

St James's Church, Taunton
Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

held on 12 May 2025

The meeting was held in the church and was chaired by Rev. Fabian Wuyts. 40 people were present.

The meeting opened with members offering examples of matters we can be grateful for, followed by the songs *Only a Holy God* and *Everyone needs compassion*.

1. Meeting of Parishioners to elect churchwardens

Nigel Bright and Fiona Hope were re-elected as churchwardens.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Sara Bright, Sue Carpenter, Sue Collard, Jacky Gillingham, Mike Gillingham, John Henden, Sue Lucas, Bev Machin, Annie Reid, Graham Reid, Phil Saddler, Johan Smit and Vashti Smit.

3. Minutes of 2024 APCM and Matters Arising

The minutes of the 13 May 2024 APCM were approved without amendment. No matters arising.

4. Presentation of the Electoral Roll

Every six years the Electoral Roll must be renewed. Sue Doyle reported that this was one of those years. The new roll has 150 names on it.

Sue also announced that Martin Bluemel would be taking over from her (the actual appointment is recorded in the minutes of the subsequent PCC meeting). Later in the meeting Fabian Wuyts presented a gift to Sue in recognition of her nineteen years' service in this role.

An online option for registering for the roll had been piloted by Martin Bluemel this year, which had been well received by those choosing to use it.

5. Election of PCC members

There were five candidates for seven places, so no vote was required. Mike Gillingham was elected as a new member of the PCC, and the following were re-elected: Roger Fenton, Lyn Jones, Richard Sainsbury and Vashti Smit. Vashti had expressed a preference to take up the one-year vacancy; the other newly-elected members take full three-year terms. The two remaining vacancies are for two years each and the PCC will seek to identify suitable candidates to approach.

6. Independent Examiner's Report and Appointment of Independent Examiner

The Report from the Independent Examiner had been received a few days before the meeting and showed no issues of concern. The person appointed as Independent Examiner last year was no longer doing this work, so the task was undertaken by Helen Hubbard of the same firm.

Helen Hubbard of Messrs Amherst & Shapland was appointed as Independent Examiner for next year's audit.

7. Accounts for 2024

Richard Sainsbury presented the accounts for 2024, expressing his continuing thanks to Chris Rickard as Stewardship and Payroll Officer, Glenys Hanlon for administration and Jacqui Sainsbury for all her support throughout the year.

He highlighted the following:

- The income for 2024 was £175,612 and the expenditure £192,167 resulting in a deficit of £16,555.
- The deficit is greater than in 2023, and is due to an increase in the Parish Share, increased gas and electricity costs, more stonework repairs on the tower, and the one-off cost of replacing the electrical distribution boards in the church.
- This year (2025) has seen an increase in staff costs due to National Insurance changes, a full year of employing our Administrator and the employment of our Children's Church Pastor. While gas and electricity prices are not rising, there does not seem to be any prospect of finding significant savings in any area. This means that it is likely that the deficit situation will continue.
- It is important that members keep their giving under review to keep pace with inflation. For every £10 given in 2020, the equivalent amount in 2025 is £12.52.

During questions, mention was made of the CofE's Parish Giving Scheme, which provides an index-linked option for those participating and also claims Gift Aid on a monthly basis. [This will be considered by the PCC as a "matter arising".]

Richard and his team were thanked for all they do, and it was noted that he is still keen for a new treasurer to take over from him.

8. Annual Report for 2024

The Annual Report was reviewed section-by-section and a number of minor amendments noted.

Because the report only looks back at the last year, Martin Wakefield (Facilities Coordinator) explained that the main challenge looking ahead is moving the church away from gas heating, as part of the Church of England's "Net zero carbon routemap". At present we are about three-quarters of the way through converting our lighting to LED, which will reduce electricity consumption (which partly comes from gas-fired sources). This year we will look at options for replacing the gas fires in our halls, probably with a mixture of an air-source heat pump system topped up by electric heaters. Converting the church heating will be more of a challenge, but we will start by seeing if a heat pump can be used to power the underfloor system. These heat-pump systems can be powered by solar panels.

9. Deanery Synod Report

A written report of the proceedings of Taunton Deanery Synod was presented to the meeting.

Richard Carpenter then explained how the Deanery promotes a missional approach: through chaplaincy, maintaining a presence in places where churches are not self-supporting, and ministry on new estates (such as Trull parish's new church on the Orchard Grove estate). A new Area Dean has recently been appointed, and Richard, as Lay Dean, will be discussing the way ahead with him and the archdeacon shortly.

10. Any Other Business

A question was asked about the provision of pastoral visiting. Fabian Wuyts explained that we had hoped to recruit a team of three or four visitors, but after some people had pulled out there was only one pair left at present. The matter is a priority on the PCC agenda as we do need to find a way ahead with visiting the housebound and looking after new members. A holistic rather than piecemeal approach is needed. At present, all pastoral matters should be referred to him or the churchwardens in the first instance, and we need to pray for more people to volunteer as visitors.

This concluded the formal part of the meeting.

11. Review and Discussion

After refreshments, the second half of the meeting was a more informal review of the year and an exploration, in groups, of a theme, this year based on the four seasons.

In his review of the year, Fabian Wuyts returned to the theme of gratitude, beginning with just being a member of the church family. He went on to review many aspects of our church life (which are recorded in the "Activities" narratives in the Annual Report).

For the group discussions, pictures representing the seasons were displayed around the church and attendees were asked to gather round whichever one they related most to as an individual. The exercise was then repeated on the basis of where members perceived the church to be. The feedback was varied, but several mentions were made that each part of the church might be at a different part of the seasonal cycle, and all are important in different ways.

Three members were then asked to illustrate how change is working out in their lives, one as a result of prayer being central to building up a team, another seeing a co-leader develop, and a third describing how a skill learned many years ago is now coming back into their life.

Three questions were then posed as "homework": what do you most value about our church, what gives you hope, and what concerns you about the future?

12. Closing

Andy Hall thanked Fabian on behalf of the church for his leadership.

The meeting closed at 9:45pm with the songs *Great is your faithfulness* and *Come set Your rule and reign*.