultation and could take months. There will be opportunities for more consultations.

He added that he agreed with AL that Revd. Ingrid and Revd. Peter Owen Jones were an underused asset and that he would call them to thank them for their continued support.

Positives:

1. We would be one of two parishes, instead of one of four as at present. Easier to organise.
2. Geographically, the parishes are close together. Easier communications. However, the local authority still has separate Parish Councils
3. We could cover all types of worship as a joint Benefice. One traditional, the other modern. We could cater for all needs.

Question Number

Answer

1. From the responses from our parishioners, many people would like the existing Benefice to stay together. Is this an option for us, and how could it be organised?

Bishop D: The Team have been looking at this since they received our figures. It was something that they had not considered before. They were under the impression that Four Marks and Medstead had a joint Parish Council. Members were able to straighten this out and advise that this was just a boundary overlap. It may be possible for some leeway on this with a possibility of moving a clergy and another boundary to take account of staying as a benefice/parish. But we would expect to have to merge and have one PCC, as there are too many with four at the moment.

PCC

2. Most replies stated that they would like Medstead to remain a Parish Church. If this was accepted, would a separate PCC and Church Wardens be allowed?

Medstead would almost certainly remain a Parish Church with at least one Churchwarden, but it could use Churchwardens from another Church if necessary. Or it could appoint joint wardens for both churches, or two of its own, that only worked there, or went between the churches. Medstead would be allowed to maintain its own governance in the form of a Church Council, which would act like a PCC, and could have some local financial controls, but the main PCC would oversee this and control everything else.

3. Would there be a separate CMF contribution or would this be joint?

CMF would be assessed by the diocese for each Parish Church share and then a joint contribution would be put together for the Parish as a whole.

4. If there was to be only one PCC, would there be proportional representation for election to it?

Archdeacon: It is open to negotiation, but could be, as an example, 2 representatives from each of the 7 churches; or 4:14 depending on the split and size of the churches etc. To be worked out between partners.

5. Would there be one Church Warden to represent each parish on the PCC?

Archdeacon: Yes at least one Church Warden for each parish church on the PCC.

6. How could you guarantee that any elected member would not feel that it was their duty to represent their parish? Surely, their parish would expect this?

No. They must act for both parishes' interests. Inevitably members would have their loyalties, but it is hoped that as time passes people would feel able to represent the parish as a whole.

7. How can we restrict election to those with appropriate skills?

Archdeacon: "We can't. Anyone can be nominated so it will be open to all."

8. What sort of skills are we thinking of here?

Archdeacon: Required skills could be publicised in the hope suitable volunteers would be forthcoming. It could be things people are good at/want to be involved with.

Finance - Archdeacon

9. Would it be possible for each church to have separate financial arrangements?

Yes, to begin with they could have different accounts. These would be designated monies in the interim, but we would hope that in the long term these accounts would be merged and that there would also be shared accounts for other stuff as well.

10. Over many years St Andrew's has hosted a wide variety of very successful fund-raising events. These have been very well received, raised substantial amounts of money for the church, and been a valuable source of outreach. In the future can we receive confirmation that the large sums raised every year by these events will not all go into a central fund?

Yes – money raised for that church by social fund-raising events could be earmarked as designated for that church.

11. What about money already in existing accounts, given specifically for Saint Andrew's Church? From views received, it is apparent this would not be received well by many.

That's fine and understandable. Yes, it would be negotiated as money to be used for the purpose designated for that church.

Worship

12. Because of present differences in Churchmanship and forms of worship, the great majority of responses stated that they would like forms of worship to remain as they are. They already have the option of going to Four Marks, and many have made a conscious decision to worship at St. Andrew's Medstead, because that suited their needs. These people have made it clear that if that was to change, they would leave. What guarantees would we have that worship/churchmanship would stay the same? For many people this is crucial.

Bishop D.: "Yes of course it could stay the same – same music, same choir and same service. You can keep the things that you do well by all accounts." Makes reference to PB and JL. YH: "But can you guarantee that it will?"

Bishop D: "No guarantees whatsoever - Who knows what churchmanship or services will look like in 10 years' time anyway! You can have what you want"

Archdeacon thought that COGS had a good business model – "...after all, they have tripled attendance in the last 10 years", and he thought more of that should be rolled

out across the Alton Deanery and everywhere else. He inferred that it was a bonus being merged with them.

13. We have robes and altar frontals. Would these remain?

Bishop D.: Yes, all part of the fabric of the building, so they will stay.

14. What pattern of services would we have?

Pattern of services are negotiable with the incumbent, but would imagine weekly traditional services would be achievable.

15. How many services would we be allowed to have, bearing in mind, that we would like the church to grow and remain a Parish Church?

Bishop D: “Weekly should be achievable”.

Music and Choir

16. Would we be allowed to continue with our choir and organ? We need certain assurances here, based on comments received.

Bishop David and RB were supportive of us continuing to have autonomy and control over the more traditional music at St Andrew’s. This aligns with the future direction of travel our parishioners require. Bishop D: “I would like you to do more of this under JL and PBs wonderful watchful eyes and nurturing talents.”

Church Hall

This at the moment is managed by the PCC, with any profit going into the Current Account to be used on Hall and Church.

17. How would this be organised in future?

The PCC can lay down the rules about this. Archdeacon thinks that any monies coming in would probably be allowed to be used for repairs etc. but needs confirmation and agreement by the governing body.

18. Would this become joint property?

Yes. If there is one PCC, conversations would be had between the parishes as to how this would work.

General

19. There is a difference between looking after a Grade 2 listed building and looking after a modern church. How would that work out?

Archdeacon: Both need permissions from the Chancellor at DAC. The one PCC will decide when and if that request is put in and when.

20. Would insurance be joint?

Archdeacon: No probably not in this case. The PCC will decide who insures, but the two parish churches may decide to remain separate for insurance purposes.

21. Where would Messy Church fit in? It is BLMS run at the moment.

The team were unaware of how and where it is run. Bishop D. seemed to think that something could be worked out.

22. What about Funerals, Weddings, Baptism coverage?

Bishop D.: Of course, these should be given priority as normal. Wants more lay ministers to get involved with that more often.

23. What about The Hub/Rectory?

That is a conversation that needs to be had with BLS once we know more. If no one is using it, it is likely to revert back to the Diocese or be leased out with the Rectory.

24. What about the School?

Bishop D.: Medstead Primary comes under Alton Schools, and Four Marks is under Alresford, because they are a feeder for Perins School. The Bishop said that they will look into this difference and have to work something out 'jousting' depending on which way our Parish goes – to stay as BLMS or go with COGS. Both schools will still need to appoint Foundation Governors in the same way.

25. Is it recognised that if parishioners feel their needs are not being met adequately, they have stated that they will go elsewhere and they will withdraw financial support?

Bishop D. 'Yes, but it is not a factor we can take into account. We cannot allow ourselves to be swayed by this. They may walk but will probably not.'

Improvements we would like to consider include:

A member of staff who was sympathetic towards traditional worship would give balance.

Summary from JL: “I think we are basically in agreement with what you have proposed and we just have to convince the parishioners of that.”

Outcome summary:

The Bishop will meet with BLS and COGS at the end of the month and make some decisions as to which way would be best for us to go. He will then get back to us with news of the outcome of this.

Bishop D.: Thanked everyone and especially AL for being so organised.

Meeting ended with a prayer by JL at 7.44pm