



**ST JOHN'S CHURCH HARPENDEN**

**Minutes of the Meeting of Parishioners**

**Held on Sunday 11 May 2025**

**in the church hall**

**Present: 49:** Revd Tim Vickers (Chair). Revd Ritah Namakula (Curate), Mary Jean Pritchard (Secretary), Alison Bygrave (Treasurer), Revd Andrew Ballard, Di Borthwick, Stuart Burnett, Neil Bygrave, Susannah Cantor, Margaret Charlston, Terry Charlston, Lawson Conroy, Carol Cooke, Jenny Cope, Brenda Cottle, Bryan Coventry, Elisabeth Coventry, Helen Davies, Anne Edwards, Alison Gardiner, Warren Greaves, Liz Harbord, Matt Harrison, Jill Herring, Henrietta Hillman, James Hillman, Mary Hoare, John Jones, Christine Kenyon, Susan Kerr, Gudrun Ledwith, Nick Luckett, Liz Macdonald, Alastair Meldrum, Neil Middleton, Jamie Newson-Love, David Nye, Heather Nye, Iain Pritchard, Michael Readman, Claire Robinson, Julia Smith, Caroline Thomas, Kevin Thomas, Alan Tree, Lesley Tree, Sue Walker, Caroline Warren, Revd Julia White

**1. Apologies for absence**

David Brown, Anthony Wills.

**2. Minutes of the last meeting**

Adoption of the minutes of the Meeting of Parishioners held on Sunday 12 May 2024 was proposed by John Jones, seconded by Heather Nye and carried unanimously.

**3. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

**4. Election of churchwardens**

Iain Pritchard had been proposed by Liz Harbord and seconded by Carol Cooke; all were in favour.

**The meeting closed at 11.16am**

## **Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on Sunday 11 May 2025 in the church hall.**

**Present:** There were 49 members present, the same as for the Meeting of Parishioners.

### **1. Apologies for absence**

Same as for the Meeting of Parishioners.

### **2. Minutes of the last APCM**

Adoption of the minutes of the meeting held on Sunday 12 May 2024 was proposed by Andrew Ballard, seconded by Nick Lockett and carried unanimously.

### **3. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **4. Annual reports**

- **Safeguarding report:** This report, prepared by Liz Macdonald, had been available in advance of the meeting and there were no questions.
- **Electoral roll report:** This report, prepared by Neil Middleton, had been prepared in advance. Neil announced that the roll was now open again for applications and a QR code was available in the papers. Margaret Charlston pointed out that paper application forms were also available. Tim thanked Neil for all his work and pointed out that although the overall number on the roll had gone down, there were 25 new members, which was very encouraging,
- **Deanery Synod report:** This report from Sue May had been available in advance of the meeting and there were no questions.
- **Report of activities:** This report lists a range of activities and gives a flavour of what goes on at St John's; there were no questions.
- **Trustees' report:** The report had been available in advance of the meeting; the accounts would be explained under item 6.

## 5. Update on our vision, values and Mission Action Plan

Tim had prepared a presentation on our vision, values and Mission Action Plan.

The vision is: to sustain and develop our vibrant all-age worshipping community, living out our faith in Jesus Christ in all we do, so that more and more people in our parish are touched by his love.

Our values are to be: welcoming; inclusive; socially responsible; caring for the environment, the community and each other; joyful.

The Mission Action Plan (MAP) goals (and steps to achieving them) are:

- to build up community life
  - creating a volunteer database to be maintained by the parish administrator
  - setting up a hospitality team with the aim of organising events through the year for all ages, both for the congregation and wider community.
  - setting up groups for shared interests amongst the congregation, such as golf or gardening
- stewardship and giving
  - setting up a giving committee
  - running a giving campaign to include teaching on giving
  - setting up a Friends of St John's
- children and young people
  - all those who work with children and young people getting together to plan a vision for this area of parish life
  - starting a youth club for young people in the parish
  - exploring ways to resource our ministry to families and young people
- welcome and invitation
  - preaching each year on welcoming and inclusivity
  - holding welcomer training
  - creating a welcome leaflet for new members of the church
- deepening discipleship (on a three-year cycle)
  - on a theme of learning learning: hold a study course, parish weekend away, organising extra learning events
  - on a theme of pilgrimage: organise a one-day parish pilgrimage; teach on this theme throughout the year
  - on a theme of retreat: hold a retreat at home; teach on this theme throughout the year.

John Jones asked how the plans for the hall fitted in to the MAP and Tim suggested it was part of the goal of building up community life, work with children and young people and welcome and invitation.

## **6. Finance**

Alison presented an update on the 2024 finances (which had been made available before the meeting). She had taken over from Jon Pitman as Treasurer in September and had spent some time sorting out various issues and making some one-off adjustments; everything is now in order. The accounts have been independently examined by Brian and Roger Cox at Miller & Co in Luton.

At this point it was suggested that we bring forward item 7 (Appointment of independent examiner), approving the appointment of Miller and Co for next year. This was proposed by Warren Greaves, seconded by Neil Middleton and approved unanimously.

Alison has some help with her role and thanked Jim McGown, who very efficiently banks the weekly collection and Amanda, who manages our invoices; we have seen an increase in magazine revenue due to her diligence.

Alison began her presentation on the finances by emphasising that we do not get any funding from any outside organisations such as the government or the diocese so we are completely self-financing; 65% of our income comes from the generous contributions (with Gift Aid) that the congregation give on a regular basis, and she expressed her thanks to everyone who does give so generously to St John's.

Accounting for charities is not straightforward; for example, our income and expenditure is divided into several 'pots' – a bit like with home finances where you might keep a pot for everyday expenditure, a pot for house repairs and perhaps a rainy day pot, but for the church some of those pots have rules attached to them. We have amounts designated for a particular purpose and restricted funds, which must be spent on something specific. Our designated funds include our legacy fund, which we do not use for general expenditure, and the organ fund, which covers repairs. We also have a fabric reserve, which has reduced this year as we took the balance of the hall roof repairs from this fund. The Linwood Road property is held in our accounts at cost price. Two new funds have been created this year: music at St John's and children's work. Income from various concerts will go into the music fund and Matt is using it to pay for various things including the junior choir pocket money and paying the vocal coach for the 'come and sing' Evensong. The children's work fund includes income from Little Acorns and means that we can keep this money separate to spend on children's work.

Our main restricted fund is for Project Phoenix; we can only spend these monies on Phoenix. The money is held in a CCLA account currently earning 5% interest.

Alison talked through the full breakdown of expenditure vs income, highlighting the fact that in 2024 our expenditure was £9,000 more than our income. She emphasised that going forward we must manage costs and maximise our income. Our reserves policy states we should hold 2 months' costs in our general fund; we currently only have one month's reserve – we need to try and build this up.

Pledged giving in 2024 went down by £1,700 from 2023; we lost five people from the scheme in 2024 and are already down five people in 2025 and no-one has joined the scheme since December 2023. Alison encouraged anyone who was not on the pledged giving scheme to consider joining, particularly those giving cash or contactless when they come to church as it is helpful for her to know how much money is likely to come in so that she can budget. It would also be more straightforward and less work for her if those giving by Standing Order could move to the Parish Giving Scheme

### *Capital projects*

After looking at the day-to-day income and expenditure for St John's, Alison went on to talk about capital projects.

The main project is Project Phoenix; as was outlined in the trustees' report, we are now looking at a refurbishment project rather than a rebuild. We have a healthy £448,000 in the restricted fund; some people are continuing to give regularly, and we are also earning a good rate of interest.

However, Alison needed to flag up other things that we will need to consider:

- the porch is currently in a bad state of repair
- the heating is vulnerable as we are down to one boiler and because of Church of England net carbon zero rules we would need to explore a range of options if that boiler fails
- the sound system is not working as it should
- we may want to consider reordering of the worship space to create a more flexible space allowing us to offer a better welcome.

Tim expressed sincere thanks to Alison, not only for her work to bring the accounts into line but also for such a clear explanation of the finances.

Stuart Burnett then explained decisions that had been made by the PCC in relation to Project Phoenix. He began by expressing thanks to all those who had worked so hard to get the project off the ground: Matt Barter, Liz Sergeant, Carol Cooke, Neil Maclure. He said that

after Covid the project was re-launched, but no new donors were forthcoming, and in the meantime the costs of the build had risen considerably; last year the PCC had reluctantly concluded that there was no way of bridging the gap; we communicated with all the donors and revisited our requirements. Although we won't be able to achieve all of our original vision, we are committed to providing a safe and welcoming space for the use of the congregation and the local community. We are now defining precisely we want from the building and establishing what budget we will need; the generosity of the original donors has given us a great foundation from which we can seek further funding.

Liz Harbord asked Stuart if there was any clarity on timescales; he said that had not been decided but he would hope we would have completed the work on the building within two to three years.

Tim reported the need to approve the accounts. This was proposed by Christine Kenyon, seconded by Stuart Burnett and unanimously accepted.

## **7. Election of lay representatives to the Parochial Church Council**

Tim explained that rules introduced in 2020 meant that lay readers – Anne, David and Lauryn – were not elected each year but were listed as ex officio members at each annual meeting. The proposal that all three would be so listed was made by Mary, seconded by Bryan and passed unanimously.

There were five vacancies for lay members, and four nominations had been received

Susannah Cantor	Proposed by: Mary Jean Pritchard Seconded by: Anne Edwards
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Nick Lockett	Proposed by: Bryan Coventry Seconded by: Alison Gardiner
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Liz Macdonald	Proposed by: Christine Kenyon Seconded by: Alison Bygrave
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Jamie Newson-Love	Proposed by: Nicola Newson-Love Seconded by: Gemma Smith
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These nominations were proposed en bloc by Heather and seconded by Anne and accepted unanimously.



## 8. Vicar's reflection

Tim began his reflection with a quote from Genesis: 'Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.'

He then spoke about the fact that going on a journey is something which is an everyday part of life; we had all journeyed to be here today, and in our lives we travel to work, to friends, to family, on holiday, and so on. Many of life's greatest journeys and adventures are not what we do 'out there' but what happens 'in here' - journeys of self-discovery, spiritual journeys or journeys with God. The Bible records a lot of journeys, which may begin as physical journeys – Abram's journey, the people of Israel in the wilderness – but become more significant.

To be the people of God is to be a people on the move, for God never calls us to stand still, no matter how comfortable it might be. But we are always travelling with friends and with God.

Our journey as a church included many highs in 2024 – Ritah's ordination to the priesthood, five confirmations, 19 baptisms, a new Director of Music, growing Junior and Mini Church, and successful Patronal Festival, Harvest Festival and more. We also had a very successful Christmas appeal for the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd in Peru, and Tim read a letter from Fr Bliss Spillar, Dean Designate of the Cathedral: 'I cannot tell you how thankful I am that St. John's sent their Christmas offering. We were able to send Christmas and back -to-school packages to 150 children in some of the most remote villages in the Amazon jungle. They were so excited to get these presents and supplies. We also used some of the funds to create a classroom space for our outreach academy. The academy will offer a variety of free classes to people of the community such as Spanish for the English speaker, crochet and art classes, and parenting classes. It is exciting to see how the congregation is opening up. We have been able to expand the outreach of the church so much and seeing more and more people benefit from it.'

Tim also pointed out that it had also been a year with some woes: beginning with him being off sick and needing time for recovery, a year without any churchwardens, challenges with finances, and realising that Project Phoenix needed to change course. But we are rarely asked to journey alone, and Tim offered thanks to various people for their part in the St John's journey. He had counted more than 65 different jobs which help the church to



function, from the polishing of the door handles to mowing the lawn, cleaning linen to arranging rotas and meetings. All of it is seen and valued.

He paid particular thanks to: those elected to the PCC; members of the Standing Committee; Alison our PCC Treasurer, who has helped us to understand what is going on financially and for the services she leads as a Lay Leader of Worship; Mary Jean, PCC Secretary, whose recording of meetings and administration, with focus on due process is appreciated; Liz Macdonald, our Parish Safeguarding Officer., who carries out the role with great attention to detail and sensitivity

Tim expressed how blessed we are to have a very proactive Ministry Team; Ritah, whose work as our Curate enriches the life of the church in many ways; Lauryn, whose thought-provoking preaching and teaching through Bible study and book group is valued; Anne whose prayerful presence at our daily offices ensures prayer is at the heart of our ministry; David whose pastoral presence is a blessing not just to the church but also to the community; Christine, whose ministry to our early years underpins the growth in the number of families coming to church.

Tim also paid tribute to Amanda, our Parish Administrator, whose role is vital to the running of the parish and to Matt Harrison, our Director of Music , whose infectious energy has refreshed our music.

In considering where we are going as a church, Tim suggested that we need to trust in God and have the courage to follow where God calls us, whatever our age, so that we might not just be a blessing for St John's, but that through us this community might be blessed too.

He ended by leading us in the parish prayer:

Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people here at St John's. As we seek to do your will give us ears to hear, eyes to see, wills to obey and hearts to love. Amen your blessings and guidance as they begin their service. May they be filled with your Holy Spirit, inspiring them with wisdom, vision, and strength to carry out their tasks. Amen.

## **9. Any other business**

Andrew Ballard said that Tim had thanked many people but that he wanted to record our thanks to him for all he does. This was enthusiastically endorsed by all present.

John Jones asked whether the Remembrance Day service could start earlier to allow those who wanted to attend the parade to the war memorial to get there easily. Tim said this request would be discussed at a ministry team meeting.

There being no other matters arising the meeting closed at 12.20 with the Grace.