

**MINUTES OF GREAT BRICKHILL ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING,**  
**HELD IN THE CHURCH ON THURSDAY 24<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2012 AT 7.30pm.**

**The Reverend John Waller took the chair.**

He opened the meeting with prayer, and welcomed all those attending.

**PART I: THE ANNUAL VESTRY MEETING**

**ELECTION OF THE CHURCH WARDENS:**

The Rector explained that with the New Church Wardens' Measure in 2001, the maximum term of office for a Church Warden is 6 years without a break – an exemption is possible for this Rule if a motion is passed before the meeting commences. Dr. Agambar who has served for 7 years said that she is happy to continue as Warden for one more year. A motion was passed that there is an exemption to the Rules in order to allow Dr. Agambar to stand for a further year of office. This was agreed by all present.

The following nomination had been received prior to the Meeting:-

Dr. Christine Agambar proposed by Mrs. Rosie Dawson and seconded by Mrs. Phillipa Cook.

Dr. Agambar was duly elected.

The Rector expressed his thanks to Dr. Agambar for all her hard work over the past year as Warden, and was pleased that she was willing to continue for another twelve months. He was concerned that there is no second Warden for another year. The Visitation for the Buckingham Deanery, when Wardens are sworn in, is being held at St Lawrence Church, Winslow on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30pm.

**PART II: THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**

**APOLOGIES** were received from Mrs. Clare Amies, Mr. Tim Amies, Mrs Helle Hopkinson, Mrs. Jean Poynter, Mrs. Marion Ralph, Mrs. Valerie Vestergaard and Mrs. Pauline Waller. (A total of 7 people).

An Attendance Sheet was circulated. A total of 19 parishioners were in attendance.

**MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON 14<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2011**

The Minutes of the previous Annual Meeting and Appendix containing the Warden's Report had been available in advance. The Minutes were then approved and signed by the Rector as a true record (proposed by Mrs. Rosie Dawson and seconded by Mrs. Julia Turner).

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:**

Elections:- Mr Jeremy Hopkinson had been elected ex-officio for a three year term as Deanery Treasurer. He had also been co-opted as a member of the P.C.C.

**ELECTIONS:**

**a). Two Deanery Synod Representatives and Nine Members of the P.C.C.**

The Rector informed the Meeting that in addition to himself, the Wardens and the Deanery Synod

representatives, the number of P.C.C. members allowed for the size of our Electoral Roll is 9. At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in 2004 provision was made for the annual appointment of representatives on the P.C.C. There is also facility for two people to be co-opted on to the P.C.C. At the first PCC Meeting after the Annual Meeting it has been the custom to co-opt Mr. Neil Cook, the Treasurer.

All current members of the P.C.C. were willing to continue – the Rector thanked them for their help during the last year and was pleased that they were willing to serve again. There were also three new Nominations for the P.C.C. Details of all the Nominations, received prior to the meeting:-

<u>Name of Nominee:</u>	<u>Proposed By:</u>	<u>Seconded By:</u>
Simon Bennett	Phillipa Cook	Christine Agambar
Phillipa Cook	Christine Agambar	David Duncombe
Robin Dawson	Frank Kinsey	Anne Humphreys
Rosie Dawson	David Duncombe	Marion Ralph
David Duncombe	Rosie Dawson	Phillipa Cook
Jeremy Hopkinson	Helle Hopkinson	Phillipa Cook
Kay Seaman	Robin Dawson	Betty Kinsey
Julia Turner	Robin Dawson	Kay Seaman
Joy Wilson	Simon Bennett	Christine Agambar

As the number of Nominations was nine there would not need to be an election. All nine people were duly elected to serve on the PCC. The Rector welcomed Mrs Joy Wilson onto the PCC and thanked Mr. Robin Dawson and Miss Kay Seaman for re-joining.

The Rector explained that the Deanery Synod Representatives (Mrs. Clare Amies and Mr. Valerie Beardmore-Baldwin) were elected in 2011 for a period of three years and so had two more years to run.

#### **b). Appointment of Independent Examiner for 2012.**

The Treasurer said that Mr. David Beatty had acted as Independent Examiner for the current year as was willing to continue. Proposed by Dr. Christine Agambar and seconded by Miss Kay Seaman, Mr. Beatty was duly appointed as Independent Examiner for 2012.

#### **c). Sidesmen.**

The Rector gave the names of those who currently serve as Sidesmen. Mrs. Juliet Bennett was willing to be added to the list. Following a proposal by Mr. David Middleton, seconded by Mrs. Jeremy Hopkinson, all the Sidesmen on the current list, plus Mrs. Bennett were elected for the forthcoming year.

#### **RESOLUTION FOR DETERMINING NUMBER OF PCC MEMBERS:**

The Rector explained that the number of PCC Members depends on the number on the Electoral Roll:- up to 50 on Roll – 6 members; 51 – 100 on Roll – 9 members. Approval can be given for the following year to vary the number of PCC members, if the Electoral Roll falls below 50.

As the number on the Electoral Roll is just over 50, the following resolution was put to the meeting for determining the number of P.C.C. members to be elected at the Annual Meeting from 2013 onwards:-

In accordance with Rule 14(1)(g), should the number on the Electoral Roll be in the band “up to 50”, the number of lay representatives to be elected at the following year’s annual meeting be varied from 6 to 9 (as per the prescribed formula for the Electoral Roll band “51-100”).

Proposed by Mr. Alan Poynter, seconded by Mrs. Rosie Dawson – passed unanimously.

## **REPORTS:**

Detailed reports had been prepared and included in the written Annual Report and Accounts for the year to December 2011. Key points from those reports and updates from the start of 2012 were presented to the Meeting.

### **(a). Wardens including Fabric.**

Dr. Christine Agambar presented the Warden’s report:-

1. This time last year I was very uncertain how 2011 would turn out because I was very anxious about being the only Church Warden. How would I cope without Julia? However, my anxiety soon receded because I have received overwhelming support from so many friends and I hope that the care and day-to-day management of the church fabric and the support that I have been able to give to John haven’t been seen to be wanting in any way. I am particularly grateful to one particular person who has acted as a sort of unofficial Warden and has been trained in hymn numbers and candle and urn management!

2. On your behalf I would like to thank our Rector. I feel that it has been a very significant year for John’s ministry because we have welcomed many regular and new worshippers to services and we have rejoiced in his recent Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which has given John a newfound spiritual strength and energy. Thank you, also to Jeremy and Phillipa for your lay leadership of services and to the many visiting clergy during the year.

3. It has been a good year for the church building. We have had no major disruption of any kind. The building is dry, warm, clean and tidy. One small problem arose when the path light failed and also tripped out the main (and newly installed) mother fuse board. The new electrical management board allows for no leaking of electricity to earth, however slight, and the path light has had to be rewired. This work has been completed and the light is now connected to a time switch in the cellar. This allows the light to be on for visitors arriving as well as leaving the church after dark. This year the Christmas lights were put up round the Church Tower and along the path. They were sort of successful but improvements could be made this year. The lights on the Tower could be seen from far and wide.

4. I was made aware at Christmas, by one of our most accomplished organists, that there was some worrying wear apparent on the keyboards of the organ. The PCC undertook to have an assessment made of the organ together with a management programme for restoring those parts that need attention. The inspection revealed far less wear than we had feared but there will be a need to introduce a staged restoration programme, which will cost money, but we will be able to tackle it slowly and raise the money as we go. Peter Moorse has kindly said that he will act as our consultant and give us a second opinion on the work that is proposed. The church received a most welcome gift of a new-to-us piano. The old piano (that is a good playing instrument) has a rapidly deteriorating case riddled with woodworm and lost its two back legs during the year.

5. Our whole church community was hugely saddened at Christmas by the news that Sir Philip Duncombe had died. We have yet to come to terms with his loss – he was so much a part of this church and its community. His Memorial Service brought everyone together, in the village and beyond, to give him a fitting and joyful farewell. The service was a true celebration of his life and work and our church was “on show” like never before.

6. We held a number of special services during the year to celebrate notable dates in the church

calendar – many of which gave us an opportunity to have a bit of a party. Of note was the month of services in October to celebrate the publication of the King James' Bible culminating in a Songs of Praise, which was very well attended. We also held a Charity Evensong at Christmas.

7. There were three major events held in the Church during the year and together they raised over £5000 for church funds. Each was more successful than the similar event held in previous years. They were in date order: The performance of the Messiah Concert; The Spirit of Christmas Bazaar and the Snowdrop Walk. Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to raise the profile of the church in the village and beyond.

8. The regular pattern of weekly services every month has continued with one small change: the Prayer Book Communion Service on the first Sunday of the month has been moved to 11am from 9.30am to enable the service to be attended by a wider group of worshippers and to enable the Rector to lead the service on alternate months. This change did not receive universal approval at first but has now settled down and is accepted by most. All services are reasonably well attended. The best-attended service of the month is the Family Service on the fourth Sunday. The congregation for this service has grown with the regular attendance of an increasing number of families with small children, which is particularly pleasing. The numbers attending Evensong on the second Sunday of the month have been declining and we need to consider why that might be.

9. I will continue to work to the best of my ability to ensure that the church meets the needs of its community of friends and provides a welcoming environment in every sense to ensure that worshippers of all ages want to return again and again. To this end, we are keeping the wire porch doors open during the day and in the coming year I plan to improve the signage to welcome people into the church.

Mrs. Julia Turner thanked Dr Agambar for her work as Warden and said that she and others will continue to help with the duties.

Miss Kay Seaman raised concern over the wire gates being left open as birds could fly into the church and leaves could blow into the porch. The Rector said that with the wire gates shut it looks as if the church is locked when it is actually open.

#### **(b). Treasurer Including Adoption of Accounts.**

The Treasurer started his report by saying that the wording for Gift Aid Declarations is about to change. Any unused Gift Aid envelopes should be used up first – new envelopes would be arriving soon.

Copies of the Annual Report had been distributed in advance of the Meeting. The Treasurer, Mr. Neil Cook, presented the Accounts and referred to the "Review of the Accounts" section in the Annual Report.

The Treasurer explained that as the income of the Church is under £100K there is an exemption from having to register separately with the Charities Commission. This ruling may change in due course.

He added that the daily running costs of the Church remains in the region of £88 per day, excluding any major restoration costs. The total of disbursements to all charitable causes during the year represents approximately 16% of the Income Received (excluding Assignables) for the year.

The Rector said that he was really pleased that in 2011 the Parish Share had been paid in full – in 2010 there had reluctantly been a shortfall in the amount of the Parish Share paid. Three of the four churches in the Benefice had been able to pay the full amount of the Parish Share. He added his thanks to everyone for their direct giving and for the fundraising events. Meeting the commitment of the Parish Share is not easy.

Adoption of the Annual Report and Accounts was proposed by Mr. Simon Bennett and seconded by Mr. Robin Dawson. The report was unanimously accepted.

The Rector thanked the Treasurer for his presentation of the Accounts and for his work as Treasurer.

**(c). Fundraising Committee.**

Mr. Jeremy Hopkinson said that the members of the Fundraising Committee are:- Dr. Christine Agambar, Mrs. Rosie Dawson, Mr. David Duncombe, Mrs. Julia Turner and himself. Three or four meetings had been held and discussed the following issues:

- 1). Making plans for regular fundraising events in most, if not all, months
- 2). Agreeing to be better at communicating with supporters of the church
- 3). Improving on our thanking of donors and introducing the idea of an informal friends group
- 4). Thoughts about encouraging legacy giving by parishioners
- 5). Making the church building a more welcoming place during the week when it is unattended by church members.

There was discussion about the fundraising events and what the funds are used for. The Plant Fayre, Snow Drop Walk and Christmas Bazaar proceeds have been used for General Funds as there is a need to pay our Parish Share and cover our costs. Fundraising for St Mary's 2000 goes into a Restricted Fund and hence there is a restriction on what that money can be used for. It is uncertain at present what funds will be required for St Mary's 2000 as it will depend on what we want to do. The Rector said that as there is no concrete focus for St Mary's 2000 the opportunity has been taken to focus on General Funds.

It was pointed out that St Mary's 2000 was started 16 years ago – there was a desperate need for toilet facilities and we should be getting somewhere on the project by now, given that there are funds available.

**(d). Deanery Synod.**

Mr. Jeremy Hopkinson referred to the Deanery Synod section in the Annual Report and said that there was nothing to add.

The Rector said that the Bishop of Oxford is asking every parish to engage in Mission Action Planning over 5 years. At the Deanery Synod meeting in November each benefice will give a presentation saying what each of their parishes are doing. While this is a paper exercise for the diocese it will be helpful for us – there will be open discussion within the parish as we move towards the deadline date.

The two elected Synod Representatives who serve a three-year term are Mrs. Clare Amies and Mrs. Valerie Beardmore-Baldwin.

**(e). Electoral Roll.**

Mr. Jeremy Hopkinson referred to the Electoral Roll section in the Annual Report. There were 50 on the Roll at the end of the year and as of today, there are 52 on the Electoral Roll.

Every six years the Electoral Roll has to be re-formed – this will happen next year, when everyone will be required to complete a new Electoral Roll Form.

Asked if the number on the Electoral Roll had an effect on the Parish Share, Mr. Hopkinson said that the number on the Electoral Roll is one of the factors used in the calculation. There is a complex formula to determine the amount that each deanery has to pay to the diocese, and a different basis is used to determine how that deanery Share is divided between the individual parishes.

**(f). High Ash School.**

Mrs. Joy Wilson had written the item for the Annual Report. She gave the following report:

Mrs. Wilson referred to much of what is in the written report and said that the Governors are committed to keeping High Ash as a Church of England School. They take the spiritual development very seriously. There are a lot of visits done, lots of opportunities for the children. There is a genuine invitation from the school for anyone from the parish to visit the school.

The Rector added that having had a conversation with Mrs. Louise Eaton, the Head Teacher, there

were interesting ideas to use the church during the 2013 Holy Week – setting up prayer stations etc. Preliminary work would be done at the school on Monday, setting up in the church on Tuesday and then the church open for all the school to visit on Wednesday. The arrangements/decorations in the church will therefore be different during Holy week next year. The Rector also added that next year there may be a repeat of the POP Connections that was done a few years ago. The children practice, sing and record songs and then have a concert in the church. The project can only go ahead if it is funded by the school and/or church. The PCC may be asked to help out again with the funding. It had been very successful on the last occasion.

**(g). St. Mary's 2000.**

Mrs. Rosie Dawson had prepared the item included in the Annual Report. She added that having achieved the huge restoration project was a landmark in itself. Now is a significant moment, a wonderful opportunity to plan for facilities needed for the future. The PCC are looking at all ways to do this. Preliminary plans have been done, looking at every angle as to how we can plan for the long term future – how we can serve the community, looking at all possibilities.

Miss Kay Seaman said that New Facilities project was started and then it was found that the repairs were required. English Heritage required that we did these first but we should continue with the facilities so that we have e.g. a meeting place for mothers to meet before or after school. We could make money with these new facilities – we need the facilities, a new room and adjacent facilities.

The Rector said that during the past year the PCC realized that there has been a period where there is no clear consensus of where we are going. At a recent informal meeting with a representative from the DAC (Diocesan Advisory Committee) it was clarified that things had changed since the new facilities were first envisaged, in particular what can be done within the church building. There is a need to establish what is the right way to proceed.

Mr. David Middleton said that with the difficulty in meeting the Parish Share and concentrating on that, maybe we need a new initiative – we should be pushing a bit harder to get the toilet facilities.

**(h). Bells.**

Mr. David Middleton, the Tower Captain, presented the following report to the meeting:-

I will try to keep this brief, as, after the excitement of re-hanging the bells and the Bell Dedication Service in 2010, the life of the Great Brickhill bell-ringers has relaxed back into the routine of ringing for services, weddings and one notable funeral.

The last element of the **Bell Re-hanging Project** has now been completed, and that is the laying of our carpet in the ringing room with some very luxurious woollen carpet to protect the bell ropes, and many thanks to Val Beardmore-Baldwin for obtaining an end-of-roll deal for us. The Ringing Room now looks very smart with its oak panelling and St. Mary's Royal Blue carpet providing the background for our colourful bell rope sallies, and anyone who hasn't seen that and the new bells is very welcome to have a conducted tour, if you would like to ask. There is still on-going work to be done by the bell ringers on sound insulation in the Ringing Chamber to achieve the correct levels of sound in the Ringing Room.

**Ringling Activities:**

We remain very short of Bell Ringers, having for our eight bells only eight ringers from the village, but we are very fortunate in having another half dozen experienced ringers who support us for practices and special ringing events, so that we have produced some good quality ringing this year, and our ringers have benefited enormously from their example and assistance. So, our thanks go to those ringers from Linslade, Leighton Buzzard and Woughton-on-the-Green who have regularly turned out to ring with us.

Last year we rang two Quarter Peals (a Quarter Peal lasts for about 50 minutes), one of which was for the Royal Wedding, and this year we have rung one Quarter Peal in February for Sir Philip Duncombe, as well as ringing the bells half-muffled for his Memorial Service. Sir Philip and Lady Rachel have always been such great supporters of the bells and the ringers, that, although with great sadness, we were nevertheless very grateful that we could mark the event with a very presentable performance on our excellent new ring of bells. Furthermore, we rang the bells on the following two Sunday afternoons for the two Snowdrop Walk events, and we rang for the School end-of-term

service. We will try to ring another Quarter Peal for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee this year, as well as ringing more to train our own ringers, and we have yet to ring a full Peal (which lasts for nearly 3 hours, such as can be seen on the peal boards on the Vestry panelling) to mark the completion of the Bell Project, although we need more training to achieve that.

We rang for three weddings here last year, but also we provided ringing for St Mary's, Bletchley weddings, as well as their annual Church on the Green service, and this year they are asking us to ring for at least 9 events, which we will have to fit around our own four village weddings. In addition, we have received much interest for our new ring of bells, and we have welcomed a number of groups of visiting ringers from near and far, all of whom enthuse about the quality of our bells and the Ringing Room.

Finally, as we need more ringers, if you know of anyone who would like to join us and learn to ring bells, we have several very experienced ringers who will be pleased to teach you.

The Rector added that the bells were rung before the recent High Ash service and there was much interest among the children, 1-200 potential new ringers.

#### **(i). Music and Choir.**

In addition to the "Music and Choir" section given in the Annual Report, Mr. Robin Dawson presented the following report:-

Once again we need to thank Jerry Breslin for taking on the role of principal Organist and Choir Master. His dedication to the cause is an inspiration to all singers. The choir is evolving along the lines of a Benefice choir, which was proposed several years ago, but never caught on until now. Bow Brickhill choir is back to ladies only. They used to practice on a Monday evening in Bow village hall. That practice now takes place in Great Brickhill. We are very grateful to the ladies of Bow who have accepted the change of venue to another village with good grace and no complaint. We in turn help with some of their services.

Another evolutionary change we are seeing is in the way people participate. At most regular choral services we have a small handful of singers that barely constitutes a choir but on special occasions we have a significant number of keen and capable singers we can call on who can deliver a big choral performance. For example Nine Lessons & Carols last Christmas had probably the biggest choir we have had for many years. We are also delighted to welcome several newcomers, regardless of vintage.

During the year "Music in the Brickhills" staged two big charity fundraising concerts. In May we sang Mozart's Requiem at All Saints in Leighton Buzzard and Handel's Messiah here in our church in September. All Saints had a capacity audience. All soloists for both concerts were amateur and members of the choir albeit augmented by friends. We are immensely privileged to live in this place at this time, to have a big beautiful church, a fantastic organ, and dozens of talented musical friends. Sharing music is a great community bond.

I would also like to thank Paul Dickens for his outstanding contribution to our services and musical events. Thanks also to our loyal friends from Danesborough who never need asking twice to sing with us. Finally I would like to add my thanks to Jan Simpson for the gift of a beautiful piano.

The Rector gave his thanks to all the choir members, to Jerry Breslin and to all the musicians.

#### **(j). Youth Café.**

This item had been included in the Annual Report. Mrs. Clare Amies had sent the following update:-

Four of the teenagers joined the Alpha Course in the village last term. They are now looking to continue to meet as a group.

#### **(k). Wednesday Communion & Bible Study, Thursday Group etc.**

A report on these various activities is included in the Annual Report. Mrs. Betty Kinsey gave an update for January to April:-

The fortnightly Wednesday midweek Communion and Bible Study sessions and Thursday Group meetings resumed after the Christmas break until the start of Lent. The sessions have just started up again after Easter.

There has been discussion as to the future of the Thursday Group. It has been decided to hold the New Year Lunch and then to have a break until after Easter. The fortnightly meetings or visits will then be held throughout the rest of the year.

As in previous years a simple Lunch was held on five Thursdays in Lent, followed by a Lent Discussion Group. The theme this year was passages from Isaiah Chapter 40. Thanks go to the Rector for leading the Lent Group and to all those who hosted the Lunch/discussion groups. The chosen charity for the donations collected at the Lent Lunches is "Combat Stress", a charity which delivers dedicated treatment and support to ex-Service men and women.

Thanks also go to those who host the Thursday Group meetings and arrange the speakers and outings. Thank you also to those who help out at the Monday Drop In sessions.

#### **(l). The Benefice Website.**

Mrs. Phillipa Cook reported that the use of the website continues to be a useful tool of communication. In the first three months of 2012 the average number of "hits" (page impressions) was 7325, peaking at 8520 in March. The highest number of "hits" in one day was on 12<sup>th</sup> March, with another big peak on Maundy Thursday / Good Friday.

The meeting was reminded that the service Pew Sheets are uploaded each week, usually on the Sunday or soon thereafter. Readings for the following Sunday are added on the previous Sunday. Items are uploaded but the effectiveness of the website is dependent upon whether they are then read. More importantly information can only be added from the details that I am sent – it is very rare that I receive anything that I haven't specifically requested. There is very poor input from the other villages.

The Rector thanked Mrs. Cook for administering and updating the website. At the next Wardens' Meeting he would remind the Wardens of the other parishes to send information for the website.

#### **(m). The Rector.**

The Rector gave the following report:-

He acknowledged that Sir Philip Duncombe, in addition to the other tributes made to him at various points during the meeting, had taken very seriously his role as Patron, a role now taken by Mr. David Duncombe. The Rector very much appreciated that Sir Philip had been very active and supportive as Patron.

The Rector said that his home situation brought many challenges. He and Pauline appreciated all the help that is given, and it is never taken for granted all the practical help plus love and concern.

The Rector referred to his trip to Israel and Palestine and was pleased to have shared the experience with the Thursday Group and also during a Sunday service. He was very grateful for the practical support that was given to enable him to go on the trip.

The Rector said that during the summer months he would be away a little more than usual as the family was planning a trip to the Shetland Islands plus he would be away at the time of Timothy's wedding.

#### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS:**

There were no matters raised.

The Reverend John Waller thanked everyone for attending and the meeting concluded with Compline (a short said service of evening prayer) at 9.05pm.