

# Christ Church with St. Marys, Old Town, Swindon

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church meeting held on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 11.45am in Christ Church.

## 1. Opening Prayer and Worship

Simon thanked everyone for attending and opened in prayer, based around our Parish Bible Verse. He quoted 'Be who God made you to be and we will set the world on fire' (St Catherine of Sienna). He welcomed those who were attending their first APCM.

## 2. Attendance and apologies

Apologies were noted for Ian Farr, Nicola Stevenette and Christine Senior. 48 people were noted on the attendance sheet which is attached to the file copy of the minutes.

### Annual Vestry Meeting

## 3. To elect two Church Wardens

Simon expressed enormous thanks to Jim D'Avila for 6 years of service as a Churchwarden and 24 years' service to the church. We are glad to see his vocation growing and wish him well in his marriage to Elisa in August in Spain and his new job at RAF Lyneham. He will step down as Churchwarden at this APCM but will support our new Churchwardens from the background.

Simon Giles and Sheila Wright were nominated as Churchwardens. Simon has been a Deputy Churchwarden since last September. There were no further nominations. Simon led the meeting in prayer for them both.

Name	Proposed by	Seconded by
Simon Giles	Daniel Pitt	Anthony Slack
Sheila Wright	Frances Poel	Rosemary Williams

**Resolved: The congregation elects the two persons named above to serve as Church Wardens. All Assented.**

Meeting ended 11.52am

### Annual Parochial Church Meeting

4. **To approve the minutes of the APCM held on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2023.** Resolution was proposed by Ailsa Palmer and seconded by Paul Ng.

**Resolved: The congregation approves the minutes of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2023.**

5. **Matters arising from the 2023 APCM** – none not already actioned.

6. **To approve the report of the Electoral Roll officer.**

Carol Simmons reported on behalf of Ian Farr who was unable to attend this meeting.

There are (as at today) 171 names on the roll. This is an increase of 2 on last year. Since the 2023 APCM, 5 members of the roll have died, and 7 new people have joined the roll.

Simon thanked God for each person on the Electoral Roll and reminded all present that we pray for our congregation each day at Morning Prayer. He said all members of the roll are very much members of the congregation and we welcome their wisdom.

**7. To notify other items not covered on the agenda below – none.**

**8. To elect:**

**a) Up to 1 member of Deanery Synod**

Anne Grainger and Anthony Slack already represent Christ Church with St Mary's on Swindon Deanery Synod. There is a vacancy for one further representative.

Sarah Garrett has offered to serve as a representative, and has been proposed by Jane Rodbourn and seconded by Ailsa Palmer.

**Resolved: The Congregation approves the election of Sarah Garrett to serve on Swindon Deanery Synod.**

**b) Up to 3 PCC members**

Vacancies arise because members of the PCC have stepped down or because they have reached the end of their 3 years' term. This year Sue Clack reached the end of her three-year term; Behbood Mozaffari has stepped down from the PCC due to having moved to Birmingham and Jim D'Avila has stepped down due to work commitments and his growing vocation. They were warmly thanked for their hard work and years of service on the PCC.

Simon then gave a brief summary of those who have been nominated to PCC.

**Resolved: The congregation elects those named below to serve as members for the PCC. All present assented.**

Name	Proposed by	Seconded by
Sarah Garrett	Jane Rodbourn	Ailsa Palmer
Helen Hartnell	Margaret Williams	Ailsa Palmer
Sheila Wright	Frances Poel	Rosemary Williams

Simon then prayed for our new PCC – that the new members will bring new energy to us – and thanked God for those who have served in the past.

The 2024/2025 PCC now consists of:

Ex-Officio: Revd. Simon Stevenette, Revd. Norma McKemey, Genny Williams (Lay Minister representative), Simon Giles (Church Warden), Sheila Wright (Church Warden), David Cain, James Davies-Spratt, Rose Earle, Ian Farr, Ailsa Palmer, Frances Poel, Alison Tremlett, Andrew Yeoward, Anne Grainger (Deanery Synod representative), Anthony Slack (Deanery Synod representative), Sarah Garrett (Deanery Synod Representative) Paul Ng (Hon. Treasurer), Helen Hartnell, Anne Farrow (Chair of the Partnership of Churches).

Ex-officio but non-voting members: Chris Smith (CCSOM); Alex Davies-Spratt (Verger).

Elected members serving:

Till APCM 2025: Simon Giles

Till APCM 2026: James Davies-Spratt, Rose Earle, Ian Farr, Paul Ng, Ailsa Palmer, Frances Poel, Alison Tremlett, Genny Williams, Andrew Yeoward.

Till APCM 2027: Sarah Garrett, Helen Hartnell, Sheila Wright

**Secretary's note: at the PCC meeting following this APCM, Simon Giles and Sheila Wright were elected as Churchwardens, Paul Ng was re-elected as Hon. Treasurer and Helen Hartnell was elected as PCC Secretary.**

**9. a) To endorse the appointment of sidespeople:**

Daniel Pitt continues to coordinate the Welcomers/Side People's rota, alongside the Churchwardens. We have eight sidespeople:

Paula Daws

Simon Giles

Anne Grainger

Helen Hartnell

Jenny Selwood

Daniel Pitt

Anthony Slack

Sheila Wright

The meeting endorsed the above people, and they were thanked for their work.

Special thanks were expressed to Angela Wirdnam for many years of service as a sacristan, sideperson and member of the Burial Board.

**a) Independent Examiners for 2024/25**

**Resolved: The congregation affirmed the appointment of Monahan's as Independent Examiners for the 2024 accounts – this was proposed by Paul Ng and seconded by Margaret Williams. All assented.**

**10. To receive and approve the Annual Report and Accounts 2023**

Simon Stevenette said he hopes we are all encouraged by what is happening here at Christ Church with St Mary's and encouraged us to look at the first five pages of the Annual Report – 'how we have met our goals in 2023' – in the light of our vision and mission. Simon thanked Carol Simmons, Chris Smith, Paul Ng and Andrew Yeoward for their help in compiling the report. He said 2023 was a 'solid year'. Simon thanked his partnership colleagues, Robert Jordan (who has just celebrated 40 years ordained) and Rach Collins (who will be ordained in June) for their support.

Janet French proposed a correction to page 3 of the report - A Rocha should be 2 words. This correction was agreed.

No questions were raised on this part of the report.

Paul Ng then presented the Financial Report for 2023. He advised that the overall financial performance was improved. The 2023 deficit was 13K in comparison to £67K deficit in 2022. The deficit is before the revaluation of the church's properties (Cricklade Street and Victoria Road). This year about £621,000 was brought in as investment gain reserve. As a result, the net surplus for 2023 is 608,000.

The composition income percentages of 2023 were quite similar to 2022. Hopefully it will continue to improve our income in 2024, especially on donations as these should be our main income resource. Donations in 2023 amounted to about 32% of our income only.

From the 2023 income breakdown, Donations were significantly increased to £114,000, 17% higher than last year. On the other hand, fundraising activities including the Beer Festival were well received by the community. In 2023, these brought in a net gain (after deduction of all related expenses) of £30K in comparing to £11K in 2022.

From the 2023 activities breakdown, our net parish share contribution was £105,000 (33% of total expenditure). This contribution level was unchanged from the value in 2021. The budgeted parish share contribution for 2024 was also set at £105,000, matching the request received from the Bristol Diocese.

There was a large increase in salary costs and wages owing to having employed more staff and more working hours corresponding to increased office work, activities and improving communications. This amounted to about 38% of the total).

Overall, 2023 was a good and steady year with God's blessing and support from the congregation and local communities.

In regard to the 2023 balance sheet, the major change was the Fixed Asset value, an increase of £624,000 due to the revaluation carried out in 2023. However, the current asset was continually going down, indicating a decrease of liquidity and cash flow.

2024 will be a challenging year, with high running costs and lower giving set to remain in place. We should focus to encourage the congregation to increase support for the Church through regular donations or the Parish Giving Scheme.

The Community Centre has been a great support to us over the years and its activities, including hall and church lettings and fundraising events such as the Beer Festival and Jazz Festival, consistently deliver a surplus. However, we should not rely on those irregular events or one-off income.

On the other hand, there are many community projects, maintenance and improvement work needing to be done in 2024 which will require extra money and resources to make it happen.

Simon thanked Paul for his report and invited questions.

Moira Slack asked if we know how much of our donations are given via the contactless giving card reader. Paul said last year this realised around £2000.

David Cain sought clarification of the deficit figure. Paul undertook to respond to David's question after the meeting. It has been confirmed that the £13,013 deficit for 2023, as shown in the PowerPoint, includes the net gain on investments throughout 2023, of £19,651.

There were no further questions.

Acceptance of the 2023 accounts was proposed by Anne Granger and seconded by David Cain. All assented. **Resolved.**

#### **11. To receive & note the Parish Safeguarding Report**

The report was distributed and duly noted. Simon Stevenette thanked the Safeguarding Team for their important work. Simon drew attention to the problem of spiritual abuse and encouraged us to watch the film 'Let there be Light – Soul Survivor.' by Matt Redman which was released two weeks ago. He said we must be aware of how our words and actions can be construed.

Simon asked for prayers for Will Stevenette who is among a high number of young people who have trained through Soul Survivor. He prayed that we will be wise and vigilant in this area and that light would shine. He reminded us of our links with Swindon Humanitarian Aid Partnership and Willows Counselling Service, both of which provide support for people who have been through emotional, spiritual, physical abuse and trauma.

#### **12. To receive questions from the floor**

There were no questions raised.

#### **13. Vicar's report: Future plans, priorities and strategy**

Simon Stevenette reported that our goals for 2024 are contained in the Annual Report. The staff team regularly seek to discern how we can help others to recognise all that God is doing amongst us. Crucial questions to ask regularly are:

Where have we seen God at work over this last week, month and year?

What is God teaching us?

How is God leading us forward?

Simon expressed enormous thanks to Carol Simmons for her help in submitting an application for a curate in 2025, and reminded the meeting that James Davies-Spratt will (subject to PCC endorsement today) be going to the Bristol Diocese Discernment Day for Licensed Lay Ministry on 8<sup>th</sup> June for LLM and that Simon Giles, Shaun Lee and Carol Simmons are studying/refreshing their theology on the Exploring Christianity Course.

Simon reminded the meeting that at the last APCM, we talked of a sermon series on 'A meal with Jesus'. Much has happened as a result of this, for example we have started a weekly Lunch Club, there has been a Prayer Labyrinth in the church and 'Come Dine with Me' has re-started. We received a generous donation of new mobile staging which was used for the first time at the recent Jazz and Soul Festival.

Simon said that our plans for the future are encompassed in our Vision and Mission statements:

**Our vision - To be Christ's Church in the community**  
**Our mission:** By proclaiming Christ through teaching and example:

- By welcoming and serving all through hospitality.
- By encouraging people to find God through worship, faith, and prayer.
- By providing a spiritual home and resources for the local community.
- By transforming Swindon and beyond with God's hope and compassion.

**Our values:** We will do this with humility, grace, and respect, listening prayerfully to God and our neighbours.

Simon encouraged us to look at Resources around the Grove model which states that 'to worship much is to change often'. He said the work that Liz Day did in helping us to identify our DNA at Christ Church with St Mary's was very important. He wants us to be an effective listening community based around human listening, not around 'doing'. He reminded us of the 4 keywords in our DNA:

- Beloved
- Behold
- Belong
- Become

Simon said that we need to be very professional and have high standards, but asked 'how can we be both professional and spiritual?'. 'How does God answer our prayers?' He asked how we record God's answers to our prayers, perhaps by keeping a prayer journal at home and suggested we also keep a prayer journal in the office where we can record what we are praying for and God's answers. He said whilst we have no doubt that God is listening, it would help conversations to record how we are praying and answers we are seeing. He reminded the meeting that two years ago, he encouraged us to pray our Prayer for Growth, and this is now used across the whole of the Old Town Partnership.

Simon suggested that the simplest of all prayers is 'Come Holy Spirit' and he would advise us all to pray this prayer often at home. He made two recommendations for us to consider whilst he is away on Extended Developmental Study Leave:

1. To pray more intentionally, directly and earnestly in faith and to expect God to answer
2. To try out Contemplative Prayer – adoring God for who he is and resting in his loving presence. Simon has found the Garden of Reflection to be a good place for this.
3. From those two prayerful foundations come renewed vocations for us personal and together as Christian disciples and as a Christian community.

Simon hopes and prays that we will join the staff team in having spiritual reflection conversations with each other and those who join us.

How is God calling you?

How can we support you spiritually?

How can we pray for you?

The more open we are to God in prayer and friendship the more we can discover our own and others God given gifts and using them in Christian ministry.

Simon reiterated that he would love us to become a more contemplative Christian community resting in God's loving presence. We have amazing gifts in this church.

With regards to our Bristol Diocesan vision, Transforming Church Together, he quoted Bishop Neil's question 'What needs to be transformed at Christ Church in order to get a bigger impact for the gospel across our parish?' Bishop Neil also said 'All we need is in the room, along with God's Holy Spirit'.

Simon feels the area we want to develop most is the challenge of reaching regularly Children, Young People and families. He advised that an excellent appointment has been made this last week for a new Head Teacher at King William Street Academy and he is looking forward to being able to share further details when he is able. We are very grateful for the growth of our Partnership Messy church, and for those who work in our Sunday Club and our schools. We have submitted an application to our diocese for a Growing Faith chaplain which will link schools, homes and church.

Simon thanked the congregation for the ways in which they pray for the church and reiterated his encouragement to have a prayer journal at home to record how God has spoken to us over the past week and to record gifts that come our way from God. He believes if we do this we will raise the faith threshold here. He reminded all present of the regular groups that meeting on the Christ Church site to which everyone is welcome:

Treasure Together (Mondays 12 noon)

Fellowship of Faith (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday 7pm)

Bible Encounter Group (2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday 7pm)

Simon referred to David Cain's phrase 'hear us Lord and answer us when we are poor & needy'.

Simon concluded his report by praying that we would be more Christ like, intentional, contemplative and vocational during this coming year. We prayed the Prayer for Growth together.

#### **14. To set a provisional date for the next APCM (must be held no later than 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025)**

- A provisional date for the next APCM was set for Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2025. 2025 will be the year for a full revision of the Electoral Roll.

#### **15. Any other business:**

Simon Stevenette advised the congregation that it is a long time since we had two new Churchwardens. Simon Giles and Sheila Wright will officially become our Churchwardens at the Archdeacon's visitation at 7pm on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> July in Malmesbury Abbey. He encouraged as many people as possible to attend this to show their support for Simon and Sheila. He also advised that neither Simon nor Sheila have cars so help with transport for them to go to the Visitation would be appreciated.

On Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May 9/30am-4pm Simon Giles and James Davies-Spratt will be speaking about Fellowship of Faith at the Diocesan Event 'Everyday Faith. Together' on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May and Simon encouraged as many people as possible to go along and support them. The 11<sup>th</sup> Beer and Cider Festival will be happening on the Christ Church site; however, Simon has spoken to Chris Smith who is happy for Christ Church people to attend the Diocesan event.

Simon further advised that on 6<sup>th</sup> July there will be a Parish Officers' Day Conference in Chippenham to see the resources available to us in our ministry.

Simon expressed gratitude to Bishop Viv along with the Government and House of Lords that that local Councils can now make grants to faith communities for their buildings and ministry which impact positively across our Swindon Borough. We will be looking into how we can apply for this funding.

Margaret Williams commented that she feels we underestimate the number of people who come into the church during the week and put prayers on the prayer board. Although we don't always know them, the Healing Prayer Group takes them away and offers prayers for them. Simon Stevenette added that healing prayer is also available to everyone during the 10am service each Sunday and at other times during the week.

Finally, Simon commended the Lectio 365 app as an excellent prayer resource for daily prayer from Pete Greig and the 24/7 prayer movement.

#### **16. The meeting closed with prayer at 12:40**