

Friends of the Three Saints Parish (TPoTS)

Guidance notes for running local church Friends groups

Simon Lewis and Ged Keele – May 2014

Background

At its meeting in September 2013 the Parochial Church Council (PCC) approved the following motion: “The PCC approves the setting up of a Friends Scheme to support the maintenance and improvement of the three Church buildings, and their associated Church yards, within the Parish. The scheme will operate within guidelines determined by the PCC”

The three Friends schemes will be formally launched in June / July 2014. These guidance notes provide a framework for the operation of each individual scheme. Currently there is some uncertainty as to how it will evolve and these notes will allow for some flexibility in the development of the local Friends Group. It is intended that they will be reviewed by the PCC, initially on an annual basis, to ensure that they reflect the needs of the Parish as a whole.

Organisational framework of the Scheme:

1. The overall responsibility for managing the scheme lies with TPoTS PCC and its operation will be governed by the PCC’s responsibilities under the Charities Act 2011
2. The objectives of the Scheme are:
 - a. To foster interest in, and support for, the three church buildings in the Parish
 - b. To provide financial support for the maintenance, repair and improvement of the three churches within the Parish through Membership Subscription and regular fund raising events
 - c. To provide a framework for disseminating information about Christian heritage, with particular reference to the three local churches
 - d. To raise the level of awareness in the community about how the local Parish is organised and managed
3. The Parish will provide central administrative support to the scheme.
4. There will be a local group for each church responsible for running the scheme locally within the current guidelines approved by the PCC.
5. The local groups will be called; Friends of St Christopher’s Church, Friends of St Mary’s Church, Friends of St Michael’s Church.
6. Initially this local group will consist of the local Church Fundraising Committee
7. Following the launch of each local scheme a separate group of local Church Friends will be set up. It is intended that this group will include members of the local community not directly involved with the Church.
8. Each Group will meet formally at least once a year. At the first formal meeting a co-ordinator for the Group should be appointed.
9. Fundraising for the local Group will be undertaken through the established channel of the local Church Fundraising Group.
10. Whilst the Friends Groups may wish to become involved in setting priorities for maintenance and repair work any proposals made will be advisory. All decisions on priorities will be made through the Building and Grounds Team, the Finance Team and the PCC itself. Membership of the PCC is restricted to those on the Church Electoral Register.

11. It is recognised that there may be a conflict between priorities set by the Development Team of the PCC for re-ordering a church interior for worship and those set within a Heritage framework. If there were to be such a conflict the PCC will make the final decision on any conflicting proposals. It would be expected that any decision would go in favour of the needs of the local congregation that worships at the church.

Financial management of the Scheme

1. Funds will be raised in four broad ways:
 - a. The Membership Scheme through an annual subscription
 - b. Fund raising events organised through the local Friends group
 - c. General encouragement to the public (local and visitors to a church) to donate specific amounts of money and to include the Friends group in their will
 - d. Fund raising projects for specific purposes
2. Membership subscriptions will be set as follows: Individual £10, Couple/Family £15, Corporate £25 per annum. These may be varied at the discretion of the PCC.
3. Membership Subscriptions will normally be gathered by standing order. Completed standing order forms will be handed to the Parish Office where they will be processed, ensuring that payment is set up to the relevant Friends' account. Where it is not possible to organise a Standing Order for a Member cash or cheque payments will be permitted.
4. Funds raised through events and donations will be handed in at the Parish Office accompanied by a note detailing the amount donated and relevant expenses.
5. Wherever possible donations should be accompanied by a signed Gift Aid declaration.
6. Each Church Friends' will have a capital account within the overall TPOTS financial framework that reflects funds that have been donated specifically towards the upkeep, and or renovation, of the particular Church.
7. Capital accounts will be actively managed by the Finance Team to ensure that a sensible return on capital is achieved.
8. A record of the income and expenditure of each Friends account, together with the status of the capital account, will be presented to the Annual Parish Meeting.
9. Decisions on expenditure relating to church buildings are the responsibility of the PCC. These decisions will be taken by the Buildings and Grounds team in conjunction with the Finance Team. Friends of a particular church will be permitted to express views on priorities for their church via their own Church Friends. These views will normally be collated and passed to the PCC at a Friends' Annual Meeting. In exceptional circumstances an Extraordinary Meeting of Friends may be called for the purposes of seeking Friends' views on a particular issue.
10. Where expenditure on a particular church will involve the use of restricted funds the PCC must consult the Friends of that church before making decisions on that expenditure. Once the views of the local Friends have been received the PCC should place due weight on these views before making a decision. However, the final decision on expenditure rests with the PCC.

Specific activities that could be undertaken by Friends Groups

1. **Organisation of an Annual Meeting at the local church** - this meeting should be free for members and should include refreshment. It is envisaged that this meeting will be built around a talk given by an invited speaker. In

order to save on the expense of paying a speaker for three annual meetings it might be sensible for all three Friends to combine their meetings and to hold their annual meetings at the same venue. Under these circumstances the annual meeting would be rotated through the three churches.

2. **Working with the local History / Archaeology Group** – these local groups have significant knowledge and expertise in matters relating to heritage. It would be helpful if each local Friends Group were to establish a working relationship with their local group. A project to display material related to Church Heritage in each church would be an ideal starting point.
3. **Assisting in the set up of a joint website with the Parish** - it is intended that there will be a Parish website available to the public in the latter part of 2014. This will include a Friends section. Some initial work has been done to develop a Friends website that displays details on local church information. This work needs to be expanded. The Parish needs to take a lead in this respect.
4. **Developing a framework to support Church Visits** – there could be a market for visits by organised groups to our local church(s). If these visits were organised they could generate revenue.
5. **Assisting the Church Wardens with local organisation** – Church Wardens have wide responsibilities which include organising local people to undertake key tasks for the church eg brass cleaning. A Friends Group could assist by recruiting people to help with these tasks.

Administrative support

1. A central administrative team consisting of the Parish Secretary and the Friends Team will provide administrative support to the Scheme. This will include:
 - a. Documentation required for the launch
 - b. Setting up a Microsoft Access database that will record Members of the Scheme, donations through the Scheme and all fundraising events within the Parish
 - c. Setting up the Friends section of the Parish Website
2. The database does not require to be registered under the Data Protection Act but requires to be operated according to the principles laid down by the Act
3. The database will be set up by Ged Keele, and data will be entered by him. There will be documentation that explains the set up of the database and back up procedures. Training will be given to relevant people to ensure that others can input and output data when required
4. Reports will be set up to provide support for the process of monitoring the Scheme.