

PARISH OF WITNEY
ANNUAL CHURCH MEETINGS
SUNDAY 11TH MAY 2025 12:15PM
ST MARY THE VIRGIN, WITNEY



Present for both meetings:	Hester Jones (chair), Ashley Arnold, Kate Banks, Julia Bee, Lawrence Bee, Melanie Bennette, Jacky Bone, Jill Carter, Rebecca Coatsworth, Chris Dingwall-Jones, Alexina Fantato, Maurizio Fantato, Michele Foot, Ian Galletley, Jean Greenway, Kerry Griffiths, Melody Helm, Monica Hester, Josie Holmes, Keith Holmes, Brian Howden, Chris Howden, Liz Johnson, Christine Lever, Elpie Lewis, Kate Lockwood, Sheena Menon, Rosemary Peirce, Mohammad Saadatpour*, Robert Seares, Hosni Seyedebrahimi*, Maryam Sharif*, Ruth Sheppard, Ruth Smith, Bryce Staniland, Janice Staniland, David Taft, Linda Taft, Anne Taylor, M D Thomas*, Charlotte Tremain, Helen West*, Linden West*, Stuart Wild, Margaret Williams, Richard Young * Parishioners in attendance
Apologies for both meetings:	Jonathan Brooks, Judy Brooks, Andy Brown, Michael Foot, Paul Francis, Susan Grenfell, Dair Henderson, Dilly Hilton, Tom Hilton, Sue Hodges, Jeremy Lasman, Helen Meyrick, Kirsty Morgan, Pippa Nash, Chris Riley, Alison Spicer, Andrew Whitehouse, Lorna Whitehouse, Jean Wild

Item	
1.1	The meeting opened with prayer.
2.1	Apologies were received as above.
3.1	<u>Annual Meeting of Parishioners</u>
3.1.1	Minutes of the last meeting Minutes of the last meeting on 21 April 2024 were proposed Charlotte Tremain, seconded Kate Banks, approved by show of hands.
3.1.2	Election of Churchwardens Jeremy Lasman has agreed to continue, proposed Michele Foot, seconded Andrew Brown. Kate Banks has agreed to continue, proposed Ashley Arnold, seconded Linda Taft. The election was uncontested and approved by show of hands. This is the first APCM since Revd Dr Hester Jones was licensed at Rector, and Revd Dr Chris Dingwall-Jones was licensed as Team Vicar. Kate Banks and Jeremy Lasman were thanked for their extraordinary service during the vacancy; Hester and Chris have appreciated their kindness, support and wisdom. The meeting of Parishioners closed.
4.1	<u>Annual Parochial Church Meeting</u>
4.1	Minutes of the last meeting Minutes of last APCM on 21 April 2024 were proposed Charlotte Tremain, seconded Kate Banks, approved by show of hands. There were no matters arising.
4.2	Reports
4.2.1	Proceedings of the PCC Since the last APCM in April 2024 the PCC has held four full meetings and additional meetings for specific purposes. In the last 12 months <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PCC has worked with the Archdeacon and the Patrons to oversee the appointments of our new Team Rector and Team Vicar. • The PCC has received regular reports from our Safeguarding Officer, and monitors risk assessments for church buildings and activities

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<p>4.2.2</p> <p>4.2.3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty applications and DAC approval was sought for the installation of a bench in Hailey churchyard and repairs to the bell at Holy Trinity. The PCC supported the Witney Bellingring Society in a faculty application for a ringing simulator in St Mary's bell tower. • The PCC has monitored the financial position of the parish and each DCC; agreed the budget; supported a parish appeal; and started a stewardship campaign. • The Governance Policy; Electronic Communications & Social Media Policy; Safeguarding Policy; Volunteer Policy; Health & Safety Policy; and Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy have been reviewed. All policies are available on the Benefice website. • The Church of England Safer recruitment process has been adopted for volunteers working with children, young people or vulnerable adults. <p>Safeguarding Report</p> <p>Over the last year the parish has continued to develop and review its safeguarding policies and practices for both in person and online events.</p> <p>Following the Makin review at the end of 2024 the Diocese has kept parishes up to date with work it is doing to ensure our Diocesan safeguarding practices are rigorous and fit for purpose, this will be ongoing for several years on a local and national level</p> <p>The Diocese encourages anyone who wants to, to undertake basic level training, this- along with foundation and domestic abuse level- is compulsory for PCC/DCC members, children's workers and other roles.</p> <p>We use the Parish Dashboard system to record much of this work.</p> <p>Concerns have continued to be reported and dealt with as needed.</p> <p>The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016.</p> <p>Annual Fabric Reports</p> <p><u>St Mary the Virgin Fabric Report</u></p> <p>Last year has been a relatively quiet one in terms of the upkeep and renewal of the fabric of St Mary's. Other than general maintenance tasks, the five-yearly electrical inspection was completed and passed, new wiring was installed to provide independent sockets for the AV tower in the Wenman Room, and new lighting and power supply installed in the storage areas behind the All Saints Chapel (including lighting above the Choir cupboards).</p> <p>Our Inspecting Architect has progressed the Quinquennial Inspection, and we have also instructed a consultancy to help us prepare a plan to Net Zero for the building. We await both reports. Detailed designs for the replacement of the North and Winchester Room doors, and an internal glass and wooden box structure for the West door have been completed, ready for submission to the DAC and to obtain planning permission.</p> <p>We remain hugely grateful to all those who volunteer their time to maintain and beautify the Church, including our enthusiastic group of flower arrangers and those who regularly come along to church cleaning. In particular, Jill Carter has stepped down from the role of sacristan after many years of service, and we must express particular thanks to her not only for her work in this role, but also for the many items of beauty that she has created for the church.</p> <p><u>Holy Trinity Fabric Report</u></p> <p>In September, Bishop Gavin came to Holy Trinity and duly blessed the north roof of the nave with the aid of a super-soaker, supplied by the Vicar.</p> <p>The vestry roof is now almost completed with the decision to remove a redundant chimney taken. Making good has been done by a stonemason. Sadly, during some exceptionally stormy weather, considerable water ingress occurred within the vestry causing significant damage to the area</p>

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4.2.3 contd	<p>around the window. Our architect, Peter Preston, made it clear that Everest roofing is to take on the repairs to make good.</p> <p>Work will be required to carry rainwater from the new downpipes out to the foul sewer on New Yatt Rd. This will be a very expensive exercise. A survey of the drains will be carried out when we are rid of scaffolding.</p> <p>The organ maintenance continues with twice yearly tuning. There is significant work required to the instrument but estimates for the cost are very large indeed. Gate pillars have been repaired at last, and we are awaiting the new pier caps expected week comm. 31.3.25 The bell is to be repaired. Whites of Appleton are ready but await the arrival of scaffolding. We have had a fault with a small number of ceiling lights which have been removed and sent back to manufacturers. We await a report from Lowe & Oliver. A small electronic part of Reiko's programming system was replaced at the same time. Trees are an ongoing issue but there are now people on the Town Council who are sympathetic to our view that trees are seriously dominating the church, to the detriment of the building. (It has been noted that a very large number of healthy trees have been removed from W. Oxon District Council grounds - this occurring during a vacancy for a tree officer.)</p> <p>We await a report on why they were felled. The office grounds lie within the same conservation area as our churchyard and thus subject to the same restrictions. Usual servicing of heaters, gas boiler, fire extinguishers, electricity inspection have taken place as required.</p> <p>A record was kept last year of some 27 wildflowers which appeared in the churchyard including a number of Pyramid Orchids - a real joy. HT was congratulated by Angus Whitburn for the enormous benefit in wilding this space. It is considered the most successful of all the areas for which they care.</p> <p><u>St John the Evangelist, Hailey, Fabric Report</u></p> <p>After over a year of negotiations regarding the quality of the stone suggested for the replacement of the Chancel Cross, the architect has successfully negotiated to appoint a new stone mason and to source the stone locally. General approval has been given by Ecclesiastical Insurance. It is hoped that the cross will be back on the roof soon.</p> <p>Both boilers have been repaired and serviced recently. The organ was repaired but a key has stopped working again.</p> <p>The recent Quinquennial report has identified major work required which has not been budgeted for. Priority work includes repairs to the West End gable cross and clearing of the back and valley gutters. A crack in the pulpit has also re-opened so will need to be monitored and possibly repaired. A small group has been put together to work on fundraising for the repairs needed.</p> <p>The churchyard continues to be maintained by a group of committed local volunteers who aim to make it a haven for wildlife and wildflowers.</p> <p>Huge thanks to Robin Carr and John Haskell for all they do.</p> <p><u>St John the Baptist, Curbridge, Fabric Report</u></p> <p>The church's condition remains sound. The building is watertight, the heating system effective if a little old and the roof strong now that essential ridge tile replacements have been undertaken. All costs have been covered by the congregation.</p> <p>Some stonework is a little eroded and the footpath is only in moderate condition.</p> <p>The bell is seized up and we are hoping to get it freed this summer. The organ functions as it should in all but the coldest weather. Guttering is rust-free and has been repainted, as have the main doors.</p> <p>The graveyard is well maintained and is full of wildflowers in springtime thanks to an amended mowing regime. Dead and dying trees have been removed and massive mature trees pruned of dead and overhanging branches.</p>

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4.2.4	<p>Finance and Statement of accounts</p> <p>The full accounts for 2024 have been displayed in the churches for the previous 7 days and are available to view on the website.</p> <p>The accounts have been reviewed and signed off by our Inspecting Accountants, Whitley Stimpson. All figures relate to consolidated accounts (combined PCC account and DCC accounts).</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>The Parish Of Witney Sources of Unrestricted Income 2024 Total £267,246</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Sources of Unrestricted Income 2024</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Amount (£)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Regular Congregational Giving</td> <td>152,742</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Donations</td> <td>42,316</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Legacies & Grants</td> <td>17,830</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Festivals and Events</td> <td>33,004</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Weddings, Funerals, Lettings</td> <td>18,846</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Income</td> <td>2,508</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> <p>The Parish of Witney Unrestricted Expenditure 2024 Total £262,117</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Unrestricted Expenditure 2024</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Amount (£)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Parish Share</td> <td>113,500</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Utilities & Insurance</td> <td>47,744</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ministry & Services</td> <td>26,975</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Parish Office</td> <td>12,963</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Maintenance & Repairs</td> <td>8,388</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Giving via the Parish</td> <td>6,019</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wedding and Funeral Expenses</td> <td>1,486</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Professional Fees</td> <td>19,438</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other costs</td> <td>25,603</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Income for the year ended 31st December 2024 totalled £380,358, with total expenditure of £411,620. These totals include Restricted/Designated and Unrestricted Funds. ➤ Unrestricted income totalled £267,245, while costs amounted to £262,117, resulting in an operating surplus of £5,128. ➤ This result reflects the continued generosity of our congregations both in terms of regular giving and also in response to an appeal for one off donations to enable the Parish to meet its operating budget. This is the fifth year that such an appeal has had to be launched; donor fatigue resulted in a reduction in the amounts given (2024 £34,738 down from a peak of £56,004 in 2020). ➤ Total Congregational Giving (Regular Giving, Loose Plate Collections plus Gift Aid, but not Donations/Appeals) covers 58% of our running costs, up 2% on 2023. ➤ 2024 income benefitted from a number of highly successful festivals and events. 	Category	Amount (£)	Regular Congregational Giving	152,742	Donations	42,316	Legacies & Grants	17,830	Festivals and Events	33,004	Weddings, Funerals, Lettings	18,846	Other Income	2,508	Category	Amount (£)	Parish Share	113,500	Utilities & Insurance	47,744	Ministry & Services	26,975	Parish Office	12,963	Maintenance & Repairs	8,388	Giving via the Parish	6,019	Wedding and Funeral Expenses	1,486	Professional Fees	19,438	Other costs	25,603
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4.2.4 contd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Our operating costs increased by 8.25% in 2024. However, once the provisions for two quinquennial inspections, the electrical inspection at St Mary’s and some one-off electrical improvements are stripped out, these costs increased by 5.7%, driven largely by increases in energy costs. We have recently re-negotiated our tariffs for both Gas and Electricity, which should see a reduction of up to 25% in unit costs. ➤ A deficit of £36,210 in restricted/designated funds primarily reflects the repairs to the roof at Holy Trinity. <p>Trends over the last 4 years</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>The Parish of Witney Sources of Unrestricted Income 2024 total £267,245</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> <p>The Parish of Witney Unrestricted Expenditure 2024 total £262,117</p> </div> <p>There has been a steady increase in giving but it only covers 58% of our running costs and we need to reach 70-80% for financial stability. It is hoped the current stewardship campaign will help.</p> <p>4.2.5 Electoral roll on 11 April 2025</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">St. Mary’s:</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: right;">90</td> <td style="width: 60%;">(from 119 in 2024)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Holy Trinity:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">48</td> <td>(from 57 in 2024)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hailey:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">31</td> <td>(from 34 in 2024)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Curbridge:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">7</td> <td>(from 7 in 2024)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">176</td> <td>(from 217 in 2024)</td> </tr> </table>	St. Mary’s:	90	(from 119 in 2024)	Holy Trinity:	48	(from 57 in 2024)	Hailey:	31	(from 34 in 2024)	Curbridge:	7	(from 7 in 2024)	Total:	176	(from 217 in 2024)
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4.2.6	<p>Rector's report</p> <p>Thank you for the generous welcome, prayers, love and the messages of support following my mother's death and funeral. Hospitality is one of our core values and I have felt generously welcomed and supported. Thank you to everyone who has found time for 1-1 meetings in order to help me 'hit the ground running'.</p> <p>The last three months since my licensing in January have been full and varied. I am enormously grateful to wardens, clergy colleagues, PCC Secretary, Safeguarding officers, and Ministry team, and day by day, to Michelle, our stalwart administrator, alongside so many others, who have kept the ship afloat across the vacancy, and continued to help and guide into this new stage of our life as a benefice. There is much to learn, in a new and varied context, and so many have been so helpful and patient. And so many have reached out with welcome and encouragement: thank you for your kindness and help as I acclimatize. It has been a great joy to speak, one by one, with a large number of our community, and I am so grateful to the many who have come forward and made time to do this. If this is still something you would like to do, please do speak to Michelle who oversees the diary. I welcome all that I have heard; and continue to pray, reflect and speak to the Ministry Team, as we seek to discern God's will for the next stage of the life of the Benefice.</p> <p>It is very good to inhabit our liturgy, firstly. We offer Morning and Evening Prayer, day by day, and I am grateful to those who continue to support this. We proclaim this offering of daily prayer, in a place in which such prayer has been offered over many centuries, as one of the building blocks of our life as a Benefice. We also offer a number of Weekday Eucharists, in person and on zoom. And many occasional offices continue to be celebrated, involving a large number of our community. Our verbal worship is beautifully supported by many musicians of different kinds and in different places. We are extremely fortunate in this, and in the skill and dedication of our directors of music. Our fund-raising concert in April was a truly moving and inspiring event with a full church and much enjoyment.</p> <p>It was a pleasure to be a part of the support and welcome to asylum seekers from overseas, and in particular from Iran. Some have sought and received baptism, and many continue, even some months on, to engage enthusiastically with weekly teaching and support, offered by Jonathan Brooks and myself. We have both found this an enlivening and affirming experience, and it has been wonderful to see our friends growing in confidence and in faith.</p> <p>In such a large Benefice, able oversight of funds and giving is absolutely essential. We are truly blessed in our Treasurer, Jeremy, and I am so grateful for his wisdom and commitment. Early in my time, we decided to launch a stewardship programme, to pre-empt the end of year appeal that has marked previous years. Consequently, sermons given by Chris and myself focused on the theme of giving, within the context of the lectionary readings. The team followed this preaching up with a leaflet that explained the need for us all to consider raising our giving in the context of rising prices. It is too early to see the fruits of this undertaking, but I pray and hope that we will be moved by a spirit of generosity, such that we can cover our costs as a benefice, without the need for the last minute drive. We are aware of the pressure on all at the moment, and are so grateful for the generosity of so many.</p> <p>One of the challenges that emerged soon after my arrival, was the imminent departure of our youth leader Laverne who has dynamically served the young of the Benefice and the eleven schools with which we enjoy a link, for almost four years and is looking ahead to pastures new. As we look ahead to this time where we won't be supported by a full-time youth leader, I ask you to reflect prayerfully on what might be offered in this important area. Might you be able to support Junior Church, once in a while? Might you even consider a talk to the collective worship in a local school? Please do speak with myself or Chris, if this could be something you might possibly be called to offer.</p>

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<p>4.2.6 contd</p> <p>4.2.7</p>	<p>It was very good to share time with some of the Benefice on retreat in St Mary's Wantage. I am very grateful to Liz for coordinating this, and for all who contributed with reflections and prayer. As a Christian community, we are nothing, if we are not prayerful.</p> <p>Pastoral care is of utmost importance in any parish or benefice, and I am truly grateful to share this work, both with clergy colleagues, with Liz Johnson in particularly heading up the Nurture group and pastoral care in St Mary's, and also with our Anna Chaplain team, led by Julia Bee, whose work in supporting residents of local care homes is also absolutely crucial.</p> <p>At this point, I am looking forward to my first experience of Festival month; I had a taste of this in the Cotswold Wedfest, when St Mary's was full of prospective couples and organisations offering wedding-related services. It is wonderful to see church open to the community we seek to serve. It is clear from the prayers on the Board that many, day by day, come to pray and to intercede; that is a wonderful gift we are able to offer the wider town community. I pray that we may continue to develop that outreach and respond to the needs of the community more and more. It was a great privilege to be asked by the Mayor to bless the statue commemorating those who died and those who gave of their time and skills in the Covid Lockdown; and to being a part in the town's VE day celebrations.</p> <p>I sense we are a benefice in transition. There are fewer ordained people and the team is more stretched. I am thankful for a gifted and diverse Ministry Team, currently reflecting and praying on how to take the benefice forward. It is a process of discerning God's will and I encourage you to pray about it, and come and talk to me.</p> <p>Deanery Synod Report Deanery Synod Meetings were held on 17 July 2024, 26 November 2024 and 20 March 2025, chaired by the Area Dean, Revd Margaret Dixon.</p> <p>The two main topics for the July meeting were work with young people, and environmental work across the Witney Deanery, with Laverne Williams and Kate Banks both reporting on how we approach these areas in our Benefice.</p> <p>The November meeting was very much focused on safeguarding, both in the national Church and in our own Deanery; we looked at the message from Bishop Stephen and there were responses to this from PSOs and others responsible for safeguarding in their own churches.</p> <p>In March, we looked at the Deanery Mission Action Plan, in which we have three main areas of focus in line with the Diocese and the national Church. These are Environmental action, Children, young people and families and Addressing poverty, inequality and loneliness.</p> <p>The area of children and young people had also been addressed at the recent Diocesan Synod and we looked at the report and the plans to engage more with young people.</p>
<p>4.3</p>	<p>Churchwardens' report During the last year we have been delighted to welcome both Rev'd Dr Chris Dingwall Jones as our new Team Vicar, and the Rev'd Dr Hester Jones as our new Team Rector. We are extremely grateful to both of them for the manner in which they have taken up their roles to serve within the larger Ministry Team, and to help our many ministries within the Parish to continue to grow and flourish. Hester and Chris have both settled in brilliantly and are a real asset to the benefice. We couldn't have hoped for anything better.</p> <p>For much of 2024, the Parish was in a period of vacancy. During this time, we benefitted from the wisdom, experience and commitment of Rev'd Preb Mark Thomas, as our senior ordained minister within the Parish. We are enormously grateful to him for his spiritual insight and leadership, as well as the invaluable contributions from the rest of the Ministry Team during this period of transition.</p> <p>Although any period of vacancy is a huge challenge for a Parish, the various reports within this review reflect the fact that we were able to sustain and, in certain instances, grow our various</p>

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4.3 contd	<p>ministries. So much of this was thanks to all the many volunteers who continue to give of their time and talents in so many different ways; contributing to our worship, cleaning and maintaining our buildings, ensuring that they are beautifully presented to all who visit or make use of them, running or contributing to the many groups that take place each week in the parish, and volunteering as part of the teams that organise the festivals and events that help us serve our community.</p> <p>Thanks to Kate Lockwood, PCC Secretary, for her organisation and support of PCC meetings and Standing Committee meetings; and to all the deputy wardens, who have been outstanding.</p> <p>A real testimony to the unity of the Body of Christ; 'For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many are one body, so it is with Christ' 1 Corinthians 12, v 12.</p>
4.4 4.4.1	<p>Elections</p> <p>Deputy Churchwardens & Windrush representative</p> <p>The following people were proposed and duly elected by show of hands.</p> <p>St Mary's: Ashley Arnold – proposed Kate Banks, seconded Linda Taft Andy Brown – proposed Jill Carter, seconded Michele Foot</p> <p>Holy Trinity: Charlotte Tremain – proposed Kate Lockwood, seconded Paul Francis</p> <p>Hailey: Kirsty Morgan – proposed Elpie Lewis, seconded Claire Hermon</p> <p>Curbridge: Ian Galletley – proposed Christine Lever, seconded Val Pole</p> <p>Windrush: Janice Staniland – proposed Dave Pizzey, seconded Bryce Staniland</p>
4.4.2	<p>Deanery Synod Elections</p> <p>Laverne will be leaving the benefice in August so one place has become vacant on the Deanery Synod, to be filled by Jeremy Lasman, proposed Kate Lockwood, seconded Michele Foot, elected by show of hands.</p>
4.5	<p>Appointment of Independent examiners</p> <p>Whitley Stimpson have been our independent examiners for several years. They have a great understanding of how parish accounts work and Jeremy recommends we appoint them for the next year.</p> <p>Proposed Jeremy Lasman, seconded Kate Banks, approved by show of hands.</p>
4.6	<p>Any other business</p> <p>None</p>
4.7	<p>Date of next APCM</p> <p>Sunday 10 May 2026 at 12:15pm</p>

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____