

**Minutes of St John the Baptist Church, Elmore**  
**Annual Parish Meeting and Annual Parochial Church Meeting**  
**Held on Sunday 16th April 2023, at 10.55 a.m. in the Church**

**Opening Prayers**

**Present:** Rev. Richard Martin, Mr. M. Watts, Mrs. J. Watts, Mrs. L. Bates, Jill Hurran, Mick Taylor, Colin Stone, Steve Bodle, Hazel Morgan and Emily.

**Apologies:** Nick Stewart, John Tooth and Pat Buckland

**Annual Parish Meeting:** The following two people were proposed as Church wardens.  
Elizabeth Bates and Colin Stone

There were no other nominations and they were duly elected.

**Annual Parochial Church Meeting:**

- 1) **Minutes** of the Annual Parochial Church meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022 were signed as correct (P) Colin Stone (S) Steve Bodle
- 2) **Matters Arising** None
- 3) **Reports**
  - Electoral Roll Thanks were expressed to Pat and it was noted that there are 26 people on the list 13 from the Parish and 13 from outside.
  - PCC and Church activities report – No questions
  - Financial report. No questions were raised and thanks were expressed to John for his hard work.
  - Churchwardens Fabric report no questions
  - Deanery Synod reportThe above reports were accepted  
(P) Colin Stone (S) Hazel Morgan
- 4) **Elections and appointments**
  - \* Appointment of Deanery Synod Representative  
Doff Stone was elected for the next three year period.
  - \* Election of PCC members (6) Jennifer Watts, Michael Watts, Nick Stewart, Jill Hurran, Pat Buckland and Steve Bodle. John Tooth was co-opted to the PCC. Doff Stone will serve as Deanery Synod Representative
  - \* Appointment of Parish Safeguarding Officer Liz Bates
  - \* Lead Recruiter George Parfitt
  - Appointment of Data Protection Officer – Nick Stewart
  - \* Appointment of Independent Examiner – Ian Daniels  
(P) Jill Hurran (S) Michael Watts
- 5) **Priest-in-Charge's comments** -

Doubting Thomas. That's how he'll always be remembered. "I won't believe it till I see it". I need proof. He becomes a kind of anti-hero in the early Church, someone not to emulate – as Jesus says, "blessed are those who have not seen, yet believed". In other words, blessed are those who aren't like doubting Thomas.

But the more I think about Thomas, the more I find in him a *good* example for disciples of Christ, during that week before Jesus met him and convinced him. And today at our APCM I'd like to point out a few of those qualities because I think they fit our situation at Elmore rather well.

First, he didn't mind being in a minority – even a minority of one. How hard must it have been for him in that week between Easter Day and the next Sunday? It would have been so easy to say, Oh, OK then, I'll say I believe it, just for a quiet life. But no. He held his ground and would not give in to peer pressure. A man of principle.

Those who attend worship at Elmore are very much in a minority in the village. Not a minority of one (though at some Evensongs it gets close) but those who don't attend are in the majority. Thomas is a role model for those who do attend. Never mind the prevailing wind, what everyone else thinks. You have your faith, your conviction, and you will stick to it. As the old chorus says, I have decided to follow Jesus, though none go with me, still I will follow, no turning back, no turning back.

Secondly, he saw positive signs of God at work all around him, but didn't experience anything himself – yet hung on in there. Thomas would love to have been able to believe Jesus was risen. He saw the effect in the other disciples – their joy, their peace. But he'd experienced nothing, he'd missed out on the big moment. But he stayed. That in fact shows great faith I think – that he was willing to wait for his moment to come. Somehow hanging onto the hope that God could still dive deep into his needy mind and heart.

Here at Elmore, it feels a bit like that sometimes I think. Even last Sunday. On Easter morning there were 50 people at Longney and another 50 at Hardwicke – all locals. At Elmore at 4pm there were about 15, of whom 2 live in the village. At times like that it feels as if God's blessings are being experienced by others but not by us. It's not just the congregation numbers. Longney and Hardwicke both have re-ordering plans, visions for new uses for their building. Here we are faced with considerable expense - replacing the organ and repairing the roof - just to stand still. In such times, Thomas' example can encourage us to hang on in there, to wait for our moment, not to give up. That's faith, too. Perhaps we like him are those who have not seen but have kept believing.

Lastly, Thomas desperately wanted to see Jesus. As the Bach anthem the choir sung on Good Friday has it, "Ah how long must my heart be anxious and full of longing for you?". That whole week Thomas was waiting, praying, searching for God. And that's where I think Thomas challenges us. In the Benefice, we had services each night of Holy Week, opportunities to worship and reflect and seek God. We had a Lent group, looking at ways to enrich our prayer life. But very few came along. I'm sure there were very good reasons why. But it raises the question – just how hungry are we for God? Wherever we are on our journey of faith, God invites us further into his abundant life, calling us deeper into worship and prayer, and then outward into service. He longs to bless us: when we seek him with our whole hearts we will find him waiting for us, with open arms.

So I want to end with a prayer we have been studying at the 9.30 Communion services Hardwicke throughout Lent – the prayer of St Richard of Chichester. I have printed a copy for each of you to keep and to pray through, especially the last 4 lines, which sum up this hunger, this intense desire for God, which Thomas exemplifies...

Thanks be to thee  
my Lord Jesus Christ

for all the benefits thou hast won for me  
for all the pains and insults thou hast borne for me  
O most merciful Redeemer, Friend and brother  
May I see thee more clearly  
love thee more dearly  
and follow thee more nearly  
day by day Amen

**6) Priorities for 2023 and 2024**

Please could we have an Easter morning service at Elmore (J. Watts) Next year Easter Sunday is on the fifth Sunday of the month and will be at Elmore. Our priorities for the year ahead are the repairing the roof and the replacement of our organ. Please can our Web site be updated and improved and could we also have a presence on the Elmore News face book page. Jenny Hobbs and Denise Barker to be approached by the Secretary.

**7) Any Other Business - None**

8) Closing Prayers conducted by the Vicar. Meeting closed at 11.05am

**There followed at short meeting for the newly elected PCC straight after the APCM**

**1. Election of Officers**

Vice Chairman Michael Watts  
Treasurer John Tooth  
Secretary Jill Hurran

**2. Election of Standing Committee, Social Committee, Fabric Committee**

**Standing Committee**

Vice Chairman, Churchwardens, Secretary and Treasurer

**Social Committee**

Vice Chairman, Secretary, Churchwardens plus other cop-opted members

**Fabric Committee**

Michael Watts, Colin Stone, Nick Stewart.

**3. Adoption House of Bishops' "promoting a Safer Church; safeguarding Policy Statement"**

(P) Liz Bates (S) Colin Stone

**4. Date of next Meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2023**

**5. Any other Business - none**

At a recent Organ Committee it was proposed to give Mary Hughes the opportunity to search for a pipe organ with the offer of up to £1,000 in expenses. (P) Michael Watts (S) Steve Bodle

Meeting closed at 11.15 am