

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting of the Parish of St. Matthew, High Brooms

Held at St. Matthew's Church on Monday 25th April 2022

Chris Wicks welcomed everyone to the meeting as we look back over the past year and look forward to the coming year.

Chris prayed for Ukraine as there is so much trouble there right now, and thanked God that we can meet freely and safely as a church.

The evening consists of two meetings – the annual meeting of parishioners to elect church wardens and the APCM.

There were 24 people present for the meetings.

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

1. Welcome

Chris welcomed those present to this meeting. It has one purpose and that is to elect churchwardens. To vote for wardens you don't need to be on the Electoral Roll, just reside in the parish.

2. Election of Churchwardens

Both church wardens are standing again - David Johnson and Brian Hobden. If anyone else would like to stand as a church warden, they can. No-one else was nominated.

Chris declared David Johnson and Brian Hobden duly elected as wardens for the coming year.

ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING

1. Welcome

Chris then welcomed those present to our Annual Church Meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies have been received from Lois Fryett, Matthew Fryett, Jane Richardson and Mike Harrowing.

3. Minutes of APCM of 10th May 2021

The minutes were accepted as a true copy of that meeting.

Proposed: Richard Arding

Seconded: David Johnson

All those present were happy that these minutes are a true record.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising from these minutes.

5. Vicar's report

Chris gave the following report:

I always try to reflect back over the past year and look ahead to the forthcoming one on these occasions – (although it feels like I need a crystal ball to do the latter in our rapidly changing climate).

As we look back it is hard to take in everything that we went through last year.

For the first three months of 2021, we were once again not able to worship together physically. In person worship only resumed on Palm Sunday in March (just over a year ago).

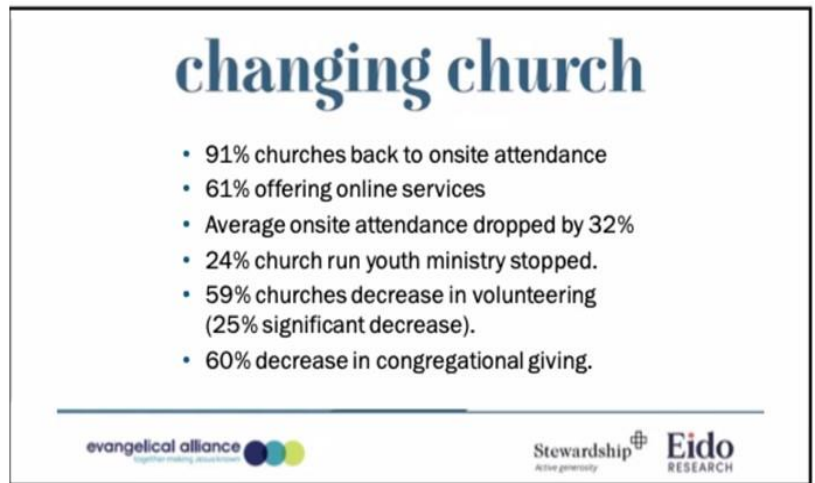
It was still some time before we were able to sing without masks or offer children's ministry, which only commenced on Sundays in September.

We were pleased to be able to offer midweek youth activities outdoors across the summer months.

C: \ One Drive – St. Matthew's Church \ Shared Documents \ PCC \ APCM 2022 \ APCM minutes 2022

Many of you will remember this slide from the Evangelical Alliance.

It provides a snapshot of not just what St. Matt's was like last year but actually the way our experience was mirrored by the national church.



What is encouraging is that in most areas we have seen progress.

- More of us are now able to gather for worship, although some still cannot join with us. We may not have returned to our pre-pandemic attendance, but numbers are rising. However, we are also living with the reality that some families have felt that it is time to move on from St. Matthew's, often for their own personal but very genuine reasons.
- Some are also still worshipping with us online – and if we were to look for highlights it would be the success of the hybrid services (both live and online approach to worship that we have adopted). We continue to have a significant online community as well as physical one.
- We have also seen an increasing number of people sign up for volunteer teams, many of whom are new to ministry at St. Matt's.
- Things have also moved on with both children and youth ministry. It has been amazing to see midweek groups re-established and growing, particularly among the younger age group. On Sundays youth Alpha in the Powney's home was also a highlight, although it is good to have them meeting back in church now. Matt's Monkeys which also reopened in the autumn has provided a valuable gathering place for parents and young children who had previously been severely impacted by Covid.
- One highlight that does not figure in the EA slide is the growth and success of the Community Larder. In many ways it is not the sort of success we want because it demonstrates the truly awful level of need in society and in our own community. It's a terrible indictment of our society that the need continues to grow and that is only likely to continue. Jan, Liz and the team made up of church members and members of our local community have done a remarkable job in difficult circumstances.
- But not every area has improved – over the last two years we have seen a significant and growing decline in giving (it is hardly surprising in the light of the economic climate). As Kate will share later, this means that we are facing a deficit and we have had to cut costs wherever possible.
- The most significant impact of this is has been that we are no longer able to appoint a youth minister currently. We have made several attempts to make an appointment, including a potential job share with High Hopes but have not managed to make an appointment. To be honest, the candidates are not out there, and we are not the only church experiencing this predicament. However, the special reserves for youth and children's ministry which came from the gift day we had a number of years ago has been completely used up and day to day income is insufficient for us to be confident we could honour any commitment to a new staff member at this time.

So where do we go from here?

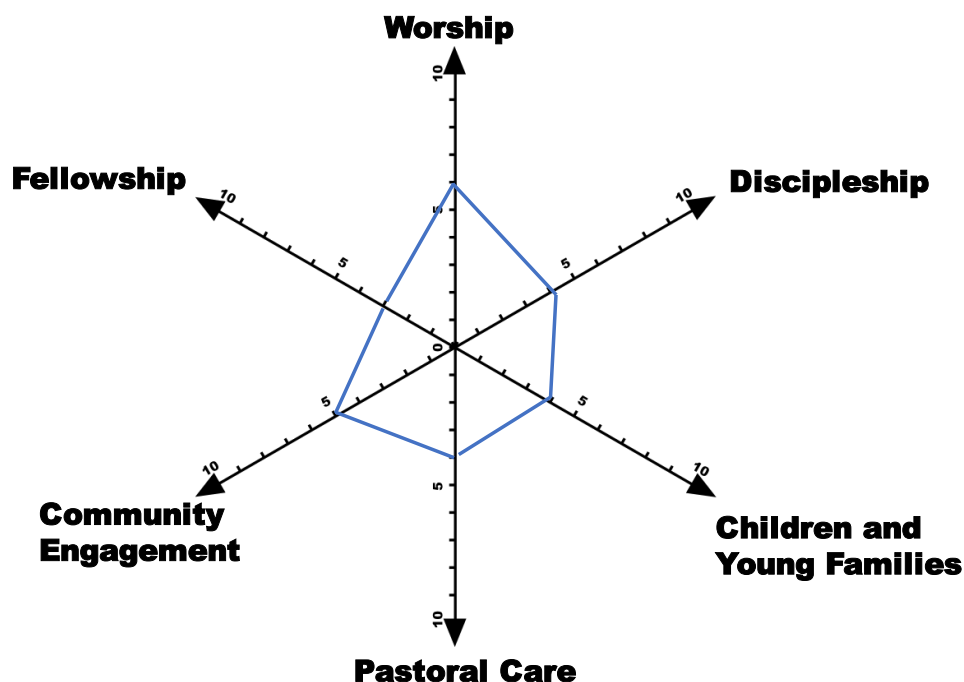
In January we had a day where we took the PCC and Leadership Team away to consider our priorities for the future. The day was facilitated by Graham Wilkinson, who is the Diocesan Growth Enabler.

The backdrop to that day was our continued commitment to our vision as church to ignite passion for Jesus.

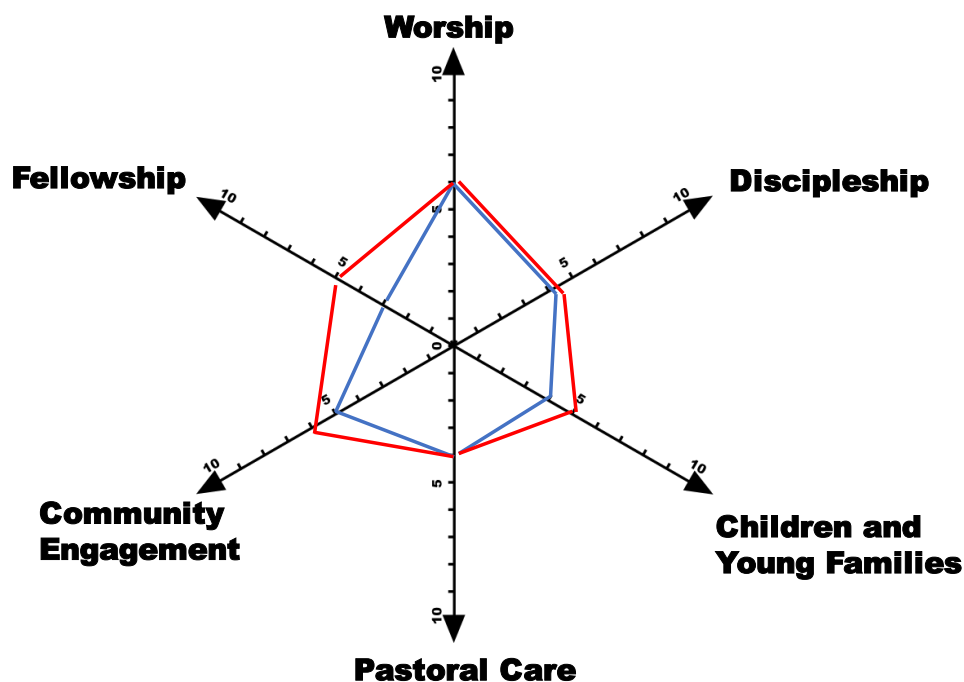
And before I speak about the outcomes it might be helpful to say a little about the process.

We began by reflecting on key areas of church life – and we were each asked to assess them personally before our thoughts were drawn together. The areas were worship, discipleship, children and youth, pastoral care, community engagement and fellowship.

We were each asked to allocate 25 points to different areas of church life according to how well we perceived we were doing it as a church – the stronger the area, the more points we gave it. This is how it looked when everyone’s points were averaged.



We were then asked to use five more points where we would like to see the most improvement – like any exercise of this sort according to our experience we had different views at times, depending on where we serve most in church.



When we added our extra points, it became apparent that there were three areas that the majority of us wanted to invest in (the ones where the red bulges out from the blue) – fellowship, community engagement and youth and children’s ministry. This does not mean that other areas are not important, but these are the ones that stood out.

We then broke into groups to talk more widely about all these areas and were asked for each group to jointly agree two priorities for the coming year and one longer term dream. As you can imagine this produced a multitude of great ideas.

Mary kindly collated these and grouped them into common themes and then they were passed to the Leadership Team to draw together three priorities that came out of them.

The result of this was seven priorities that were most repeated and that most people felt were important.



The first three were youth related, the next three were community related and specifically in relation to the potential development of the Bethel building. The final one related to fellowship and growing relationships in church through social activities.

Youth

Bearing in mind that desire to ignite passion for Jesus, the Leadership Team were incredibly aware that for that to happen after so much disruption there is a need to rebuild relationships amongst our young people.



So we took those three priorities and distilled them down into one that seemed to encompass it all:

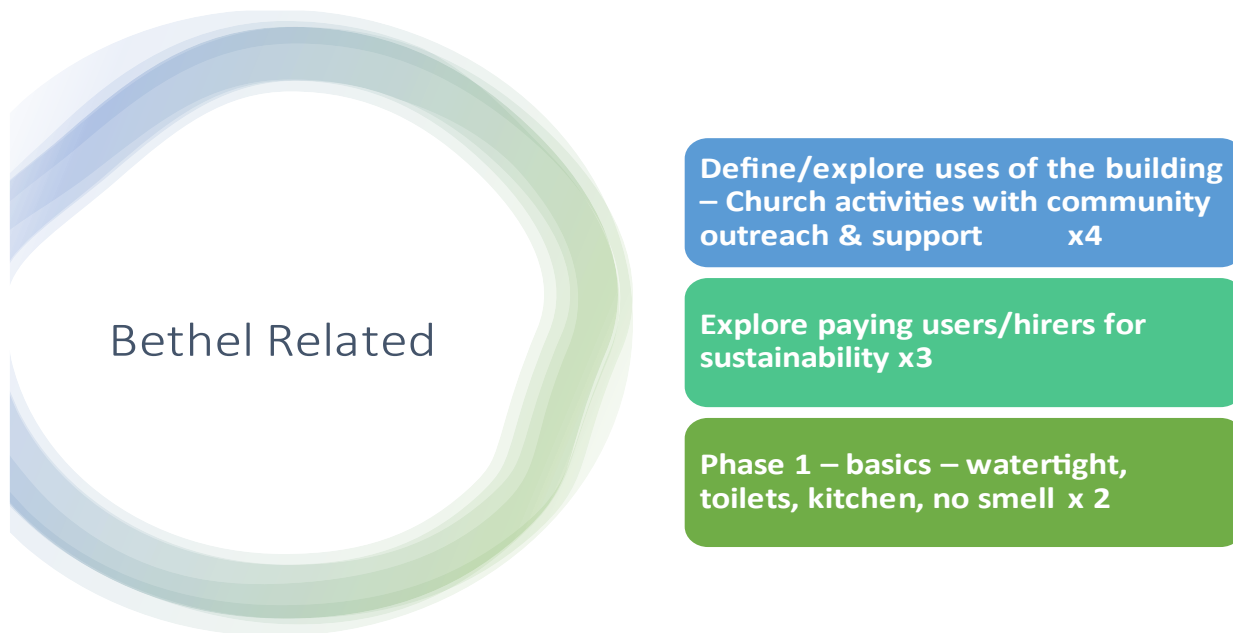
Find and establish routes to grow relationships / community among our youth in church.

To do that it is a given that we need to grow team – and if we are going to see our young people grow in their faith it will require relationships to be rebuilt.

Community Engagement

The next set of priorities were community related and referred specifically to the Bethel building.

The success of the larder and their ideas for the building development have been a wakeup call to the potential of the building to become a church led community hub. It is incredibly complicated because of the legal situation and the fact that although we have use of the building it is owned by The Bethel Trust, which is an independent Christian trust with very strict guidelines for its use.

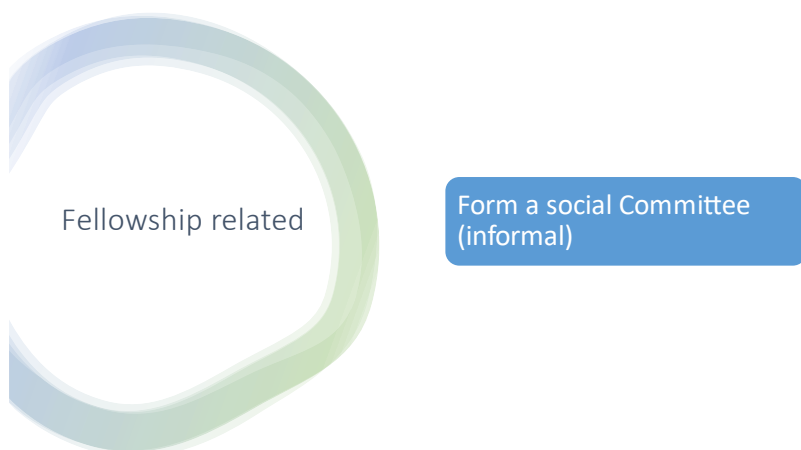


The Leadership Team drew these three priorities into one all-encompassing one:

Following the success of the community larder in the Bethel building, we will continue to explore the further development of the building as a church and community resource in conjunction with the Bethel Trust.

Fellowship

The final priority was fellowship related. We have already alluded to how church as changed post covid. The Leadership Team felt that, as with young people, there was a need to rebuild relationships within the wider church family.



This could almost be seen as an irrelevancy against the big picture of needs amongst young people and the community, but there was an awareness that if we are serious about igniting passion for Jesus, we need to be stirring ourselves up over this and that can only come out of relationship.

The priority needed to be a bit wider than just forming a social committee, so it is:

Planning and using social events to give opportunities to build relationships.

Therefore, these are the three priorities which were agreed by the Leadership Team and the PCC for the coming year



- Find and establish routes to grow relationships / community among our youth in church
- Following the success of the community larder in the Bethel building, we will continue to explore the further development of the building as a church and community resource in conjunction with the Bethel Trust.
- Planning and using social events to give opportunities to build relationships.

Chris asked if anyone had any questions about anything he had said.

Appreciation was expressed to Natalie Ash for stepping up and running our youth sessions on Sundays.

6. Trustees' Report

Chris explained that we are not just a church; we are also a charity. Every year we have to submit accounts and a report to the Charity Commission, which means this report feels a bit sterile as it's in the form needed for the Charity Commission.

The report was accepted.

Proposed: Ian Wilson

Seconded: Suzanne Owen

There were no questions or comments.

7. Electoral Roll

The changes in the electoral roll of St. Matthew's Church since the APCM last year is as follows:

Total at APCM 2021	Additions	Deletions	Total at APCM 2022
123	3	12	114

The updated electoral roll was received.

Proposed: Kate Whitehead

Seconded: Mary Wilson

8. Church wardens report

The churchwardens' report was accepted.

Proposed: Carole Wicks

Seconded: Kate Whitehead

9. Safeguarding report

Chris expressed his gratitude to Linde Horseman who was our Parish Safeguarding Officer for most of last year and has done a fantastic and professional job in this role.

This report is normally written by the Parish Safeguarding Officer, but as the role holders changed during the year, Hannah wrote it this year. Julia Church is now our Safeguarding Officer.

The safeguarding report was accepted.

Proposed: Suzanne Owen

Seconded: Richard Arding

10. Deanery Synod report

We can have two Deanery Synod representatives as a church, plus the vicar and Richard Arding as a representative for retired clergy. Mary Wilson is our elected member, and we have one vacancy.

This is Mary's report on the business of Deanery Synod for the year.

Not only is Mary our representative on Deanery Synod, but she has also been elected to Diocesan Synod to represent the Tunbridge Wells Deanery. Thank you to Mary for taking on that role.

The Deanery Synod report was accepted.

Proposed: Richard Arding

Seconded: Jean Best

11. Parish Treasurers Report

Kate Whitehead explained the top-level numbers for 2021.

In many ways 2021 was similar to 2020 in that it was an unusual year for finances.

Kate gave an explanation on how the accounts are produced – we have restricted and unrestricted expenses. Any money coming into church is income, so things like Matt's Monkeys subs, tickets, Revive breakfasts, etc as well as giving by the congregation.

Restricted income is income for specific ring-fenced purposes. For example, specific donations for children and youth, gifts and grants for live streaming equipment, the community larder.

Unrestricted income is everything else, giving to the general running of the church.

Overall in 2021 we spent £4,500 more than we had in income.

However, restricted giving in 2021 was £4,500 in hand, which is mostly credit to the larder team and their hard work in raising funds to make the larder sustainable and to supplement food that they are given.

Unrestricted giving in 2021 was £9,000 in deficit, so we spent £9,000 more than we got in income.

In 2020 and 2021, we had the Quinquennial works happening on the church building. We had saved money for this in repair funds, but in the accounts it shows as an expense when we paid it, so it looks like a bit of a shock. We paid some of this bill in 2020 and some in 2021.

In terms of staff, we had no youth worker in 2021, so we saved money there. Lois and Hannah both increased their hours a bit to help cover some of the youth provision, but not as much as a separate staff member would have cost.

Kate explained that 2022 is more challenging. Currently congregational giving is about £12,000 to £15,000 a year lower than in the last few years, and expenses look like they are increasing across the board. The real challenge is gas and electricity rises, especially as we don't benefit from the price cap as a business.

Kate added that the good news is that at end of 2021 had overall balance of about £186,000 in the bank, from legacies and reserve, but we want to save that for bigger projects if we can.

A question was asked about the money in the bank. If we have that money in the pot for a rainy day, then what constitutes a rainy day if not now. We have Covid, Brexit and Ukraine all creating massive economic pressure, so shouldn't we be using that money now?

Kate replied that we are using it to meet the gap between income and expenditure, but we would rather use most of it for a big project going forward than using it up on the day to day running of the church. She also explained that as a charity, the PCC has a reserve policy, so we keep 6 months running costs in the bank in case anything catastrophic happens. We would like to be covering our day-to-day costs with our giving over a year, but that hasn't been happening for a few years.

Chris added that the money in the bank is made up of 3 pots – repair funds, most of which were used on the Quinquennial works and will need to be built up again, a legacy that we would like to use to develop buildings, so it gives a legacy for that person who left it, then money that has built up over the good years which we are now starting to eat into. St. Matt's didn't used to have any reserves, so we have done well to build that up and we are required to have reserves by the Charity Commission. We haven't been making a big thing about giving in church as it feels like people are and will be under significant pressure financially. But we are going to have to address this if we want to get back to adding any more staff or staff hours going forward.

Chris gave a vote of thanks to Kate Whitehead for all the work she puts in to this role.

The Treasurer's report and annual accounts were accepted.

Proposed: Matt Taylor

Seconded: David Johnson

12. Re-appointment of Independent Examiner

It was proposed to re-appoint David Stephens as our independent examiner for the 2022 accounts.

Proposed: Ian Wilson

Seconded: Richard Arding

13. Elections and Appointment of Tellers (if necessary)

David Johnson and Richard Arding are happy to act as tellers if required.

Election of PCC Representatives

Chris explained that people on the PCC are standing down on a 3-year cycle but can re-elected if they want to be. This year Matt Fryett, Suzanne Owen and Mike Southwick are all standing down.

Mike and Suzanne are happy to be re-elected. However Matt does not feel able to stand again.

There are other places vacant as well, so if anyone else wants to stand for PCC, they can be nominated or nominate themselves.

Kate Whitehead nominated Matt Taylor. Matt was happy to stand for election. Ali Granger seconded this.

Chris Wicks therefore declared that Mike Southwick, Suzanne Owen and Matthew Taylor have been duly elected to the PCC.

Chris thanked them for being willing to stand.

Thank you also to Matt Fryett who has contributed a lot while on PCC.

Election of Deanery Synod Representatives

There is one vacancy for Deanery Synod. Being elected to Deanery Synod means you would be on the PCC and part of Deanery Synod. There were no nominations for this vacancy.

If anyone wishes to stand, they can be co-opted during the year.

14. Appointment of Sidespeople

Sidespeople are those on welcome and coffee teams. The Church of England calls them sidespeople.

Hannah Mwesigwa then read out the names of those put forward by the churchwardens to be sidespeople for the coming year.

Jane Andrews, Norman Andrews, Sue Andrews, Jean Best, Rosemary Blanchard, Gordon Blanchard, Julia Church, Caroline Clark, Lois Fryett, Matthew Fryett, Jan Gabriel, Mark Gabriel, Hannah Granger, Antonia Harrowing, Mike Harrowing, Liz Johnson, Elaine Latchford, Hannah Mwesigwa, Dedo Rampe, Julie Sewell, Jane Sexton, Patrick Sexton, Clare Smith, Mike Southwick, Jane Taylor, Matthew Taylor.

The churchwardens also requested the power to co-opt if extra help is required.

Thank you to everyone who serves on this team.

The above names were accepted.

Proposed: David Johnson

Seconded: Brian Hobden

15. Any Other Business

Richard thanked Chris and Carole for all their leadership of the church. Their wisdom and kindly leadership of the church is hugely valued.

Chris also thanked Hannah for all she does, particularly with things like the APCM which take a lot of work.

There was no more business.

Chris closed the meeting with the grace.