

The Parish of St Thomas', Fair Oak

MEETING FOR THE ELECTIONS OF CHURCHWARDENS Minutes of the Meeting Sunday 18th May 2025

Action
By

CW1 Approval of Minutes

Proposed that the minutes of the Vestry Meeting 5th May 2024 are an accurate record of the meeting

- Proposed by Stuart Waterman
- Seconded by Danny Stupple
- All In Favour (except those absent last year)

CW2 Election of Churchwardens

The following people have been nominated as churchwardens:

- Matt Nicholson
- Bob Carkeet

As the number of candidates does not exceed the number of vacancies, an election was not required, and the candidates were hereby appointed.

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING (APCM) Minutes of the Meeting Sunday 18th May 2025

APCM1 Apologies

Bob Carkeet, Jenny Carkeet, Bob Nicholls, Janet Painter, Lucy Freckleton, Anais Harvey, Sara Cann, Dave Barrie, Pauline Barrie, Julie Nicholson

APCM2 Approval of Minutes

Proposed that the minutes of the APCM 5th May 2024 are an accurate record of the meeting

- Proposed by Dave Alford
- Seconded by Matt Nicholson
- All In Favour

APCM3 Business and Reports

a) Numbers on Electoral Roll

Jono Harvey (JH) reported that there are currently 115 members on the electoral roll. It was also noted that our Worshipping Community size is around 166 people.

b) PCC General Report

Andrew Challis (AC) introduced himself as Secretary of the PCC; not a PCC member, but a responsibility to keep things in order according to Church Representation Rules (CRR) and HMRC Trustees.

The PCC 'year' runs from APCM to APCM (as opposed to financial accounts and trustees report which runs for a calendar year). The PCC met seven times since the last APCM, and the minutes recorded 73 items that were discussed at the meetings. Attendance is good at meetings.

A tangible outcome of the PCC are the proposals that are made and voted on. Since the last APCM these have ranged from process ones such as approving minutes, appointing officers etc, to some actual tangible items. Compared to the previous year, this year has been quieter for the PCC, but some stand out decisions included:

10/24 – Approving a WhatsApp channel for PCC members to communicate on
26/24 – Developing of Sunday at 4pm, into Horton Heath
37/24 – Investing in training for our team of musicians
38/24 – Exploring development of space outside the extension, and replacing the main church door
59/24 – Approval of application for temporary re-ordering licence for the pews, to a full faculty

Last year it was mentioned there was a change in CRR that allows the PCC to now conduct PCC business 'by correspondence'. This means that decisions can be made via email, without having to wait for an in-person PCC meeting. This rule change allowed the PCC to approve Policies and Handbooks in between meetings.

Over the past year, the PCC has been continuing on the journey of developing their awareness around Safeguarding, and this has been in the form of short workshops within PCC meetings.

Tom has led the PCC through diocesan worksheets, on the topics of

- Creating a safer community
- Promoting the Welfare of Vulnerable Groups
- Supporting People in Safeguarding Roles

During the course of next year, AC will be handing over the reins of PCC Secretary but will still be available in the background for support.

c) Reports on the activities of the parish generally

Reports were received from various teams, for the period Jan-Dec 2024.

Loving and Serving

Tom Young (TY) shared that there were about 100hours of time generously given to the team. They conducted various activities, including gardening, house moves, lifts to appointments, lifts to church, meal trays, home visits, hospital visits. God's love has been working through these actions; sometimes temporarily, sometimes long lasting.

TY reflected on the story of a child who was walking along the beach, noticing a starfish on the beach, he flung them one at a time into the sea. A passerby commented "There are too many here, how can you possibly make a difference". "It made a difference to that one" replied the child.

And that is what we do in the Loving and Serving team – making a difference one person at a time.

TY thanked everyone – both those on the team, and those who get alongside people even when we don't know about it.

Building Community

JH presented on behalf of Gary Stupple (GS). As well as the Thursday Night Youth, Teddies, With Love, Band of Brothers activities, we have added a weekly lunch – which has served 451 lunches since records began in November. Often have lunch with people aged 0-90 and every decade in between. Our thanks go to the Parish Council who

support the lunch, and help towards food costs. JH extended thanks to Sarah Oswald who supports the lunches, and Andy Coleman who leads the youthwork team.

Exploring Faith

Caroline Oswald (CO) shared how there is an incredible move of God going on at the moment, not just at St Tom's, but all around. We are privileged to be a part of that. Whilst we have seen a 10% increase in our worshipping community numbers, people have also moved on – so there are in fact even more on the journey.

There are 12 people on the Freedom in Christ course – people are so hungry. It is a privilege to be walking alongside these people, who want to know more.

God told us to prepare a place and he will send them. We did, and he has.

Gathering as Church

JH shared how the church had been gathering over the year. In 2024 we looked to 'extend the place of our tent'. The 4pm Horton Heath now has 30-50 in attendance – 50% of which are under 11. We're also making more use of alternate Wednesday evenings for corporate prayer and ministry. This is all as sign of that new life that were hoping for at APCM last year – the river bringing new life.

Sharing Life as Disciples

Danny Stupple (DS) shared that over the past year the identify of 'Home Church' was move to 'Open Homes', as a better reflection of what the groups are.

The 'Feasts of the Lord' were introduced as a theme and are now part of the rhythm of the church- an annual rhythm of disciple life.

Wednesday evenings – while in part it is part of gathering as church, has also been an opportunity to go deeper into discipleship. It alternates between open homes. DS encouraged attending both.

There is an upcoming weekend away, just 3 miles away, and DS encouraged people to come along and meet God all together. When people were together at Pentecost ... things happened!

Partnership in the Gospel

DS reported that Peter Rouch had moved on, so felt there is no longer a connection to Church Army. The group also decided to replace Cody and Liann Archer's support with Chip Kendal representing Maoz UK Also felt a calling to support the church in Iran, which is under great repression from the regime - women coming to faith find it particularly difficult.

TY is maintaining a good relationship with churches in Fair Oak and Horton Heath – doing things with Family Church and St Swithun Wells.

The APCM asked if there was any consideration into appointing a paid youth worker at all, and JH confirmed there are no plans to do so at this stage.

Stewardship

Stuart Waterman (SW) shared his experiences of God's provision in finances over the previous year. There were times of despair, but then money would unexpectedly arrive. It is a privilege to be in the role and see how God supports us in this way.

The PCC finances are now in a fairly strong position. There is regular and consistent giving, and they welcome any further support to help with the many activities going on throughout the year.

A 35-day high interest savings account was opened with NatWest, and the church has been paying the full Common Mission Fund (CMF) contribution – including an extra contribution of £5,000 for which the bishop thanked us.

Dave Alford (DA) reflected that giving is a secret place of worship – a test of heart and a wrestle with God – but we know that when we give, we are giving to God as well as giving to the building, the ministry, and the CMF.

DA recommended the use of the existing Parish Giving Scheme (PGS), as the gift aid comes in quicker, and it is a much lighter administration load. One-off gifts can also be done through PGS, or direct into the church bank account – remember to fill in a Gift Aid form. Last year the church received a total of £31,000 in gift aid from the government.

Safeguarding

JH shared that the team met three times, and extended gratitude to Michelle, Sandra, Bob, and Stewart in supporting making St Tom's a more welcoming and safer place for people.

The team made use of diocesan parish dashboards to keep track of our compliance with standards.

JH also extended thanks to Sandra Brierley who does the admin for safeguarding (amongst other jobs!)

The safeguarding processes are in a better place than last year, with the dashboard showing around 97% compliance, recognising that safeguarding is an ongoing process.

JH reminded people that if they have any concerns about safeguarding issues, then there are posters around the church with details of who to contact.

d) Trustees Report and Annual Accounts for year ending 31 December 2025

JH shared that the report and annual accounts have been approved by PCC, so they are presented here for presentation and questions only – approval by APCM is not required.

The APCM asked for clarification around redistribution of funds from the Children's Work Fund which was specifically for a youth worker. JH confirmed that this is a ring-fenced pot, which is being used to part-fund employees who are fulfilling this role, in direct proportion to the amount of time the spend doing so. For example, if 25% of a person's paid role is for Youth Work, then 25% of their salary comes from this fund.

e) Church Wardens Update on Church Fabric

Matt Nicholson (MN) shared a report on the church fabric, reflecting that it was odd not having Bob Carkeet here as they do so much together and BC handles a lot of the technical stuff.

This year there have been some general repairs and maintenance to the buildings; replacing windows in the stables, repairing chancel gable wall, improvements to the extension – paint, curtains, and tie backs.

As we near the end of our temporary reordering licence for the pews, we will need to move this to a full faculty application.

We also have some funds available, so looking at carpets, cushions on pew, and other improvements to the church and extension.

The APCM reflected on the update, noting that there are changes to VAT which might affect some of the building work we do. It was commented that a Fire Pit outside the extension would be nice, as would a glass door for our main entrance. Also hinted at were removing more pews, although the current plan is to just stick to what has been removed already.

f) Report on the proceedings of Deanery Synod

JH reported that deanery synod met three times. DS stepped down as a representative, but Steve Harding (SH) and Neil Osborne (NO) remain as reps.

c) Appointment of Independent Examiner

JH extend thanks to SW, BC, and DA for all the help behind the scenes with the finances. They would like to reappoint Knight Goodhead as the independent auditor, noting that they are now working with a different staff member.

The APCM asked if there was a requirement to replace the examiner after a period of time, as they had been in this role for 15 years. JH clarified that as is an *examiner* not an *auditor*, then there is no requirement to periodically replace them.

Proposed that Knight Goodhead be appointed as independent examiner/

- Proposed by Tom Young
- Seconded by Danny Stupple
- All In Favour, except for 1 abstention.

APCM4 Elections and Appointments

a) Election of lay PCC Members

The following people were nominated as Elected PCC Members:

- As the number of candidates did not exceed the number of vacancies, an election was not required, and as no objections were received, the candidates were appointed.
 - As there were vacancies across a range of terms of service, the terms of service were decided by drawing lots in accordance with procedures set out in Church Representation Rules.
- Teresa Lovett (2 years)
 - Steve Cann (3 years)
 - Daphne Bright (2 years)
 - Sue Lynham (3 years)
 - Danny Stupple (3 years)

b) Election of Deanery Synod Representative (casual vacancy)

No nominations were received

APCM5 General Update and look ahead into remainder of 2024

JH extended his thanks to AC for being PCC Secretary for the past two years. AC and Clare Challis had a recent move, so time to release him from his tasks. He has been a Godsend for me in this role. The good news is that Sue Lynham is about to step into his shoes.

Last year we looked at Ezekiel, and the river bringing new life – which CO was referring to earlier. Have been thinking more about the river over the past year. Am now thinking about a wave on a river – a tidal bore! Or is this a tsunami? A tidal bore occurs where an incoming tide meets a shallow river; JH shared a BBC Video that showed the Seven Bore in Gloucestershire.

A tidal bore isn't a tsunami – it's about riding a wave...

“You don’t sense the power from the bank; you have to be in the wave to feel the power”

There is something about catching the wave of the spirit; let us not be the people who are watching from the bank. What would it be like for us to be out on the water?

APCM6 Closing Prayers

CO closed the meeting in prayer