

Minutes of the Easter Vestry and Annual Parochial Meeting of St Leonard's Church Lexden held on 7<sup>th</sup> April  
2019

Present – Rev'd Matthew Simpkins Chair and 56 members of the congregation.

**Easter Vestry Meeting**

Apologies (for both meetings) had been received from Julie Hinchcliffe, Jean Holden, Mandy Allston, Maureen Watkins and Christine Rose.

1. Minutes of the meeting of 29<sup>th</sup> April 2018 were agreed and signed.

2. Election of Churchwardens

Two nominations had been received, Mr David Watkins and Mrs Esther Heptonstall were duly appointed. Rev'd Matthew Simpkins thanked David and Esther and the assistant wardens for their overwhelming support.

**Annual Parochial Meeting**

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2018 were agreed and signed.

2. The Annual Report on the proceedings of the PCC and the activities of the Parish in general, circulated previously, was approved. Rev'd Matthew Simpkins gave a short summary of the report and thanked all those who give service at St Leonard's in any way.

"The annual report is straightforward and self-explanatory, I hope. Though I was here for just three months of 2018, those key characteristics of St Leonard's that the report communicates became very evident to me. St Leonard's is committed to serving its communities – through engagement with schools and residential homes; through baptisms, weddings and funerals; through outreach, mission and social events; through inviting and sensitive worship; through pastoral ministry; and through offering our buildings and facilities. Discipleship is also being lived out through collective and individual support of charities and institutions - most importantly through active assistance, but also through generous financial giving. St Leonard's seeks to serve its existing community, while at the same time growing its work with children and young people, as well as its fellowship provision for those of all ages. Our Flower Festival drew people from across the area. A healthy variety of worship is prepared and offered with love and concern - not just for the gathered congregations - but also for the parish community that it is our privilege to serve. The main capital project completed in 2018 – the expansion of the kitchen – was intended to further facilitate mission through hospitality. This Church takes seriously its responsibility to surrounding parishes, the deanery, the diocese, the Church of England and the general Church of God, paying its parish share in full and looking for ways to collaborate in the building of the Kingdom and the sharing of the Gospel.

However, there is *one* story often told about St Leonard's that needs to be carefully revisited, perhaps. That is the story that this is a straightforwardly wealthy parish. Careful stewardship and generosity is rightly seen here as an essential part of our lives as disciples. The closing of our 2018 accounts within £1,000 of the figure budgeted was achieved because the PCC received generous legacies. But legacies cannot be predicted, of course, and so perhaps the key trend in our accounts is that regular stewardship giving fell by over 10% in 2018 – a decrease of over £10,600. The PCC is to prioritise stewardship in this accounting year, seeing it as being about releasing all the gifts God has given us – among them material gifts.

Overall, St Leonard's is a faithful, engaged Church of England parish church, which sincerely strives to make Christ's love known by all in its community. I give thanks that I have the privilege of serving this parish, and again offer my sincere gratitude for the wonderful welcome you have given my family and me".

There were no matters arising from the report.

3. The Financial Statement (Jan Buckley) The Statement had been independently examined by Peyton Tyler Mears and copies had been made available previously to the congregation.

Adrian Steward gave a short report

"I'd like to mention and point out that every year the figures in the Financial Statements, reviewed by the Accountants, Peyton, Tyler, Mears include a large sum of money for our church hall. The church hall building is valued at over half a million pounds. The value of the church hall inflates the total and in reality the church has less money to use on day to day costs. We can't use the money contained in the church hall building. A stranger looking at the accounts might quickly conclude that St Leonards is a rich church. It certainly is rich in time and talents and many churches would be very pleased to report these figures of income and assets. However meeting day to day expenditure proves to be challenging, and in 2018, the accounts show a deficit of £14338 (against a budgeted deficit of £13475). As you would expect, the PCC is already taking steps to address this situation."

Percy Saunders Restricted fund will be corrected to Percy Sanders.

Maggie Whiteman asked what steps are the PCC taking to address the deficit situation – Adrian Steward said that they are going to look at Stewardship as this is key and would raise income. They will also be looking at expenditure and making sure we are prudent and look at the Diocesan buying scheme.

4. Acceptance of the Financial Statement was proposed by Maggie Whiteman and seconded by Sian Simpkins and approved.

5. The appointment of Independent Examiners Peyton Tyler Mears was proposed by Adrian Steward and seconded by Alan Hedgeland and approved.

#### 6. Electoral Roll

Thanks were expressed to Jo Burrows for all the work done in renewing the Electoral Roll this year. At the end of 2018 there were 237 on the roll. There are 205 names on the new one, 52 of whom are new to the roll and 107 are resident in the parish.

#### 7. Fabric Report

There is a short report in the Annual Report and a slightly longer one in the other reports which were available at the back of the church.

#### 8. Report of proceedings of the Deanery Synod

The report had been prepared and circulated with the other reports. Margaret Smith and Rev'd Viv Mendham were our parish Deanery Synod reps at the beginning of the year but Viv stepped down when she was ordained. Matt reported that we are allowed 5 reps and emphasised that it would be good if we could try and take up as many of our places as possible.

#### 9. Election of Representatives of the Laity to the Parochial Church Council

Jan Buckley had completed her three years. Nominations were received for Jan Buckley, Christine Rose and Mary Hanmer who were all duly elected.

Nominations were received from Julie Hinchcliffe and Maureen Watkins as Deanery Synod reps – they were duly elected.

#### 10. Appointment of Child Protection Officer and Adult Safeguarding Officer

Julie Hinchcliffe is our Parish Safeguarding Officer. Matt reported that she has done a superb job to keep us abreast of what is expected of us. Safeguarding folders are available at the back of the church and on the website. If you need any more information or have any concerns please speak to Julie or Matt.

#### 11. Churchwardens Assistants

Esther and David wanted to add their personal thanks to Peter, Beverley (and Edward for his support of Beverley with all that the hall requires) and Frank for all their help and for everything they do.

#### 12. Appointment of Sides persons

The names of 29 ladies and gentlemen were read out and duly elected en bloc. They have one of the most important jobs that people can do in welcoming, particularly new people who are coming here for their first visit. The list will be displayed on the North porch Noticeboard. Esther thanked them all for all they do each week, welcoming people into the church.

#### 13. Any Other Business

None

#### 14. Priest in Charge Address

“As we approach Holy Week and Easter the symbol of the cross is very much in our minds. It is at once a symbol of failure and death, and also *the* symbol of the eternal triumph of God’s love. The cross’s power as a symbol comes from its simplicity – one vertical line meets one horizontal line. The vertical line speaks of the relationship between humanity and God. The horizontal line reminds of the relationship between ourselves and all others. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” – says Jesus, describing the vertical part of the cross. “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” – says Jesus, describing the horizontal part of the cross. In the cross these two – love of God, love of neighbour – cannot be separated. This is what God expects of his Church, and - as part of his Church - this is what God wants for St Leonard’s: that we love God and we love neighbour, and in loving our neighbours that we draw them closer to him.

What vision shall we have for doing this, then? Vision is discerned *together*; discerned by a community of disciples over time through careful attentiveness to what God is already doing through others and through ourselves. Seven months in to my role as Priest-in-Charge, I discover more and more of what God is doing in

this parish each day. I am *still* learning *with* you, of course – but here's a sketch of a vision of what God may have planned for Lexden and St Leonard's – a vision grown from what God is already doing.

St Leonard's is to be a community of nurture and invitation where Christ's love is made real to those who never thought such love could possibly be for them. A community that goes out in hope into the world – seeking those who are marginalised, forgotten, ignored. A community that is willing to be vulnerable enough to hold its arms open in welcome – not seeking to impose our own standards, but delighting in all those who come. A community that is humble: gentle towards others, and gentle towards its members. A community that grows disciples of all ages, deepening their relationship with Christ. A community that constantly asks who from Lexden parish is *not* here with us? - What are *their* needs? - How can we build *them* up? A community that enthusiastically engages in mission, but which refuses the dangerous path of hyperactivity and busyness. A community where all are supported to give of their best – whatever that might look like by the world's standards – but which rejects perfectionism as damaging. A generous community that sees any abundance it has – whether of ministry, of gifts or material resources – not as its *own*, but as God's: given to be used for the benefit of others and therefore to God's glory. A community whose worship and music is infused with love and joy, and that aids and inspires people to use their own gifts. A community that seeks out what God is doing and works with others – other parishes, other ecumenical partners, and other secular organisations – to further build God's Kingdom.

So may the love of God grow in each of us and between us. May the love of God overflow from us to all our surrounding communities. Because when that love truly overflows, we might well find that God fills not just the chancel and the nave, but the balcony *every* week too".

David thanked Matt on behalf of everyone for coming here to serve as Priest in Charge of St Leonard's. He also thanked Sian, Martha and James for their commitment too. We look forward to joining with them in serving God here at St Leonard's in the future.

The meeting concluded at 12.25 p.m. with prayers and Grace.