

*The Parochial & Prebendal Church of St Denys, Sleaford*  
*Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Council*

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting was held on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2018, at 11.30am in Church. The Vicar, the Revd. Philip Johnson was in the chair and 31 members of the parish were present.

1. **Opening Prayer**

The Chairman opened the meeting with prayer.

2. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mr Douglas Hoare.

3. **Minutes**

Copies of the Minutes of the previous meeting were circulated and following some spelling corrections on pages 4 and 7 were approved with no discussion.

4. **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising from the previous annual meeting.

5. **Annual Vestry Meeting of Parishoners** (APCM standing orders suspended)

a. Election of two Churchwardens and two Assistant Churchwardens.

Mr Richard Clash and Mr Philip Starks were re-elected as Churchwardens unopposed. Mr Terry Reagan was re-elected as Deputy Churchwarden unopposed and Mrs Pamela Jakeway was elected also as Deputy Churchwarden unopposed. The Chairman expressed his thanks to the Churchwardens and Deputy Churchwardens. He also expressed his thanks to a person with special dispensation who has stood down as Deputy Churchwarden.

b. There were no matters raised concerning the wider community of Sleaford.

Vestry Meeting concluded, APCM standing orders were reapplied.

6. **Statement on the Electoral Roll**

A report was received from Mrs Angela Clash, the Electoral Roll Secretary. Several members have died during the year. There have been two new members making the current total 148.

7. **Annual Report on the proceedings of the PCC**

The Vicar gave a precis of the report.

8. **The Financial Statement of the PCC**

Firstly, Mrs Brenda Hitchcock wished to thank the collection counters for all their hard work during the year. Mr E.H. Double had been the longest serving collection counter but had retired during this year. Huge thanks were expressed to Eddy.

Mrs Brenda Hitchcock explained that a summary of the financial report had been distributed because it represented the format for the accounts that the parish had become used to. Mr Terry Regan queried the shortfall and what was the position if the shortfall continued. Mrs Brenda Hitchcock explained that the shortfall could not continue indefinitely and that there were

approximately 12 months of running costs in the reserves. The Vicar said that there would be more on this in his final statement.

The Vicar expressed huge thanks to Brenda and David for all the hard work they put in to preparing the Annual report and accounts and their work throughout the year.

9. **Churchwardens' Statement on the Church Fabric, Inventory and Terrier**

Mr Richard Clash – Churchwarden, gave a precis of this section of the Annual Report.

Following this, the Vicar have his heartfelt for the work of the Churchwardens and deputies. They take up a huge amount of work which in turn takes a weight of his shoulders.

10. **Stewardship and Giving**

More on this in the Vicar's final statement.

11. **Report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod (Diocesan & General Synod)**

Mr David Hitchcock reported that during the past year, the nature of the Learning Communities initiative had become clearer. Parishes are being encouraged to see how they can link up with other parishes.

The current representatives are Mrs Beryl Risdell, Mrs Gillian Boutle and Mr David Hitchcock.

12. **Churches Together in Sleaford & District (CTSD)**

David Hitchcock compiled the following report which had been circulated beforehand.

*Regular reports have been given to the PCC and to the congregation (through the Churches Together newsletter) throughout the year; and so that information will not be duplicated in this report.*

*Recent news and details of forthcoming events of interest comprise:*

- *the next united service is this evening at the Methodist Church at 6.00pm;*
- *the Lent Lunches were reasonably well supported but the poor weather seems to have caused some drop in support and although not all the Christian Aid collections have been remitted it seems that the funds raised may be lower than the previous year's figures;*
- *attendance at the Good Friday Procession of Witness and at the service in the Market Place was as well supported this year as it was in the previous year;*
- *The Community Food Larder saw a 54% increase in demand in 2017 and is likely to be as much in demand this year due to benefit changes. Thanks are expressed for the public's support in prayer and with food which is much appreciated;*
- *Evergreen Sleaford. This befriending service now has 46 ongoing friendships in the town and surrounding villages, with 10 people on the waiting list. 60 volunteers are involved and more are needed to meet the need. Further details from 07707 260822 or [info@evergreensleaford.org.uk](mailto:info@evergreensleaford.org.uk)*
- *The town Youth Club supported by the churches continues with its weekly sessions for secondary school age young people. Churches*

*Together is exploring the feasibility of employing an additional youth worker, to be supported by all the churches, and to look for more volunteers to help meet the growing need;*

- *The Thy Kingdom Come prayer initiative, this year will be from 10-20 May ending with a united Pentecost Songs of Praise service at New Life Church on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30pm (not at 6.00pm as previously advised by me);*
- *the 2018 AGM will be on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> June at 7.30pm at St. Mary and All Saints, Swarby NG34 8TD, when the guest speaker will be the Rev'd Martyn Taylor of St George's Stamford.*

The Vicar thanked David for his report and all of the hard work he gives to the Churches Together initiative. There were no questions regarding the report.

### **13. Bishop's Visitor: William Alvey Church School**

Beryl Risdell compiled the following report which was circulated beforehand. *It is now 5 years since I became Bishop's Visitor for our church school in May 2013.*

*A Bishop's Visitor aims to be a friend of the school and a listening ear, a link with the Bishop of Lincoln and the Diocesan Education Team a Christian presence supporting the school, attending collective worship and school events and offering skills and talents to contribute to the life of the school. I have also tried to develop greater links between the church family and the school family.*

*I continue to visit on a regular basis, talking to and getting to know staff and pupils – not easy in such a large school, visiting classrooms, helping with school visits outside school eg to the church and cathedral and attending all kinds of events in school. Recently I set up a Prayer Space in school and took a number of groups of different ages on prayer walks between the indoor space and a memorial garden at the bottom of the school field. These walks will continue so that more children can experience them. I've also helped with a group of Y5 children researching the pictures and history of the reredos in church. The most recent highlight was a visit to Assembly by the Bishop of Lincoln as part of his visit to the parish. It is also my pleasure to read the Bishop's termly letter to the church schools of the Diocese. It is a great pleasure to see the church packed full of children for their twice-yearly visits for the school Carol Service and Alvey Day in July.*

*Bishop's Visitors also have opportunity to meet as a group with people from the Education Team, to get to know each other, exchange ideas and stories, receive training, hear about latest developments and share the Eucharist together.*

There were no questions regarding the report. The Vicar expressed his thanks to Beryl for all her hard work as Bishop's Visitor.

### **14. Reports of affiliated Church groups**

#### **a. The Choir and Music**

David Prescott, Organist and Director of Music compiled the following report which was circulated beforehand.

*My thanks go to all choir members for the work that they do – it is greatly valued. Thanks also go to the people who supported me by playing the organ when I was absent or, on those rare occasions when I was conducting and to all those who helped with refreshments in particular between the rehearsal and service on Palm Sunday evening when we were joined in our singing by other choirs from the Deanery plus other friends and relations when we sang 'The Cross of Christ'. We sang two Carol services namely Advent and the Christmas carol service.*

*Choir numbers during 2017 rose slightly and we ended the year with 20 on the books – this is slightly up on previous years. We are often joined by my daughter and her family which augments the choir and orchestral groups used for our Celtic and Taize services. Their help and support is greatly appreciated as is the instrumental help and support from other members of the church. Thank you all.*

*Music Fund Account:*

*Income: £300 from St Denys Church towards costs, in particular the fees paid to young members and donations totalling £35.*

*Expenses: Children's expenses amounted to £232. Other expenses included £154 to upgrade the music writing programme; £150 additional organist fees e.g Palm Sunday evening and the Carol Service including rehearsals.*

The Vicar wished to express thanks on behalf of all for the great job David does, in particular for all the work that goes on behind the scenes with church music.

Mrs Gaynor Jakeway also wished to record thanks on behalf of the choir for David's leadership, expertise and care.

#### **b. The Bell Ringers**

Two youth learners have come on board over the past year. The bells continue to be in fairly good condition. For health and safety reasons, the Council of Bell Ringers is trying to enforce everyone in the tower wears a yellow hi-visibility jacket.

The Vicar expressed his thanks to the Bell ringers.

#### **c. Communicants' Guild**

Pam Jakeway compiled the following report which was circulated beforehand.

*The Guild continues to meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 7pm in the Parish Centre. We have a membership of 30 with an average attendance of 20 plus occasional visitors. Members pay £1 per meeting which covers the cost of speakers. We also have a raffle and bookstall raising extra funds which are used in providing a gift for the church every year and a donation to the Parish Room. Our gift to the church this year was three vinyl tablecloths to replace the paper ones. We have a varied programme of speakers and each evening concludes with a service of Compline. At our party in January, we were entertained by members of the Prescott family and some of our own members. In April, we had a service of Holy Communion in church followed by*

*our Annual Meeting. In June, we had a very pleasant evening visit to Quarrington Church. In September, we met again in church for Holy Communion. In December, we always hold an evening of carols and readings in preparation for Christmas.*

*We continue to hold stalls at the Summer and Winter Fayres helping to raise funds for the church.*

*Our meetings are open to everyone (men and ladies) and I hope provide a time of friendship and fellowship in addition to hearing some interesting speakers, and we are always pleased to welcome new members of visitors.*

There were no questions regarding the report.

#### **d. Mothers' Union**

Angela Clash compiled the following report which was circulated beforehand. *The Committee has continued to run the branch, fixing the programme, dealing with requests and chairing the monthly meetings in turn.*

*We had a varied programme based around the theme 'Faith in Action'. Speakers included our Diocesan President and our Curate, Rhona. Others told us about the Nomad Trust, a charity for the homeless in Lincoln, and the church in South India, and a First Responder came to update our first aid knowledge. During Advent, we looked at a variety of nativity sets and members shared their Christmas memories.*

*We continue to have close links with the branch in Harlaxton and were able to join them in August for a service to celebrate Mary Sumner Day. We enjoyed a visit to our link branch in Sibsey when we joined them at their 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations.*

*Committee members attended Diocesan Council meetings and we served coffee at St Benedict's on three occasions.*

*We have assisted with Baptisms, looked after the Remembrance table and provided flower arrangements and cleaning for the Lady Chapel.*

There were no questions regarding the report.

#### **e. Explorers' Church**

The Explorer's has met seven or eight times this past year. Support from families is erratic but hopefully numbers will rise with the better weather on its way. Support from the helpers is as good as ever and it seems to always work well when it falls on the same day as the Summer Fayre. It's a good way to spread the gospel to all ages.

Mr David Hitchcock wished to thank Mrs Alison Wickstead and all involved for their hard work with Explorers. The Vicar added his thanks.

#### **f. Mothers and Toddlers Group**

Pam Jakeway compiled the following report which was circulated beforehand.

*The Mother & toddlers group meet on Wednesday mornings during term time from 9.30am – 11.30am. The cost is £1 for the first child and then 50p for any other children in the same family. From this we were able to give £250 to the Parish Room. We have three teams consisting of a leader and two ladies who help to put out all the toys for the children. They also provide a cup of tea or coffee for the mums (or Grannies or child minders) and then provide a snack for the children. Numbers were slightly down on last year with an average of 12 children each week. The children always enjoy playing with the toys, listening to a short story and then making music and singing nursery rhymes (although it's often the adults who do the singing!) In June we have a sponsored toddle around the outside of the church (inside if it's wet) which this year raised £298 for Barnardo's. At our last meeting in December, Father Christmas came and presented each child with a gift. This is a very happy group which the adults enjoy as much as the children and are most appreciative of the facility.*

#### **g. Other Miscellaneous Reports**

##### **Acolytes, Crucifers and Servers**

Beryl Risdell compiled the following report which was circulated beforehand. *Acolytes are recruited as needed for special services. Currently we have a number of servers who cover 8-00am and 10-00am regularly and other services as required.*

*Special thanks to Robert Bexon and Andrew Bird who have served at 8-00am for many years since they were teenagers and to Hugh and Lucia Johnson, much more recent additions to the team.*

*We also remember at this time Anne Smillie-Pearson for her regular service in this capacity until her last illness and recent death.*

*We now have 5 crucifers, including 2 new volunteers, on the rotas. If you would like to take up any of these roles please make yourself known to myself, churchwardens or clergy and find out exactly what is involved.*

##### **Verger's Report**

Pam Jakeway compiled the following report which was circulated beforehand.

*It has been a privilege to act as Verger this past year which has been quite busy with funerals and weddings. Funerals are always sad occasions but the clergy always conduct a caring and compassionate service and I'm sure the families find great comfort in them. Whilst funerals generally follow the same line, weddings are completely different. Bridesmaids come in all ages (the*

*youngest being only 5 months old and pulled along the aisle in a purpose-built white cart) and numbers – from 0 to 7 (complete with 7 groomsmen).*

*I have also attended several school carol services and prize-giving's, it is really good to see so many children and young people in the church.*

*I look forward to another year as Verger.*

**15. Election of Deanery Synod Representatives**

There were no representatives to elect. Current representatives are David Hitchcock, Beryl Risdell and Gillian Boutle.

**16. Election of PCC members**

Helen Bristow has decided to stand down from the PCC after many years of service. The Vicar thanked Helen for all her work on the PCC.

David Marriage stood for re-election and there were three new nominations: Pam Jakeway, Keith Bailey and Edward Jarvis.

All were re-elected/elected unanimously.

**17. Appointment of Sidespersons**

The Vicar read out the list of sidespersons. Rosemary Wilcox has asked to stand down and Keith Bailey had agreed to be added. The following list was agreed unanimously:

Brian Coxon	Judith Coss	Pam Jakeway
Alison Snookes	Sue Parsons	Ray Maltby
Brenda Hitchcock	Barry Mason	Hazel Starks
Rose Chilley	Joan Sommers	Keith Bailey
Helen Bristow	Sheila Evans	Greta Lee
Philip Blackburn	Sue Blackburn	Richard Spencer
Edward Jarvis	John Virden	Beryl Risdell
Elisabeth Innes	David Hitchcock	One with special dispensation

**18. Appointment of an Auditor**

Brenda Hitchcock wished to express her thanks to Duncan & Toplis for the past year. The Vicar proposed that Duncan & Toplis were appointed as auditors for the forthcoming year. David Prescott seconded and the proposal was carried unanimously.

**19. Chairman's Statement**

*Five years! Well it will be in October, but this is my fifth vicar's report to the Annual Meeting. Stalin introduced a five-year plan to Soviet Russia and without wishing to draw any parallels I thought this fifth year would be a seasonable opportunity to review the plan introduced at my first Annual Meeting. In that first year, I identified 5 priorities. Just in case you have forgotten them, they were:*

- *To improve the visitor experience*
- *To help people (especially visitors) to pray*
- *Update and introduce new service booklets*
- *Children and youth*
- *Become a learning community*

So, where have we got to? **First**, improving visitor experience. We have developed a new website, produced new literature for visitors to use, introduce a new multi-lingual welcome banner and de-cluttered many areas of the church. These are all positive steps but the stewarding of the church through the summer months is vulnerable. So much of the positive experience of visiting the church is about the personal encounters and the stewards are key to this but with aging and poor health, it is becoming more difficult to provide stewards, so this ministry is vulnerable. **Secondly**, to help people to pray. Some of the literature for visitors (the pilgrim stations, for example) is designed to help people engage on a spiritual level, not just the tourist level. The development of the Trinity Chapel as an interactive prayer space and the introduction of the Stations of the Cross and Stations of the Resurrection are also related to this priority. **Thirdly**, we have not only introduced new services – Explorers and Sunday@five and the Celtic Eucharist. We now have three musical settings, lent/advent, Easter/Christmas and ordinary time which brings musical variety through the year. We have also produced some service booklets in Polish and Russian for the benefit of the Slavic communities who are increasingly coming to us for occasional offices such as baptisms. **Fourth**, is children and youth. On the face of it this does not look very good. The small Sunday School has ceased to function and we do not have many young children in church on Sundays. That is however only one indicator of what is happening with children and young people. We have introduced Explorers church and later this year, we will be reviewing that service and consider ways in which it might be developed further. Through our Bishop's visitor and governors, we continue to have a very active presence in the Church School. Last year we reviewed the annual church schools' festival and have changed the format so that we have a much greater involvement and it is more focused on developing awareness of Christian values. We now have an advent/Christmas service for scouts in addition to the traditional St George's day parade/ I have also have regular access to all the schools in the parish and am chaplain to the air cadets, the latter of whom now use the church for their awards day. So, **finally**, becoming a learning community. The home groups continue to flourish and until recently we have held regular lent and advent courses. We have now, however, commenced a yearlong programme of Learning Church. In addition to this Rhona has organised a number of quiet days and other learning opportunities in the diocese and beyond and are regularly made available. I think you will agree with me that over the past five years we have made significant progress in each of these priority areas. That is not to say that they are completed, but now is the time to look at priorities for the next five years.

There are two big issues that have been the cause of much thought and reflection for me over the past couple of years. First, is the financial health of the church – I talked about this at length in last year's report – and as you have already heard today, the situation has not changed for the better. The second is the regular attendance at church. Over the past year or so the numbers attending regularly have declined, not least due to death and illness. Although some new people are coming into the church, the nett change is

*negative. At the beginning of this year we had an episcopal visitation. It was a good opportunity for me to discuss with the Bishop the challenges that we are and will be facing over the coming years. One of the things we talked about was vision and thinking big. In a couple of months' time, I will be meeting again with the Bishop to reflect further on some of these issues that we discussed. Some of the challenges he gave me to think about were these:*

- What additional staff might we need to further the ministry in our priority areas?*
- How might they be deployed and resourced?*
- What structural work might we need to do to the church to create a building for the next century (rather than short term 'sticking plaster' solutions to problems)?*
- What are the local businesses that we might be able to work with to realise a multi-million-pound development project?*
- How is all of this related to the strategic development of the town plan?*

*These are big questions related to our strategy and vision for the future. In my previous parish the phrase I heard most frequently over the first year was 'so long as the church survives long enough to take my funeral that's good enough'! Well that was not the right attitude for there and we mustn't get sucked into that way of thinking here either. Over this year we will be developing a 'big' strategy that may seem hopelessly optimistic and beyond our means and grasp. However, we are stewards of all that we have been entrusted with in order to hand it on in good shape to the next generation. We are at a significant point in the history of this church and it is up to us to lay the solid foundations for mission and ministry in this town for the next 100 years.*

*So finally, it just remains for me to thank those who do so much to further the mission and ministry of this place. This year has been a time of significant transition. Anne Smillie-Pearson was one of the great characters of the church. In her own inimitable way, she did so much for the church, more than many people – me included ever realised. When I was called in by the nursing home, as they thought she was at death's door, I said some prayers with her and she told me to check to make sure we had enough palm crosses! No one person could step into Anne's shoes and at times this year some things have slipped through the net, so to speak as no one realised that Anne had done that particular thing. However, I am grateful to all those that have shouldered new responsibilities: Pam, taking on the role of verger, Brenda covering leave in the office and Paula taking on additional responsibilities in the office are the ones that come readily to mind, although there are, no doubt many others who have absorbed something of Anne's workload.*

*I have already mentioned the stewards in this report but I would like to thank them here for sitting in the church through the summer months and welcoming visitors. If you would like to join the rota, please see me or Joan. Thanks to Janet who cleans the toilets and the parish centre, actually it is Sue Blackburn doing it at present as Janet has broken her arm, and to all those who dust and polish and Hoover the church (first impressions when someone*

*comes in says as much about what worth we give to God as it does about us); to Bernard for looking after the Garden of Remembrance and the flower beds by the West Door. Thanks to the flower arrangers and the hospitality teams (that is making tea and coffee); thanks to Paula our administrator – for many, their first point of contact with the church.*

*I would like to thank the lay ministers who lead the morning prayers daily in St Hugh's chapel. This work is foundational to this place being a place of prayer and of our ministry in praying for this town and especially praying for those who do not know how to pray for themselves. Thank you for the dedication in getting up early to come and minister in this place and to minister to us clergy. Thanks to the sacristans who turn up early (or even the night before) to set up for services, to Sue who launders the altar linen, the servers, readers, intercessors, musicians, singers and all others who enrich the services.*

*Thanks to Alison and David who have taken on the leadership of Explorers Church and to the large team of people who enable that outreach ministry to happen. Thanks to Al and Rhona for piloting Sunday@5 and the range of other ministries they are involved with. My life would have been so much harder without the support of the retired clergy (if retired is an appropriate word given how much they do); David Boutle, John Wickstead, Bill Kentigern-Fox, Heather Nesbitt and David Woods in particular; the readers, David and Bernard, lay ministers and ordinands, wardens, assistant wardens, PCC members and of course our curate Rhona – many thanks to all of you.*

*There is always a risk when compiling this sort of list that someone will inadvertently get missed out – so if you think that I have missed you out and you have not been thanked elsewhere in the meeting, apologies.*

*Finally, a few words about Al. Time will come later in the year when we say farewell properly as you leave to begin your curacy. But at this meeting, thank you for all you have done to enrich the life and ministry of this church and may God richly bless you over the coming weeks leading up to your ordination as a deacon.*

*Father Philip*

20. **Any other business**

There being for further business, the meeting closed with prayers at 1.10pm.