

Barley Hill Church AGM/APCM Meeting Minutes

Tuesday 6th May 2025, 19.00 – 20:30 pm

St Mary's Church, Thame

Parishioners' Meeting

1. Election of Churchwardens

Al French was re-elected as Churchwarden. Proposed by Andrew Newton. Seconded by Carrie Priestnall. Passed without dissent.

APCM

1. Opening prayer

Margaret Robinson shared a selection of Scriptures including "...and my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus". "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well."

Andy McCulloch prayed, acknowledging that "all our needs are met in accordance with God's great provision."

2. Apologies

Apologies have been received from Andy Clamp, Mike Clamp, Katy Hammond, Judith and Stephen Harper, Craig and Donna Maddock, Richard and Barbie Potts, Sharon Bond, Richard Shearwood, Janet Sweet, Bridget and Robert Trueman, Angela Willson.

3. Electoral Roll report

This year the Electoral Roll was renewed. The number on the roll for Barley Hill Church as prepared for the 2025 APCM is 50 compared to 66 last year.

4. Minutes of the last meeting – 16th April 2024

Proposed by Steve Priestnall. Seconded by Al French.

The minutes were approved.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Treasurer's Report

Andy thanked Natasha for the work that she has done, and to Keith Civval also.

There was one query raised in advance about whether there was a £10,000 deficit. To sum up the issue, all pluses and minuses are relating to amounts being moved between the churches. There is 3 months of reserves in the accounts, and these funds will merge eventually, if the parishes are amalgamated.

Natasha gave her summary report and no questions were raised.

7. Approve Accounts for 2024

Question whether we could in future see a consolidated picture of the income and expenditure of the whole group of churches. Andy confirms that this is available to see on the Barley Hill Church website.

Proposed by Vanessa Shearwood, Seconded by Linda Newton.

The minutes were approved.

8. Appoint Independent Examiner for 2025

Mercer Lewin Chartered accountants

Proposed by Al French, Seconded by Steve Priestnall.

Unanimously approved.

9. Election PCC Members

We are allowed up to 6 members and can co-opt two others. Suggestion is to co-opt Sharon Bond and Natasha Challoner.

1. Judith Harper was re-elected to PCC, proposed by Al French, seconded by Andrew Newton
2. Margaret Robinson was re-elected to PCC, proposed by Andrew Newton, seconded by Linda Newton.
3. Andy Clamp was re-elected to PCC, proposed by Amber Hyde and seconded by Vanessa Shearwood.
4. Andrew Sweet was re-elected to PCC, proposed by Janet Sweet, seconded by Ray Whorton.

All were elected without dissent.

10. Election Deanery Synod Members

Richard Shearwood is stepping down from this role after more than a decade of service.

Bridget Trueman has agreed to stand again, and was proposed by Andrew Sweet and seconded by Judith Harper.

Bridget was elected without dissent.

11. Approval of Thame Church Safeguarding Policy

Proposed by Carrie Priestnall

Seconded by Ray Whorton.

ACTION: PCC will need to approve the Safeguarding Policy at which point it will be updated on the website.

12. Annual Report from Ministry Areas

Thanks to everyone for their input in the different reports.

Andrew Sweet noted that some sections had come from the St Mary's Church representatives rather than the Barley Hill Church representatives. Andy outlined that this is as a result of working as Thame Church primarily.

13. Review and Looking Forward (Clergy Report)

Andy stated outlined ministry priorities: **Children and families:** the grant for Hannah's role is reducing. At the same time we are looking for a volunteer youth leader. We are seeing God bringing youth unprompted to the church, but we don't have the critical mass or regular events to support them. The challenge is how we invest in this area without sufficient resource.

Young adults: again, we don't have a critical mass. But we want to nurture and build them up. We would like to offer a 'discipleship year' programme. One day a week of teaching, two days to serve, two days working in the community. This would be in partnership with New Wine.

14. Unification of Parishes

Mike outlined that lots of thanks to be given tonight. Thanks given to Andy from Mike for his support and friendship, as there is trust and collegiality (and thanks also for Graham and the retired clergy). The wider team makes the church feel alive. That brings an excitement because of what's around the corner.

Since the surgery, Mike has not been able to do so much. The deanery are allowing Mike to reduce his hours, because of Andy being in post, and Heather being available with her having completed her curacy. So Mike will be reducing to 0.6 FTE and Heather will take on the 0.4 FTE, from 1st July 2025. (This is subject to a formal interview process for Heather).

It also means that we will have a confident and gifted woman in the leadership team and that's very positive step. This feels as if it was all in God's hands.

Question about unification timing:

All three PCCs are in favour of the parish unification, and joining together as one church. St Catherine's, would be maintained by their own funding, and the same would be true of St Mary's – each will have 'ring fenced' funding.

This is something we have been practically living by since we went into lockdown in 2020, but with the complexities of reporting separately and together. Transparency is really important, and by bringing the three churches together we are able to streamline systems and focus on other things.

The plan will reduce bureaucracy and increase efficiency.

The consultations will take 12-18 months. We are not expecting it to be complex because we have been demonstrating already that there is no great risk.

Of the 9 parishes we are a group with, it would be three churches coming together. There will be two public meetings so that everyone in the town knows what the church are doing.

The six villages have given Emma some excellent experiences, and they are advertising for a house-for-duty minister to oversee the worship in those communities. We have advertised twice but have not received a field that we can shortlist from. This is separate from the arrangement for the Thame-based churches.

Steve Priestnall: do all the six other churches have building that we maintain?

Answer: No, they are maintained individually. We have no liability.

Barbara: With Emma stepping down, who will be covering that work?

Answer: The responsibility lies with the church wardens. It is likely that there will be a reduction in the number of clergy-led services.

Carrie Priestnall: With Heather joining and Emma leaving the curacy, are we looking for a new curate?

Answer: As a parish, we own a house on Victoria Mead. The earliest that we could next have a curate would be July 2026, as we need to give time to Emma to find her next role and move. But we have put a bid in, and we feel we can give candidates a wide experience with the villages and town churches.

Al French: Is 12-18 months likely?

Answer: The main concern is that the key person is currently absent. We would like it to take a shorter amount of time, but we have no power over the speed at which things are considered.

Andy Wainwright: Is there a minimum consultation period?

Answer: The FAQs on the website show that there's no legislation to say that there is a required length of consultation period, and have opened up the consultation period as early as possible.

Human sexuality issue has been discussed – particularly around the issue of blessings - and this will be brought to the congregations.

We will continue to look to deepen, to look out to the town, and to engage and develop the worship of what we do here.

Thanks to the PCC members, and especially to Al French, and the other wardens, and Natasha Challoner. Thanks to Andrew Newton being the PCC Secretary and Andrew Sweet for the minutes. Thanks as well to Mike Reading for his role too.

Also, Katy Hammond has been a great help – we have seen huge amounts of benefit from Katy joining the team. She is excellent in the work and in maintaining relationships, and she reflects a different voice. She has freed up a lot of time for Andy.

ACTION: would be good to have a report from Katy Hammond – she does write one up for the Joint Church Council.

Note: A full list of JCC reports will be going to PCC members and all parishoners.

15. Open Questions

Question about Sunday evening teaching.

Answer: Would like this to cater for the youth in that slot. Deeper teaching is wanted somewhere, whether weekend or mid-week. Small groups are really important in this.

Real discipleship happens in small groups. Zoe Alexander has an oversight of this.

Comment from Barbara Thompson: Small group in Haddenham has been tremendously strengthening since it started in the last year as they are a great blessing in witnessing in the community.

Margaret Martin sends on her love to everyone at the church. She is in great spirits but not great health.

16. Any other business

17. Closing prayer

A closing prayer was said by Al French.

PCC Minutes

Appointment of PCC Secretary, PCC Treasurer and Safeguarding Officer

Al French, Margaret Robinson, Andrew Sweet, Andrew Newton, Natasha Challoner, Andy McCulloch, Mike Reading.

PCC Secretary nominated to be Andrew Newton. Nominated by Al French. Seconded by Margaret Robinson.

PCC treasurer nominated to be Natasha Challoner, Andrew Newton proposing, and seconded by Al French.

Parish Safeguarding Officer. Sharon Bond nominated by Al French. Seconded by Andrew Newton.