

**OUR LADY AND ST JOHN, GORING AND CHRIST THE KING, WOODCOTE**

**Minutes of Parish Meeting**

**Held on Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

**Present:** Father Antony Conlon  
Father Jacob Lewis  
Members of the Finance Committee  
(David Bermingham, Karen Brown, David Browne, Halina Czajka, Greg Dean, Dave Sexon)  
About 25 other parishioners

**1. Opening Prayer**

Father Antony Conlon

**2. Apologies for absence**

There were none

**3. Minutes of Last Meeting & Matters Arising**

Father Antony said there were no Minutes on file from the last meeting in October 2018. (Karen Brown later apologised for not having produced these). Father Antony reported that the main discussion had been about progress with the extension/annex and the need for better facilities. The general state of the church buildings was also covered and it was agreed that the Woodcote church needed renovation but that this would have to wait.

**4. Parish Finances**

Father Antony said that it was a source of joy and consolation to him that the Parish finances were in such good shape with a cash balance of about £80,000 in the bank. This was in part due to the efficient administration provided by Karen Brown and Greg Dean and he expressed his thanks to them.

A copy of the Accounts and Gift Aid Totals are attached.

Karen Brown went briefly through the Accounts, highlighting a few issues. There had been a generous donation of £5,000 from one anonymous parishioner towards the extension building fund; an increase in the Gift Aid claimed due to Greg Dean's diligence; an increase in the Diocesan Support Charges; a substantial decrease in the church and house maintenance this year, but quite a large expenditure on Architect's Fees and preparatory costs for the extension; dividends from investments were slightly down but the interest rate had increased.

David Browne asked a question about why expenditure on the church extension project was reported as operating costs and not as capital expenditure. Karen explained that the Diocese required her to report this under one code and there was not a separate one to cover capital expenditure.

Greg Dean then briefly explained that the parish made a gift aid tax claim and a tax claim under the 'loose plate small donation scheme' each year. The gift aid claim covered all donations made by people who had signed gift aid declarations in favour of the parish and the 'loose plate scheme' covered cash given in the plate and from those giving under the envelope scheme but who had not signed gift aid declarations. In the tax year 2018-19 the eligible offertory was £39,875 enabling the parish to make tax claims totalling £9,504. For the tax year 2017-18 there was a further tax claim outstanding of £3,558 under the 'loose plate scheme' which the Diocese is still due to pay the parish. They had written and apologised for the delay. Greg Dean advised that one way or another about 99% of the 'loose plate' collection was eligible for gift aid. Pauline Knollys asked Greg for clarification on this. Apparently cheques in envelopes without gift aid are not eligible but cash up to £30 is eligible. However, if more than £30 cash is put in the envelope, none of it is eligible! Greg went on to say that there are only very few non gift-aid envelopes.

## **5. Progress Report on Church Extension**

Father Antony explained that there had been an enormous amount of paperwork generated in relation to the project but that the Finance Committee had borne the burden of this and he was very grateful for their help and imaginative approach. Diocesan bureaucracy had also caused problems and delays.

David Browne summarised the situation.

Initial plans were approved over two years ago by SODC in September 2017, but following the submission to the Diocesan Arts and Architecture Committee some changes had to be made and Faculty Approval was received on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2018 and then resubmitted to SODC. Final approval from SODC was received on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019. We then had to get approval from the Diocese for a large expenditure based on tender prices from at least three.

Tenders were issued on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019 to four local builders and quotations were received from three by 18<sup>th</sup> July 2019 and the first tender report was issued on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2019. This was followed by a period of bid equalisation and clarification until the final tender report and related price was received on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2019. The Finance and General Purposes Committee met on 9<sup>th</sup> August to review the tender report and approve a recommendation to Father Antony as to which tender to accept. Father Antony approved the recommendation to appoint WA Hine in a letter to Anthony Delarue dated 11<sup>th</sup> September 2019, but this could not be formalised until we had Diocesan approval of the major expenditure.

However, with a firm tender price it was now possible to complete and submit the Diocesan Form for the Approval of this Major Expenditure together with numerous supporting documents. This was submitted on 11<sup>th</sup> September and formal approval was received on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

The estimated cost of the extension is about £300,000 but this does not include fitting out the interior etc. We can encash the full value of the Parish holding in the Diocesan Unit Trust Fund (DUTF), which is currently valued at around £220,000 and we have £84,000 in the Parish bank account, so we are well on the way to the £300,000 needed for the build.

However, at least £30,000 must be held in the Parish account to fund the ongoing operation of the Parish. Also, encashment of the full holding in DUFT will reduce the parish income by around £6,000 a year so we have to look at getting money from other sources. Halina Czajka has been in contact with the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust (OHCT) and the initial response was very positive. David Browne is meeting with them next week to discuss the matter further. Depending on how these approaches to source alternative funding goes, it is thought that the Parish will need to raise approximately £25,000 to £40,000.

One idea is to write to all the younger families who have had children baptised in our church during the last five years to ask if they would be prepared to give a donation. Father Antony also thanked the Sadlers for the money they had raised recently by selling apple pies and garden produce. He felt very confident that the project would be a success and expressed his thanks to members of the Finance Committee for their help.

David explained that two sub-contractors have been appointed in the last week (cost £4,000) to do the preparatory work with respect to Building Control Services and Construction Design Management. These two contractors need four to six weeks to prepare the necessary paperwork ahead of the start of construction which makes it very tight to start before Christmas and when the weather is at its worst. Also, the approval of any grant from OHCT cannot be made before mid-February and must be done ahead of the start of construction so, on this basis and with the agreement of the main contractor, the start of construction has been deferred until the third week in February.

## **6. Christmas Services**

It was agreed that the first Christmas service would be at 5pm (with carols at 4.30pm) on Christmas Eve with a service at 8pm in Woodcote. The Christmas Day services would be at 10 am in Goring and 11.30 am in Woodcote.

Although there is no torchlight procession this year, there will still be a bonfire and carols in Streatley Meadow.

Father Antony mentioned that he had had a recent meeting with the Reverend Ben Phillips and had really warmed to him. He will join him at the Remembrance Service this Sunday and looks forward to other ecumenical ventures in the future.

**7. Date of Next Meeting**

It was suggested that we hold the meeting next year in October before the clocks go back – possible date is Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020 - possibly in the new church extension/Parish Room!!

**8. Any Other Business**

Father Antony talked about the difficult time he is having with his health and that the current treatment leaves him often feeling very exhausted. He is very grateful to all those who are providing food for him and driving him to hospital appointments. He is also very grateful for all the prayers.

Mary Ann Harding mentioned the Children's Masses and asked if it would be possible for the children to have some advance warning of readings/bidding prayers they are expected to read. This would enable them to practice and to understand what they are reading. Father Antony said he would try to do this.

Kerry Harding mentioned the lack of kneelers in three rows at the back of the church – this will be looked into.