

PARISH OF SANDERSTEAD
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON 5th JULY 2016
AT ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

Present:

Guest: Ven Christopher Skilton, Archdeacon of Croydon

Members: Canon Martin Greenfield (in the Chair), Neville Henderson (Lay Vice-Chair), Rev Susan Atkinson-Jones, Fr Grant Cohen, Rev Jeremy Groombridge, Bala Balachandran, Indrani Balachandran, Clive Christensen, Tim Crump, Lynne Davison, Jeremy Dearden, Veronica De Grasse-Grant, Linda Etheridge, Gill Hanson, Janet Heath, Piers Hubbard, Rosemary Kempell, Maria Linford, Gill Pates, Deborah Rastall, Michael Rowland, Richard Wragg, Chris Babbs (secretary)

In Attendance: Rev Carol Coslett, Penny Bird

Apologies: Peter Banks, Caroline Harper, Sylvia Keats, David Prothero, Julia Rider, Marc Smith, Susan Thomas

16/26 OPENING BIBLE READING AND PRAYER

Martin welcomed the Archdeacon and Rev Carol Coslett who was currently “shadowing” him. He then read Psalm 149 and led us in prayer.

16/27 NEW SANDERSTEAD RECTORY

(A) BACKGROUND

Martin explained that the proposal to buy 53 Glebe Hyrst as a new Rectory and dispose of the current site needed a formal resolution of support from PCC. A marginal change in wording was needed from the draft which had been circulated – “the” parsonage house, rather than “a”. Chris Skilton explained that, in law, each benefice could only have one “parsonage house”; other clergy houses within the benefice were legally “glebe” – but could be known by whatever name (rectory, vicarage etc) is preferred locally.

(B) RESOLUTION

The following resolution was then put to PCC and passed unanimously:

Sanderstead PCC fully endorses the proposal of the Diocese of Southwark for the purchase of 53 Glebe Hyrst as the parsonage house for the benefice, for occupation by the Priest-in-Charge of All Saints'/Team Rector Designate, and the sale of the existing rectory site.

(C) COMPLETION ON 53 GLEBE HYRST

The target date was 15th July.

16/28 IMPLICATIONS OF THE RETIREMENT OF THE VICAR OF ST JAMES', RIDDLEDOWN – BACKGROUND

Martin explained that Rev Christine Spurway, the Vicar of St James' Riddlesdown, had retired in April. In the current situation, which the Archdeacon would explain, the fact that St James' was geographically so close to the Sanderstead Team inevitably meant that implications for us needed to be considered.

Chris Skilton then explained that the aim was to find the best pattern for Mission and Ministry across the archdeaconry. This was against the background of a shortage of stipendiary clergy, so that very careful thought needed to be given to their best deployment and their non-stipendiary support. Part of this was the financially driven need to reduce clergy posts across the diocese over five years up to 2017 (some 23-24 posts had so far been saved). But it was more than a financial issue. There was a real shortage of stipendiary clergy nationally and this was beginning to be felt in Southwark. Balancing the books was important but the situation also gave us the opportunity to think creatively and positively about patterns of Ministry.

Chris had met St James' PCC a few months ago and informed them that, against the background of the need to find a saving of two further posts in the episcopal area, the replacement of Rev Christine Spurway with a full-time stipendiary priest would not be possible and a different solution would be required. The policy was to reduce the number of clergy posts but retain clergy houses, as this gave the opportunity for flexible patterns of ministry.

There were two options for St James':

- "House for duty" – under which a priest lived in the house rent-free in return for some 20 hours a week of ministry in the parish but received no stipend, supporting him/herself by other means; but that would only perpetuate the status quo and leave that priest, and the parish, still isolated;
- Create a partnership with another church – for example St Mary's.

Other background points were that St James' had an electoral roll of around 80 and an average Sunday attendance of some 40; the parish was quite small (some 4,500 inhabitants). In the short-term at least, St Mary's benefitted greatly from the services of two retired clergy, and St James' from the help of a recently retired hospital chaplain resident in the parish.

Chris was meeting both St James' PCC and St Mary's DCC next week and would then return to St James' PCC for a further discussion.

Implications for the Sanderstead Team if such a partnership were set up included;

- Expanding the Team to include St James';
- Removing St Mary's from the Team, thus recreating the original one;
- Other more radical options which might be defined.

However, there was a need to link these issues to the wider one of the best use of church buildings and clergy in the long term, including other forms of Ministry rather than just traditional stipendiary clergy. We needed to ask ourselves what each

church's purpose was within the whole pattern – and not now but in five years' time. If there were several churches in a parish not all of them needed to do everything, but concentrate on different, but complementary, roles.

It was far better to approach the issue on a consultative basis, rather than the Bishop simply saying what was to happen. This provided the opportunity for creative solutions. Much more flexibility was available now than in the past. The policy of the national church was to find a legal mechanism for achieving the desired end, rather than blocking proposals on the basis of traditional legal structures.

16/29 REMOVAL OF THE SUSPENSION OF THE TEAM RECTOR POST

The Team Rector post had originally been “suspended” (so that Martin was technically Priest-in-charge of All Saints’ and Team Rector Designate) because that facilitated the legal process around changing the Rectory. Whilst that requirement was coming to an end, there would be further consultation as to whether or not renewing the suspension was actually desirable, as continuing it would also make it easier to effect structural change, if that was what was agreed. In practice, the distinction between clergy with “freehold” and those simply licensed was much less than previously, because all new appointments were on “Common Tenure” which provided security of tenure until age 70 or resignation.

16/30 COMMENTS ON THE ISSUES RAISED

After discussion in pairs, the following comments and questions/answers were raised by PCC members:

- Was there an option to link St James’ with All Saints’, Kenley? All Saints’ was already linked with St Barnabas’, and linking three churches of their sizes might be rather too much.
- Was there any demographic “fit”? St James’ area was possibly more like St Mary’s than the rest of Sanderstead.
- What was St James’ worship style? On the “high side of middle” – analogous to St Mary’s.
- Such a partnership was possible inside, or independent from, the Sanderstead Team. Then there were different models for teams, or for less formal arrangements.
- A wider solution would give more opportunities for creative and supportive relationships.
- What was the timescale? St James’ needed to know the direction of travel by the end of the year. St James’ PCC had known Christine would not be replaced directly and had feared closure, so looking at solutions like this was more positive. In any event, bishops could not simply close churches where the congregation felt they could carry on.
- A pioneer ministry (such as the Church Army) was a possibility. All Saints’, Kenley, and St Barnabas’ were using Hayes School for worship. There might be other options in Sanderstead, given our flexible buildings. It all depended on individual circumstances and geography.

- Local churches' congregations tended to be eclectic, with purely local elements restricted to those needed to walk to church, particularly the elderly. But local communities did benefit from the practical ministry of each church.
- The right worship solution might be something other than Sunday morning services – certainly with no expectation that people should “graduate” to Sunday morning worship.
- Was a bigger or smaller team a greater catalyst for change? Possibly the latter?
- St James' may simply prefer to be independent.
- After many years of building up relationships within the existing Sanderstead Team, it might be hard to change them – but that might be necessary for a wider purpose.
- Retired clergy – without cost except for expenses – were a gift of grace.
- It would be possible for a relationship between St Mary's and St James' to be built up before “finishing the story” in terms of the wider structure.
- Different models of organisation were available as stimuli to thought. But the main thing was to decide what is right for Ministry and Mission and then fit the formal organisation to that.

16/31 THE WAY FORWARD

Chris Skilton said that much thinking, praying and discerning would be necessary to find the right way forward, but St James did need to know the direction of travel by the end of the year, as he had said. A suggestion as to the way to achieve this would be to hold a gathering for 1-2 days of the PCC/DCCs of the five churches, with a facilitator – perhaps in the autumn. This would concentrate on how best to facilitate Mission and Ministry, drawing on an evaluation of the churches' MAPs and on how possible arrangements would fit into the Deanery as a whole.

Martin asked, in a straw-poll, whether this suggestion seemed a good idea. A show of hands showed a large majority in favour.

16/32 GRACE AND CLOSE

There being no further business for this special meeting, we ended with the Grace.

NEXT MEETING 22/9/16 AT ST EDMUND'S