

THE PARISH OF CENTRAL EXETER

Minutes for the Meeting of the Parochial Church Council 2.30pm on Wednesday 3rd December 2025 in St Petrock's church

Present: Revd Sheila Swarbrick (chair), Richard Skinner, Claire Mayer, Viv Asher, Jessica Claridge, Betsy Allen, Keith Walton and Mary Keaney (PCC sec)

Apologies: Celia Smith

1. **Welcome:** Sheila welcomed everyone and read a prayer from the material Demelza Henderson had prepared for the Pre-Advent Quiet morning in Lymptone parish church.
2. **Minutes of meeting on Wednesday 3rd September 2025:** The minutes were signed as an accurate record by Sheila.
3. **Matters Arising/Questions:**
 - 3.1 Swift boxes update on storage of recording machine (see 11.1). Jessica reported that the swift boxes are stored over winter with Jerry from Devon Swift Project. Next year we will ensure the sound level of the calls will be lower as we received a complaint about the noise level.
 - 3.2 The digital display in St Stephen's needs updating with new material and will be completed at future date.
 - 3.3 The old display screen has been dismantled. Damaged chairs need to be taken to the tip. Eventually, the Faith display in St Pancras can be replicated in St Stephen's.
Action: *Sheila to put up a 'Christmas Art through the years' display in St Stephen's on the new display board.*
 - 3.4 Following the Archdeacon's visit in June UNLTD proposed to set up a Drop In Café in St Stephen's on a weekly basis but are struggling with recruiting enough volunteers.
4. **Church Buildings:** Building's Officer report circulated prior to the meeting

Good News: St Stephen's server floor repairs completed in September by Barley Manor (Ernest Brook Trust to fund £3,000); new fire extinguishers in place in all churches; a new log book begun by Bethany Watts; St Pancras' roof repairs completed in December at a cost £17,000 including VAT which will be funded from St Mary Arches Trust; St Mary Arches trust also funds building insurance and electricity bill for St Pancras; the planning application for CCTV cameras for St Petrock's day centre has been agreed but took a lot of Bethany's time.

Future Works: Gutter maintenance to be carried out by Barley Manor in the week beginning Monday 8th December.

 - 4.1 **St Stephen's:**
 - 4.1.a Incident damage work to be carried out by Delve Electrical once instructed by Bethany. Meeting gave approval for this work. Once all related repair work is complete we can submit the insurance claim.
Action: *Jessica to contact Bethany about getting in touch with Cathedral stonemasons to quote for pillar repair.*
Post Meeting Update: *Sheila emailed Bethany to pass on the PCC approval to instruct Delve Electrical to do the work*
 - 4.1.b Graffiti cleaning at on St Stephen's Bow and St Pancras outside wall to be done sensitively by contractors using the appropriate materials.
Action: *Bethany to ask about possible removal of fish sign on St Stephen's main door*
 - 4.2 **St Petrock's:**
 - 4.2.a Damp Issues: Unsure if underfloor heating is working so need to contact whoever installed it in 2017 to check it is operational.

Action: Sheila to try to find out who was the original installer

4.2. b Tea bar cover - ongoing.

4.3 St Pancras:

4.3.a Door repairs to be carried out by Door Doctors – Bethany given approval by meeting to instruct the company to carry out the work on both doors.

Post Meeting Update: Sheila emailed Bethany to pass on the PCC approval to instruct Door Doctors to do the work

4.3.b Removal of moss from the main section of the roof to be carried out by Barley Manor in January 2026. Date TBC

4.4 St Olave's:

4.4.a Works Update: List B has been submitted for approval to repair the vestry window plaster.

Action: Bethany to liaise with Barley Manor for start date once approval given

4.4.b Once works completed the electrical system needs attention

4.5 St Mary Arches:

4.5.a Quinquennial Inspection: The last QI was in 2019. Bethany to circulate this to PCC. The next one is due to happen in 2026.

Action: Sheila to speak with Michila Wilks (architect) and Matt Clayton as UNLTD will have a separate agreement with Michila

4.5.b Drain clearance: Two quotes received. The meeting gave approval for Eco Clean to be instructed to carry out the work. Funding will come from St Mary Arches Trust.

Post Meeting Update: Sheila emailed Bethany to pass on the PCC approval to instruct Eco Clean to do the work

4.5.c Bethany requires a usable key for SMA

Action: Sheila to ask caretaker if he has a spare key for SMA

4.6 Critical Incident: See Lone working Policy at item 8.2

The meeting expressed thanks to Bethany for all her hard work as Building Officer.

5. Parish Activities:

5.1 Pastoral Care: Unminuted

5.2 Pattern of services:

5.2.a Soup lunches: In the new year they will become shared lunches to spread the load.

5.2.b Christmas:

Sunday 21st December: Keith to lead Crossing Place

Sunday 21st December: Skylarks Christmas Carol Concert 'Nowell, Nowell' at 3pm in St Stephen's

Sunday 21st December: St David's Carol Service at 6pm

Thursday 25th December: Christmas Day Holy Communion at 10am

Sunday 28th December: No Service

Sunday 18th January: Sheila to conduct crossing Place

Sunday 25th January: Pulpit Exchange with Sarah Cumming in St Olave's (Sheila away)

Sunday 25th January: Homelessness service – venue TBC

Action: Sheila to contact Laura at St Petrock's Day Centre to confirm the venue

Sunday 1st February: Simple shared lunch

Sunday 15th February: Betsy to lead Crossing Place

Sunday 1st March: Simple shared lunch

Friday 6th March: World Day of Prayer 10.30am St Stephen's

Sunday 15th March: Keith to lead Crossing Place

Sunday 29th March: Palm Sunday – parish to attend the Cathedral as no service in parish (Sheila away)

Sunday 19th April: Sheila to lead Crossing Place; **APCM** at 11.45am

Sunday 31st May: Peter Beacham to take service at St Martin's

Sunday 30th August: Fifth Sunday

Sunday 29th November: Fifth Sunday

Action: Sheila to circulate the new service rota once complete

5.3 Parish Social and Events:

5.3.a Cathedral Treasures Exhibition visit:

Post Meeting Update: Betsy has confirmed the visit for **Thursday 5th March** at 2pm with tea in the Chapter House Refectory afterwards

5.3.b Jessica has booked Sarah Dean and Torside Trio, the first performers, for our July concerts next summer.

6. Finance: (all reports circulated prior to the meeting)

6.1 **End of November 2025 report:** Sean is now using the new simplified format as recommended by our new Independent Examiner. Sheila reported on the November report explaining that the unrestricted grants of £12,501 were allocated to pay the parish employees whereas the restricted grants are ring fenced for repairs such as those recently undertaken by Barley Manor. Our Diocesan share figure of £8,639 is accurate.

6.2 **2026 Budget:** In 2026 the CCLI and Flower Arranging costs will be moved into the 'Upkeep of Services' category hence the higher estimate for next year. Please see the Budget for estimates of Receipts and Expenditure for 2026.

6.3 **Review of hourly rates for self-employed staff:** Sheila proposed the meeting should increase the hourly rate for our caretaker and cleaner from £12.25 to £13 with the intention to increase to the real living wage over next year or so. The meeting agreed to raise their rate to £13.25. And to raise the Building Officer and Administrator hourly rates from £14 to £15. Richard proposed and Claire seconded.

The meeting expressed thanks to all four.

6.4 **Review of Parish Giving:** Sheila and Keith outlined the current situation with a proposal to stream the 12 charities for the month with an increase to £220 and to keep the standing order to the Cathedral to £75. This will result in a total of £2,715 in 2026. The charities include: St Petrock's Centre, Exeter Food Bank, Freedom from Torture, Medecins sans Frontieres, Refugee Support Group, CERN, ECI, Congo Children's Trust, CMS, Practical Action and Embrace the Middle East. The meeting approved this list and agreed to choose a 12th charity to replace Fitter for Faith at the March 2026 PCC meeting.

Viv reported on her visit to Sense House in Bartholomew Street West. It is a small facility for people with physical disabilities, sensory impairments or learning difficulties. They would welcome a donation but gave Viv a muted reception.

Sheila advocated A Rocha, an environmental charity which has an Eco Church programme.

7. **Deanery Synod report:** Sheila and Jessica reported on the meeting held at Trinity School on Thursday 16th October. Bishop Mike outlined 5 strategic strategies but discussed 2 in detail. Chris Palmer, Canon Treasurer at the cathedral spoke as did Matt Clayton from UNLTD. A Diocesan bid is to put in for Church Commissioners funding which is linked to the strategic priorities. Ed Hodges has been appointed as the new City Dean with Mike Clark as his assistant.

8. Safeguarding and Health & Safety:

8.1 **Safeguarding Report** (circulated prior to the meeting): Sheila mentioned the AA groups and their non-compliance with completing a hirer's agreement.

Action: Sheila to talk to Palace Gate

Action: Mary and/or Sheila to find a county AA contact

8.2 **Lone Working Policy & risk assessment** (circulated prior to the meeting): The policy was accepted with the understanding it would be shared with all those working solo within our buildings. Mary thanked Viv, Claire, Bethany and Betsy for their input and support.

Action: Mary to share policy/risk assessment with the Greeters Team in January and to discuss the need for personal attack alarms.

The meeting expressed thanks to Mary

- 8.3 **Wall Box Vandalism:** Sean noticed the wall box in St Pancras had been vandalised so asked Guardian Security to repair it which they did. £95 plus VAT invoice received. It appears that St Stephen's safe requires a service.

Action: Sheila and Sean to speak with Guardian Security about servicing the safe.

9. CTAX/CTCE:

- 9.1 **United Service:** Thanks to Claire for representing the parish in the preparation meetings.
- 9.2 **Other news:** Sheila is meeting with colleagues about the Agape in Holy Week. The Pulpit Exchange is going ahead in the new year. Sidwell Street Methodist church is for sale. The Lent group at St James will be on Tuesday afternoons. Claire mentioned that the Advent service in St David's on Tuesday 2nd December was lovely.

10. **CMS link:** No more news on the link person. Sheila will contact them in the new year.

11. Correspondence:

- 11.1 The parish received a noise complaint from Environmental Health re: swift callers from St Stephen's which we will ensure are lower in volume next year.
- 11.2 £2,000 is the legacy left to the parish from Caroline Cornish's estate:
- 11.3 The parish received a Thank you letter from St Petrock's Day Centre for harvest contributions
- 11.4 The parish will receive a percentage of Sue Blow's estate in time.

12. A.O.B.

- 12.1 Jessica mentioned that all stalls at the St Nicholas' fair will need their own float on Saturday 6th December
- 12.2 Claire noted that we have a new flower arranger to join the team
Claire wished to thank everyone for their hard work.

13. Date and Place of future meetings:

Wednesday 4th March 2026 2.30pm at St Petrock's;
APCM: Sunday 19th April 2026

The meeting closed at 4.30pm with a blessing from Sheila.