

SANDERSTEAD PCC

UPDATE STATEMENT ON PASTORAL & ORGANISATION ISSUE 14/1/20

1. At our meeting on 29/10/19 we agreed a way forward with three strands:
 - The formal process to dissolve the Team Ministry and the DCCs and replace it with a conventional parish structure with a single PCC. It was hoped to achieve this by Easter 2020 and certainly by the 2020 APCM and the start of the new church administrative year.
 - Facilitated further discussions to seek the right way forward for St Edmund's building and district (in whole or part) – also by around Easter 2020.
 - A study by Canon Will Cookson (Dean of Fresh Expressions) on the mission potential of St Antony's, as part of the Parish of Sanderstead.

To this I would like to add a fourth strand – the practical steps we need to take within the parish to allow the new structure to work.

This is an update on all of these strands.

2. FORMAL PROCESS

As we understand it, the proposition to dissolve the Team was accepted by Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee on 6th December. There follows a two-stage process, each with significant public consultation periods, and with the second involving the Church Commissioners. The end product is a Scheme made by the Church Commissioners enacting the changes.

Chris made an enquiry about progress last week. The result was frankly disappointing. It appears that drafting work has not started. We were warned that it is extremely unlikely that the process will be completed before the APCM and the start of the 2020/1 church administrative year.

This has a number of major implications for us. We were seeking to minimise the length of the current artificial situation in which St Antony's and St Edmund's continue to exist formally as quasi-independent churches but in reality have ceased to exist as worshipping communities. Above all it is important to avoid, if at all possible, the completely pointless process of all three churches having to elect churchwardens, Synod, PCC & DCC members on the current basis, knowing the new one will come in to force within, at worst, a matter of months.

We need help and guidance from Bishop Jonathan and the Archdeacon here. Subject to our discussion tonight, I propose to seek guidance on the following points;

- Is there any legal way we can work on the new basis with a single church council (PCC) after the April APCM, even if the legal paperwork has not caught up?
- If so, on what basis should that PCC be elected (and also representatives for the 2020-3 Deanery Synod)?
- If not, is it really essential for pointless DCC etc elections to be carried out, or is there an alternative?
- What is the position as regards the legal responsibilities of the current churchwardens? Do six churchwardens have to be re-elected, or is there an alternative?

- The diocese currently requires all three churches to produce separate accounts (which are then consolidated for the Charity Commission). Does this have to continue for part of the 2020 financial year?

These are vitally important questions. However at the moment we do not know the answers. As already said, I propose to seek guidance from Bishop Jonathan and the Archdeacon.

3. FACILITATED DISCUSSIONS

I am pleased to say, progress here is more positive!

The Archdeacon invited Bishop Peter Price (former Bishop of Bath & Wells) to act as facilitator. Rosemary, Chris & I met with him on 17th December, basically to bring him up to speed and to develop the initial steps of the process.

There have been further discussions over the holiday period, including a meeting between Bishop Peter & Fr Grant Cohen yesterday. Bishop Peter then contacted me yesterday setting out his preferred next steps:

- A further meeting between himself, Grant, myself, Rosemary (subject to John's health issues), Jeremy (if possible) & Chris as soon as possible; we are working on possible dates for this.
- Then a meeting with Sanderstead PCC as soon as possible afterwards. This is likely to mean that we shall require an ad hoc meeting before the next scheduled one on 31/3/20.

One point Bishop Peter made at our initial meeting is that all parties have, in different ways, suffered a form of bereavement and are in the grieving process. That takes time and a strict Easter deadline might not be helpful in finding the best solution. Therefore, whilst we shall make the best progress we can, it may not be possible to complete the process by Easter.

Once we have a conclusion, we shall also need to consider the best way to continue the work of St Edmund's Caring Group.

4. MISSION STUDY

I have been in touch with Canon Will Cookson. We are just trying to finalise a date for a meeting between him, Jeremy and myself to work out the terms of reference etc for the study.

5. PRACTICAL STEPS

What is in our control is the practical action we can take locally to ensure that we are ready to operate the new structure when we are allowed to do so.

The key issue is the appointment of an estates manager to run St Antony's during the study period, and also St Edmund's if the conclusion is that it remains within the parish. We can also expand the role to include aspects of the All Saints' estate if we choose. We are promised diocesan funding from the savings in stipend until the second licensed minister is appointed to Sanderstead. This is essential to make the workload of the wardens and other officers anything like manageable under the new structure.

I hope PCC will agree this evening to the recruiting and appointing of an Estates Manager.