

Dear Parishioners

We are writing this letter to you all to keep you up to date with discussion and decisions that have been taken by the PCC after discussion with the Archdeacon regarding possible future arrangements for the Parish and the appointment of a new vicar. The advert for our new vicar is in the national press on Friday 5th April, with the expectation that interviews and tours of the parish will be held on the 14th and 15th May.

As you will know there has been lots of thinking about the future of St Michaels since a meeting with the Archdeacon in November 2021 and concern at the large financial deficit for St Michaels (£15,000 for the year ended December 2023 with a further £17,000 deficit projected for the current year.)

While there have been positive developments with women officiating at St Michaels on a number of occasions, there has been a decline in numbers and also in the availability of people able to assist with the practical arrangements that enable worship and the care of the building week by week. This coupled with high energy and repair costs at St Michaels mean that the PCC as trustees have needed to make some difficult choices around arrangements for St Michaels.

The PCC voted on the 21st March to continue to offer worship at St Michaels focused around the major festivals only, and to offer additional services at St Davids in the Anglo-Catholic tradition (which is at the heart of St Michaels's and underpins the liberal catholic tradition at St David's) to ensure that the needs of these parishioners continue to be met. This is currently being discussed as to what this might look like. This may actually improve the financial situation -reducing, but not removing deficits.

The PCC passed a resolution to request the Archdeacon investigate the process and pathway for possible changes at St Michaels. This means that a request will be made to the Archdeacon of Exeter to commence a consultation about the future of St Michaels which will be led by the Diocese and will involve talking to parishioners across the parish and the local community. It will include an options appraisal about the use of the building. This will take some time.

In the meantime, in the spirit of trying to think imaginatively about how St Michaels could continue to have a worship space and be financially viable one option has been presented which is to consider mixed use of the St Michaels Chapel of Ease in a subdivided format providing a reduced worshipping space and separate affordable housing, that allows the burden of maintaining and heating the fabric of St Michaels to be shared. If successful the consequent reduced costs base at St Michaels, would allow regular services to resume with the choir and organ space preserved.

The PCC authorised the wardens to contact the Diocese and other parties to explore the options available for social housing as one possible solution. We must stress this plan is only a suggestion and would be at the instigation of the Diocese and Church Commissioners, who themselves may identify other alternatives. Other proposals may emerge and they would be very welcome.

We are considering the best way to engage with the congregations of St Michaels and St Davids to clarify these matters and hopefully explore possibilities in a positive spirit. There has been some inappropriate and misleading comment on social media. We hope that this letter makes the position a little clearer and demonstrates our wish to find a cooperative way forward. Whilst change is always uncomfortable it brings forward opportunities too and we ask everyone to engage constructively with us as we seek to find a way forward

April 5th

PCC Secretary Standing Committee