

THE PARISH OF CENTRAL EXETER

Minutes for the Open Meeting of the Parochial Church Council 2.30pm on Wednesday 4th June 2025 in St Stephen's church

Present: Revd Sheila Swarbrick (chair), Sean Swarbrick, Doreen Hatt, Jill Grainger, Margaret Peirce, Sarah Branton, Viv Asher, Keith Walton, Cath Dobson, Imogen Walsh, Nigel Walsh, Betsy Allen, Richard Skinner, Claire Mayer, Bethany Watts (Building Officer), Andrew Beane (Archdeacon), Jim Pilkington, Mary Keaney (PCC sec)

Apologies: Helen Evans, Jessica Claridge and Celia Smith

1. **Welcome:** Sheila welcomed everyone assembled, introduced the archdeacon, Andrew Beane, and led prayers from Romans Chapter 8.
2. **Presentation on the future of the parish:** The Archdeacon of Exeter, the Venerable Andrew Beane, thanked Sheila for inviting him to visit the parish. He then presented '*A Church for the High Street: A Vision for Renewal*' where he talked about working more closely with churches rather than dictating how to move forward. He acknowledged the huge Christian heritage in the city and how the parish have been good stewards of all churches in our care. Andrew asked the parish to consider 'Where are we now' with low attendance numbers and an ageing congregation. He also included underused buildings which have a limited capacity for change. He held up a new vision where St Stephen's became a vibrant, visible church on the High Street as a hub for faith, arts, young people and community. St Stephen's could be a shared space with a shared mission. As part of this change Andrew felt there was an invitation to relocate so buildings can be used in new ways. Could the parish congregation move to St Mary Arches and Unlimited Church use St Stephen's? This invitation could mean partnership with different churches with collaboration the goal and not competition. Finally, Andrew outlined the next steps which involve consultations, consideration and clarity. Also, the parish could spend some time exploring offering the spaces to interested groups/churches.
A discussion followed Andrew's presentation. It was acknowledged that St Stephen's has many fewer events taking place since the Covid pandemic of 2020/1 but the door is always open on a daily basis for visitors who regularly leave messages about the peace they find within. It was noted that both churchwardens worked with their counterparts in St David's but very little progress was made.
It was also felt that now is an opportunity to rethink our future and experiment with a few different ideas. Large signage could be put in place as an invitation to the general public to enter. Maybe Exeter College could design signs to invite people to come through the door. We could ensure the digital screen was functioning and a display of events is available.

Once Andrew had left so did other members of the parish. The PCC continued with the remainder of the meeting.

Present: Keith Walton, Sheila Swarbrick, Bethany Watts (Building Officer), Sean Swarbrick (Treasurer), Viv Asher, Claire Mayer, Betsy Allen, Richard Skinner and Mary Keaney (sec)

Apologies: Jessica Claridge, Helen Evans & Celia Smith

3. **Minutes of meetings on Thursday 27th February 2025 and Wednesday 5th March 2025:** Both sets of minutes were dated and signed by Sheila as accurate records.
4. **Matters Arising/Questions:** None
5. **Parish Activities:**

5.1 Pastoral Care: Unminuted

5.2 Pattern of services:

Sunday 29th June: service to be led by Peter Beacham at St Martin's

Sunday 15th June and Sunday 20th July: Crossing Place to be led by Sheila

Sunday 17th or 31st August: service at St Mary Arches TBC

Sunday 5th October: Harvest at St Petrock's?

5.3 Parish Social and Events:

July concerts: all dates have confirmed performers. Posters and flyers are being circulated.

There is a planning meeting on Monday 23rd June at 10.30am at Sarah's house to consider the organisation for the lunches which are provided. The third concert is in memory of Paul McClure who died last year.

Skylarks Summer concert: Sunday 20th July 3pm Donations for Exeter Community Initiatives

Words and Music Concert: Thursday 14th August 1pm

Parish Social: Keith's garden on a Sunday afternoon in August, possibly 17th or 31st

St Petrock's Day Centre 30th anniversary – Jim Pilkington and Jill Grainger will represent the parish at the celebration tea party in the Bishop's Palace Garden on Saturday 21st June.

6. Church Buildings:

6.1 St Stephen's:

6.1.a Gutters: Bethany, Building Officer, has received quotes for all churches except St Petrocks as the contractor was unable to access the roof. He would like to use a drone to see the roof before submitting a quote. Bethany also asked for any roof plans to be made available which could help with providing an accurate quote.

Action: Keith and Bethany to look through cupboards to search for any relevant church building plans

6.1.b Storage: Bethany has found a handyman who will put up a shelf in the chair store cupboard. He charges £35 p/hr. The door of chair store may need re-hanging.

6.1.c Personal alarm: Claire offered a spare alarm for church use.

6.1.d Digital display: Recently this has not been working.

Action: Keith to show Bethany how the system works.

6.1.e Servery floor: Bethany has received a quote from Smith & Sons for replacement vinyl. However, a carpenter needs to look at problem with the joists below the vinyl.

Post Meeting Update: Bethany has met with Richard Hardy, the builder from St Olave's project, and he advised it was an urgent problem. He is to set a date with Bethany to remove the vinyl to investigate the issue.

6.1.f Plaster replacement: Bethany is still waiting for a quote.

6.1.g Disabled Access: This has been fixed but we are withholding payment for the work done as the engineers who attended previously did not leave the site in a good working order.

6.2 St Petrock's:

6.2.a solar panels: deferred

6.2.b St Petrock's Daycentre: the staff have noticed some issues outside and with the hatch for the crypt which may need DAC approval while the refurbishment planned for inside can go ahead with advice from the architect.

Action: Our architect, Building Officer and Sheila met on 11 June with St Petrock's staff.

6.2.c Damp: Mushroom growth has been noticed in the church and will be raised with our architect.

6.3 St Pancras:

6.3.a Noticeboard: handyman to refix door if possible.

6.3.b Pulpit floor: Our architect needs to view the floor and make recommendations. Smith & Sons could be asked to quote for this when ready.

6.4 St Olave's:

6.4.a Guttering repairs & vestry floor: Work is ongoing and the wall is beginning to dry out.

Action: Keith to make the List B application and show Bethany how to do this online.

Post Meeting Update: Sheila and Bethany met with architect and builder about the crack above one of the windows in the vestry on Wednesday 11th June. Michila, architect, is to contact painting conservator, Ruth McNeillage, about possible wall paintings hidden below paint on recommendation from the DAC. Repair of the arch can be included in a List B.

6.5 St Mary Arches:

6.5.a Building officer appointment: Bethany has been working for Unlimited Church and the parish for a few months but recently has resigned from the post with Unlimited. Bethany will continue with her work for the parish. Currently she is using a personal email when communicating with us and contractors.

Action: Mary to contact Dancing Badger and ask for a parish email for Bethany. We will suggest the following: buildings@parishofcentralexeter.co.uk

Betsy expressed our thanks to Bethany for the work she has already accomplished on behalf of the parish.

7. Finance:

7.1 End of May 2025 budget report: Sean reported that it has been good to find our new Independent Examiner, Clare Liddington, who has suggested that we simplify the accounts system which Sean has done.

The meeting thanked Sean for all the work he does.

8. **Inner Room:** Sheila informed the meeting that Helen and her father are to move to Yorkshire to be nearer her brothers. As such Helen resigns from the PCC with immediate effect. The meeting expressed our sadness to see Helen leave St Stephen's but also our thanks to her for all her work with the parish and Inner Room especially.

Post Meeting Update – Helen met with Keith, Richard and Sheila on 18 June to discuss the future for Inner Room. A full report will be given to the September PCC.

9. **Deanery Synod Report:** Sheila reported on the meeting held at Countess Wear on Thursday 1st May. Three parishes gave brief presentations on their work - Pinhoe & Poltimore, Holy Trinity and Forest School from Countess Wear. The main topic, introduced by Anne Foreman, was *What is Deanery Synod?* and *What is Diocesan Synod?* Bishop Mike's address to the March Diocesan Synod was recommended to be circulated. Matt Rowland is the new rector at St Leonard's church. David Nixon, Area Dean, is retiring in July.

The October meeting on **Thursday 16th October** will include + Mike.

10. **Social Media:** Facebook has been taken down as agreed at the APCM in April.

11. Safeguarding and Health & Safety:

11.1 **Safeguarding Report:** This was circulated prior to the meeting and accepted.

Action: Mary to update the Parish Dashboard with an assurance to the PCC that known offenders will be effectively managed and monitored in consultation with the Diocesan Advising Officer. Also, that the PCC complies with the data protection legislation and Church of England data retention guidance.

12. **CTAX/CTCE:** Sheila reminded us of the Thy Kingdom Come celebration in the Cathedral on Sunday 8th June at 6pm. The next United service will be at Southernhay United Reform church on Sunday 23rd November.

13. Correspondence:

13.1.a Documentary Film: A request to film in our churches has been received. Mary to confirm with Diocese about this.

13.1.b Martin the Piper: A request to video in St Pancras. Mary to suggest he contacts St James' or Southernhay churches as more suitable venues than St Pancras as it can be noisy and is open daily to the public.

13.1.c Bat survey: As we do not have bats in any of our churches Mary to reply that a bat survey is currently not needed.

14. A.O.B.

14.1 Quotes for reprinting of postcards, St Pancras' folded leaflets and St Olave's booklets:

Action: Sheila to confirm costs with Trusts at a meeting on Thursday 5th June and to instruct Mary which leaflets are to be printed.

14.2 Next Steps following the archdeacon's presentation: Contact with Unlimited Church to propose a weekly youth café afternoon in St Stephen's; new signage; discussion on invitational versus expectancy.

15. Date and Place of future meetings:

Wednesday 3rd September 2.30pm at St Petrock's;

Wednesday 3rd December 2.30pm at St Petrock's;

The meeting closed at 4.45pm with the Grace.