

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting of St Mary the Virgin, Thame held at 7pm on Tuesday 29 April 2025 in St Mary's Church.

Present: Revd Mike Reading, Rector, Revd Andy McCulloch, Team Vicar, Jacqueline Hurst PCC Secretary and 36 congregants. Names of attendees at end of minutes.

PARISHIONERS' MEETING

Mike opened with prayer followed by giving a brief history of all that our dear friend and colleague the late Helena Fickling gave with diligence, serving the church and the community for many years. Mike thanked David Brown for stepping up managing the additional work Helena's death has brought.

1. ELECTION OF CHURCHWARDENS

David Brown has agreed to stand again. David's nomination was proposed by Robert Ridgway and seconded by Malcolm Ross. Susanne (Sue) Lay submitted her nomination form in before the meeting. Jacqueline Hurst proposed Sue as Churchwarden, this was seconded by David Brown.

No election was needed as there were no further nominations. Both were accepted and approved unanimously.

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Julie & Edward Fox; Christine Waring; Malcolm & Sandra Ross; Janet & David Pickard; Nena Davis; David & Ann Warburton; Toby Webster; Victor & Sara Gaultney; Eileen Bryant; Janet Choldcroft; Hannah Smith; Matthew (Matty) Fearon; Tom Haley; Gill Rushman, Ronnie Reading; Reg & Sheila Moss and Jon Vendy.

2. NOTICE OF AOB

None

3. THE ELECTORAL ROLL

Having revised the electoral roll, the number currently on the roll for St Mary's Church is 178 compared to 185 last year.

4. MINUTES OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN APCM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23 APRIL 2024

It was proposed by Ann Midwinter and seconded by Natasha Challoner that the minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on Wednesday 23 April 2024 should be accepted as a true record of that meeting. A vote was taken with no abstentions or dissensions and therefore carried. The minutes were duly signed by Revd Mike Reading.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Critchley's. A change to the Auditors for the Financial Accounts.

Meadowcroft. This is being supported by Graham Choldcroft and Ann Midwinter. Services led by members of Thame Church are held regularly.

6. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None

7. ELECTION OF PCC MEMBERS AND DEANERY SYNOD REPRESENTATIVES

Nominations for PCC membership was submitted by Matthew (Matty) Fearon (Co-opted last year) proposed by Natasha Challoner, Seconded by Sian Stratton, Sian Stratton proposed by Natasha Challoner and seconded by Matthew Fearon and Graeme Parker, proposed by Jacqueline Hurst and seconded by Nena Davis.

The Nominations submitted were adopted with no dissent.

The other current members wished to continue their term of office.

Vicki Reay wished to step down as Deanery Synod Representative.

David Brown and David Gurney will remain as Deanery Reps until the end of their term of office in 2026.

There were no other nominations.

The Nominations submitted were adopted with no dissent.

In response to Mike's invitation for other nominations, there were none. One vacancy remains.

8. REPORTS

The booklet had been circulated in advance of the APCM to all members on the Electoral Roll who had given an email address.

Mike gave a brief outline on the reports as per the booklet. Andy thanked Sharon and Katy Hammond for the work they have done on Safeguarding.

Mike asked Andy to summarise the financial report. There had been a significant loss but we have finished the financial year in a good place. A step of faith is needed as monthly expenditure is greater than the current income. We need to cover the costs of the ministries of Hannah Smith and Katy Hammond. Andy asked if anyone had ideas for fund raising to speak to him or Mike and concluded that he hopes Thame Church will be in a stronger position as we move forward and asked for the congregations prayers and support. Andy thanked Natasha and Keith Civval who have worked tirelessly to keep the finances in good order.

Questions regarding the finance report:

Kevin Wallis asked about the church heating. This will need replacing. Unfortunately costs for this hadn't been included in the budget but Andy mentioned there are grants available and reserves could be used.

Andy referred to the Quinquennial Report that indicated there are other repairs needed. In particular the pillar nearest the lectern. Priority over greater need would be given to other minor repairs and other items.

Polly Rea asked about Friends of St Mary's. Mike confirmed the funds from the charity were now in the general fund. He explained the reason for the charity's demise as the time and effort it takes to generate income and that of the age of the charity members.

Mary Cleare suggested liaising with the townspeople for funding raising. Mike thanked Mary for this idea. Ian Cleare agreed that the community would in his experience be willing to support church repairs and costs of upkeep.

Ann Midwinter asked about solar panels. Mike explained the Diocese were originally opposed to this but are coming round to re thinking this, but progress would be slow.

Ian and Kevin gave a brief outline of the Zero Carbon survey. Helena had been responsible for this. Unfortunately the firm appointed to support this went into liquidation, but progress is now in hand.

In response to a question asked by Polly Rea about information reaching congregants who are not online, Mike reported paper copies of Church News were delivered weekly by Jackie.

9) REVIEW AND LOOKING FORWARD - CLERGY REPORT

Mike thanked David Brown for his hard work over the past difficult year. Andy was also thanked for bringing his gifts and energy to us and for being part of the part.

Other thanks were to Graham who has been a rock and worked tirelessly in pastoral ministry. Ann Midwinter was thanked for her ministry as Anna Chaplain and Emma was thanked for the support and time she has given to the villages following the retirement of Revd Peter Waterson. Mike reported that Emma has now completed her curacy and will be looking at pastures new and will go with our thanks and prayers.

Mike thanked Hannah for her work with families and children. He also thanked Jackie for her support and Katy for her gifts, concluding it is wonderful to have her as part of our team.

Mike went on to thank our retired clergy – Tom Haley, Tony Price, Ian Brown and Derek Witchell who fill in the gaps and step into roles often at the last minute. Mike also thanked Alison Price for her diligent service. Alison has now given notice to stand down from Ministry.

Mike paused to remember those we have lost over the past year.

Returning to other items in the clergy report Mike explained he will be working reduced hours from July 2025. We welcome the Diocese-supported appointment of Revd Heather McCulloch, who will work alongside her husband, Andy, helping our church into its next chapter.

In answer to a question raised by Ian Cleare, Mike confirmed potentially a new curate could join us from 2026 but there are no guarantees.

Focus on Young People and Young Adults

Mike reported that the Bishop is keen for support and partnership between churches to be made.

Human Sexuality

Mike explained briefly that there are differing views on this, and our community mirrors other CofE churches.

The JCC and Standing Committee are looking at finding a way through the maze of human sexuality. We are committed to fostering respectful dialogue and will provide opportunities for the congregation to engage in discussions in the months ahead.

10) UNIFICATION OF THE PARISHES

Mike gave a brief explanation from his written report on this item.

Rosalie asked why was the move necessary and shouldn't Barley Hill Church be dissolved, and why is St Catherine's included as they are a parish in their own right. Mike believes we are already stronger working together and the majority of congregants are in favour of unification. This will lessen the load on time, energy and finances.

Andy confirmed that Barley Hill Church were never given the option to dissolve. Covid gave us an opportunity to work and worship together.

Rosalie cited 'All Saint's' but Andy concluded this was a very different situation and unification for St Mary's, Barley Hill and St Catherine's will significantly reduce the workload involved currently as three separate parishes.

Mary Cleare asked if the two different styles of worship would continue. Mike confirmed for now the styles we have would continue but we also need to do something radically different to serve young people and young adults.

The loss of the 8am service was mentioned. Most of the congregants from this service now attend the 9am service. Mike stressed that it is not just 'older folk' who attend the 9am service and we have newcomers attending both services.

In answer to a question raised by Polly Rea, Mike confirmed St Catherine's will remain as is with funding ring fenced and the local community support the church with fund raising.

Other comments regarding the styles of worship were encouraging. The choir enriches the 9am and choristers come from Barley Hill Church, St Mary's and newcomers to the area. There is something for all.

Mike concluded the process will take time and we will continue to be transparent, listening to concerns both favourable and critical observations. These will be considered by the Diocese and others and the process unfolds.

11) OPEN QUESTIONS

In answer to a question raised by David Gurney, Mike concluded the 6.30pm slot would be held for young people and young adults. These groups are underrepresented in Thame Church.

Carole Galvin asked if we are in danger of assumption rather than asking the young people what they want. Andy responded by confirming that there is a working party involving young people and young adults.

Sally Davies asked about Meadowcroft. Graham Choldcroft confirmed services are held regularly but recruiting volunteers isn't easy. Details will be included on the website calendar.

ACTION: Jackie & Katy

Linda Ferris asked about the situation in the six villages. Mike explained that Revd Peter Waterson retired at the request of the Diocese. A vacancy post was created but as a '**House for Duty**' with no salary or pension. There has been very little interest to the profile on the website and therefore no shortlisting. Mike is meeting with the Diocese shortly to discuss the next steps. The post may be advertised again. In the meantime Emma will continue to oversee with Mike retaining his position as Rector of the Thame Benefice. Mike concluded with a request for prayers for the situation.

12. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT AUDITOR

Gravita were named as appointees. This was proposed by David Gurney and seconded by David Brown. All in favour. No Dissention.

Two copies of the Report and Financial Statement booklet for St Mary's were duly signed and will be posted off to Gravita this week.

ACTION: Jackie Hurst PCC Secretary

13. AOB

None

Andy closed in prayer

Attendees recorded:

Seamus Russell, Revd Emma Endean-Mills, Mary Cleare, Ian Cleare, Robert Ridgway, Linda Ferris, Sue Lay, Geoff Rushman, Terry Galvin, Carole Galvin, Margaret Jewson, Sally Davies, Owen Davies, Natasha Challoner, Alison Kelleher, Laurie Kelleher, Steve Harding, Paul Clark, Andy Clamp, Robert Paterson, Graeme Parker, Andy Clark, Rosalie Gibson, Polly Rea, Brian Rea, Kevin Wallis, Cynthia Jackson, David Jackson, David Gurney, Sharon Bond, Katy Hammond, Ann Midwinter, Daphne Bartlett and Sian Stratton.