



## **Minutes of the Meeting of Parishioners**

**Held on Sunday 17 May 2026**

**in the church hall**

**Present: 53:** Revd Tim Vickers (Chair), Iain Pritchard (Churchwarden) Mary Jean Pritchard (Secretary), Alison Bygrave (Treasurer), Lauryn Awbrey, Revd Andrew Ballard, Katie Barter, Matt Barter, Paul Bedding, Anne Briggs, David Brown, Naomi Burnett, Stuart Burnett, Neil Bygrave, Susannah Cantor, Margaret Charlston, Terry Charlston, Carol Cooke, Brenda Cottle, Bryan Coventry, Sophie Crowley, Derek Curran, Elizabeth Curran, Helen Davies, Anne Edwards, Alison Gardiner, Warren Greaves, Jill Herring, Henrietta Hillman, Mary Hoare, John Jones, Susan Kerr, Nick Luckett, Liz Macdonald, Dawn Mason, Jim McGown, Alastair Meldrum, Neil Middleton, Michael Readman, Brenda Norwood, Claire Robinson, Cynthia Russell, Jill Slinn, Keith Slinn, Elizabeth Gordon-Smith, Julia Smith, Jonathan Spoor, Alan Tree, Lesley Tree, Sue Walker, Caroline Warren, Revd Julia White, Anthony Wills

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

Ruth Akehurst, Di Borthwick, Andrew Harbord, Liz Harbord, James Hillman, Christine Kenyon, David Nye, Heather Nye, Ian Thonger.

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

Adoption of the minutes of the Meeting of Parishioners held on Sunday 11 May 2025 was proposed by Margaret Charlston, seconded by Warren Greaves and carried unanimously.

### **3. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **4. Election of churchwardens**

Iain Pritchard had been proposed by Paul Bedding and seconded by Matt Barter; all were in favour.

Tim expressed his thanks to Iain for agreeing to stand again; he appreciates all his support and hard work and the fact that he leads by example.

**The meeting closed at 11.15am**

## Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

*held on  
Sunday 17 May 2026 in the church hall.*

**Present:** There were 51 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 11 May 2025 was proposed by Stuart Burnett, seconded by Susan Kerr and carried unanimously.

### **3. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **4. Election of representatives to Deanery Synod**

There were two nominations for three vacancies; David Nye has been a representative, but as he is on holiday we are unsure whether or not he wishes to be re-elected.

Alison Bygrave

Proposed by: Sophie Crowley

Seconded by: Liz McDonald

Michael Readman

Proposed by: Lauryn Awbrey

Seconded by: Bryan Coventry

Lauryn Awbrey proposed and Bryan Coventry seconded these nominations being approved, and this was accepted unanimously.



Alison showed the page form the accounts of income and expenditure and then went on to talk in more detail about the designated and restricted funds. She answered a question about the organ fund, and thanked Stuart Burnett, as chair of the Fabric Committee for all their work; in reply, Stuart pointed out that the expenditure would have been significantly higher had it not been for all the work Lawson Conroy had undertaken with no charge. Thanks were recorded to Lawson.

Alison then presented the highlights from 2026 so far:

- after a successful Lent campaign, led by James Hillman, monies had been raised for the much-needed porch repair
- the plant sale in April and the organ recital in February had raised a total of more than £1,000 for the music fund
- there was a new toddler sports class now running in the church hall
- tenants were due to move into Linwood Road at the end of May
- a giving campaign was planned for November 2026.

In answer to a question about the giving campaign, Alison said that in September our monthly income from regular giving was £10,000 from 82 individuals; this month the total was £12,000 from 90 individuals. In addition, the number of people who were on the Parish Giving Scheme had moved from 56 to 75. Alison emphasised how much work it saved her when people moved from Standing Order to PGS. She thanked Jim McGown, who does all the banking and keeps very efficient records.

In answer to a question from Keith Slinn, Alison confirmed that we can collect Gift Aid not only on individual contributions but also a percentage on the anonymous donations through the collection plate and Payaz machine.

Alison thanked Matt Barter for his work in relation to the Linwood Road tenancy; not only was the rent higher than budgeted and the fees lower, less had been spent on repairs and decoration.

Alison then presented the challenges in the year ahead:

- capital projects: sound system, re-ordering, heating
- ongoing hall maintenance
- loss of income from an aging congregation and the challenge of encouraging new members onto planned giving
- Project Phoenix: further fundraising needed.

Margaret Charlston asked what was meant by re-ordering, and Tim explained that we had had an Archdeacon's licence for changes to the sanctuary area; that licence had expired and so there was a working group looking at the options to allow both flexibility and accessibility. Alison confirmed that this had been listed under capital projects as there may be expenditure on furniture.

Naomi Burnett asked whether the rule changes around tenancies meant it would be difficult to evict tenants if we wanted the house back. Alison explained that a change in the diocesan policy meant that having a curate was no longer linked to ownership of a house; Matt also confirmed that the tenants were on a one-year rolling contract, and if we needed to get the house back for a curate, we could.

Tim paid tribute to Alison's hard work and forensic attention to detail not only on the accounts but also on stewardship.

#### **8. Appointment of independent examiner**

This appointment had been agreed as part of the Treasurer's presentation (see above)

#### **9. Announcement of outside giving recipients for 2026**

A total of 100 voting slips had been received (34 today) and results were as follows (winners in bold).

##### ***Harpenden***

Harpenden Music Foundation 32

##### **Harpenden Trust 35**

Harpenden Mencap 31

##### ***Hertfordshire***

St Albans Foodbank 32

Hector's House 21

##### **Carers in Herts 45**

##### ***National***

Ollie Foundation 23

Human Milk Foundation 13

Inclusive Church Network 13

##### **Make a Wish UK 26**

Little Princess Trust 21

#### **10. Implementing our Mission Action Plan**

Iain Pritchard explained how the PCC over the past year had worked on implementing our Mission Action Plan. He began by reminding everyone what was included in our Mission Action Plan (MAP):

- building up community life
- stewardship and giving
- children and young people
- welcoming and invitation
- deepening discipleship.

Several committees had been set up to help us to achieve our objective. He emphasised that these committees were not to take over work that was being done by committed volunteers but to co-ordinate and ensure all areas were covered.

- Social Committee organises and oversees regular social and community events; they have organised a quiz night and a Scrabble afternoon and have other events organised for this year.
- Fabric Committee oversees the repair and maintenance of all church buildings and the garden, ensuring compliance with all relevant regulations; they have been responsible for a number of repairs, management of Linwood Road and installation of fire alarms.
- Children and Families Group supports and promotes the fullest participation of children, young people and families in the life and worship of the church. The group is responsible for setting up the children's area at the back of church and for the growing numbers in Mini and Junior Church.
- Finance Committee supports the Treasurer in planning and managing the church finances. In the past year they have proposed some principles for funding capital projects and also governance arrangements for legacies.
- Martha Committee oversees the practical aspects of hospitality and welcome within the church's premises. They were responsible for organising the Spring Clean in the church.
- Fundraising Committee exists to plan and co-ordinate fundraising for specific projects and initiatives (distinct from the Stewardship Committee); this committee has yet to meet.
- Stewardship Committee plans and implements an approach to committed giving. This group has yet to meet.
- Outreach and Communications Committee will lead proactive engagement with the congregation and wider community. This group has yet to meet.
- Worship Committee aims to support the ministry team in planning and developing worship. This group has yet to meet.

Iain pointed out that the membership of these committees was not restricted to members of the PCC and urged anyone who had interest or expertise in any of the areas outlined to approach him or Tim and they would be welcome to join the relevant group.

John Jones asked whether thought had been given to more flexible use of the church – eg, by removing the pews. He felt this would be particularly relevant when the church hall was being redeveloped and the groups using it would have to be accommodated elsewhere.

Carol Cooke asked for recognition of the Mothers Union, which Tim acknowledged worked slightly outside the committees mentioned, as did Eco Church; both of these groups would be acknowledged in his reflection.

## **11. Project Phoenix**

Stuart introduced the Project Phoenix Board, and explained what they had undertaken in considering how to redevelop the church hall after the decision had been made in 2024 that we could not bridge the gap between the existing funds and the ambition of the original Project Phoenix plans. The PCC had agreed to a feasibility study that drew on the extensive work carried out by the original Project Phoenix group, including the architects' plan, some recent feedback, and a survey of the current

building. The overriding aim was to create something really good for the parish and community that was affordable and would meet our needs for decades to come.

The survey was an important part of the process; it revealed that the existing building was structurally sound, offering a more cost-effective option for the development than a new build. Working with Aedifice, a local independent property consultant and chartered surveyor business, the Project Board had presented to the PCC a new design, which retains the skeleton of the main hall and committee room and creates a new extension to include an additional meeting room, a commercial kitchen and a central reception area. One of the key features that has been retained from the original plan is that the new building would include a link into the church.

As part of the presentation to the PCC, the Board had outlined the stages for the project:

- Stage 1: progress to planning approval
- Stage 2: planning approval
- Stage 3: detailed design
- Stage 4: tender process
- Stage 5: construction

The PCC had authorised the Project Board to proceed with Stages 1 and 2, including submission of a planning application, and to release up to £55,000 (including VAT and contingency) from the Buildings Fund to cover these costs.

The difference between the money we had in the bank (£500,000) and the estimated cost of the redevelopment was £900,000. This was clearly a big commitment, but the Project Board had been clear that a fundraising plan would be needed alongside the project plan. The agreement to go ahead with stages 1 and 2 did not commit us to the complete build.

Stuart went on to present images of the proposed design. He answered various questions to help people understand the images and there were then questions about both accessibility and sustainability. Stuart confirmed that the building would be accessible in all areas. Lauryn pointed out that Aedifice were known nationally for their eco-friendliness and so were very committed to accessibility. Because of the large number of trees around the building, solar panels were not thought to be practical, but other options would be considered.

Tim offered thanks to Stuart and other members of the Project Board. Although there were challenges ahead, we now have an exciting proposal to do something transformational in line with the vision we hold for our church in this community.

## **12. Vicar's address**

Matthew 28.1-10

As we come to the close of this APCM, it's striking that we've spent much of our time looking back. In the reports prepared for this meeting, we have been reviewing the year, reflecting on what has been, giving thanks for all that's been done in this place. That's right and good. But most of what we have

spoken about today is looking forward to the future, and the Gospel we've just heard also gently turns our gaze forward.

In Matthew's account of the resurrection, the women come to the tomb carrying grief, uncertainty, and perhaps a sense that the story has ended. And yet, what they encounter is not an ending, but a beginning. The stone is rolled away. The angel speaks. And everything changes.

'Do not be afraid,' he says. And then, 'Go and tell.'

Those two phrases sit at the heart of our life as a church. 'Do not be afraid.' As we look ahead—at challenges, at change, at the unknown—it's easy to feel anxious. There are always questions about resources, about people, about the future. But the first words of the resurrection offer not pressure, not demand, but reassurance. God is already at work ahead of us. The risen Christ is not locked in the past; he goes before us.

And then, 'Go and tell.' The women are sent—not with a complicated strategy, not with all the answers—but with a simple message: 'He is risen.' Their task is to share what they have seen, what they have experienced, and to trust that God will do the rest. That calling remains ours. Everything we've discussed today—every report, every role, every act of service—is part of that same mission. Whether it's caring for this building, supporting one another, serving our community, or simply showing up faithfully week by week—we are, in our own ways, people who go and tell. So thank you.

Of course there are certain individuals who have tirelessly served this bigger vision at St John's in various leadership roles, and I'd like to thank them all now and set them up as an example.

To our ministry team – to our Readers, Lauryn, David and Anne, and to our Lay Leaders of Worship Christine and Alison. Yours is a visible modelling of this kind of calling and it is hard to list everything you do, but you get stuck in and are not to be afraid of trying something new, of visibly trusting in God, and of course leading us in our worship – be it preaching, deaconing or leading worship.

But everything we do is ministry and service, and this is no more clearly shown than through the working of the Standing Committee:

- spearheaded by your churchwarden Iain (who brings his gifts of organisation, helpfulness and computers) with really energy and commitment
- Mary Jean our PCC secretary, who has the really important role of recording and reporting our work as a PCC, as well as giving time and energy to Little Acorns, our Choir and Martha Committee
- Alison, who as PCC Treasurer does an amazing job in ensuring we have not just the funds but also an awareness of what is happening to the money you have given; this requires an eye for detail
- Nick, who gives his expertise freely to support our mission and ministry and is a valued voice as we discern what we do next.

In fact we are deeply indebted to so many of you who volunteer time across not just one but several areas of church life. Where would we be without volunteers (and yes, we always need some more)

So to name a few of those groups who through their work show us we need not be afraid, and whose work enriches others:

PCC and Deanery Synod

Little Acorns, Junior and Mini Church leaders

Baptism Team

Flowers arrangers

Church cleaners

Committees (not mentioned elsewhere) - Eco church, Mothers Union

Our gardener Steve.

Of course there are some things we cannot rely on volunteers to do, and so this last year we are particularly thankful to Matt, our Director of Music, who has enriched and grown our music-making capacity at the church. And to Amanda Knights, who holds fort in the office, and who works as a hub for all kinds of important administrative functions that go on behind the scenes.

You have all been part of this cycle – do not be afraid to get involved and go and tell. And notice this: as the women go, Jesus meets them on the way. They don't have to wait until they've got everything sorted. They don't have to be perfect or fully prepared. As they step out in faith, Christ meets them.

So as we leave this meeting today, we do so not just as people who have completed an annual requirement, but as Easter people—people who live in the light of resurrection, people who are sent, people who trust that Christ goes ahead of us and meets us along the way.

Do not be afraid.

Go and tell.

And know that the risen Lord is with us.

### **13. 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.

There being no other matters, the meeting closed at 12.50 with the Grace.