

CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION, HILTON

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL VESTRY MEETING – 8 MARCH 2009

1. **Rector's Report:**

The Rector's Report was distributed in the Parish Magazine and by email prior to the meeting [copy included in Minute Book]. In the service, in place of a Sermon, Nic highlighted some items from his report, going into depth about Dedicated Giving.

2. **Present and apologies:**

Attendance lists were circulated for signature and reflected 62 people present and 18 apologies.

3. **Adoption of minutes of previous Annual Vestry Meeting - 02 March 2008:**

Copies of the minutes had been placed on the notice board after the meeting and then ratified by Council at the next Council meeting. Bev Davidge proposed the adoption of the minutes, seconded by Graeme Mackenzie and agreed by all present.

4. **Questions of clarification and discussion of Rector's Report:**

There were no questions of clarification or discussion on the Report.

5. **Presentation and adoption of Financial Report for 2008:**

Copies of the audited accounts were circulated. Nic asked Gavin Bulman to present the report in detail.

Gavin said that we remember with sadness yet with thankful hearts the life of Rodney Whitley, who had served as our Honorary Treasurer for many years. We record our gratitude for his dedication and service to this parish. He also thanked Jennifer Howlett, Julia Lloyd, Neville Bailey and Sven Jager for all their hard work in preparing the Annual Financial Accounts.

Income

Planned Giving was up by 6.7% against last year.

CPIX averaged 11.31% in 2008.

Total income including plate collections was up against last year by 12.23%, which is good news.

Expenditure

- **Diocese assessment** - Up by 8.6% against previous year.
- **Clergy Costs** – Last year we introduced a supplementary retirement plan for the Priest, of which the parish gives R250 and the priest R250 per month. The utilization of retired priests increased by 38% year on year and here we get good value for money.
- **Administration** – was up by only 8.42% year on year. We have also introduced a supplementary retirement plan for the admin staff based on the same principle as the priest's.
- **Pastoral & Worship Costs** – This category was our biggest increase by 81.4% from R35 420 to R64 254, due to us employing a part time Youth

Leader, but the benefits have increased tenfold, and the number of lives touched by this ministry speak for themselves.

- **Property** – increased by 35.78% due principally to attending to much needed and very overdue maintenance of the parish buildings.
- **Transport** – remarkably only up by 9% considering inflation.

This means that we ended the year with a surplus of R9 584 which, when added to the brought-forward surplus from last year of R1 328, resulted in an accumulated surplus of R10 912, which will be carried forward to 2009 - quite a remarkable achievement.

Balance Sheet

We have R19 286 in cash and in the bank but owe R8 374 to current creditors. We also have in the bank R189 698 which is earmarked to cover the funds we have established over the years.

Turning to the special funds we are grateful for the additional donations received and in particular to the Building Fund R131 000 and Social Responsibility Fund R57 000. We were also able to fulfil our goal of bringing the Garden of Remembrance Fund up to R10 000 by transferring R2 240 from the sale of plaques.

We have established three new funds this past year, which we consider to be a matter of exercising good stewardship. They are Maintenance Reserve into which we transferred R500 per month from general funds; the Rector's Discretionary Fund and the Environment Fund, which attracted donations of R32 520 and R1 230 respectively. Both these funds need to be renewed constantly with funds.

It is good that we reflect on what we have achieved over the past years. On 1 January 2003 we had a deficit of R99 440 and owed R44 500 to creditors as there was no cash to pay them. At the end of 2008 we have an accumulated surplus of R10 912 and owe only R8 374 to current creditors and this is after extending the hall, repairing the roof of the office block, installing a new organ, building a Wall of Remembrance, renovating the outbuildings at the rectory and upgrading the rectory bathrooms – all made possible through contributions made by parishioners and friends.

In conclusion Gavin said that he knew that Glen joined him in reiterating his thanks to Jennifer, Julia, Neville and Sven and the members of the Property & Finance Committee for their valuable input, enthusiasm and support during the year. It was a good year made possible through the grace and generosity of God working through all those who contributed prayerfully and financially to the preservation, growth and success of our parish.

Gavin then said he had pleasure in submitting the financial statements for 2008 and moved their adoption.

Nic asked if there were any questions or clarifications on the financial statements. None were forthcoming. Tim Wright seconded it, and all approved.

6. **Presentation and adoption of the Budget for 2009:**

On presenting the budget for 2009 Gavin looked first at expenses. For background: The budget has been drawn up on the premise that the parish had bought into the overall general principles surrounding its vision for growth and development. This resulted in blending the cost of fulfilment of that vision with unavoidable increases in running costs just like any other household would have to do. Gavin had drawn up a graph showing the various expenses and highlighted a few.

- Diocesan Assessment has risen by 6.8% to R393 000 - being R137 000 for Rector's salary and R255 000 for Diocesan costs including support to the Province. This represents 35% of our general income.
- Clergy costs only increased by 6.2% to R68 000 including the supplementary retirement plan of R250 per month and an increase in anticipated medical expenses.
- Admin costs have been increased by 7% to R190 000 which also provides for the continuation of the supplementary retirement plan for the Admin staff.
- Property expenses of R136 000 reflects a huge budgeted increase of R28 000 of which R25 000 is necessary for the replacement of gutters, barge boards and the painting of the outside at the rectory. Maintenance work at the rectory has not been done for 22 years, except for replacement of the roof tiles.
- Pastoral and Worship expenses are our biggest increase of 141%. In response to the need to grow the ministry to the youth and employing a full time Youth Pastor, the budget for 2009 has been increased by R114 000, bringing the budget for young people's ministry to R126 000.

Income

Gavin again used a graph to explain the income. The main source of income is Planned Giving at 62% followed by Loose Plate collections at 11% and this year a special Fundraising Initiative will be staged to raise R114 000 for what has been called Youth Pastor retention, which will amount to 11.5% of total income.

Other special fund raising efforts will have to be held to cover the R25 000 for the repairing and painting of the rectory. A special push will have to be made to encourage participation of the wine auction and "Christmas Dinner in July" and other donations and honest giving back to God some of the riches he has bestowed on us.

Gavin said that Nic's words this morning were not only from Nic but from the Parish Council and the Property & Finance Committee and that we must all wear our hearts on our sleeves and that the implementation of our vision cannot happen on it's own.

Gavin went on to talk about the parish's longing for the ability to see the **big picture** and that we have been blessed with the formation of a Parish Vision and that the Parish Hall Meetings in late 2008 had brought about a "buy in" to the vision and an overwhelming endorsement of it. He suggested that it does not stop there and that people prayerfully consider their level of giving to that which they believe will make God and them happy and respond "by putting their money where their mouth is".

In so doing we will balance our budget. We have not budgeted for a deficit, in faith we have budgeted to do the necessary things that we have been asked to do and likewise in faith budgeted for R197 582 from donations and special fundraising events which is “a big ask” – but necessary – because of insufficient funds currently coming from Planned Giving. We need to open our hearts and to respond by pulling together rather than leaving it to someone else.

Gavin showed a slide of the level of giving which showed that 8 pledgors (2.5%) of the parish roll make up 26.5% of dedicated giving, and 22 pledgors (6.9%) 50.2% of dedicated giving. Another disturbing aspect is the fact that only 42.5% on the parish roll contribute through the preferred dedicated Planned Giving scheme.

The slide also showed that the majority, totalling 67 pledgors, were in the 100 to R300 band. If those on the planned giving scheme increased their contributions by R120 per month we will have sufficient income and no need to raise an additional R197 000.

In Deuteronomy 8:18 we read: “Remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth”. It is over to us to ensure we accept the challenge of the work we need to do in this place.

Gavin moved for the adoption of the budget.

Nic asked for any questions on the budget.

Robin Greenwood explained that 80% of the Assessment goes to paying the stipends of the Bishops and Clergy. Some also goes to the ministry to the poor rural areas where they cannot afford to pay for a priest.

The Diocese has increased priests’ stipends by 11% this year, slightly under the inflation rate. The Diocese asked for an increase on Assessment of a minimum of 6.8%. We accepted the minimum this year due to our financial situation in employing new staff but in previous years we had paid more when asked to do so.

Ingrid Andersen said we would have sufficient funds if each person gave an extra R100 per month and we must step out in faith.

Nic replied that some people on our roll never attend church but wish to be on it for “security reasons” like having a place to have their funeral, but he never refuses to do a funeral and these people need to decide if they belong or not.

Sharon Kingham said that the idea of putting the information in the pew bulletin about our finances is good and we should continue to do so as it reminds people to catch up if they are in arrears.

Penny Purchase said that many blessings come from giving and we need to testify to this and reach the unconverted. Nic replied that a number of sermons, some from visiting preachers or parishioners, would be offered during the year.

Nic again asked if we could move for the adoption of the budget, as proposed by Gavin. Rob Stranack seconded this, and all attending agreed.

Glen Crouch said that Rodney had left a large hole in our parish and it had been impossible immediately to fill the position of Treasurer so it had been decided to leave it open until now. Gavin had worked tirelessly on the budget and accounts and on behalf of us all he thanked him. Everyone reciprocated.

Nic told the congregation that the Church Wardens and Parish Council members had not finished their term of office, with the exception of Jane Miller, so there was no need for new elections this year.

7. Appointment of Honorary Treasurer

Neville Bailey has agreed to accept the position of Treasurer continuing to help the office with the monthly financial statements. Gavin proposed that we accept his offer. Unanimously agreed

8. Appointment of Auditor

Gavin thanked Sven Jager for auditing our accounts once again and proposed that he continues as our Auditor – which was unanimously agreed. In reply Sven accepted, and said it was his responsible response to his God-given talents.

9. Election of Representatives to Elective Assembly.

No Elective Assembly was envisaged this year unless a bishop retired or was moved to another diocese. All agreed that it could be deferred to Parish Council.

10. Election of Representatives to Synod:

A Synod was planned for 9, 10 & 11 October for which we have to send two lay delegates. Usually Church Wardens or members of the Council attend. Can this be deferred to Parish Council for submitting names at the appropriate time? All agreed.

11. General

Rob Stranack remarked that he had lived in Hilton and worshiped at the Church of Ascension for many years and that since Nic's arrival it had been the most exciting and prosperous time and he congratulated Nic on his ministry here. The church has been vibrant and Nic has chosen his leadership team well.

The financial situation is not new, this parish responds well to projects, but does not respond well to Planned Giving and we need to broaden our base more.

Gavin replied he hears what is being said but it was not up to the Parish Council to supply our needs; it was up to the entire congregation to take responsibility for them and not someone else's responsibility.

Jenny Hammond said that Nic had mentioned that the average age of this parish is middle age and includes pensioners with fixed income or reduced income due to the financial situation of the world. Could we encourage people, when making their Wills, to consider endowing the Church of the Ascension in thanksgiving to God?

Nic replied that we not only have middle age and pensioners but also have young parishioners with high profile jobs, often with two incomes in the family. Careful thought should be given to what one is able to give when budgeting.

Gavin replied that we can be assured of enjoying our facilities due to past congregations having a bigger vision than was needed at the time. We are planning to set up an Endowment Fund for people to give to, invested in a special account where we will only draw the interest into our current account and preserve the capital for as long as we can.

Robin Greenwood said that to fulfill the Church's Constitution we should re-elect the Council en-bloc. Nic agreed, explaining that all the Council had not yet served their elected period; did everyone agree to us re-electing the Council en-bloc. Unanimously agreed.

Nic closed the meeting at 10.30am and ended in prayer.

Signed:

Resident Priest

Date: _____

Church Warden

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