

THE PARISH OF CENTRAL EXETER

Minutes for the ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS Minutes for the ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

Held in St Stephen's Church on Sunday 6th April 2025 at 12noon

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners:

Chair: Revd Sheila Swarbrick

Sec: Mary Keaney

Attendance: Keith Walton, Sandie Walton, Yuezhao Xie, Doreen Hatt, Jim Pilkington, Sean Swarbrick, Jill Grainger, Claire Mayer, Margaret Peirce, Helen Evans, Bee Harley, Cath Dobson, Sarah Branton and Viv Asher

1. **Apologies:** Don Branton, Brenda Tripp, Betsy Allen, Richard Skinner, Jessica Claridge, Imogen Walsh, Barbara Northey and Celia Smith
2. **Minutes of the 2024 meeting:** The minutes of the meeting held on Sunday 7th April 2024 were accepted and signed by Sheila as an accurate record.
3. **Election of Churchwardens for 2025/26:** Keith Walton and Betsy Allen were re-elected as churchwardens for the coming year.

Keith Walton: Proposed by Sandie Walton and Seconded by Sarah Branton

Betsy Allen: Proposed by Sandie Walton and Seconded by Sarah Branton

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting:

1. **Apologies:** Don Branton, Brenda Tripp, Betsy Allen, Richard Skinner, Jessica Claridge, Imogen Walsh, Barbara Northey and Celia Smith
2. **Minutes of the 2024 meeting:** The minutes of the meeting held on Sunday 7th April 2024 were accepted and signed by Sheila as an accurate record.

3. **Annual Report and Financial Statement of the PCC for the year ended 31st December 2024:** The Annual Report & Financial Statement which is forwarded to the Charity Commission was circulated prior to the meeting. Sheila reported that St Stephen's is due to host the Lord Mayor's Civic service on Sunday 27th April 2025 and encouraged everyone to attend. Sheila commented on all the sections in the report with special mention of those parishioners who had died in 2024: Bobby Burn, Sue Blow, Caroline Cornish and John Dobson.

Sean, treasurer, gave some highlights from the Financial Statement. We ended 2024 with an income of approx. £42,000 although there was a deficit of £7,000 as we started the year with £49,000. In general terms the income from grants was approx. £23,000 with £8,500 from planned giving and £16,000 from use of the parish properties. The parish expenses include the parish share which was approx. £10,000 with utility bills standing at approx. £12,525 of which 75% is the cost of St Stephen's electricity bill. The high cost of church services at £6,922 is down to the replacement of the projector at £6,860.

One query was whether St Stephen's utility bill was always expensive. Sean informed the meeting that the parish is now with Parish Buying which should be a little cheaper as many parishes get their electricity through this scheme. We are still with a green utility provider.

The meeting accepted the Annual Report and Financial Statement.

Thanks were given to both Sean Swarbrick and Keith Walton for their time and the hard work that goes into compiling the Annual Report and Financial Statement.

4. **Nomination of an Independent Examiner for 2025:** The meeting acknowledged Simon Gay as the Independent Examiner for the last eleven years and made the decision to release him from this position due to his workload. The meeting agreed to make a donation to Surf Life Saving Charity, in lieu of payment, as this is the charity for whom Simon currently works.
Sean recommended and proposed Clare Lillington as the new I.E. as she is accredited as such. The meeting agreed and Clare Lillington was appointed as the Independent Examiner for 2025. Clare makes a small charge of £100 for this service.
Action: Sheila to send a card from the parish to Simon with our thanks for his work as our I.E.
5. **Report on the Fabric and Furnishings of the churches:** This report, written by Keith, has been circulated prior to the meeting. Sheila reported that there has been little change over the year. However, a new architect, Michila Wilks, has been appointed. She is efficient and working hard on our behalf. We have a new Building Officer, Bethany Watts, who has been appointed as a joint role for the parish and Unlimited Church. She is keen and also very efficient. The swift boxes have been installed and we have a new gardener who looks after the garden behind St Stephen's church.
Sheila mentioned that the work to St Olave's begins next week (Monday 14th April) and the church will be able to remain open during this time. However, if it is closed we need to make the Redcoats aware of this.
It was brought to the meeting's attention that the servery floor in St Stephen's is in need of repair.
The meeting accepted the Fabric Report.
Action: Mary to make a sign to alert any users of the servery of the squishy floor and to let Bethany know we would like to make repair of this a priority.
6. **Safeguarding Report with Health and Safety Report:** Mary gave a brief report based on the reports circulated prior to the meeting. Next year Bethany will submit a Health and Safety report as Building Officer. Thanks were extended to Mary and the report accepted.
7. **Greeter's Report:** Sheila noted that Safe Space returned to St Stephen's during the autumn of 2024 but have not come back this year and that the booking policy and forms were updated. She thanked the small team of Greeters. The report was accepted.
8. **Flower Arranging Report:** Sheila commented on the circulated report that the team are wonderful and it was remarked that the flowers always look lovely. The arrangers welcomed 2 new people to the team last year and Claire was thanked for her work sourcing cards for special events of parish members. Caroline Cornish, who died in the

summer, is greatly missed but remembered for her greenery and support of the team. The report was accepted.

9. **Inner Room Report:** This report was circulated before the meeting. Sheila said it was lovely to see Helen as poor health has restricted activities for 2024 although National Poetry Day was celebrated as was Poetry Night at St Nicholas Priory where seven Inner Room poets contributed. Helen thanked everyone for their support. The report was accepted.
10. **Report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod:** Sheila reported that there had been two meetings of the Deanery Synod in 2024 and the new lay chair and a new secretary who were appointed in October 2023 are keen to promote DS reps getting to know each other and the parishes they represent. The report was accepted.
11. **CTaX/CTCE Report:** Sheila reported that the lay led annual United service is well received. Sheila was asked if the Church of England could make a stance about President Trump and the support he enjoys from some Christians. Sheila felt it was not appropriate to make a comment on this. The meeting accepted the report.
12. **Parish Social Media Report:** Helen reported that she has been the main administrator for the parish Facebook page and suggested in her report, circulated prior to the meeting, that the parish should discuss the future of our presence on FB in the light of the new fact checking rules and the impact they may have on community safety. After a brief discussion Sheila proposed we should delete the page. This was seconded by Margaret Peirce.
Action: Helen to delete the parish Facebook page
13. **Election of Representatives for the PCC:** Sandie Walton proposed and Jill Grainger seconded the re-appointment of Richard Skinner to the PCC for one more year. Helen Evans proposed and Bee Harley seconded the re-appointment of Viv Asher to the PCC for another term of three years. Thanks were given to both Richard and Viv.
14. **Election of Representatives to the Deanery Synod:** Jessica and Celia have a further year to serve on the Deanery Synod.
15. **Adoption of the Electoral Roll:**
The new Electoral Roll is 31 for 2025. Two people were added to the Electoral Roll and five people did not renew their membership due to relocation, worshipping elsewhere or illness. Also we have had two deaths: Caroline Cornish and John Dobson. The new ER was accepted. Mary to send the certificate to the Old Deanery.
16. **Report of the Rector:** Sheila's report had been previously circulated. Sheila highlighted some points from her report such as the new Bishop's visit to St Stephen's and Keith's Heritage weekend talks. She also remembered Sue, Bobby, Caroline and John as they have moved on to Glory. Sheila mentioned the date of her sister's funeral which is on Thursday 24th April 2025. She thanked everyone assembled.

17. **Chair's report:** Sheila presented her report as chair. Our CMS (Church Mission Society) link, Ruth Sayers, is retiring and has suggested Luke Brennan as her replacement. Luke may be able to visit the parish before he works in Africa during August. The meeting accepted Luke as the new CMS link.

Sheila then talked of the future of the parish which is to be the subject of the next PCC in June when the archdeacon, Andrew Beane will be attending. This will be an open meeting where Andrew will discuss his plans for the parish. Andrew's letter to the parish is attached. Sheila felt that his view of the opportunities for the parish is positive and encouraging. As Sheila has a review/appraisal meeting with Andrew in May she would be pleased to hear everyone's view on the archdeacon's letter before this in preparation for the June PCC meeting.

18. **A.O.B:** None

Minutes of the PCC meeting following the APCM

Agenda:

19. **Election of the chair for 2025/26:** Sheila was nominated as chair for the year 2025/26.
20. **Election of sidespeople:** Everyone re-elected.
21. **Confirmation of date of next meeting:** Wednesday 4th June 2025 at 2.30pm in St Stephen's church with the archdeacon, Andrew Beane. This meeting is open to the parish.

The meeting closed at 1.05pm