WREXHAM MISSION AREA CONFERENCE

5 OCTOBER 2021@ ALL SAINTS’ CHURCH

PRESENT: The Revds Jonathan Smith (Mission Area Leader), Dr Jason Bray, Sarah Errington, Patrick Williams; Dr Elizabeth Cottrell(Chair), Ann Owen (Secretary), Carol Jones (Treasurer); Helen Davies, Malcolm Casey, Jean Morris, Steve Cannon (St Margaret’s); Nick Roe. Judith Jones, Lynn Mackreth (All Saints’); Brian Stickels, Stella Whitham, Janet Hardcastle (St Giles’); Sue Williams, Julie Barlow (St James’); Ruth Cleverley, Mandy Roberts, Beryl Edwards, Tricia Jones (Holy Trinity).

The Revd Jonathan Smith welcomed members to the Conference, postponed from its original date because of the delay in receiving the Report of the Review conducted in May. He updated the Conference also on the condition of the Revd Dylan Parry Jones who had collapsed during the service on Sunday and who is still in hospital.

The opening Worship was led by the Revd Dr Jason Bray, reflecting on the life and mission of St Francis of Assisi.

1. **Apologies** were received from Art Ellinson, Gareth Jones, John Gallanders, The Revd Dylan Parry Jones and the Revd James Tout.
2. **The Minutes of 20 April 2021** (previously circulated) were subject to the following correction under item 3: “Art Ellinson felt that God had given us a nudge to address the use and place of online activities and perhaps we could offer worship etc without every cleric in the Mission Area preparing online services every week”. The approval of the Minutes was then proposed by Janet Hardcastle and seconded by the Revd Jason Bray.
3. **Matters Arising**:

* Each Church reported a general return to normal patterns, although the Revd Sarah Erringon noted a significant drop in numbers at St John’s for a range of disparate reasons
* The Revd Jonathan Smith reported that the Church Army Centre of Mission continues with the support of the Wrexham Parochial Education Foundation and the Church Army, under the leadership of Josh Smith and the newly licensed Jack Wright. During the Summer they had provided hot meals for Caia Park (and elsewhere), and their current focus is on the Tin Can, sport and schools

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4. **Mission Area Review (previously circulated)**

Dr Elizabeth Cottrell from the Chair opened the discussion by noting that the Review had taken place 6 months ago and so some matters (eg the hedges at All Saints’) had already been addressed; that the Report consisted of snapshots of each Church as seen by the Archdeacon John Lomas, the Diocesan Secretary Diane McCarthy and the Diocesan Churches Inspector Michael Plane; and that it reflected how each Church had actually appeared on that day.

Dr Cottrell than asked for initial impressions of the Report. Included were the following:

* There was a feeling that the Report focused more on buildings and less on the Kingdom (“not much about bringing souls to Christ”)
* Is Hope Street part of the Mission Area or independent? The Bishop had expressed some surprise at its inclusion
* The offering of hospitality is an unrealistic aspiration in some localities
* Holy Trinity is in fact a Grade 2 listed building – *the Diocesan Team has now acknowledged this and apologized for the error*
* Confusion in St James’ about a contradiction re the grant/ and the proceeds of sale (Church or Hall?); also re the )suggested ground clearance
* St John’s had already suggested re toilet; paid professionals had been used but still there were problems;
* Confusion re the connection suggested between St Giles’ and Hope Street if latter not part of the Mission Area; liaisons need to be in both directions
* St Mark’s description fair; waiting for professional services to make progress

Regarding **the Report on the Halls:**

* it was felt that the comments on St Peter’s were fair (incorrect spelling of Shaun noted)
* Michael Plane is to visit All Saints’ to discuss matters raised
* St John’s is a 1990s building (not 80s) **and not recorded here as having** **served as a Cold Weather Shelter** (this had been included for All Saints’)
* St Margaret’s has some reserves and has had some grants; the Lunch Club may not reopen; it hopes to be able to help support the Church

Regarding **Other Assets**

The status of the ownership of both 55 Princess Street and of College House is to be checked. The former is held by the RB, the latter vested in the RB.

**Review’s Recommendations**

It was agreed that the key item is Recommendation Two (qv), on which depend Recommendations One, Four, Five and Seven

Comments were taken first on the remaining Recommendation:

**One:** the directions for the Action Plan, which it is hoped may be completed by Christmas

**Three:** St Mark’s Vicarage matter is in progress. It is currently rented and some part of the rental may contribute to the Social Supermarket in due course.

**Six:** It was felt that the pattern of St Giles’ in respect of daily opening and engagement with tourism is unrealistic for other Churches, which occupy such different locations ; that in any case it has been a matter of incremental growth even for St Giles’.

**Eight:** the development of Gift Direct was seen to be a good suggestion

**Recommendation Two**

The Revd Jonathan Smith summarised the development from the Wrexham Benefice, which ended in 2014, to the Wrexham Mission Area configuration which replaced it.

Under this model, St Giles’ is the Parish Church and the remaining churches are Conventional Districts, and are autonomous. This works well for us.

However, the Diocese has now constructed Mission Areas which exist as a single Parish, and the Bishop wishes Wrexham to conform to this pattern.

This is not a simple return to the former Benefice structure; the Mission Area Leader is not the same as the Rector of Wrexham.

The critical factor is the issue of Charitable Status, on which the claiming of Gift Aid via HMRC is by law now contingent.

Under the Diocesan system, the Mission Area would become a single Charity; but both St Giles and St James are themselves independent Charities, and would have to be dissolved as such in the proposed Diocesan scenario.

The Revd Jonathan Smith suggests upending the present arrangement by making the six Churches form the Parish, and St Giles’ a Conventional District. (It would be difficult for each Church separately to function as a separate Charity; there are other issues including the work of the MA Treasurer and oversight of properties.)

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**Comments were invited.**

It was agreed that each PCC needs to have this on its Agenda for discussion before Christmas.

It was remarked by the Revd Sarah Errington that if we were to become one single Charity, St Giles would be a major distortion in relation to the other Churches because of its singular structure. The Revd Dr Jason Bray agreed adding that its current independence allows everything to work. It was noted that the Bishop strongly requires us to conform, but the Conference does wish to research and examine the position.

**It was agreed that a Working Group be set up, to be composed of the Clergy plus one Church representative. This will be organized by the Revd Jonathan Smith.**

1. **Finance**

Carol Jones reported that we are in a good position.

75% of Parish Share has been paid in full: the latest 30% grant from the Enabling Fund is due to be paid into the MA account and will be distributed appropriately to the churches.

Current Account £5k Reserve account £72k **Note** the following restricted sums in the Reserve Account: St Peter’s Hall £10k; Admin grant £4,300. Foster Road future repairs £9k (Total £23,300)

1. **Liquidation of Former Deanery Fund**

It was agreed nem con that this Fund should be liquidated and the proceeds divided between the Wrexham and Alyn Mission Areas

1. **Standing Committee**: the report of the June meeting had been circulated and the report of the most recent one is awaited. The Revd Dr Jason Bray has been appointed Vice Chair
2. **Governing Body:** the Revd Dr Jason Bray reported on the approval of the Blessing of same sex partnerships, which was passed by the required majority in all three houses of the GB. There is a conscience clause; there will be a need to work together. The Year of Biblical Literacy is scheduled to take place soon. The Life Events package is soon to be launched by the Diocese.

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1. **AOB and Announcements**

* MA News will be published shortly
* Christians Together in Wrexham Quarterly Open Meeting: Thursday 7 October at 7.30pm in Capel y Groes
* Diocesan Conference: Saturday October 9 th 10.00am – 1.00pm on Zoom
* Civic Opening of Hope Street: 11.00am Monday November 8 th

Treasurer’s meeting to discuss 2022 share: Monday November 8 th 7.00pm on Zoom

* Standing Committee: Thursday 25 th November in person?
* Rescheduled: Tuesday 10 th May 2022 Paul Jones &amp; Fiona Hendley in Concert at St John’s Church
* **Safeguarding of Older People booklets: please distribute in each Church**
* **DASU in King Street have indicated a significant increase in male victims of Domestic Abuse and are available to offer support**

**NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 23rd November at 7pm for 7.15pm at St Mark’s Church**

The Closing Prayers were offered by the Revd Sarah Errington