



Minutes of the Vestry Meeting and of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting of the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford, held on Sunday 28 April 2024 at 12noon in the Old Library.

Present

Elizabeth Adams	Adam Hardiman	Victoria Mort
Joe Andrews	Jill Harding	Sarah Mortimer
Diana Barton	Nicholas Hardyman	Roger Nascimento
John Barton	Henrietta Harrison	Jenny Pettengell
Rosemary Burton	Katie Hicks	Judith Pettersen
Hannah Cartwright	Penny Howe	Eleanor Pritchard
Margaret Chaundy	Louise Jarvis	Mike Stevens
Terry Cudbird	Felix Leach	Sue Stevens
Jennifer Darnley	Will Lamb	Paul Thompson
Esther de Waal	Alison Le Cornu	Kate Wilson
Eric Eve	Mary Lean	Emma Womersley- Sharp
Jessica Fulljames	Aym Maidment	
Naomi Gardom	Karen Melham	

The Vestry Meeting

The meeting opened with prayer.

1. Welcome

The Vicar took the chair, extended a welcome to those present and explained the purpose and protocol for the meeting..

2. Appointment of Clerk

Mike Stevens was appointed as Clerk for the meeting (Proposed by Will Lamb and appointed by acclamation).

3. Election of Churchwardens

Both Wardens had agreed to continue to serve for another year. Nicholas Hardyman (Proposed by Margaret Chaundy; Seconded by Kate Wilson) and Karen Melham (Proposed by Paul Thompson; Seconded by Jessica Fulljames) were elected unanimously and thanked for all they do.

The meeting closed.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Apologies had been received from:

Lesley and David Sutton, Margaret Lipscomb; and Megan Roper.

2. Welcome

The Vicar took the chair, extended a welcome to those present and explained the purpose and protocol for the meeting.

3. Appointment of Clerk

Mike Stevens was appointed as Clerk for the meeting (Proposed by Will Lamb and appointed by acclamation).

4. Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 30 April 2023

The minutes of the previous year's APCM were agreed and signed by the Chair.

5. Report on changes to the Electoral Role

The Chair reported that the number on the Electoral Roll was 131, with 10 deletions and 11 additions compared to that at the previous APCM.

6. Report on the Financial Statements of the Parochial Church Council for the year ending 31 December 2023

Felix Leach spoke to the accounts which had been independently examined and approved by the PCC at its meeting on 16 April 2024. He acknowledged the support of Jeanne White (Parish Finance Officer) and Ben Hayes (Independent Examiner, Wenn Townsend Accountants) in the preparation of the accounts.

Felix provided the meeting with a comprehensive presentation which started with an explanation of the interrelationship between the various financial structures within the parish. He summarised the overall position as being healthy and provided an analysis of trends in sources of income and expenditure over the past 5 years. It was reassuring to see that, with significant thanks to the work of the staff involved, income from the Tower and Shop had returned to pre-Covid levels one year ahead of the post pandemic recovery plan. This remained by some way the most important source of income. On a less positive note, he pointed to the financial impact of the Vaults and Garden Café dispute which had resulted in a significant loss of income pending resolution of the legal case against Mr Pouget and Fresh Connection, the current operators of the café. He assured PCC that the Parish remained committed to paying the living wage and that staff costs had increased, as had professional fees. In response to questions he cautioned that, whilst costs had been broadly balanced against income, there was a risk that these might exceed income in 2024 and that he would report regularly to PCC in the monitoring of this. He also referred the meeting to the accounts for a report on the Reserves Policy.

The Chair thanked Felix for his careful stewardship of the financial dealings of the parish and the meeting formally accepted the accounts and annual report as presented.

7. Appointment of Independent Examiner

Felix Leach confirmed that Ben Hayes had agreed to serve a further year as the Independent Examiner for the PCC accounts. His re-appointment was agreed unanimously by the meeting with thanks for his continuing service.

8. Churchwardens Reports

a) Report on the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council and church activities

Nicholas Hardyman and Karen Melham provided a verbal report, the written text of which is provided in full here:

“In a challenging year since our last APCM, Will Lamb has led our church community with grace and understanding and enjoyed a well-deserved sabbatical from April to June. Hannah Cartwright has continued to develop her ministry at St Mary’s, as evidenced by her well-deserved promotion to Associate Vicar. In July Naomi Gardom joined the clergy team as Assistant Curate and, following her maternity leave, we are benefitting from her presence among us again. They have been aided by our Associate Priest Alan Ramsay, Reader Sarah Mortimer LLM, and our Chaplains who fulfil an important role in the life of the church. We once again welcomed a number of ordinands from Ripon College Cuddesdon, Wycliffe Hall and St Stephen’s House in the course of the year. In early 2024 We bade a fond farewell to Charlotte Bannister-Parker, after her many years with us, as she left to take up the post of Associate Vicar at St John’s, Notting Hill.

Morning Prayer is celebrated on weekdays at 9am followed by a 12.15 Eucharist, both in the Chancel. Two Sunday services are held, at 8.30 in the Chancel and 10.30 in the Nave. Godly Play, for young children, takes place in the Old Library during the first part of the 10.30 Eucharist on the first Sunday of the month. An informal discussion group of young adults, ‘2nd Coffee’, meets after the Sunday morning service during term. Choral Evensong and other services were held at 3.30 on almost every Sunday in the Trinity, Michaelmas and Hilary terms, and an organ recital each Sunday in August. The 10.30 and 3.30 services are recorded and can be watched live or later online.

There have been a number of special services in addition to the termly Latin communion. There was a service to mark the coronation of King Charles III, a brief act of worship in June before the Pride Parade set off from Radcliffe Square, and vespers and compline for the feast of St Cecilia. Christmas celebrations began with the Advent Carol Service held jointly with the German Lutheran Congregation, and continued with Carols in the Square with the city of Oxford Silver Band, a Graduate student carol service, Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, the Crib Service and Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, and Eucharists at 8.30 and 10.30 on Christmas Day.

In addition to regular University Sermons held in the University Church and college chapels, the Intercollegiate Service was held at St Mary’s in February. On Palm Sunday we began our service at the Clarendon building and processed with palms and a donkey to continue in the church. The Revd Professor Katherine Sonderegger was our Holy

Week preacher, starting on Palm Sunday, leading meditations each evening at Compline, preaching at the Maundy Thursday Choral Eucharist of the Last Supper, and at Good Friday services: Stations of the Cross; a Service of Reflections for Good Friday on the Seven Last Words of Christ, and the Liturgy of Good Friday. We celebrated the joy of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday morning at the 8 o'clock Eucharist, 10.30 Choral Eucharist, and an afternoon Easter Carol Service.

There has again been a rich offering of musical concerts and Thursday lunchtime recitals held during term.

Events and exhibitions at St Mary's this year included 'Resolved to Serve', a portrait exhibition celebrating black culture and its influence in the church today and *Tableaux Vivants*: actors recreating 23 of Caravaggio's best-known canvasses with clever arrangement of drapery, ordinary objects and themselves. Lux Muralis staged their son-et-lumiere experience 'Renaissance' in the Church. In the autumn, St Mary's hosted a major churches conference 'Faith in the Public Square' with a series of very engaging talks and workshops.

Beating of the bounds took place in May, and there has been more communal walking in the Interfaith Friendship Walk, the annual Ride & Stride fundraiser, and walks through Iffley and Oxford, visiting churches along the way.

Will has provided a number of candlelit tours for groups, which continue to be very popular. He has been extending his repertoire with 'Hidden highlights' – more features and treasures in the building.

Outside of the building, Will participated in an event organised by the Oxfordshire Homelessness Movement, and many of you supported him in his 'Vicar's Sleep-out'.

There have been many opportunities for learning and reflection through midday Bible study, pilgrimage, Sunday forums, quiet and creative mornings, poetry hour, thematic workshops, including some at the Ashmolean museum, and other talks and lectures on everything from religion, populism and right wing identity politics, to sexual identities in Christian theology. The Bampton Lectures were held in May 2023, both in person in the church and online. The Rev Dr Willie James Jennings, Systematic theologian at Yale Divinity School, challenged us with 'Jesus and the Displaced: Christology and the Redemption of Habitation'. This was a bumper year for Bampton: in February and March 2024, The Rt Revd Dr Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury and Archbishop of Wales, spoke on 'Recognising Strangers: Solidarity and Christian Ethics'.

The ever-popular parish lunches are a way to meet outside worship contexts and enjoy one another's hospitality. Coffee and doughnuts on Wednesday mornings during term are similarly an excellent avenue for community and carbohydrates.

Faith in Action continued its dual focus on local and international causes, supporting Littlemore and Oxfam respectively, as well as making available small grants to Oxford Food Hub, Oxford community action, Spires project at the old firehouse, and the Gatehouse. They again organised Christmas presents for locally housed refugees, to which so many contributed. Faith in Action continues to support and explore connections with Littlemore church and Citizens UK in Oxford, and encouraged topical reading during Black history month.

On the second Saturday of each month, a group of volunteers works in Holywell Cemetery to maintain this extraordinary space. Last year's bird boxes continue to provide places for nesting. The Eco church group's work includes reflections and suggestions in the weekly e-pistle and on the website.

We are very grateful to the St Mary's staff for the help and support they have given to clergy, church officers and visitors over the past year. Sarah Ockwell has managed the administration of the church and events bookings with calm efficiency. Ana-Maria Niculcea has worked hard on coordinating and entertaining the volunteers, advertising our many events, and overseeing the sound at, and video recording of, our services. Becky Plows has run the business of the shop and tower efficiently and profitably. Patrick Croom has ensured that events ran smoothly, with the aid of the Operations team, and has kept the church safe and welcoming to visitors. Kevin Harris has monitored the state of the fabric and arranged necessary maintenance. Jeanne White has continued to maintain our accounts and assisted the Treasurer in making the financial affairs of the church evermore coherent and transparent.

Many members of the congregation give generously of their time, and we are especially grateful to Felix Leach for his work as our PCC Treasurer. We would like to thank Jill Harding and Liz Adams for the dedication they show as sacristans, Mike Stevens for his calm handling of the many tasks undertaken as Secretary to the PCC, Ellie Williams for organising the servers, and Terry Cudbird for his continuing work as Stewardship Officer. We thank Alice Willington for arranging the rota of intercessors and readers; Victoria Mort for leading the flower team for so many years, and to David Crispin for taking this over. We are grateful to Rosemary Burton for continuing to organise the coffee rota, and thank Laura White for organising and running Godly Play with the help of Emma Womersley-Sharp. We are also very grateful to Paul Thompson for performing the many duties of Head Steward so competently. We thank Judith Pettersen for the careful attention she continues to pay to the essential role of Parish Safeguarding Officer.

We thank Margaret Lipscomb for organising the weekly collection in church for the Community Emergency Food Bank, and all those who contribute to it, and Patricia O'Neil for her work in coordinating food collection for the Gatehouse project. The involvement of the congregation is central to the life of the church, and members of the congregation normally read the first lesson and say the prayers of intercession. Some serve and assist at communion while others provide refreshment after services. Our services are graced by the efforts of the flower arrangers. All this participation, along with the wonderful music from our organist James Brown and the choir under Robert Howarth's direction, help to make St Mary's a vibrant and welcoming church community.

This year we have said farewell to a number of longstanding and well-loved congregation members, whether through death or moves away from Oxford. We remain grateful for our time together and all they gave to us and our common life. We have also welcomed more babies and their families. Children of all ages are a delight to have among us, underscoring that St Mary's is a church for everyone. The growth of this part of our congregation has led to more events for children and families, and to plans for a children, families and schools chaplain.

We particularly want to thank Will for continuing to encourage us in our faith and for ensuring that all decisions have been made with care for the ongoing witness of this church”.

b) Report on the fabric, goods, and ornaments of the church and PCC report

Nicholas Hardyman and Karen Melham provided a verbal report, the written text of which is provided here:

“The PCC has continued to deliberate thoughtfully and prayerfully on all matters relating to the wellbeing of the church’s people, buildings and contents.

Under section 50 of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018 we are able to report that the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church are in a good state and ongoing repairs to the fabric, including items identified in the last Quinquennial report, have been carried out under Kevin Harris’s careful guidance. We have also benefitted from the advice of the Fabric Advisory Committee (FAC).

Most of the PCC’s attention this year has been focused on the remodelling and renovating of the café, and the redevelopment and restoration of the north churchyard. To this end, the Vicar and various members of the church have joined representatives from the FAC, Caroe architects, and various planning, building and landscaping experts, to put together plans to fulfil these aims. These plans will shortly be sent as a pre-Application proposal to the Planning department at Oxford City Council to get their views on the scheme. The Diocesan Advisory Committee will also be invited to comment. The original project group has now been split into a Design Group, chaired by an external Project Manager and a Project Board that oversees the entire project.

During the year we had the unsafe pinnacle on the south aisle roof, which was taken down during the work on the nave roof, repaired and reinstalled. We also successfully applied for a faculty to enable Professor Stefano Evangelista, Former President of the International Walter Pater Society, to arrange for the Pater Memorial in Holywell cemetery to be restored”.

The Wardens closed by thanking everyone for their help and support during the year and the Chair thanked the Wardens for their comprehensive reports and for their work over the past year.

9. Safeguarding Report

Judith Pettersen provided a verbal report, the written text of which is provided here:

“I am asked by the diocese to report on a range of specific issues.

Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at PCC meetings. Other safeguarding meetings include meetings between the Vicar and Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO), three way meetings between the Vicar, PCC Safeguarding lead and PSO, and meetings between the PSO and DBS verifier.

a) Compliance with the requirement to have regard to the House of Bishops guidance

We are working in line with Church of England Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance. PCCs are formally obliged to report to the APCMs on whether or not the PCC 'has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and clergy discipline measure 2016 (duty to have due regard to House of Bishops guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).' I can confirm that we are complying.

b) Safeguarding Roles

I am the Parish Safeguarding Officer

Alice Willington has been the DBS Verifier for the past year and Aym Maidment has recently been recruited to fulfil that safeguarding administration role. Our thanks go to Alice for the work she has done and in particular for all she has done to ensure that our performance in this is considerably better than it has been. I am delighted to tell you that 100% of DBS checks have been completed as required. Having dedicated capacity for the role has proved invaluable in helping us to keep up to date with this work.

Mike Stevens is the PCC lead for safeguarding.

c) Safeguarding Policy, Guidance and Information

Parish Safeguarding Policy. The policy can be summarized by our requirement to Promote wellbeing, Prevent harm and Protect those who have been harmed. It is reviewed annually by the PCC and all PCC members are asked to sign that they have read and understand the policy.

Safeguarding guidance and information. We work in line with the Church of England Parish Safeguarding Handbook and have created a summary leaflet on how we should respond to concerns about safeguarding. Again, this is reviewed annually by the PCC.

d) Safeguarding Learning and Development

The requirement for training has been significantly reduced for most people and as a result a lot of people have completed the relevant safeguarding learning pathways for their role. Forty (of 47) have completed the Basic Awareness pathway. A few now need to renew their training which needs to be repeated every 3 years. Most of the training is now available online which makes it much more accessible.

e) Safer Recruitment and People Management

This is an area where we are still working to make sure our practice is as good as it can be. The safer recruitment of volunteers is well developed and practice is being developed in the recruitment and management of all paid staff.

f) Concerns Raised

A number of safeguarding concerns have been shared with the Parish Safeguarding Officer, some of these have been shared with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team for information or support.

g) Next Steps

I think it would be fair to say that our practice in relation to individuals is thoughtful and responsive. In my opinion however, we need to do more to make sure that our systems utilise best safeguarding practice.

The areas of safeguarding which we will be focusing on in the next year are:

Continuing to develop our safer recruitment and people management practice.

Ensuring that the activities for any vulnerable groups within the church community are fully compliant with diocesan guidelines.

An action plan for the year will be presented to the PCC based on the above and on an evaluation of our practice using the Church of England parish dashboard system”.

The Chair thanked Judith for her comprehensive report and for her work over the past year.

10. Vicar's Report

The Vicar provided a verbal report, the written text of which is provided here:

“I am very grateful to the wardens for their report, and also grateful to Judith Pettersen for the extremely important work she is doing as our Parish Safeguarding Adviser. I should also like to thank Felix Leach, our Treasurer, and Mike Stevens, the PCC Secretary. We have an extraordinarily good lay team participating very actively in the governance of the University Church, and I hope that we can show our appreciation for everything they have done for us in the course of the last year.

I also wish to thank people who do a huge amount behind the scenes: Liz Adams and Jill Harding, the Sacristans, Paul Thompson, our Head Steward, Ellie Williams, our Head Server, Alice Willington, who coordinates the readers and intercessors, David Crispin, who coordinates the flower arrangers, and a particular word of thanks to Rosemary Burton for coordinating the coffee rota, and to Katie Hicks for arranging the parish lunches. Terry Cudbird has continued as our Stewardship officer, and along with Jenny Darnley will be working with me to develop a new Patrons' Scheme over the next few weeks.

I also want to mention members of the Parochial Church Council, particularly those standing down this year. I would like to thank on your behalf Jacob Fordham, who stood down from the Deanery Synod in January, Laura White, who resigned in November, and Victoria Mort and Mary Lean, who are standing down from today. Members of the PCC play a vital role in the governance of St Mary's and we are very fortunate indeed in having such a rich array of gifts, skills and experience.

I also want to express my thanks to Hannah Cartwright, who of course rose to the challenge of covering my sabbatical last year. And to welcome Naomi Gardom to her first APCM as assistant curate here. It is a delight to have such able colleagues here at St Mary's, and it was a real joy to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood last weekend.

In the course of last year, the PCC approved a new Vision and Strategy document, which gives expression to our distinctive mission and ministry as the University Church. Under the banner of Faith Seeking Understanding, we have sought to provide a focus for our energies and activities around five areas:

- The Desire for God
- The Love of Learning

- The Joy of Hospitality
- The Cry for Justice
- The Care of Creation

This provides a fitting agenda for the PCC and for our community as a whole as we look to the future. We seem to have turned a corner following the pandemic. Our finances have recovered. And I was heartened to learn that when comparing attendances in 2019 and 2023, attendance at services has in fact increased by 10%. We have attained a Silver Award under the Eco-Church scheme and this remains a priority. We are also committed to developing our work with children and families.

You will be aware that there have been some considerable challenges around the relationship with the café in the course of the last 12 months. While Mr Pouget has sought to personalise this, in a way which I can only describe as regrettable and unhelpful, the PCC has been unanimous in seeking to address the presenting issues and has been careful to rely on professional advice at every stage. We are a small charity, but we have obligations to the Charity Commission, and we have sought to fulfil those obligations faithfully.

All of us would like this matter to be settled. Mr Pouget has been invited to meet with our representatives, Wilf Stephenson and Kenneth MacRitchie, at a number of stages in this process. For an extended period, Mr Pouget refused to meet with them. Currently, this matter is the subject of live court action, and for that reason I have to be very careful about what I say so as not to prejudice those court proceedings.

Nevertheless, while I cannot say a great deal about Mr Pouget's occupation of the premises, I can say that the plans for the refurbishment of the café and the restoration of the churchyard continue apace. We have an excellent professional team working on this along with our architects. We have appointed a project manager, and once the court has determined the issues with the café, we will proceed with the planning application. Given the sensitivity of the site, we are proceeding with great caution. Our intention is to improve accessibility, and to ensure that we have a sustainable facility for hospitality and parish activities in the future. Over 50% of our energy use is generated by the café. If we are to achieve a reduction in our energy use, we need to start by getting gas out of the kitchen, and ensuring that antiquated equipment is renewed so that it has appropriate energy ratings. By asserting exclusive possession, Mr Pouget has endeavoured to effectively exclude us from our own café, while the PCC continues to provide for its maintenance and pay for its heating and lighting. That cannot be right.

It is essential that these buildings serve the Church's mission and ministry. The PCC is united in pursuing that objective and securing that outcome. My hope and prayer is that good sense will prevail, and that both parties will be able to move forward in the near future.

Finally, a word of thanks to our lay staff, to the musicians, the shop staff, and the operations team, as well as the admin team. We may have a larger team of lay staff than many churches – but one should not underestimate the fact that this is one of the most visited churches in the country or the complexity of looking after a major historic building. When I showed a recent visitor from the University a copy of What's On, he assumed that there must be a team of people responsible for its publication. He was a bit nonplussed to discover that the staff team produce this alongside all their other

responsibilities. They do a huge amount. So I want to express my thanks to the staff, and to our volunteer welcomers and stewards. The ministry of hospitality which we exercise here is incredibly important”.

11. Report of the proceedings of the Deanery Synod and election of parochial representatives of the laity

In their absence at this point in the meeting, the Chair confirmed participation by the parish representatives in the meetings of the Deanery

An election was made for one position as a parish representative of the laity in place of Jacob Fordham who had left the parish and resigned mid term. Jacob was thanked for his service.

<u>Nominee</u>	<u>Proposed by</u>	<u>Seconded By</u>
Roger Nascimento	Paul Thompson	Jessica Fulljames
Elected unanimously.		

12. Election of parochial representatives of the laity to the Parochial Church Council

Six vacancies were available for election. Four existing members of the PCC were due to retire by rotation, three of whom (Rachel Abernethy, Adam Hardiman and Megan Roper) had agreed to stand for re-election. Mary Lean was demitting office and was thanked for her service.

In addition, two vacancies had arisen by the resignation of Victoria Mort and Laura White during their term of office. Victoria and Laura were thanked for their service.

The following were re-elected unanimously.

<u>Nominee</u>	<u>Proposed by</u>	<u>Seconded By</u>
Rachel Abernethy	Margaret Chaundy	Roger Nascimento
Adam Hardiman	Alison Le Cornu	Alice Willington
Megan Roper	Victoria Mort	Jill Harding

The following were elected unanimously.

<u>Nominee</u>	<u>Proposed by</u>	<u>Seconded By</u>
Louise Jarvis	Margaret Chaundy	Tess Blenkinsop
Eleanor Pritchard	Alice Willington	William Bannister-Parker
Esther de Waal	Alison Le Cornu	Leslie Sutton

13. Close

The meeting closed with prayer at 1pm.