

Minutes of the Annual Joint Meeting of Parishioners, and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, held on Wednesday 1 May, 2024 at 8pm in the Church and online via Zoom.

Present: Nick Prideaux (Lay Vice-Chairman), Rev Tom Nash, Rev Stephen Boon, Jono Chalklin, Andy Bradshaw (Church Warden), Naomi Vallely (Safeguarding), Phil Jones (Electoral Roll Officer) and 82 parishioners (list available) and others via Zoom.

Apologies: Ali Scoble, Maddy Doherty, Andy Norris, David Ralph, Mike and Jenny Boughton, Jean Plumbridge, Chris and Hayley Watts, Al and Gill Simms, Nigel and Lizzy Costain, Paul Sperring, Claire Tunstead, Charlotte Smith, Louise Taylor, Hannah Buggs and Wendy Robb.

Revd Tom Nash warmly welcomed everyone to the APCM. After opening in prayer, the congregation sang '*Lord, for the years*'.

Revd Tom Nash gave a short talk from Psalm 32, pointing out the following key points:

- Only the forgiven sinner knows true happiness (v1-2 and v10-11)
- Our sin is covered and out of sight
- The Lord counts no iniquity against his people
- Reminder to rejoice in response
- Open up and confess your sin to God
- We are hidden in Christ

The congregation prayed in groups.

Joint meeting of Parishioners

Nick Prideaux (Lay Vice-Chairman) added his welcome to everyone in attendance, both in the building and on Zoom.

1. Apologies for absence

Helen Stones (PCC Secretary) listed names of church members who presented their apologies in advance.

2. Minutes

Nick Prideaux thanked Angie Stromsoe for writing the minutes of the Joint meeting of Parishioners and APCM last year. The minutes were proposed by Simon Curtis and approved.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising to report.

4. Election of Wardens

Nick Prideaux thanked Andy Bradshaw for his 12 years as church warden; Andy is not seeking re-election. The two nominations received for church warden were from Stephen Rigby and John McLernon, both were duly elected.

The congregation prayed in groups for those in leadership within St John's Church.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Minutes of the previous Annual Parochial Church Meeting

The minutes were proposed by Keith Wynne and duly adopted.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising to report.

3. Election of PCC and Deanery Synod representative

Nick Prideaux explained the nominations received in advance of the meeting. There were no nominations received on the night. There are five Deanery Synod places, three of which are filled. The two vacancies will be co-opted from PCC members. For PCC, there is a one vacancy for a one-year term with one nomination from Andy Bradshaw, who was duly elected. There are two vacancies for a two-year term and the nominations are Ali Scoble and James Akroyd, who were duly elected. There are five vacancies for three-year terms and we received nominations from Monique London, Charissa Buggs and Claudia Chambers, who were all duly elected. Nick thanked Zara Stitson and James Akroyd, who had recently stepped down from Deanery Synod. Nick thanked Bid Case, Tim Prideaux and Tom Barker for their service; they have all recently stepped down from PCC.

4. Electoral Roll

Phil Jones presented the electoral roll, stating as at April 2024 there were 329 names recorded (2023: 326). 6 people had left and 9 people had joined.

5. Treasurer's report + appointment of independent examiner

Simon Curtis (PCC Treasurer) reported the continued blessing from God of the financial support by the church family and thanked the congregation on behalf of the PCC. In the last year, donations have increased by 5%. The expenditure has been increased due to staffing levels and activities, leaving a deficit of annual activities of £50,000 – this was budgeted for. Significant funds have been spent on extending the vicarage to allow further hospitality opportunities for Tom and Clare Nash. We are grateful for legacies and have consequently built up funds which the PCC seek to spend wisely. Overall, there is a deficit of £120,000, mainly as a result of the vicarage extension. Simon highlighted the church family support fund (previously named hardship fund) which members can donate to in order to help those with financial difficulties within the church family. There is a small group who confidentially consider applications for that fund. We have provided £6000 in support for church family members. Simon thanked Toby Chiu, who has been our Accounts Administrator for the past year, taking over from Nora.

The Independent Examiner – Perrys (Zach Ransom) had been very good at preparing the accounts and Simon proposed that they be reappointed for a further year; this was agreed by the meeting.

6. Safeguarding

Naomi Vallely (Parish Safeguarding Officer) reported on three priorities for the safeguarding team in the coming year:

1. Parish dashboard – brings all PCC approved activities to see the progress of safeguarding metrics e.g. risk assessments and volunteers have been safely recruited and undertaken safeguarding training.
2. National safeguarding team recently published 5 safeguarding standards. These measure quality control and impact of safeguarding standards.
3. Local training – hosting face to face leadership training for churches in our archdeaconry. We can then book in several people in time for training.

We're all in this together. Let us remember what God has already done for us and remember the ultimate homecoming when God will reverse everything wrong in the world. In the meantime, we must do all we can under his guidance to keep everyone free from hurt and harm.

7. Church Warden's Report

Andy Bradshaw reviewed the past year under the two themes of “contending and maintaining”. For “contending”, Andy explained the plan to continue to fight and contend within the Church of England, despite its leadership having less regard to the sound doctrine of the Bible. To signal our disapproval, we withheld our giving to the Diocese for a period of time, but this has now resumed. Bishop Jonathan Gibb voted for same sex blessings in the first vote, but voted against, along with a small number of bishops at the second vote, which gave the PCC to resume giving to cover the costs of stipends and support services (safeguarding, legal etc). Do pray for Bishop Jonathan and any successors. We're thankful for Andrew Smith contending on our behalf at General synod.

For “maintaining”, Andy spoke of investing in buildings and strategically in ministry – this included audio, lighting, boilers and the vicarage extension. He is grateful to Tom and Clare Nash, who are gifted in hospitality and the extension enables church activities to be separated from family life. The church still owns two houses, on Stephen's Road and St David's Road, which are let out for income. Andy thanked the Estates committee for all their work behind the scenes.

Andy thanked Tom and Stephen and the many volunteers who serve at St John's. Andy confirmed that the silverware is present and in order. He shared what a privilege it has been to serve as a warden for 12 years. Andy thanked Nick Prideaux and Stephen Rigby and was delighted to hand the baton on to John McLernon.

8. Healthy Church Review

Stephen Rigby gave an update regarding the Healthy Church Review, giving context to the topic. In 2021, the PCC asked a small group of congregation members to consider the culture and processes of the church. At the time, Bishop Rod Thomas asked all PCCs to undertake the review, off the back of high profile safeguarding reports. The group carried out its review over the period of summer 21-spring 22, to then present recommendations. No harm or abuse was found; this was a church health check rather than an investigation. 90 people contributed towards the review. Written contributions were sent in and some cases were interviewed. All was confidential and only seen by 6 people in the group. A 20-page report was produced by the group with recommendations under the following headings; 'accountability, diversity, pastoral care, handling change, valuing people, safeguarding, an emphasis on character and godliness when appointing and recruiting people to leadership positions'. The PCC reviewed its recommendations to address the risks highlighted. For example, we now have a clearer way to raise concerns about leaders, a more defined complaints procedure, adjustments have been made to recruiting leaders, a better appraisal for staff team. There is still some way to go, for example, how to address pastoral care in a different way.

Stephen reported that we want to keep healthy church at the front and he urged church members to take time to think about the culture here. It matters how you are treated by people, particularly those in leadership. Please speak up if you see something that isn't quite right.

Nick Prideaux thanked those who had formed the complaints review body and the family support fund.

The congregation prayed in groups, giving thanks for God's provision in the last 12 months.

Submitted questions from Church Members

Written questions were submitted in advance. The following questions were raised:

Q1. Is there a reason why we didn't do anything to do with lent this Easter and why we didn't have any talks on or about Jesus between rising from the dead and ascending into heaven?

A1. Tom Nash response: We remind each other of the great commission each week, which Jesus gave before His ascension. The Bible doesn't give huge amount of detail of this period. With regard to lent, it's not something we're against, it's also not covered extensively in the Bible. We could explore lent courses in the future.

Q2. Why is it we don't hear anything about Crossways, Street Pastors or prayer pastors or any other Christian thing that go on in the community. We used to give money sometimes to local Christians organisations?

A2. Stephen Boon response: From the front, we mostly focus on those institutions that St John's are involved in, but expect that Christians are involved in other organisations outside of this remit. We have occasionally given money to other organisations and prayed for it. We'd often bring up other organisations to pray for at our prayer meetings.

Q3. There were a few questions about Jenny Williams' recent departure from the staff team

A3. Nick Prideaux response: Nick read out the following statement which had been published to the church family recently:

Jenny Williams has served as our Associate Minister for Women for over five years and was previously one of our ministry trainees. We are grateful to God for Jenny's hard work, dedication and faithful service during that time. We are letting the church family know today that Jenny will step down from her role at the end of April to pursue other opportunities. Jenny is very thankful for the love and support of the church family. Please uphold her in your prayers. We want to take this opportunity to thank Jenny for her faithful service amongst us and wish her well for the future.

Nick explained that it is unsettling when people move on from the staff team at short notice. St John's has a duty of care towards employees, particularly when it comes to privacy. What had been shared in the statement is what Jenny wanted

the church leaders to say publicly. To avoid unhelpful speculation, we would like to clarify that there had been no moral lapse or safeguarding issue in relation to Jenny's departure.

Q4. I have a question on the notes to the financial statement. Under 1.6 on page 14 is stated: "Consecrated and beneficed property of any kind is excluded from the financial statements by section 10(2)(a) of the Charities Act 2011. The church centre is attached and falls within this exclusion."

I do not believe this is correct. The church centre was built some 20 years ago whilst I was churchwarden. The land on which it was built was bought by the PCC in 1966 and the building built with money generously given by the members of St Johns. It is my understanding that the building does not fit the exemption of consecrated land and belongs to the PCC. (Similar to other buildings in your report.) I ask that the PCC look into this and clarify the ownership of this building in the next 12 months. It could be a very important detail in the future.

A4. Stephen Rigby response: The question is asking who owns the Church Centre, is it the PCC or the Diocese? The PCC owns the land and paid for the construction of the Church Centre. However, this can be looked at further to investigate.

Q5. I was wondering about the rationale of not holding evening services during half-terms and holidays.

A5. Tom Nash response: This is mostly due to man-power and demand. It's a lot of effort to prepare sermons and is quite a stretch for the preaching team to cover all the evening services across the year. There is an encouraging number attending the evening services, but it is not a huge number. Numbers tend to drop over the holidays. I'd love to have more people to attend the evening service and more people being trained to preach.

The roving microphone was taken to church members wishing to ask questions.

Q6. Has any more thought been given to the current communion arrangements?

A6. Tom Nash response: For some time, we have been dissatisfied with the arrangements since covid, which were only meant to be a temporary change. Going forward, we will move to individual cups and are getting the equipment organised.

Q6.1. Could we move to a shared cup?

A6.1. Tom Nash response: Anecdotally, most churches seem to be moving away from shared cups as people are uneasy about it post-Covid.

Q7. Are we giving money to the Church of England? What was the reason for withholding the funds and then starting it back up again?

A7. Stephen Rigby response: We used to give what was known as the parish share, which covered the costs of clergy salary. We paid an additional voluntary contribution to cover services such as safeguarding. An additional voluntary contribution was invited by the Diocese, however, some of this money would be used as a general contribution to the Diocese, which we weren't sure what was being spent on. It was suggested by a number of churches to suspend the voluntary contribution as a form of protest to the LLF process. We wrote to our Bishop that while he voted for the LLF process, we would continue to suspend the payments, but we would pay it back if he votes against, which he then did. We continued the payments and paid what we had held back. We currently pay for clergy salary and the services we receive, such as safeguarding and vicarage maintenance.

Q8. Can children see the Lord's supper?

A8. Tom Nash response: The Lord's supper is for believers, in 1 Corinthians 11:28-29, Paul says "Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself." Discerning requires understanding, therefore Tom and the PCC would not encourage children to participate in the Lord's supper. In a previous church, the Sunday school finished early and observed the Lord's supper. This could be something we try in the future.

Q9. If somebody had a complaint, who would they go to?

A9. Stephen Rigby response: A form can be filled in from the website, go to 'Resources' then 'Policies'. An informal complaint can be made to the church wardens.

Looking Forward

Rev. Tom Nash shared his deep thanks to Jenny Williams for all her hard work and servant-hearted attitude towards her gospel ministry over recent years. Tom also thanked Andy Bradshaw as he steps down as warden; he has been an encouragement and showed great kindness to both Tom and Clare over the past 4 years.

Looking forward, Tom highlighted the following:

1. We want to resource the women well at St John's and we are committed to do this. The steering group has been set up to oversee the ministr.
2. New appointments – Brian Wong will be joining us as a Cornhill Student from September. He will oversee the internationals work. Pray that we might find one more Cornhill student.
3. Church plant – we want to add a church planter to the team for a year or two. Pray for wisdom, gospel courage and a unity of mind.
4. Church of England – continue to pray for repentance.
5. The gospel is still true.

The congregation split into groups to pray and sang '*In Christ Alone*' to finish the meeting.

Signed

Lay Vice-Chairman

Date2025