



St Michael and All Angels, Ledbury

Minutes of Standing Committee - 4 July 2022

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

554. The meeting opened with prayer. Stephen Cheetham was welcomed to his first meeting of the Standing Committee.

Minutes of the meeting on 10 May

555. These were agreed unanimously.

Strategic vision

556. Keith Hilton-Turvey and Lisa-Jayne Lewis have met and are producing a paper for the PCC to consider at its awayday, to be held on 20 or 27 August¹. The awayday will be held at St Michael's Hospice, Bartestree.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey/Lisa-Jayne Lewis

Small groups co-ordinator

557. A number of names were suggested. Keith Hilton-Turvey will speak to them.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey

Prayer chain co-ordinator

558. Two names are in the frame. One is currently ill; Keith will speak to the other.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey

Pastoral care co-ordinator

559. One name was suggested. David Houghton will discuss it with the person concerned.

¹ Since arranged for 27 August, at St Michael's Hospice, Bartestree.

Action: David Houghton

Baptism

560. This was to be discussed at the additional PCC meeting on 14 July.

Youth work

561. Ian Beer had had a further meeting with John Masefield School, but progress was very slow. The school has indicated that they wish to resume using the church at Christmas.

Communications

562. A meeting of the communications group was to be held shortly.

Magazine

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

LMDG

564. 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

565. No progress to report.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey/Lisa-Jayne Lewis

Website

566. Stephen Cheetham proposed that a website be created hosted by Wordpress. This would cost £70/annum. This was agreed unanimously. Stephen will set up the website, restructuring it into a more logical format, with a new home page and a clear menu structure. This will incorporate the TeamUp calendar as a booking function. Stephen will circulate a draft of the website layout and content to the Standing Committee.

Action: Stephen Cheetham

567. Setting up individual addresses (such as Rector@SMAA etc.) based on SharePoint was expensive, at £50/email address/year. It was agreed that, for now, effort should be concentrated on the website.

Finance

568. Cath Beech had circulated a balance sheet with an updated end-year projection. She noted that some of the office charges need to be reallocated to the General Fund. A Gift Aid claim had been made, but this was lower than expected. Cath will discuss this with Ayo Adewale. It was noted that Andrew Mence was shortly to give up the roles of Deanery

Treasurer and acting treasurer for the defunct group of parishes; pressure would continue to be applied to recover the £5,000 that St Michael's was owed.

Action: Cath Beech/Stephen Cheetham

569. Stephen Cheetham made a case for closing the church office. Much of what was done, such as bookings, could be automated and the resultant savings much needed given the state of the church's finances. He noted that Sarah Williams was on a one-year contract, and felt that this should not be renewed. He hoped that someone could be found to take on the various printing jobs that Sarah currently does. Stephen will draft a paper for discussion by the PCC at its meeting on 20 July, as notice would need to be served thereafter should the PCC agree this.

Action: Stephen Cheetham

570. It was agreed that David Houghton would contact Sam Pratley at the diocese, to ensure that the correct procedures are followed following any PCC decision.

Action: David Houghton

571. It was agreed unanimously that Ed Huxley should be employed one hour/week to clean the church toilets prior to Sunday services and main midweek events, as there is no other cleaner at present.

Action: Cath Beech/David Houghton

572. Stephen Cheetham will work on an appropriate scale of charges for concerts (possibly with separate scales for winter and summer to take account of heating costs). This would need to be agreed by the PCC.

Action: Stephen Cheetham

St Katherine's

573. The trust that owns St Katherine's chapel and hall and the almshouses is itself in the process of being incorporated as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This will delay further the renegotiation of the lease.

Fabric

574. Andrew Beech reported that the faculty for the chapter house lights was now subject to public consultation. That for the projector and drop-down screen was still with the DAC, but clearance was expected shortly².

575. The Fabric Sub-Committee will report to the PCC on prioritising the recommendations of the quinquennial report.

² This information had been given to us by the DAC in error. On checking it was found that the DAC had completed its clearance, hence public consultation was able to begin on 13 July.

Action: Andrew Beech

Safeguarding

576. A candidate to replace Jenny Bury as Safeguarding Officer is considering whether to accept the post.

Graveyard

577. Nothing has been received from the town council about the condition of grave markers. Andrew Beech will continue to chase.

Action: Andrew Beech

Other business

578. A number of people now need lifts to church. Cath Beech and David Houghton would place a notice in the Pew Sheet asking people to volunteer to give lifts.

Action: Cath Beech/David Houghton

Next meeting

579. The next Standing Committee meeting will be held on 4 September at 3.30pm at Daubentons, Staplow.

The meeting ended at 9.12 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