



St Michael and All Angels, Ledbury

Minutes of Standing Committee - 10 May 2022

Present: Keith Hilton-Turvey (Rector)
David Houghton (Churchwarden)
Andrew Beech
Catherine Beech

532. The meeting opened with Psalm 87 and prayer.

Minutes of the meeting on 7 March

533. These were agreed unanimously.

Worship

534. Keith Hilton-Turvey will be reviewing the chalice assistants and sacristans/servers, some of whom may not wish to resume their former roles. Any new volunteers either to serve communion or to assist would have to be approved. The Archdeacon had confirmed that approval would be to administer both the bread and the wine. Additionally those DBS checked could administer home communion.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey

535. It was agreed that the last Covid restrictions - closing off two pews at the rear of the church could now be removed.

536. It was noted that the performance of the sound system was getting worse. The system needs overhauling or replacement. Some funds are available towards the cost. It was agreed that Keith Hilton-Turvey would ask Benjamin Hilton-Turvey to consider urgently what might be done, and to report to the PCC.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey/Benjamin Hilton-Turvey

Strategic vision

537. There has been no progress. Keith Hilton-Turvey and Lisa-Jayne Lewis are to produce a paper for the PCC to consider at its awayday. Keith is also to arrange the awayday.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey/Lisa-Jayne Lewis

Contact details

538. It was agreed that the routine contact should Keith Hilton-Turvey not be available would be firstly Tony Hodder and secondly Bill McKenzie. Tony Hodder's day off is also Friday, so it was accepted that there may be occasions when no-one is immediately available. Sarah Williams will answer answerphone messages.

Small groups co-ordinator

539. No-one had yet been found to take on this role. Keith Hilton-Turvey will organise a meeting of small group leaders to try to find a replacement co-ordinator.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey

Reviews

540. The paper put to the PCC by Diana Veasey had sought clarification from Keith Hilton-Turvey of his views on the terminology to be used ("christening" or "baptism") and on the baptising of children from outside the parish. Keith said that he had stated his views clearly when this issue had arisen back in 2017 (see Annex A), and that he felt no need to do so again. David Houghton pressed him to do so for the sake of clarity on the part of the new PCC; that these issues will keep festering unless addressed. Neither Andrew nor Cath Beech could see why a purely semantic point about terminology mattered; no-one outside the church (nor most of those inside it) seemed to care one way or the other.

Pastoral care

541. The PCC had agreed the proposals of the Pastoral Care Review for the establishment of a prayer chain and the appointment of a pastoral care co-ordinator (though it was felt that this might be beyond the resources of a single person). Keith Hilton-Turvey will seek people who might volunteer to be part of the prayer chain, which he aims to start in September.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey

Magazine

542. No-one has yet volunteered to take on editorship of the magazine.

LMDG

543. Keith Hilton-Turvey is to convene a meeting of the existing members of the LMDG. It's membership and remit could possibly be considered at the PCC awayday.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey

Liturgical plan

544. No progress to report.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey/Lisa-Jayne Lewis

Finance

545. Stephen Cheetham had agreed to become treasurer. For this to happen the PCC will be invited to co-opt him into membership and then to appoint him as treasurer. The PCC will also be invited to appoint him to the Standing Committee. Cath Beech will continue as treasurer in the interim, and will assist Stephen as he takes on his new role.

546. A finance report will be available for the PCC. A decision on the 2022 Parish Share would also need to be made. Cath felt that the state of the church's finances, given the huge increases in energy costs, required a further reduction in Parish Offer by around £10,000. Keith Hilton-Turvey believed that the Parish Offer for Ledbury and Eastnor jointly should not be allowed to fall beneath the cost of ministry (stipend, and associated employment costs totalling £63,000).

St Katherine's

547. No progress to report.

Fabric

548. Andrew Beech reported that the repairs to the damaged floor stones in the nave and south aisle would take place the following day.

549. The Fabric Sub-Committee were to meet, also the following day, to consider the Quinquennial Report, in order to report to the PCC the following week.

550. The DAC had asked further questions in respect of the faculty applications for a projector and drop-down screen and also the Chapter House lighting. The former had been referred to Benjamin Hilton-Turvey, the latter to Ian Cramp. Keith Hilton-Turvey will remind Benjamin of the need to respond.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey

Safeguarding

551. Churchwardens will require DBS checks; other PCC Members should complete C1 training, of which the church should maintain records.

Graveyard

552. Nothing has been received from the town council about the condition of grave markers. Andrew Beech will both chase a reply to this, and write to them about the condition of the yew tree outside the Tombs' house. The damaged wall on the west side of the churchyard is being rebuilt.

Next meeting

531. The next Standing Committee meeting will be held on 4 July at 7.30pm at The Croft, Woodleigh Road.

The meeting ended at 4.55 p.m.

KEITH HILTON-TURVEY PAPER ON BAPTISM - OCTOBER 2017

Baptism at S. Michael's

From early Christians onwards, the church has baptised infants of believing parents. This is what is known as covenant-baptism; existing covenant members include their children in the covenant community.

The Church of England has practiced that approach throughout its history, with both the Prayer Book and Common Worship baptism services being founded on that assumption and expectation. Both base the contents of the service on the idea that both parents and Godparents are practicing members of Christ's covenant community.

The baptism service has traditionally been understood and described as follows: "the baptismal blessing is a conditional blessing and the Baptismal Service is a covenant service, an agreement between two parties" *Dyson Hague*

The Church of England has always received baptism enquiries positively, seeking to prepare and instruct parents and Godparents for this important sacrament. Preparation and instruction are cited as the reasons to delay baptism of infants. The infant baptism service emphasises the fact that baptism is the beginning, not an end in itself. It looks forward to the infant growing into a full member of the family of God, through and because of the example of the parents as active members of the church and with the support and encouragement of the local church.

The Church of England, as a denomination, has never recommended nor practised unconditional baptism, though this has been implemented by some. After parents and Godparents have been given preparation and instruction; Once they affirm their understanding and willingness to make the promises and commitments in the service, the church, minister and congregation make what is known as a 'charitable assumption' (that the people mean what they say and trust the Grace of God to be at work in parents, Godparents and the child) and the baptism goes ahead.

We at S. Michael's are a Church of England parish. We welcome people to the whole church as well as our local community, so we have a responsibility to reflect the broader church policy. I receive baptism enquires positively, warmly seeking to prepare parents (and where practical God parents too) for the important and significant occasion that baptism is.

When Jesus met people, He always asked questions. When people came to Jesus, He welcomed them and asked them questions. For Him it was part of meeting them where they were and loving them where they were. For Him it was part of helping them discover where they were, so enabling them to move and change. Asking questions, then, is a form of Christian Love. In asking questions we're not sitting in judgment but is part of getting to know them. In asking parents what they think about the questions and answers they will be asked and expected to give, we are expressing more than a welcome, we are showing our care, concern and interest in them.

In the baptism service the parents and Godparents are asked the following questions and give the following answers:

Will you pray for him/her, draw him/her by your example into the community of faith and walk with him/her in the way of Christ? *With the help of God, we will.*

Will you care for him/her and help him/her to take his/her place within the life and worship of Christ's Church? *With the help of God, we will.*

Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God? *I reject them.*

Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil? *I renounce them.*

Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour? *I repent of them.*

Do you turn to Christ as (your) Saviour? *I turn to Christ.*

Do you submit to Christ as (your) Lord? *I submit to Christ.*

Do you come to Christ, The Way, The Truth and The Life? *I come to Christ.*

The Church of England recognises that not all parents are ready or wish to say yes to the questions above, which is why it offers a Service of "Thanksgiving For The Gift Of A Child". It is an opportunity to celebrate the addition of a new member of a family, whether by birth or adoption. The Church of England services are focused on thanksgiving and commitment to God, they do not include 'naming services' for 'naming days'.

Ann Tombs expressed this exactly in her paper 'Baptism 06/09/17' when she wrote: "a celebration, a thanksgiving, presenting their baby to God and to the community", without the covenant commitments and promises of baptism. It is an option I offer to all parents, highlighting our willingness to share with them the new life in their family and delight that they want to express their delight to God in church.

Accepting parents' desire to bring their children for baptism joyfully carries with it the responsibility to prepare them well. Baptising infants in instant or unconditional gratification of parental desire is not welcoming nor preparing them.

In her 'Baptism' paper, Ann Tombs wrote that we (S. Michael's) "*need to... help them [parents et al] to make some preparation for taking this decision*". I agree with her, we do need to help parents make some preparation, but don't we owe them more? I am convinced they deserve help to make good preparation. Taking parents through the service, so they understand and have thought through what they will be saying and doing, is surely fulfilling the preparation Ann argued for. It also prepares them as to what to expect and what they will need to do in the service.

I always invite parents to come along to church (more than once) to meet the church family and to get a feel for how we do things in S. Michael's. I make a point of inviting and encouraging them to come to a baptism service, if there's one coming up during the time of exploration and preparation.

Helping parents to think about why they wish their child to be baptised, the meaning of the questions and the implications of their promises, is not "deep questioning" (by implication unhelpful). It is a way we can share our faith and show its great value. It is part of our mission

to share our Christian faith. Not preparing and instructing people is to do them a disservice and shows a lack of care, concern and interest both for them and their child. Unconditional baptism sounds good, but is in fact unloving, uncaring and so is also unwelcoming.

Diana Veasey was right when she said:

"We surely have to be glad that folk want to bring their precious children to be baptised in our church, for us to share their joy and welcome them aboard as far as they feel able to join us". However, we don't welcome people by hiding from them the nature and contents of baptism and we have to accept that some people don't wish to join when they begin to understand what baptism is and what it means.

With regard to the proposal: It is proposed:

that St. Michael's Church accepts all Baptism Enquiries in a positive light with enthusiasm.
Yes, of course, we do already.

that this PCC confirms a Policy of welcoming unconditionally, all children, young people and adults for entry into Christ's Church through Baptism.
What does "welcoming unconditionally all... for entry into Christ's Church through Baptism" mean?

What exactly will be the practical consequences of "welcoming unconditionally all... for entry into Christ's Church through Baptism"
What will that actually look like in the day-to-day life of the church?

It is further proposed that we review our way of managing the whole process of unconditional welcome for baptism preparation and the Baptism Service, including congregational responsibility / involvement and pastoral follow up of the candidate and family. If you are being unconditional, you logically cannot require preparation as that enforces conditions.

The baptism service is, with regard to its contents and main flow of liturgy, defined by the Church of England within the Prayer Book and Common Worship.

Keith Hilton-Turvey 18-10-2017