

Parish AGM Meeting 8th June 2024 2pm

Present:	Core Team: Sarah Cooper (SC), Claire Fairlie (CF), Kevin Rourke (KR), Canon Tim Madeley (CTM), Jenny Marsden (JM), Claudine Maude (CM), Denis Woodhouse & Parish Members Minutes Secretary: Denise Bass (DB)
1.	Opening Prayer
2.	Apologies: Richard Hartle, Sara Tremlett, Mary Sharp
3.	Presentation of Accounts for 2023: presented by Sarah Cooper, chair of the Parish Finance Committee. The team have responsibility for stewardship of the parish's assets; this covers repairs and maintenance of the buildings, their fabric and grounds, as well as ensuring standards of health, safety, welfare, accessibility and safeguarding are maintained. There are currently 9 committee members, Neville Barrie and Geoff Day, our bookkeepers for St. Gabriel's and Our Lady of Consolation respectively, Brian O'Connor and Carl Conroy, our Health & Safety and maintenance representatives for each church, David Morris our Gift Aid Coordinator, Bertha Belmore our Grant Applications Coordinator, who will also be taking over Gift Aid from David when he moves out of the parish, Kevin Rourke our Safeguarding Officer, Canon Tim and myself. I am very grateful to them for all that they do. We would especially like to thank David for his support and wish him well as he moves North. SC talked through the parish accounts for the year ending December 2023. You will have noticed that there are currently two separate accounts. The Diocese would like them to be merged and we plan to move towards this over the next year. The figures presented are as finalised by/with the Diocese. The figures in the shaded green column represent 2023 assets, liabilities, profit or loss etc. The figures in the pink column represent the corresponding value for 2022. The variance year on year is shown in the 3rd column with negative values shown in brackets. She wanted to draw the %Variance column to your attention – this is generally a useful guide to how much more or less we have received or spent in a particular area. However, she noted that where a new cost centre has been used in 2023 that had not previously been used in 2022, the variance is shown as 0%. She presumed this is because the software can't handle dividing by 0. Where this is the case, she has indicated this with a blue arrow. In general, red arrows show negative trends – decreasing income or increasing expenses. Starting with OLOC. Overall, we finished the year with £1,349 more in our account than in the previous December. In terms of income, donations were generally lower overall, with less money coming in through standing orders and envelopes and more money coming in through cash in the collection baskets than in previous years. We also generated some additional income from the Repository and Pilgrimages. SC thanked all those volunteers who give their time to assist with these. Unsurprisingly, our outgoings have risen, but thankfully the increase is smaller than it might have been when you consider the effects of inflation and energy costs are having nationally. For St. Gabriel's, we finished the year with £267. more in our diocesan account than at the end of 2022. Again, income from offertory, donations and legacies is significantly down on last year. This is probably a sign of the cost-of-living crisis, with people needing to be frugal and giving as and when they can. Expenditure is significantly up on last year even though we have made savings on clergy costs, travel expenses, office and cleaning costs. Overall, we made a net loss of £8,620. The diocese having balanced our books with some transfers related to the sale of St. Crispin's at Pulborough. As you know we held our planned giving drive in March to try to help with maintenance costs. We also try to make the most of the hall as an asset and are very grateful to Jacqui Rourke for looking after our hall bookings.

4.	Past Successes: presented by Claire Fairlie The agenda says 'Successes' however she altered it to focus on GROWTH as a better indication of the process. With the understanding that we share the same fundamental belief in, for instance, the centrality of the Mass and our shared journey towards the same goals for ourselves and our communities... Are we planting? Are we nurturing? Are we maintaining and growing? Looking at the growth of our parish, two churches; one community. Following COVID and a change of clergy, the Synod came. Our thanks to Karen Goldsmith who has provided the Core Team with a summary of the groups' responses to each of the synod questions. Well-attended groups unanimously asked for greater representation in order to support and grow our parish. As part of our whole parish response to the Bishop's directive to, "Look after our parish priest" and as part of Canon Tim's remit as shepherd to our flock, the PCT was formed. The PCT has a goal of trying to share the load of the Parish Priest as well as prayerfully and respectfully help to integrate and respond to the requests and needs of our parish. At the same time, other initiatives have continued and grown e.g. • Our parish is now very active in Churches Together in Billingshurst • The Walk of Witness in Holy Week started from St. Gabriel's for the past two years • The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has been hosted and represented well by our single parish community • The CFG continues to flourish and lend significant support to many worthy causes • Connections between churches in W Grinstead are being nurtured • A 'new parishioners' social evening was well attended • A reactivated social calendar is now in place thanks to Brian Richards for organising last year's events and to Richard Cooper for taking-on this year Events where each church has hosted for the whole parish to attend have been enjoyed and the fostering of wider engagement between our communities is evident from our meeting today. Our Finance Team is now up and running at full strength - thanks to all volunteers and especially Sarah Cooper. So much more could be added in terms of the actions, events and thanks - please excuse if you or your group haven't been mentioned.
5.	Update on Future Developments: Presented by Canon Tim outlined below in no particular order: St. Gabriel's Church: Accessibility, safety, structural repairs and maintenance: • Provision of a ramp up to the main entrance of the church to remove the current disadvantage to wheelchair users who have to use a side door (This inequality was observed by the Bishop on his visit in 2016 who advised correction). • Increasing the height of the balustrade across the front of the organ gallery for health and safety reasons. • Cleaning and repointing of the exterior masonry to prevent future water ingress and to restore the stonework to its original honey colour. (Quinquennial survey July 2022) • Repairs to the cracks in the back wall of the sanctuary. • Full redecoration of the inside of the church including replacement of damaged carpet on the sanctuary. • Provision of icons of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Gabriel to adorn the sanctuary wall (as suggested by the Bishop). St. Gabriel's Church Hall: Safeguarding, safety, accessibility and modernisation • Refurbishment of toilet facilities for safeguarding reasons to improve provision for the nursery school (using the hall Monday-Friday). • Provision of ramped escape paths from all fire exits for safety of wheelchair users. • Modernisation of the kitchen to a commercial hiring standard. • Improvements to the parish room in the hall: more windows and better facilities. St. Gabriel's Presbytery: Maintenance and modernisation • Cleaning and repointing of the exterior masonry to prevent future water ingress and to restore the stonework to its original honey colour.

	• Provision of separate office with upgraded IT equipment • Total internal redecoration (much of which hasn't been touched for over 30 years). The Shrine Church of Our Lady of Consolation and St Francis: Restoration, structural repairs and modernisation • Emergency repairs to leaks over the side altar areas (note the church is Grade II listed). • Widespread roof repairs to prevent further water ingress and work to improve health & Safety issues in that area. (The architect has received quotes of between £45,000 and £65,000 (plus VAT) for this work.) • Repair damage to the bell tower louvres. • Reconfiguring of the side extension to provide a new sacristy and improved toilet facilities (giving the opportunity to convert the current sacristy back to being the main entrance of the church) • Installation of live streaming equipment • Erection of Victorian font (which has arrived from St Thomas' Church, Salisbury at the end of January). • Erection of the two altars from Womersley (St Francis de Sales & St Charles Borromeo). • Conservation and restoration of the third Womersley (wooden) altar (St Stanislaus). The Pilgrim's Way: Redevelopment to support the Bishop's vision for the Shrine Church to be the main diocesan shrine and centre for pilgrimage • Demolition and replacement of the "open-barn" structure and replacement with a purpose built all-weather pilgrimage and community centre. (The Bishop has requested this). • Replacement toilet facilities and a new commercial standard kitchen (reusing elements salvaged from former kitchens at DABCEC). • Installation of energy efficient ground source heating as part of the redevelopment • Improved access to the site for pilgrimage coaches from Park Lane • Installation of external lighting to provide safe access between car park, church and pilgrimage centre Provision of a Portiuncula Chapel in the centre of the rosary garden as a devotional attraction for visiting pilgrims (reflecting the history of the church being run by the Franciscans during the Reformation era and the fact that West Grinstead Church was the centre of devotion in the country to the Portiuncula up until at least the First World War.)
6.	Update on the Diocesan Plan: Presented by Canon Tim Copies of The Word Who Is Life – the Pastoral Plan were available for parishioners to take away. We will become part of a large parish which basically encompasses the entire Crawley deanery: Billingshurst & West Grinstead, Crawley, East Grinstead with Lingfield, Gatwick, Henfield, Horley. Horsham and Worth. The parish will have a new name and will be led by a moderator. Canon Tim has been appointed moderator by the Bishop. So far there have been good discussions during clergy meetings with the diocesan development team and with the Bishop. Next there will be meetings of the various teams such as Core Teams from the Horsham hub and the Crawley hub. A steering committee will be created made up of key people. The Bishop has allowed the process to happen at our own pace but legally it should all happen by the end of 2025. It is a big change that is difficult to see how it will work out. Eventually there will be a moderated parish plan and a whole parish newsletter possibly once a quarter.
7.	Submitted Questions: The questions and responses are summarised below. 1. <i>Why are personal cash gifts given to the priest at Christmas and Easter eligible for Gift Aid?</i> The money placed in cards is a direct personal gift for Canon Tim to do with as he wishes. Money given through the collection plate at Christmas and Easter Masses goes into the diocesan account – as a charity account, gift aid can be reclaimed on it. Canon Tim hasn't taken the Gift Aid raised on these collections, so the parish benefits from this. 2. <i>How is the almost fulltime commercial letting of St Gabriel's parish hall justified in the light of the Charities Act 2011 which prioritizes this facility for church use?</i> We accept that the playgroup booking does pose an issue – in that in order for it to be viable for the playgroup they need to book it for their core hours every day in term time.

	There isn't sufficient demand from the parish to use the Hall during the week to alter the current situation. The Hall is available for parish use some evenings, weekends and during the school holidays. However, St Gabriel's Hall is not the only parish meeting space – at the moment there are two rooms at West Grinstead, which do not have any regular bookings and are available for parish purposes making renting other premises unnecessary. 3. <i>Could parishioners be fully informed about the sale of the parish asset, the Pulborough church site, which took place circa January 2024: date of sale; amount raised; amount accorded to the parish and who will decide the use of these funds?</i> Canon Tim received an email on 7th March from the Diocesan Chief Operating Officer (COO) confirming the sale of the site at Pulborough. Canon Tim shared the message from the COO with Kevin and Sarah on 9th March. It was sold for £746,784 net after fees. 65% - £485,409 is being held on the diocesan project scheme (accruing interest). The parish may draw on this for future parish projects – as outlined by Canon Tim earlier in the AGM. 35% - £261,374 is in a separate ring-fenced diocesan account – to be used to fund work on buildings at West Grinstead that the Diocese has responsibility for – the Priest's house and the Pilgrims' Way. The sale was mentioned in the core team minutes. It was felt that the AGM was a good opportunity to share the projects that the sale will allow us to progress. 4. <i>Why were parishioners not given information, available at the time and relevant to the decision-making process, concerning the sale of the church property when they were encouraged to sign Standing orders in a Planned Giving Initiative in March?</i> The need for the planned giving drive had been established in October 2023. It was clear from the trends evident in the accounts that the decline in income and increase in expenditure was not sustainable for the future and that we needed to ask the parish to consider what they give to the parish (both in time and money). As soon as the Diocese acknowledged that there was funding available, we moved forward with the contract for urgent repair to the roof at Our Lady of Consolation. The news would not have changed the appeal as this was made for the day to day running of the parish rather than big projects. 5. <i>Could there be a more equitable balance between singing and spoken prayer in the Sunday Mass?</i> Liturgy can be an emotive subject for many. The Mass is a collective form of worship in communion with one another – prayer, singing and silence. In 2010 there was a new translation of the altar missals in these the prayers are set to be sung. If one examines the depth of the documents, it is stated that all parishioners should be able to say and or the Lord's Prayer and the Creed in Latin. It is recognised that there is a need for more silence during Mass at St. Gabriel's so beginning Sunday 9th June there will be a period of silence after the Communion hymn and before the Taizé chant is sung. Canon Tim expressed his gratitude to those who are involved in the liturgy and music in the parish. The singing in particular has been commented upon by both the Bishop and other visiting clergy. There will be further changes with the introduction of the new lectionary in Advent. Canon Tim stated that thanks to the generosity of Jennie Wren-Scott's legacy we are in a position to purchase all the new books we require. A bookplate will be put in the books in her memory and will continue to keep her in our prayers.
8.	KR closed the meeting with thanks to all for making us such a fantastic parish.