

St Mary's Episcopal Church, Aberfoyle

Rector: Revd. Richard Grosse

www.stmarychurchaberfoyle.org.uk

A charity registered in Scotland: SC023266

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting Held on 12 December 2010 at 11.45 a.m. in the Church

The meeting, which followed the Morning Service, was attended by 24 members of the congregation. It should be noted that extremely wintry weather adversely affected attendance.

Mark Seymour, Vestry Chairman, welcomed everyone and thanked all present for turning out in such treacherous conditions.

1. Apologies. Apologies were received from Peggy Aitken, Susan Forsyth, Alastair Gardner, Keith and Eileen Gibbs and Tim and Anne Winther.

2. The Minutes. The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 13 December 2009, copies of which had been distributed in advance, were approved and their adoption proposed by James Stirling, seconded by Philip Gaskell and signed by the Chairman.

3. Vestry Report. The Chairman reported that the Vestry had met on four occasions in the last year. Minutes of these meetings can always be made available and are on the Church website: www.stmarychurchaberfoyle.org.uk

Another outstanding Harvest Supper and Quiz Night was held with St Andrew's at Callander in October.

The Vestry has started work on the Casting the Net initiative. The first meeting of the Mission Action Group, led by Philip Gaskell, will be in January 2011.

Following the recent Stewardship initiative, The Chairman stressed the importance of increased giving. He emphasised that we must pay our way in St Mary's and that the current appeal was essential and a quite separate issue from the Renovation Project which had been so generously supported by the congregation. The Chairman noted that if each regular churchgoer gave as little as an extra £1 per week we would be £1000 p.a. better off, but surely we can do better than that.

In conclusion, the Chairman expressed his appreciation and thanks to the Vestry and many others in St Mary's for all their work over the past year, including Richard Grosse, Nick Cooke, David and Marie Thompson, Philip and Karen Gaskell, Margaret Johnson, Margie Stephen, Keith Gibbs, Jean Sykes and Marion Nolan. It was noted that the Secretary has agreed to serve for a further year but a replacement is required for 2012.

4. Rector's Report. The Rector gave a written report which is presented here in full:

After years of toil and effort, it might have been thought the summit had been reached on Palm Sunday of this year when our Bishop rededicated St Mary's following renovation to God's service. It proved to be a memorable day.

I was dismayed to learn the company responsible for the renovation, Hunter and Clark Ltd was obliged to cease trading shortly after completing the project. The Company served us well and we offer sympathy to those who have lost their employment.

I said at the outset the summit of our ambition appeared to have been reached with the completion of the building project. We know though that endeavours to create a worthy place of worship cannot stand alone: they now need to be capitalised.

So in the week prior to the service of dedication a most successful programme of concerts was put together with the aim of promoting the building for meetings and concerts. A number of similar functions have or are taking place in the future. Those who have shown both drive and imitative in this regard are to be thanked and congratulated.

We are not though custodians of a concert hall: St Mary's is primarily a place of worship. At the end of every year, the Diocese asks for figures for attendance in the preceding twelve months. There were 1484 communicants at 85 services, these including services at Balfron, Killearn and Home Communion. These figures give no cause for complacency; in fact rather the opposite. For this reason I am looking forward to the Casting the Net process to which Vestry has undertaken to play a part. The process starts in earnest tomorrow evening. Casting the Net is a Diocesan scheme to assist growth and reinvigoration of parishes. In twenty or so years of ministry I have participated in a number of broadly similar schemes. Where Casting the Net importantly differs though is that expert eyes from outside the parish are brought to bear on what we do. Having been in post now for some six years, there is always the danger that I do not see wood from trees. I then look forward to whatever guidance and advice that might be forthcoming. This not to say that I haven't plans myself for drawing St Mary's closer to those about us..

In Killearn this year there has appeared on lampposts notices deterring 'cold-callers' on doorsteps. I am sure these are not specifically aimed at the church. Nevertheless their tone indicates a caution and reluctance of society in general to deal with an unfamiliar face. It is for this reason I continue to combine parish duty with salaried employment where possible. The amounts earned relieve only in very small part the considerable overheads inevitably generated by my ministry. Importantly however, this employment in the parishes is a means whereby my face is more familiar than might otherwise be.

I am indebted as always to the level of commitment and dedication to the cause. The level of self-giving, and the talents displayed is quite remarkable. I shall refrain from naming names, but I hope those responsible are aware of my unending gratitude for support

St Mary's continues to sorrow in the passing of Veronica North earlier in the year, a good and stalwart member of congregation. This year seems also to have brought more illness and bereavement than normal to the congregation. My prayers and best wishes go to all who are in suffering or anxiety at present.

5. Presentation of Accounts 2009-2010. The Treasurer reported as follows:

- Vestry members have the full Report & Accounts, everyone else just the Statement of Financial Activities and Balance Sheet covering the year ending 30th September 2010.
- The Report & Accounts document follows a set pattern prescribed by current law, modern charity regulations, and the needs of the Scottish Episcopal Church. As Trustees of a registered Scottish charity, Vestry collectively has to provide and approve annual accounts which contain key information to (1) OSCR and (2) the Diocese and the General Synod Office.
- These Accounts have not yet been signed off by Iain Kyle as our Independent Financial Examiner, but I am confident in the accuracy of the figures before you. These are currently being examined and I am asking this Meeting to authorise Vestry to approve the Report & Accounts subject to the completion of the IFE's examination over the next month. His official report appears in its standard format as part of the full document.
- This will be Iain's last year as our IFE so I would like to thank him now for his services to St Mary's and hope we will find a successor who is as helpful.
- In terms of the St Mary's financial review for the past year, I refer you to the two key financial documents on pages 9 and 10 of the Report & Accounts. I shall quote from the relevant summary in the Trustees Report:

“The General Fund produced an operating deficit of £3,549 in the year, a disappointing outcome which largely reflects a static baseline of congregational giving which has failed to keep pace with increases in clergy and ministry costs. To some extent this position may also reflect the recent exceptional demands placed on members of St Mary’s by the Renovation Project. There is no doubt, however, that the Vestry will have to address the need for a renewed stewardship initiative in the coming year. Fortunately, the year end position of the General Fund was helped by a gain of £3,080 in the market value of investments.

The completion of the Church Renovation project with the use of loan funding noted above has resulted in a substantial net outflow of £36,578 from the Renovation Fund, with total works expenditure in the year amounting to £64,260. The closing negative balance of £18,267 in this Fund closely reflects the current extent of external loans, as noted in the Accounts. A review of the long term role of this Fund will be taken in 2011.

The Church Giving Fund was actively used to make donations totalling £1,200 to five UK registered charities. All of these were nominated by members of St Mary’s personally connected with their work or, as in the case of the Haiti Earthquake Appeal of Medecins Sans Frontieres, was a cause which Vestry considered particularly important; our donation of £400 included the proceeds of a special Sunday collection.

Overall, the above three Funds declined in value by £37,850 in the year and now stand at 53% of their equivalent value a year previously. The coming year will require all of Vestry’s discipline and vigilance in strengthening the reserves in the Balance Sheet.”

- Three key messages stand out from this:

1. In the last few weeks you will have all received a letter from the Rector and Chairman via your Area Contact asking for a renewed effort from all members of St Mary’s to improve the level of assured giving as part of our collective Stewardship commitment. So far, the response from many has been very slow – only 10 replies have come in from 60 letters distributed. As the figures in these Accounts demonstrate, this is no idle request and I do urge everyone who has not done so to reconsider what they are currently giving to St Mary’s.

2. Our Balance Sheet is considerably weaker than a year ago and Vestry will have to address the repayment of significant loans as part of St Mary’s annual budget commitments for some years to come. Again, this will be a far easier task if we were to see a higher level of assured congregational income.

3. As I have said to Vestry, we need to plan now for the future and establish a Church Fabric sinking fund so that our successors are not faced with the barrier we faced three years ago in financing the renovation of the our Church fabric with no financial reserves whatsoever set aside for this purpose.

A final thought. One way in which all of us can help with this last message is to make a legacy to St Mary’s in our wills. It’s a morbid subject, maybe, but one that those of us here who know and love this beautiful Church building will understand.

Thank you for listening to what may sound a sombre assessment of our affairs. My name is not George Osborne! I hope we can make real progress in meeting all of these challenges in 2011.

6. Lay Representative’s Report.

The lay representative attends Area Council meetings, 3 per year (all now open meetings) and represents the church at Synod along with the rector.

- the Windsor Covenant (the bishop spoke)
- Rev Canon Alison Peden on education and mission

- Better vestries – Rosie Mackie

The all-age Gathering in May was a highlight and emphasised the scope and opportunities of the Casting the Net process.

Members of the congregation are encouraged to attend Area Council meetings which will be publicised. Transport to meetings may assist attendance especially when the meetings can be as far away as Dollar.

7. Vestry Membership and Appointment of Lay Representative and Alternate Lay Representative

No new members of Vestry were proposed. However, Susan Forsyth has agreed to continue her Vestry membership for a further term.

Jonny North has agreed to become our Health & Safety Officer. Following Hannah Sanderson's recent resignation as Vulnerable Adult and Child Protection Coordinator, Melanie Grosse is taking over this role. Two vacancies exist: we require a team leader to organise future concerts/events in St Mary's and a Fabric Team leader.

Philip Gaskell and Saffrey Miller agreed to continue as Lay Representative and Alternate Lay Representative respectively. Philip Gaskell was proposed by David Miller and seconded by Kate Joynson. Saffrey Miller was proposed by Jonny North and seconded by Billie Bates.

8. Any Other Business.

James Gardner brought the meeting up-to-date on the plans for a 'Young Church' now named 'I Wonder'. It is hoped the new group will meet for the first time on 30 January 2011 in the Church Room. In addition to Melanie Grosse, Barbara Carruthers and James Gardner helpers with particular hands-on skills for activities with young people are being sought.

The question was raised as to why the gate had been removed from the foot of the steps from the lane. The Chairman explained that it no longer served any purpose as it was fenced only at one side. He assured the questioner that the gate would be kept in storage in case of any future change to this section of the perimeter.

9. Date of Next Meeting. The A.G.M. will be held on Sunday 11 December 2011.

There being no other competent business the Chairman thanked the congregation and the meeting closed at 12.45 p.m. with The Grace.

Signed.....

Date.....