**St Mary & St Melor Extraordinary PCC**

**Minutes**

**24th March 2021, 7.30pm Zoom**

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| **Item** |  |
| 1 | **Prayers** |
| 2 | **Present: Fr Darren A’Court (DA), Ruth Davies (RD), John Swindlehurst (JS), Julie Lewis (JL), Tony Pryor-Jones (TPJ), Sophie Moody (SM), Lisa Courtney (LC), Barbara Maddocks (BM) (Minutes)** |
| 3 | **Approval of the 2020 accounts** – end of year (31st December 2020)  LC was happy that the accounts were accurate.  JS proposed acceptance of accounts, TPJ seconded and all agreed.  BM will collect accounts from LC to take to the auditor, LC will collect following audit. |
| 4 | **Church opening** - DA has had a conversation with the Rural Dean, alongside the research Sophie has done and our previous conversations.  We have a chance to explore the views of members tonight and make a decision.  RD – received an email from Salisbury Journal regarding large gatherings and the risk of spreading the virus – RD feels we must not let down our guard. Given that we would not be the only church to be closed RD feels that we should remain closed.  DA - If we were to open we would need to address the issue of people mingling.  SM – Looking at the Methodist closed, Baptist closed. Amesbury is a medical hotspot at the moment (this is not confirmed). Catholic church open. SM very strongly in favour of staying closed. Would we be liable if someone’s relative caught covid?  DA - Safeguard for individuals is their right to choose.  JS – feels that if we make it as safe as possible then people should be able to choose but understands that people might choose to stay away.  JL – will support if opens and in support of opening. People will have the choice and the service will still be online.  BM – having been to the services before, feel that the safety measures are in place  LC – we are encouraging visitors in the nursing home she works at – if it is done safely, in favour of opening. Amesbury has 6 cases at present and is not a hotspot.  TPJ – in WH it was set out perfectly inside but those attending chatted, unmasked, outside. Mingling took place before and after the service, this is a concern. We are facilitating the possible spread of virus cases. TPJ does not support opening.  DA – thanked members for their thoughts. Rural Dean has told DA that he can make the decision as the ‘venue manager’ but his approach is to consult the PCC. There are representations about why the church is not opening but PCC had some very strong feelings that we should remain closed because of concerns about the level of risk. It is not straightforward as there are very different views.  Parish Priest has ultimately to make the decision. Whatever we decide has to be sustainable to the clergy and everyone. The team would be DA, BM and JL (not in the vulnerable list) who would have to make sure that risk assessment was followed. If we started with 8am and 10am, then we could move to a Wednesday 11am and maybe more as long as we had a team to sanitise in-between. Many of those who may attend are in the vulnerable group. If we opened and things changed we could close again – though this would be unpopular. Important not to be coerced into opening by people who are emailing to complain that we are not opening when other churches are. In fact not all churches are opening and the Cathedral is only open for smaller services and their main services are online. By opening we are creating an opportunity for people to worship in the building. While we have been closed DA has tried to be consistent and has not held funerals in church. There are weddings booked and banns need to be read in a church service in church, not online.  We have carried out a good risk assessment and the church is set up accordingly. Opening at Easter includes members who may have had at least a first vaccination which gives some protection.  SM – with a team of 3, what if one week one cannot make it? The scientists are talking about a third wave and we could be shutting down for that as well.  TPJ – agrees with every item of DA’s reasonings. Christmas was tremendous but we went straight into a second lockdown. Still cannot support opening – advice is out there that says ‘Do not let your guard down’.  DA would like to open for Easter Day - decision has been an extremely difficult decision and is done with great caution on the part of the PCC. Safety must be our primary concern. We will follow our risk assessment and increase the team wherever possible. If there is increased concern nationally, locally, or if someone falls ill in church congregation then we will close again. People will still need to book in, wear face masks, receive in one kind only.  DA will advertise the opening through our usual channels. |
| 5 | **Wyndham Hall** - Members have seen the recent emails from Liz (Elizabeth) Wallis, the diocese's trusts officer, regarding the process involved for sale or lease of the hall; the valuer; and from Damian who is interested in leasing/purchasing the hall. DA asked for views on the way forward.  JS – if someone gets it listed as a community asset we will not be able to sell it for a different use, e.g. redevelopment. Who has the right to do that? Anyone who goes to the council.  SM / BM – we should sell it.  JS – it has always been the opinion that we should sell it if we need to.  TPJ – potential time that it may take to sell for any purpose. There are a number of other venues that can be used as a community venue. Feeling that we should lease for two years with a view to selling at the end of the two years, using the youth club section  JS – short term lease – hoping to look towards £500 PCM  DA – on balance decide to sell to help fund ‘fit for the future’ project, with leasing as a back-up plan.  RD – feels that people will be upset if we lease or sell but we have to make a decision for the good of the church and although the WH is a wonderful asset it is bleeding us out and selling it will be the option to go with. The money being offered by possible lease holder is not enough, but if it is a reasonable amount then leasing is a possibility. It is not a good time to be looking at selling with the pandemic.  JL – agree with RD. The venue would be missed for church social events. If we can lease it for a good amount then that would be good but if we could sell it and use the money for ‘fit for the future’ then that would be even better.  DA – the money we made from the sale of WH would go towards our project to make the church to become a space where social events could happen, ie toilets, kitchenette, etc.  LC – the hall is currently costing about £500 a month with no income coming in – leasing would allow us to cover the costs until we sold it.  JS – Town council will be leasing the history centre and the person who leases will be responsible for the utilities and insurance.  TPJ – make sure the terms of the lease include a get-out clause.  DA – suggested instructing the valuing agent (Myddleton and Major) to market to sell or two year lease, whatever comes first but the critical thing for us is to maximum return. Let the agents do the negotiating. DA will write to Damian to tell him what we are going to do. This was supported by unanimous vote of the PCC.  DA thanked the members for their courage in this decision.  Post-meeting note. DA has revisited the email from Liz Wallis. Before we can instruct agents regarding sale or lease of the hall we need to seek consent from the DBF (Diocesan Board of Finance) in the first instance. DA will email Liz to confirm the PCC’s decisions and ask for Liz’s advice about how to proceed. A copy of these minutes will be sent to Liz as she has requested in her email. |
| 6 | Thank you to DA for yesterday’s National Day of Reflection, and thank you to Jeanette for all that she did towards its success. |
|  | Close with the Grace 9.30pm |