**St Mary’s Church, High Bickington**

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parishioners (Vestry Meeting)**

**Sunday 3rd April 2022 at 1115 in church.**

1. Rev Tracey opened the meeting with a prayer.

2. Present were: Rev Tracey Doyle (Chair), Derek Birch, David Halpin, Ken Shelvey, Roger Keen, Noelle Clemens, Vivienne Hudson, Neil Hudson, Rev Julia Halpin, Julie Clarke, Michael Doyle and Ruth Shuff, Georgie Shelvey.

Apologies were received from: Ian Cornwell, Catherine Cornwell ad Melanie Doyle.

3. The minute of the previous meeting (11 Apr 2021) were passed as correct.

4. There being only one candidate for the office of Churchwarden Derek Birch was proposed by David Halpin and seconded by Julia Halpin. The proposal was passed unanimously.

**Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)**

**3rd April 2022 at 1125**

1. Attendance and apologies as above.

2. The minutes of the previous meeting (3rd April 2021). Proposed by Neil Hudson, seconded by Graham Bridge that the minutes be passed as correct. Unanimous.

3. There were no matters arising.

4. Reports

a. Electoral Roll. It was reported that there had been a reduction of 3 to the roll since the previous report. These reductions were due to one death and one couple moving away. Current number is 31.

b. PCC activities. There were no questions arising from the annual report.

c. The Churchwarden confirmed compliance with the section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline measure 2016.

d. Finance. There were no questions to the Treasurer arising from the financial statement for the year ending 30th December 2021.

e. Fabric. The Churchwarden reported that although the tower works are not yet fully complete, we do have use of the toilet and kitchen facilities. The remaining work is in the new ringing chamber where some extra work is being carried out to deal with water ingress through the tower walls. This will be finished in the near future. One item that we are not happy with is the lighting of the new west window, it is simply not doing the job. This matter will be discussed with the Architect and builder prior to the works being signed off. The south and west walls of the tower, at lower levels have a water ingress problem which will hopefully be solved later this year by scraping out and repointing, with lime mortar. The quinquennial inspection is now well overdue. This is because we decided to wait for the tower works to be completed before carrying out the inspection. As we know the tower works have taken much longer that we anticipated. The Architect has been approached to carry out the inspection and it will be done this year.

f. Mission Council Report. Rector’s report is attached at Annex A.

(Neil and Vivienne Hudson left the meeting at this point).

g. Deanery Synod. There had been three meetings of the Deanery Synod during the reporting period, in February, August and October. The February meeting was held via Zoom and there was no speaker. The synod met in Great Torrington in August where the speaker was Bishop Jackie assisted by Rev Preb Phillip Sourbutt. The subject of the talk was Living in Love and Faith. (Those who attended a LLF course are encouraged to complete the online questionnaire before the end of April 2022). In October the meeting was held in High Bickington and the speaker was Rev Mike Clark who spoke on his role in the Diocese and he also introduce the new initiative, Lightening the Load. The role of Deanery Synod Secretary is currently filled by Jacque ward, however she needs to lighten her load to allow her to concentrate on her roles as the Archdeacons PA and as a focal minister in our Mission Community. Anyone interested in taking on this role please contact Rev Tracey or Derek Birch.

5. Elections. Election results attached at Annex B

b. Independent Examiner. Proposed by Kenneth Shelvey, seconded by Roger Keen, Mr Ian Cornwell was unanimously re-appointed as Independent Examiner.

6. 2022 Plans. Rev Tracey spoke about plans for 2022 which included more joint services with Atherington, our Methodist brothers and sisters and our school, both in the churches and outside. It would be great to expand our lay leadership. Training and assistance are available for those who need it. More help is needed for after school club which is growing. With up to 40 children more adult supervision is necessary a maximum of once per month during the school year. Please contact Rev Tracey if you think you could help with any of this. We can start to think about re-ordering the church to make the building more user friendly for various groups and activities. Finally we need to get out and join in with more of the secular activities in the parish, e.g. by entering teams into quiz nights, going to the pubs when they reopen(!) and other similar events.

7. Budget. The treasurer presented a proposed budget for 2022. One question was raised by David Halpin concerning actual annual “running” costs for the church. It was suggested that a list be produced to put up in church to show the make up of our annual / weekly running costs to ensure that we all understand where the money is being spent.

**Parochial Church Council Meeting**

**11th April 2022 at 1225 via Zoom**

1. Attendance: Present were Rev Tracey Doyle, Derek Birch, David Halpin, Rev Julia Halpin, Kenneth Shelvey, Graham Bridge, Noelle Clemens and Roger Keen.

Apologies Neil Hudson, Vivienne Hudson.

2. Appointment of Lay Vice Chair. Proposed by Rev Tracey, seconded by Graham Bridge that Derek Birch be appointed as Lay Vice Chair. Carried unanimously.

3. Secretary. Roger Keen, after 40 years’ service, offered his resignation as Secretary. This was mainly due to his lack of IT skills as almost all business from the Diocese is now electronic. As there were no volunteers for the role of secretary the Churchwarden will continue to fill this role. Graham Bridge volunteered to act as PCC Minutes Secretary this offer was gratefully received.

4. Treasurer. Ken Shelvey was re-appointed as Treasurer.

5. a. Safeguarding. It was unanimously agreed to re-adopt the Bishops’ Safeguarding Policy.

b. All current PCC members have completed the necessary DBS checks.

c. All current PCC members declared that their circumstances relating to “Fit and Proper Persons” were unchanged.

d. All PCC members have completed C0 training.

6. Any Other Business. Nil.

7. Date of next meeting Wednesday 11th May 2022 at Nethergrove House.

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**ANNEX A**

**Two Rivers Mission Community Annual Report 2021**

2021 has of course been a year dominated by coronavirus, both in church and society. We have, however, remained focused throughout on our aim of “building a Christian community in each village, which will worship, pray, grow and reach out with the Gospel”. Indeed, during the year we refined and agreed a new Mission Action Plan (see appendix 2) and agreed a way of organising the mission community to achieve this. In December 2021 the Bishop’s council formally constituted a new Two Rivers Mission Community Joint Council which will further facilitate our parishes working together. This council will come into existence on 1st January 2022. There is now a focal minister in place in each parish.

The year began with England entering a third national lockdown in an attempt to fight coronavirus. Churches were permitted to meet and after careful risk assessments we decided to maintain Sunday services in all parishes. This decision was justified by attendance remaining little different from normal. People obviously wanted to meet together for worship and felt relatively safe in our large, well-ventilated buildings. For those unable to attend church in person we provided a weekly online service or sermon; numbers tuning in averaging around 8-12.

Meeting for other purposes was not permitted and so we made the most of Zoom. Our new year course, “Life on the Front Line” was attended by around 25 people and helped us think through how we live out our faith in our daily lives. During lent we offered 3 “streams” within one weekly Zoom session, looking at 2 Timothy, the events of Holy Week and ‘getting to know the Holy Spirit’.

In March we commenced a very successful online Alpha course, with nine attendees ranging from long standing Christians to those new to church. The group enjoyed exploring the Christian faith together and most attendees are now involved in their local church in a variety of capacities. Some hope to be confirmed when we are able to book a bishop.

Rev Tracey and Rev Gary provided weekly online collective worship for our four local schools until they were able to go into school once more in the summer. Our relationship with local schools remains strong, especially with our church schools in High Bickington and Holywell. High Bickington enjoy weekly assemblies from the clergy and on alternate weeks Open the Book. Collective worship in the other schools is less frequent but there is scope to offer more when resources are available and covid permits.

Covid restrictions began to ease by the summer and churches tentatively began to reopen coffee mornings and hold other social gatherings. These provided a wonderful opportunity to bring people together and support the wider community in a practical way. These events have continued throughout the rest of the year. Homegroups began to meet in person once more, providing a means for church members to support each other in their journey of faith. St Giles started a new group to add to the existing groups in High Bickington and Newton Tracey. Yarnscombe aim to resume meeting in 2022.

The lifting of the ban on singing in church and lighter restrictions on activities made it feasible to resume more interactive family services in the Autumn. These have helped us reconnect with younger people. A notable success has been the family service in Tawstock where many baptism families have joined in. Churches have sought to be creative in offering harvest, All Souls, remembrance and other services for their communities; sometimes getting outside the curch building to do so. A monthly muddy church service in the community woods in High Bickington has seen families previously unconnected with church get involved and provides something different from traditional church. The youth group in Newton Tracey and After School Club in High Bickington resumed in the Autumn, much to the delight of the young people.

The year ended with a flurry of Christmas services and activities as we sought to celebrate Jesus’ birth and share the good news amidst growing concerns over the new omicron coronavirus strain. Attendance was good and we welcomed many visitors both from the local community and those visiting family and friends.

During the year we conducted 40 funerals across the mission community. Baptisms resumed in the summer, as did weddings, and we baptised 19 children and 1 adult during the year and conducted 7 weddings and a wedding blessing. 13 weddings are booked so far for 2022. These pastoral offices are a wonderful opportunity to share God’s love and the good news of Jesus with people at both the high and low points of life.

Our pastoral work relies very heavily on ordinary church members showing love and concern for each other and their neighbour. This is supported by the leadership team in general and Julia our parish nurse in particular. Julia was ordained in Exeter cathedral in September and now combines her role as parish nurse with distinctive deacon – helping the church offer practical care with a spiritual dimension out in the community. She visits baby and toddler groups, the sick and elderly and shares home communion.

Julia’s ordination and Elaine Cook (trainee reader) joining us on placement in the Autumn remind us that we need to be constantly raising up people for ministry. We cannot rely on ‘the Diocese’ to supply our needs. We need to be raising up ministry from within.

All our churches have maintained their common fund payments throughout the year – a wonderful achievement given the inability to fundraise. Church members giving regularly and generously (ideally by direct debit) helps ensure that we can meet our bills. Churches have worked hard to maintain their buildings and to improve them to better serve the mission of the church and local community. It is to be hoped that other churches will be able to follow High Bick by adding toilet and refreshment facilities.

We are committed to building Christian communities in each parish. These communities are to glorify God (worship and prayer), nurture Christians, and grow the kingdom of God (evangelism and practical action). Each of these rely on the Christians in the community getting involved and playing their part. We pray that God would send us a house for duty team vicar and mission enabler– there Is certainly plenty of work for them to do! But we are blessed with many good people who have worked hard over the last year to make our churches the lively, vibrant places they are. There are too many to mention by name, but we offer our thanks to our leadership team, wardens and PCC members, and all who play their part. We offer our thanks too, to the retired clergy who have led services and conducted pastoral offices, always waiving their fees. We could not manage without them.

Who knows what the year ahead will bring? God willing coronavirus will be brought under control, and we will get back to some measure of normality. I do believe we are in a good place to move forward as churches. What might God be calling us to? Well, to a certain extent this is now up to each church to discern. What is God doing in each parish? How might the Christians there join in? But I do believe that as a mission community we do need to consider how we can share the gospel with people of all ages and invite people to enter a relationship with God through Jesus. What can we provide for children and teenagers? How can we help people engage with the Gospel and make a decision for Christ? We also need to be raising up more people for ministry. There are definitely people with the gifts. How can we nurture and grow them?

So, let us be of good cheer. Jesus’ promise that he would build his church and the gates of hell would not prevail still stands, as does God’s promise to work in all things for the good of those who love him. Let’s keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. To him be glory for ever! Amen.

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|  | **ANNEX B**  **RESULTS OF ELECTIONS** |

Parish of **St Mary’s, High Bickington**

Deanery of **Torrington**

At the Annual Meeting of Parishioners and Annual Parochial Church Meeting of the above parish held on 3rd April 2022

The following was elected as **Churchwarden:**

Name: **Derek Birch** Name: **Vacancy**

The following were elected as **Parish Representatives to the Two Rivers Mission Community Joint Council:**

Name: **Derek Birch** Name: **Kenneth Shelvey**

The following were elected as **Lay Members of the Torrington Deanery Synod:**

Name: **Derek Birch** Name: **Roger Keen**

The following were elected as **Lay members of the Parochial Church Council:**

Name: **Noelle Clemens (until 2025)**

Name: **Neil Hudson (until 2023)**

Name: **Vivien Hudson (until 2023)**

Name: **Graham Bridge (until 2024)**

Name: **Kenneth Shelvey (until 2024)**

Name: **Vacancy**