**The Parish of St James the Great, Blendon, Bexley Kent**

**Meeting of Parishioners – Sunday 25th October 2020**

**Agenda**

**Opening Worship**

1. Appointment of Clerk of the Meeting

 2. Apologies for absence

 3. Minutes of Annual Meeting of Parishioners held on 28th April 2019

 4. Election of Churchwardens

at the rising of this meeting there will follow:

**The Annual Parochial Church Meeting**

**Agenda**

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 28th April 2019
3. Matters Arising
4. PCC Reports:
	1. on the proceedings of the PCC and the activities of the parish generally
	2. on the financial affairs of the parish
	3. from the churchwardens, on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church
	4. on the proceedings of the Deanery synod
	5. on the Electoral Roll
5. Election of representatives to Deanery Synod – two vacancies
6. Election of PCC members
7. Appoint independent examiner:  *The PCC proposes Brian Kraushaar, Treasurer of St Andrew’s, Sidcup, as Independent Examiner until the 2021 APCM.*
8. The Vicar’s Report
9. Any other business

Closing Prayer

There will be a brief PCC meeting at the end of this meeting to elect a Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, and to consider the appointment of members to the Standing Committee.

**Draft Minutes of the April 2019**

1. Apologies for absence

Received from: Jenny Hackett, Thelma Holman, Marjorie Stevens, Kay Tong, Jo Stokes, Jenny Breen, Brenda Martin, Mavis Morley, Penny Dormer, Mike Swatton

2. Minutes of APCM held on 15th April 2018

Passed unanimously as an accurate record.

Proposed by Beatrice Gilpin, seconded by Brenda Goulding

3. Matters arising

No matters arising.

4. PCC Reports:

a) PCC and Parish activities were circulated before the meeting; there were no matters arising.

b) Financial affairs of the Parish

Timothy Nunns formally presented Accounts and the Annual Report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

Accounts

The Statement of Financial Activities shows the income last year was £96,000—up about £4,000 on the previous year. However, spending was up a lot more—up by £23,000 on 2017. This is partly due to the £15,000 special fund set up to refurbish the vicarage before Ian’s arrival.

Overall we made a loss so the net worth as a church has dropped from nearly £62,000 to £44,000.

Church’s biggest income is Planned Giving—by standing orders and envelopes. This dropped by £4,000 last year. The next biggest income is £21,000 from Hall Rentals.

Income from fees has increased and we received £8,000 legacy money.

The largest item of spending is the £60,000 we sent to the Diocese last year. We also sent £15,000 to Missions; some from collections for charities and the rest from the 10% of our income that we set aside for our Mission Partners.

The church made a loss overall; amounts people gave through the envelope scheme, standing orders and donations were all lower. We need to think about giving in the months ahead.

The PCC decided to send only £53,000 to Diocese so we should break even this year.

Annual Report

Our Independent Examiner is Richard Percival, and the PCC recommends that he be re-appointed for next year

Timothy thanked: Ian for his encouragement

 Sue Amey especially for her work on Gift Aid

 those who count the collection

 those who bank to money

especially Jenny Breen, who organises the cheques and keeps tabs on so much.

people of St James for their giving which provides 70% of the income.

Timothy wishes to stand down as Treasurer in 2020.

Tim Moule asked how much the diocese had asked for. Timothy N replied £59,132.

Sue Moule asked that Timothy N set up “easy fundraising through internet shopping” before he steps down from Treasurer.

Timothy N formally moved that the Annual Report and Accounts be received.

Proposed by: Sue Amey.

Seconded by : Janine Peters.

All agreed.

c) Churchwardens’ report

This had been previously circulated. Andy asked for help with jobs eg putting chairs away after the service, to make life easier.

No questions raised.

d) Deanery Synod Report

As circulated, no questions.

e) Electoral Roll

70 members of church have enrolled. Those church members who missed the deadline for the APCM can enrol now.

5. Reports from the Church Activities

As circulated

Ian Smith thanked those who look after the grounds: Ian & Linda W, Dai Breen, Mavis & Peter Morley, and others.  Those who do not enter the building only know the church from the outside so their work is much appreciated.

6. Reports from Organisations.

As circulated.

7. Election of laity to Deanery Synod

Not needed this year Current Representatives are Mary Nunns and Brenda Goulding.

8. Election of laity to PCC

Angela D, Janine P and Jenny B have stood down. Nominations received from Angela D, Pat W and Linda W. These three people were duly elected to fill three vacancies.

9. Appointments

a) Sidespersons: Ian S said this is an important job as theirs are the first faces that people see. He asked that people should consider volunteering to be a Sidesperson.

Ian S proposed the following people to continue as Sidespersons:

Sue Amey, Maureen Aylott, Angela Davis, Jenny Hackett, Thelma Holman,

Barbara Logan, Ann Pennington, Marjorie Stevens, John & Lindsay Walsh,

Ian & Linda Willmott.

Reserve: Janet Coldicott.

This was formally agreed.

b) Independent Examiner

Richard Percival was proposed by Timothy N and seconded by Roger W as Independent Examiner for the coming year. This was agreed in line with the wishes of the PCC.

10. Vicar’s Address on the ministry of St James

The Vicar had previously circulated a worship and ministry report highlighting our 2 main challenges; ie. firstly the need of more resources in the form of people, willing to get engaged in the various ministries in the church, and also financial resources.

Secondly to determine and deliver our corporate mission to people who live in the parish but are not part of St James.

Ian’s prayer is that: we grow and nurture our relationship with God, our relationships within the worshipping community, and  with people on the fringes and into the wider community.

Ian handed out a draft document intended to be used as a Welcome Leaflet, containing some of his dreams for us to read, talk and think about, and give him feedback.

“what can we offer for children during the week?” eg Toddler group on Tuesday afternoons.

“what difference do we make to people around us in the parish?”

eg Places of Welcome--Space that people are invited to for food and company.

Café church—worship with food and drink.

Peter M suggested Ian should approach Playgroup mums as a captive audience.

Ian said he has been developing relationships with the Playgroup.

We need to find our mission to people around in the community; it will take patience, skill, learning, time. What difference does this church make (as a church) to people in the area? How do we grow to include more people?

Ian is happy to run an Alpha course or Explorer course but it will need people to support it.

We see God answering prayer in our lives—we should try to speak out to encourage others.

11. Any other matters of Parochial or general Church interest

Our website is soon to have a total re-vamp. It will be easier to access on different media. We were asked to use it and see the new content. A supply of new content will need to be supplied to keep the online presence fresh and interesting.

It was highlighted that those who do not have access to online content are disenfranchised if everything goes online.

Ian is intending to produce a news leaflet. He also wants church wifi, laptops and perhaps a card reader.

12. Commissioning of members of the PCC

In the absence of the formal commissioning form of words, Ian prayed for the PCC members: Andy L, Mary N, Brenda G, Beatrice G, Jo K, Mary L, Harry G, Nicky G, Timothy N, Pat W, Angela D, Linda W.

The formal commissioning will take place at the next regular PCC Meeting.

The meeting closed with prayer at 3.37pm.

**PCC Report and Welcome**

Hello and welcome to St. James’ belated APCM.

This is an unusual APCM in many respects, and an absolute treat for me, being my first as PCC secretary. When we as a PCC started planning for it, we were discussing how best to avoid conflicting dates and times with the London Marathon and the North London Derby, and I was endeavoring to complete this document before flying to Thailand - how times have changed!

In that regard, some of the reports in this issue may be somewhat out of date, as most were written in March, and naturally the seven months since have been unprecedented, however they are included, and I warmly encourage prayer for all of these groups, societies and involved people as we move towards ‘the new normal’.

The PCC’s main concern is to oversee the ministry and mission of the church, and the current situation has complicated that, but we have endeavoured to continue support for our mission partners, and we are pleased that group worship has returned to St. James, albeit not in the style we are accustomed to. The following reports, especially from the Vicar, Treasurer and Church Wardens provide details around how this has been achieved.

I shall begin by thanking all the members of the PCC, who work hard with thoughtful contributions to meetings. We had our first PCC meeting since the national lockdown this month, to discuss how our ministry would be taken forward. During the lockdown, the standing committee met online, and produced the following report in July 2020:

*As we have not had a PCC meeting for several months we (the standing committee) thought we would give you a summary of what has been happening at church.*

*The Diocese issues updates on virus related matters three times a week, at the time of writing we can open the church for private prayer and Sunday worship (without any singing) but only allowing limited numbers to attend – the size of our premises and the need to keep a distance apart means we can only have about 18 individuals at anyone time.  We have opened the church for private prayer on Wednesdays between 13-00 and 17-00hrs. These times have been used by church members however there have not been any visitors from the wider community.*

*We have not been letting out the premises with the exception of the playgroup which the government “requires” to open. The group has used the Blendon rooms and the garden and have done thorough cleans at the end of each session. It is likely that they will return again in September when the schools reopen. We have decided not to seek payment from those groups (uniforms, Jo Jingles Dance) who have not used the premises. Jo Jingle and Dance have said they wish to come back in September; we will be guided by Diocesan advice issued at the time before we can agree to this. The premises are in good order and we have not had any incidents of vandalism or burglary.*

*Ministry continues to our community albeit in a different format, no one has asked Ian for a pastoral visit. There have been no requests for funerals during the pandemic from the wider community although Timothy took Keith Parry’s funeral at Blue Bell Hill, outside Rochester . Ian has been producing written services each week along with the notice sheet and distributing this via email. There have been no requests for support from anyone within the parish. Telephone contact has been taking place between church members as a means of mutual support.*

*Social events have been cancelled. Plants plus, VE day commemoration. The Harvest Supper and Christmas Fair are unlikely to happen. It is hoped to have a Macmillan coffee event in the garden if the weather is suitable. More details will follow.*

I would like to thank every contributor to this document, not only for their time in writing, but for the continued work throughout the last eighteen months that makes St. James the wonderful place it is.

Harry Garland

PCC Secretary

October 2020

**Vicar’s report for 2019**

Within the worshipping life of St. James, 2019 saw some changes.  We bedded in a different pattern of services, moving to two non-eucharistic services on a Sunday at the 10.30 service.  I know for some of you this was a wrench and thank those of you who did find this challenging for your continued support.  I know some seem to be labouring under the impression that this was purely an exercise in trying to grow numbers of people attending church.  It is much more than that.  It was certainly about having services which are accessible but we were also wanting to have greater flexibility with baptism services and so forth, but it also gives us an opportunity to have a more diverse diet of worship.    We will in due course review the pattern and any feedback would be helpful.  The reality is, of course, that one can never scratch every itch in a church service!  It is important to place on record my thanks to everyone involved in our worshiping life: those who act as sides-people, flower arrangers, prepare notice sheets, serve coffee, lead music, support children’s work, lead intercessions, read lessons…….I’m sure I’ve missed someone so apologies!!

I suspect many of you will have noticed that a primary concern of mine has been what difference St. James makes to the lives of those around us who are not regular members of our worshipping community.  2019 marked the starting of Stay and Play which took off really well.  We meet in the Garden Room and have, on occasions, been in the position where we were outgrowing that space.  The people who come have, generally, been very positive and we have developed a solid core.  One of the really nice bits of feedback we got was how one family always looked forward to their weekly hug from St. James.  Messy Church continues to flourish and, again, we have a good core of people regularly attending.  Many, many thanks to all those who have supported both Stay and Play and Messy Church – we are always in need of volunteers and these initiatives make a huge, positive, impact on those around us.

Of course, all of this came to a grinding with the impact of Covid-19.  I really do not want to reflect on that here – that is for next year but one cannot escape it.  The whole structure and life of church and our mission has been impacted.  It is a sadness that our worship has been so drastically impacted and I know the limitations we are operating under are troublesome for many.  We are sad that the children we engaged with at Stay and Play will, inevitably, have moved on and we will be largely starting again, when we can.  We are sad that the plans made for Places of Welcome have had to be put on hold, but they will come to fruition.  We continue to reach out to our Messy Church families by doing Messy Church in a Bag, aiming for once a month but it is not the same (although the families are absolutely made up when they get their bags and are really grateful that we remember them)……

Through all of this our Churchwardens Andy and Mary, our Treasurer and Lay Reader Timothy, the standing committee and PCC have been sources of encouragement, wisdom, strength and guidance.  The same can be said for many others who have had a kind and encouraging word, especially through Mandy’s recent visits to Birmingham!!  We try to continue serving God as faithfully as we can here and trust in God’s faithfulness.

In Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings, a poignant conversation takes place. Frodo says, ‘I wish the ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened.’ Gandalf replies, ‘So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All you have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to you.’ We may not choose these times, but we can make the most of them by gathering around God’s word and seeking to faithfully serve the kingdom here in Blendon.

**Church Wardens’ Report**

It is always difficult writing this review in March looking back over the previous year and separating what happened and what is future plans, writing this in October 2020 for the year 2019 is somewhat difficult looking back so long ago but these are "strange times".

St James would not function without the help of so many people. It would be unjust to single out any individuals for particular thanks - so we will not - but thank you to everyone for whatever you do for the benefit of St James.

The buildings are in good repair - there are inevitable minor issues that have needed attention and this has happened. The major works of toilet improvements has ground to a halt - the virus playing a major part in the delay. All the church assets (chalices etc) we need to account for are present(confirmed by Andy and Ian)

To be "legally approved" as your churchwardens the church has agreed for this year  we do not need to swear in front of the Archdeacon but can do this to Ian instead.

The exciting plans for the future ministry and development of St James on are on hold. There are opportunities opening up for outreach, "stay and play" and "messy church" are both likely to resume and "places of welcome" will hopefully start post virus times.

Our finances were healthy at the end of 2019 and St James, like so many other organisations, has seen a reduction in income over the first ten months of this year, Oophs we have strayed into talking about more recent times. It is important to note that Timothy has stayed on as treasurer during the current year and we need to thank him for this extra service. He is definitely standing down at the end of this calendar year. Oophs strayed off again thanking individuals when we were not going to do this. We said writing this is hard.

We thank God for all his blessings this year, and look forward to the year ahead in full expectation of future blessings and challenges.

Mary and Andy

**Reports from Church Activities and Hall users**

Here follows the reports from various church activities, as received by Oct. 2020. This is not a definitive list of what goes on a St. James, but given the circumstances of 2020 There may not be a report from every aspect of church life - PCC sec.

**APCM Music report 2020**

The music group, (Harry on acoustic guitar, Olly on bass, Emma on flute, Karin on cello, me on piano with Brenda -and Harry singing) continue to lead worship on 3rd and 4th Sundays. Harry plays with me for the 2nd Sunday Family Service. As a congregation we have learnt a lot of new songs since Ian joined us 2 years ago. In recent months we have ‘bedded’ these songs in with ones we have sung previously so it hasn’t felt that we are just singing new songs. This is not intended as a criticism as it’s good to learn new songs and keep abreast of the new worship songs.

The singing group, (Brenda, Penny, Emma, Olly, Harry and myself) continue to practise twice a month and sing before and during the services with the exception of the 2nd Sunday.

Thank you to all our Christmas choir members who sang at the Carol service, Cruise and Bexley funeral’s Carol service. It was especially lovely to have Felicity join us this year. Every year I’m choosing more challenging music and the choir achieve a very good standard with so much enthusiasm. Maybe some Bach or Handel next year!

Thank you to all the people named above for supporting the music at St James, it would not be the same without you! Anyone is welcome to join the singing or music group so please don’t hesitate to talk to me.

Nicky Garland

Feb 2020

 **Churches together in Old Bexley**

Annual service of prayer, in week of Christian Unity was held at St. James Blendon, and was well attended. Stations of the Cross service, at 12 noon, Good Friday, at St. Marys.

Pentecost prayer walk planned for Saturday, 30th May, possibly “baton style” between our nine churches. A volunteer organiser is being sought in order for it to go ahead.

The sixth annual summer music festivalis being organised by Judy French, of St. Barnabas, with events at all nine churches, plus the songs of praise at Hurst Primary School on Sunday 5th July. Please look out for the posters, in church, nearer the time.

For our 5 weeks' Lent Course,our two groups  are using the Churches Together 2020 course : " Opening the Scriptures,Setting our Hearts on Fire.

Your support at all the CTiOB concerts and events, is much appreciated! Thank you!

Stephen Roberts

Feb 2020

**Sanctuary and Flower Guild Report**

In common with many Church flower guilds our membership is dwindling. Sadly, Beryl Bellinger had to put away her flower snips in December due to ill health. Thanks again Beryl for your contribution over the years.

We now have a membership of eight ladies. This is still good compared to some local churches where only one or two people are responsible for the flower arrangements and are really struggling. However I am appealing to anyone interested in arranging flowers to please speak to me. This year we started using a more biodegradable type of oasis foam and also use vases more often. We are also using more seasonal flowers and foliage, including material from the church garden. This generally results in arrangements lasting longer and not needing to be replaced so often. For the weeks following on from festivals, we now carry out a “check to refresh” And we managed to make some of the Christmas arrangements last for 3 weeks!  A big thank you to Jo Stokes,  Sue Amey,  Teresa Allen,  Carol Hazelgrove,  Mandy Carol,  Janet Cooke and Brenda Featherstone for their help and support.  Also, thank you to the church members who encourage us.

Linda Wilmott - Secretary

Feb 2020

 **2nd Hurst Guides**

Our Guide unit currently has 25 Guides and four leaders.  We are following the new Guide programme of skills builders, unit meeting cards and interest badges with a goal to achieve the Guide Gold award.  At weekly meetings the Guides have made games boards using wood, learnt how to make Macrames, lip balm and air fresheners, learnt about wellbeing and have also enjoyed lots of discussions and games set on the unit meeting cards.

Our year started with two of our Guides being awarded Jack Petchey awards.  This is a fantastic award the girls should be very proud of.

Our first Community event was held with a community afternoon tea.  This event was headed up by our Guides working towards their Baden Powell Challenge award.  They prepared the whole afternoon and invited lots of people within the community to join us for a very enjoyable afternoon of sandwiches, cakes, tea and entertainment.

The Guides first chosen trip of the year was to go by bus to Greenwich and take a ride on the cable cars finishing with lunch in the 02 at Jimmy’s.  The bus ride was fine but the cable cars was a big challenge for a few with fears of height, me included.  It was well worth the ride for the all you can eat Jimmy’s buffet afterwards.  This trip saw some great friendships flourish.

Our chosen charity event was to collect used crisp bags to raise money for Kent and Sussex air ambulance.  The Guides went mad collecting bags and bags of empty crisp packets, some went that extra mile and set up deposit boxes in their school enabling us to send off thousands of crisps bags.  The bags are melted and made into plastic garden furniture etc and sold to raise money for the Kent and Sussex air ambulance.

Our next Guide trip was to The Girl Guiding Head Office to take part in the ‘I can do sightseeing badge’. We set out early catching the train to London and walking through St James Park to Girl Guiding.  We then set off around London looking at different sights, answering questions, learning interesting facts, taking photos and enjoying the London buzz.  It’s never a Guide trip unless there is food and so we stopped off for lunch at China Town to enjoy an “all you can eat” Chinese.

In May we joined to celebrate the Greater London Kent county 50th Birthday.  We were taken in coaches to Downe to take part in a variety of activities from bouncy castle to playing instruments to taking goats for walks, to singing.  It was a very hot day and so lovely to see so many Rainbows, Brownies and Guides all together having fun.

Our older Guides working towards their Baden Powell challenge were sent off to complete their final challenge of Bexley Monopoly.  This is a challenge in teams they have to gain as many points travelling around the borough on public transport and walking to visit places and complete tasks given to them.  This is a real team building activity where you have to work together to gain the most points.  They slept well that night I’m sure.

In September our unit joined with the Hurst Rainbows and Brownies to hold a Macmillian coffee evening.  The Guides made some cakes to sell and held small stall to raise money for a great cause.  In total a fantastic £347.50 was raised.

In November we took out Guide unit away on a Holiday to Paxwood.  The Guides took part in backward cooking on an open fire, making tye dye t shirts, wide games, cooking and much much more.   It was great to see the girls working together and helping each other during the weekend.  Some lovely memories made during the weekend for the Guides to keep forever.

During one of our meetings we wrote postcards taking part in ‘postcards of kindness’.  The cards were then sent to residential homes to brighten someone’s day.  The Guides were pleased to hear back from one of the homes thanking the Guides for the cards they had sent.

We took the older Guides to London where the Guides introduced the leaders to Five Guys, where we’ve never seen so many chips!  We then walked around London to see the Christmas lights taking lots of selfies along the way before going to the Theatre to see the School of Rock.  The Guides loved the show, talking about it all the way home.

We took the younger Guides to The Orchard Theatre to see Billionaire Boy, a great David Walliams show with lots of laughter.

For the start of our Christmas celebrations this year we joined with the Hurst Rainbows and Brownies for an evening of ice skating.  It was amazing how well all the girls could skate and it was defiantly the leaders using the skating aids!

Our final Christmas celebration was spent at the Weatherspoons for our Christmas meal.

The new year is going to bring us lots more adventures, challenges, fun and friendships throughout the year which is what Guiding is all about.

Feb 2020

**Blendon Preschool**

* It has been another busy year at preschool, we have a record 38 children on roll at the moment
* We are having a successful year with our sessions being at capacity on 4 days a week, with a much quieter session on a Wednesday afternoon as our afternoon session is unfortunately never as popular.
* In January we had our much awaited OFSTED inspection, we were graded as Good which we are extremely pleased about and we received some very positive feedback from the OFSTED inspector, and a lovely OFSTED report
* Following our inspection, we are now able to accept children from the age of 2 (it was previously 2 and a half years) which has boosted numbers and should help with our quiet period from September to December
* We will be repeating our sponsored activity for the children to carry out over the Easter break to raise funds to enable us to buy some new resources for the children.
* We will be holding our annual sports day in the summer to enable the parents to come and watch the children compete in some fun races.
* We are taking part in a National Dental Survey in May, which will involve a visit from a dentist to look at the children’s teeth.
* We arranged a visit to a local business Craft T Cake in December where the children decorated Christmas decorations.
* We are looking at the possibility of extending some sessions by an hour to enable us to run a lunch club to help prepare the children for school.

Thank you for the continued use of the premises and support.

Best wishes

Angela Green / Lisa Foley

Preschool Managers

**CRiBS**

Once again it is my privilege, as ambassador, to report to St. James AGM on the fantastic work that CRiBS (Christian Resources in Bexley Schools) continues to do.

Now in its 27th year, CRiBS has been as busy and active as ever under the leadership of its CEO Mark Leveson.  Staff, volunteers, and the German ‘Koru’ gap-year students, continue to assist both Primary and Secondary schools throughout Bexley and now also in Greenwich and Swanley.  As their recent report says “… this brings and demonstrates a message of hope to the school context.  A hope rooted in the timeless message of the sacrificial love and powerful resurrection of Jesus …”.  This includes the provision of Religious Education lessons, helping with school assemblies, and putting on seasonal plays in the run-up to the Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter.

In 2019 some schools changed the way they deliver R.E. but, through the development of lessons and delivery approaches, CRiBS has continued to deliver lessons and develop links with new schools.

Other aspects of CRiBS’ work, notably ‘Boys Noise’ and ‘b:You’, offer additional intervention programmes to boys and girls in school years 2 to 6.  This provides help and support to those youngsters struggling with emotional, low self-esteem, friendship and anger management issues.  Through various activities, such as team games and crafts, children are helped and encouraged with social skills and confidence building.

Another expanding area, delivered in the summer term, is a workshop, ‘Taking Off’, offered to children in year 6, which helps them to prepare for the move from primary to secondary school.

The rebranded secondary school work, ‘Unlimited’, provides leadership for Christian Union and offers 1:1 mentoring for young people to help them deal with the many challenges and anxieties that they can face in education and the wider-world

So, through its many and various activities, CRiBS is fully focussed on providing a Christian experience, demonstrating support, kindness and care, to local children at all stages of their education.

CRiBS is a charitable organisation and, in addition to monies earned through its work with local schools, it is heavily reliant upon financial donations, sponsorships and fund-raising events.  During 2019, this has involved activities such as quizzes, music events, curry nights and a special ‘Songs of Praise’ with cream tea. Other donations, e.g. stamps, coins, keys, watches etc, such as those collected in the Orange Box available at St. James provide CRiBS with another source of income.

I would personally like to add my thanks to all at St. James who kindly support CRiBS in various ways, enabling it to continue a busy but very rewarding and worthwhile programme.  All contributions are very much appreciated and are likely to be even more significant to CRiBS as it continues with its work when schools resume after the current enforced break due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

ANGELA DAVIS

April 2020