



**Agenda
and
Reports
for the
Annual Parochial Church Meeting**



Held in the Church Hall
Sunday 27 April 2025 at 12 noon

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Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2025

Agenda

- 1 Prayers
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Minutes of meeting held on 28 April 2024
- 4 Election of Churchwardens
- 5 Election of PCC
- 6 Approval of Sidespersons and Senior Sidespersons
- 7 Discussion and approval of the following reports:
 - a The Electoral Roll
 - b The Activities of the PCC, its Committees and related Parochial Operations
 - c The Churchwardens' Report
 - d The Activities of the Deanery Synod
- 8 The Financial Statements for 2024
- 9 Appointment of the Independent Examiner of the Accounts
- 10 Questions and Announcements
- 11 Closing Remarks



Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

28 April 2024

The meeting commenced at 12.12 p.m. in the Church hall after the morning service. The Priest-in-charge, Rev'd Dr David Vannerley, and 28 parishioners were present.

PRAYERS were led by the Rev'd Dr David Vannerley.

APOLOGIES were received from seven members.

THE MINUTES of the meeting on 16 April 2023 had been published online. Miss Alex Knight proposed, and Mrs Angela Doe seconded, that they be accepted as a correct record, and this was agreed unanimously.

MATTERS ARISING. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

VESTRY MEETING. Mr Stephen Barker and Miss Shirley Hagger had been duly proposed and seconded; no other names were put forward, and they were unanimously accepted to continue in their role as the churchwardens.

REPRESENTATIVES ON DEANERY SYNOD. Dr Philip Knight, having been re-elected in 2023 for a term of three years, continued as our representative. The post of second representative remained unfilled.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL 2024–2025:

Sally Waters as our Reader was *ex officio* a member of the PCC, as were the churchwardens, and Dr Philip Knight as Deanery Synod representative. Nine other people had been duly nominated and seconded before the meeting to serve on the council. No other names were put forward, and these nine were unanimously voted into office:

Mrs Jean Baker	Mr Peter Brown	Miss Enid Dixon
Mrs Angela Doe	Mrs Barbara Jackson	Miss Alex Knight
Mr Robert Mathews	Mr James Taylor	Mr David Wood

DUTY WARDENS. Since the Covid pandemic one person had been acting as Duty Warden each Sunday, with some others available to help if need be. This system continued, with regular Duty Wardens being Mr Peter Brown, Mr Brian Kennett, Mr Robert Mathews and Mrs Libby Nicholls. Deputy Wardens were Mr Jeremy Barford, Mrs Angela Doe and Mr David Wood. These were approved unanimously by the meeting.

ELECTORAL ROLL. This was stated by Enid Dixon's report to be 82, and the report was approved unanimously.

REPORTS ON THE WORK OF THE PCC AND OTHER GROUPS.

These had been distributed beforehand and were unanimously approved.

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT.

This had also been distributed beforehand; there were no questions, and it was also unanimously approved.

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT.

This report, by Rosemary Walters, was also received; there were no questions, and it was also unanimously approved.

FINANCE. The Treasurer, Miss Alexandra Knight, had also prepared and circulated her report and accounts for the previous year, 2023.

She reported that for the sixth consecutive year the church had a deficit on the unrestricted funds, due to a reduced congregation size and to increased costs passed on to us by the Diocese. The deficit for the year was £22,788.

However, our voluntary giving rose by nearly £9,000, due to planned giving as a result of our stewardship campaign in late 2022, and to a legacy. Running costs rose by nearly 20 per cent through inflation, and the parish share increased by over £12,000.

Lettings income from the hall generated over £10,000, though this is not yet back up to the pre-pandemic level.

Many people had already transferred their regular donations to the Parish Giving Scheme, which saved us some work. The Diocese had now stopped dealing with Gift Aid claims directly, so our own account had been set up with HMRC in order to claim gift aid on relevant donations. Regarding the Parish Share, the contribution from the Archbishop's School had now finished, and we were waiting to hear how the Vacancy would affect our share.

The upkeep of our buildings was a constant call on our resources, but was helped greatly by the Friends of St Stephen's. The present project was concerned with the preservation of the windows. We were also considering how we might make our buildings more carbon neutral, including examining the viability of solar panels on the hall.

QUESTIONS:

Q: How much money is made off the website?

A: Not much, although there are buttons leading to donation pages.

Q: There was £3m made available from the Diocese for improvements to churches. Can we take advantage of this?

A: This is solely for Maidstone and Margate.

Angela Doe voiced the meeting's gratitude to Alex for the immense amount of hard work she put into the financial side of the church's life.

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER.

The Independent Examiner of the accounts, Peter Barton, FCA, was said to be happy to continue. Alex proposed he be re-appointed, Robert Mathews seconded it, and the motion was carried unanimously.

There were no further questions or comments from the floor, and the Meeting was closed at 12.37 p.m. with the Grace.

THE ELECTORAL ROLL FOR THE YEAR 2025–2026

Every 6 years the Church Electoral Roll must be revised and renewed; and this was such a year.

The number on the roll at the time of writing is 75.

Thank you to all those who renewed their enrolment and to the nine new people who also decided to enter their names onto our Roll: John Bennett, Jenny Bennett, Helen Brunger, Patrick Clark, Biobele Harry-Amos, Eduard Heyning, Patricia Moon, Elizabeth Tipton, Peter Tipton.

By being included on the Church Roll you become a voting member of our Church ensuring there is a group of lay members involved in the decision-making process of the Church.

Enid Dixon, Electoral Roll Officer.

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ANNUAL REPORTS

Proceedings of the Parochial Church Council

Names of PCC members are listed above in last year's minutes. We met on six occasions over 2024, and since the retirement of Rev'd Kevin Maddy the chair has been taken by Peter Brown. We discussed, of course, a wide variety of matters which needed decisions, details of most of which come under one of the headings in the following pages. Some of these questions remain unsolved month after month for a variety of reasons. One such long term problem is how to display the 'achievements' of Sir Roger Manwood, which for many years have been in the care of the City Museums, but which they now want returned to the church. Another project, complex and expensive, has been the protection and repair of our windows. There are different possibilities to appraise and long waits for expert opinions. We are being helped with the cost of this by money from the Friends of St Stephen's, but we also have to explore funding from various grants. Some apparently simple projects such as replacing the church notice-board by the gates become entangled in unforeseen complexities when dealing with different authorities and remain stubbornly on our agenda, meeting after meeting

We were very sorry that James Taylor felt he could no longer continue his PCC duties in October; he had worked hard for us as Eco-Church representative, getting us to the level of a bronze award.

However, in November Dr Victoria Field joined the PCC, and we shall be very glad of her experience and knowledge of sources of grants and funding.

We are fortunate now in having Jo Heath reporting regularly to the PCC on Safeguarding: a matter of perennial importance to the Church of England, and allied to that to have had Enid Dixon overseeing the training courses taken online by our members to fulfil the national requirements for PCCs. We thank Enid for her most valuable work in this area as she steps down from the role.

Because of the other bookings of the church hall we were unable to offer accommodation to help the work of Catching Lives with the homeless over the past winter, but the Sunday nights which we had previously covered were able to be taken over by another church.

We decided that our contributions of food to those who need a helping hand should now go to the Community Larder at All Saints' Church, largely because of Sally's involvement there during her training.

The major matter over the year was of course the vacancy in the ministry. We are enormously grateful to Fr David Vannerley for what he has been doing in leading our worship and becoming our interim Priest in Charge, when he thought he had retired, but this was never to be a permanent solution. The process has required long discussion about affordability and the role(s) to be taken on by the next incumbent under the guidance of the Archdeacon. But progress is being made.

REPORTS FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS OF THE CHURCH

Acorn Community Café

It has been a happy year for the Acorn Community Café. We regularly welcome over 30 people each week. We are also so pleased that each week a group from 'Without Exceptions' join us. We are so lucky to have a wonderful team of people who take turns to set up and serve the coffee each week. Also Ann and Sheila kindly make cheese scones on alternate weeks. Ann's husband John also brings surprise offerings of vegetables for us to sell that he grows on his allotment. There is a lovely buzz to the morning and any new faces are quickly welcomed by one of the regulars. We have had the occasional Charity morning when we've raised money for a local organisation. These are always well supported. In November we raised £363 to be shared between Porchlight and L'Arche.

In December we joined in the Christmas tree festival in the church. Our 'Crafty Lady' Christine Richie managed to involve everyone in making a decoration for our tree and fun was had decorating it in the church.

We reckon that we have contact with up to 50 people throughout the year. It is such a privilege to be part of this outreach into the community.

Libby and Jenny



Baptisms

Although we are not back to pre-Covid numbers there were 8 baptisms through the year.

I have always felt that most baptisms happen without any involvement of the congregation and are rather an add-on to parish life. Having these services after the main service means it is less a part of the church's life. In recent years often 30 or 40 guests are invited which makes the logistics of incorporating this number of people into the main service difficult—particularly as a large number of guests are totally unused to worship. However, this year we had the wonderful experience of 3 baptisms from the congregation. Nkesichi and Oscar were baptised in the service and Patricia was baptised in preparation for her confirmation, also in the service.

It was such a privilege to share these occasions as a congregation.

Five other families brought their children for baptism during the year.

I have been so very blessed to be involved in the organising of the ministry of baptisms here at St Stephen's for nearly 18 years. I have met all the families in their homes beforehand—to gather the details required and to talk through the service and its meaning. At the service families are given a book of bible stories so each home has at least the basic stories of faith available. Mary also sends a card every year for the first 5 years—this is a mammoth task! It is hoped to arrange a tea party later in the year inviting all the families we have had contact with recently.

I feel that it is time for me to hand over to someone else, so propose to say that in a year's time—at the next APCM—I will step down from helping in this way. This will give someone else the privilege of meeting with families or indeed will leave it free for a new incumbent to alter the way we arrange baptisms.

Libby

Bellringing

The bells of St Stephen's are now ringing regularly and aim to ring at least once on Sunday before either the Eucharist service in the morning or Evensong. This is normally organised bands, as this way we always know we have enough ringers to ring.

We have had several people express an interest in learning to ring over the past year, but unfortunately they do not stay. Although we do explain it can take several weeks to learn the basic handling of a bell, I think some people still expect to ring competently much more quickly, and therefore leave. This said, we do have a mother and son who are regular at practices and when we have had open ringing, they have boosted our numbers for Sunday service ringing. We are still looking for more learners so anyone interested, please get in contact with me. May I take this opportunity to thank Paul Davis (Vice-Captain) and Len Huckstep (St Dunstan's Captain) for all the hard work they have put in in assisting me to teach learners.

During 2024 we rang a total of 104 times, 50 Sunday service ringing, and 52 Monday practices. Sundays were 48 quarter peal attempts of which 37 were successful. This is slightly down on our success rate from last year but is still a good effort, with more and more methods being rung in each quarter peal. I rang eleven different methods in one quarter peal, which was a first for me! We had open ringing on Christmas Day and a quarter peal which was successful for St Stephen's Day.



Monday evening practices have continued to be very popular for ringers from other towers to attend, and on some occasions we have had 20 plus ringers present. This is wonderful, but hard work to ensure everyone has an even go at ringing, and includes a variety of methods from beginners and basic bell handling to advanced methods.

We entered two competitions in 2024; we won the Call Change Competition, and in March this year we retained our title by coming first out of six teams at St Mary's Teynham). The second competition, the Six Bell Striking Competition we also won and therefore went on to represent the Canterbury District of the KCACR (Kent County Association of Change Ringers) in the County Final which was held at Beckenham in September, and out of four teams we won. We will be entering a band for the Canterbury District competition again in May this year. This is the first time I have ever known St Stephen's to be the holders of all three cups in one year, a real achievement, so thank you to those who rang in our teams.

If you would like to continue to hear the bells, we still need some more ringers. Anyone interested in learning to ring should contact me for more information. Anyone from the age of 10 is able to learn to ring. You could even make it a family activity!

My thanks go out to all the support I have had and particularly to the St Dunstan's band who regularly help us out.

Jane Huxley, Tower Captain

Churchyard

The Churchyard Steering Group exists to enhance the churchyard and to improve the experience of those visiting St Stephen's.

Having completed much of the clearing work over the past few years, we are now concentrating on keeping the churchyard tidy and removing excess growth as necessary. We want to ensure that people can walk around the churchyard in safety while encouraging native flora and fauna for us all to enjoy. During 2024 we installed a bug-hotel to encourage wild-life and hope to see positive effects over the coming years.

The Churchyard Working Party meets on the first Monday of each month to carry out general gardening and maintenance tasks. The group comprises a core of stalwart volunteers with others joining us when they can; everyone is welcome. The appearance of the churchyard has been greatly enhanced by their work, which has been recognised and much appreciated by visitors.

We have a Quiet Garden below the east window of the church, where people can sit to enjoy the peace and ecology of the space.

The extension to the New Garden of Remembrance to the south of the church was approved in 2023 and is now being used for the interment of ashes of parishioners, providing a peaceful place for families and friends to visit and remember the departed.

The churchyard is closed for burials and many graves have no family in the area to maintain them. We launched our 'Adopt-a-Grave' scheme before the pandemic, and it works well but now needs extending. Participants in the scheme weed their adopted graves and plant native plants, especially those that encourage wildlife. The overall look of the churchyard is thus greatly improved, and the enjoyment of visitors is enhanced.

We were delighted to be contacted by the King's School early in the year. Students visited the churchyard during March and worked hard to improve several of the graves and to plant flowers. Their hard work was much appreciated by the congregation and visitors.

Students from the University of Kent contacted us in the spring to ask if they could film part of their final year project in the churchyard. We were very glad to support them with this, and were invited to see their completed film later in the year.

We are always pleased to welcome people to get involved with improving and using the churchyard. If you are interested, please email: churchyard@ststephenscantebury.net



The Eco Church Programme: 'Helping us care practically for Creation in our churches'. We obtained a Bronze award overall in 2020, but now our rating is Gold for Worship and Teaching and Silver for Land. We can all calculate our personal carbon footprint on <https://climatehero.me/>. This is a useful and informative exercise; let us know your result and we can feed back our scores to the Eco Deanery group.

And we now have a bug hotel and bird boxes in the churchyard!

The Friends of St Stephen's

We had a busy year in 2024 beginning, as usual, with our popular Soup Lunch on January 27th. On March 13th, Thomas Reilly spoke engagingly about his trek across Baffin Island with his friends. As well as describing the trek itself, he told us about the preparations, the dangers and the Inuit people. The audience was very engaged. They asked a lot of questions and chatted to Thomas over drinks and canapés after the talk.

May 18th saw a Spring Cream Tea which was enjoyed by a good number of people and on June 8th, we joined the Residents' Association at their Big Help Out event. We had a stall which helped to raise our profile and let more people in the area know what we do. The Thanet Clarinet Trio gave a concert on September 7th which was very popular, and we were very grateful to them, especially to Eduard Heyning who organised it for us. The audience enjoyed the concert and chatted to members of the Trio afterwards over drinks and canapés.

Our ever-popular Nosh and Knowledge Quiz was held on 12 October. We are grateful to Jeremy and Rosie Barford for running the quiz for us again. Everyone enjoyed a fun evening.

We sponsored a tree in the Church Christmas Tree Festival during the first weekend of December, which was very well attended. There was a happy atmosphere throughout the three days with lots of children amazed and enthralled by all the decorations.

We were very sorry that Val Thistleton decided to step back from the committee after more than 20 years. We are most grateful for all her hard work over the years and to the support of Alan at many events. We were delighted to welcome three new members to the committee: Jo Heath, Sally MacLean and Victoria Field. Their enthusiasm and fresh ideas are much appreciated.

We look forward to several events during 2025 and hope to see you at as many of them as possible. If you are interested in joining us or would like more information, please contact: friends@ststephenscanterbury.net



Hall Bookings 2024/2025

The hall continues to be affected by the vagaries of the cost-of-living crises that do not seem to go away, but groups have managed to weather the small increase in fees imposed last year.

There has been some operating on minimal numbers of attendees, but the hall continues to provide opportunities for the local community to keep fit and to congregare socially.

The generic email address for the hall bookings is no longer working along with other Church generic email addresses and Steve is doing his best to resolve this. In the meantime, the hall notice board now advertises the following address and it is hoped that enquirers will use that instead: eniddixon21@gmail.com



Mothers' Union

As usual we have had a mixed programme starting with the annual lunch in January followed by the Annual Meeting, Lent Reflection, Wave of Prayer and Lady Day Service. On Mothering Sunday we made small boxes and filled them with homemade sweets and gave one to everyone present at the service then provided Simnel Cake after the service.

We had several interesting meetings where we had our local councillor Elizabeth Carr-Ellis come and talk about Feminine Cities where there was more easy access for working women and mothers rather than just cities that had easy access to suit men! Not everyone sat comfortably with this but it was good to hear other people's views. We also had a talk about the work the displaced Ukrainians as well as those for other countries by Domenica Pecoraro and her colleague Nastia Nizalova from Diocesan House.

We also had a lovely visit to Belmont House near Faversham in May for our annual outing, our customary Summer Supper and Compline, and our Fish and Chip Supper at Whitstable in August. We had our Membership Renewal Service and made Christingles during a short Christingle service

We had the pleasure of welcoming Val Coulter to our branch and hope to welcome Bibi Harry-Amos to the branch who will be transferring from her branch in Nigeria to St Stephen's in the near future.

I hope we will continue to flourish and spread the word and works of the Mothers' Union during the coming year and perhaps even encourage some other people to join us. I relinquish my position as Branch Leader at our next AGM in February 2025.

Margaret Horwood (Branch Leader)



Music Report

We have a dedicated choir who sing to a high standard as part of our ministry at St Stephen's. They sing two services each Sunday throughout the year (apart from a holiday break in August), supporting the worship of the whole congregation through the leading of hymn singing, anthems carefully chosen to match the readings and theme of services, psalms and canticles for Evensong, and Mass settings for our Eucharist chosen to mark the changing liturgical seasons.

There have been some changes to our choir over the past year. With the changes that have taken place in the music provision at the Cathedral, with choristers no longer boarding at St Edmund's School, several of our younger members have gone on to sing there following the start that they had at St Stephen's. We have also welcomed some new adult members to the choir over the past year to join with our existing singers—people who enjoy the music that we offer and are keen to share their God-given gifts with all of us to enhance the worship. Our choir and the music at St Stephen's is an important and significant part of our outreach. Of course, new members are always welcome to join us, so if you are secretly harbouring a desire to sing, or know someone who you think would enjoy singing with us and helping to lead our worship, do put them in touch with me!

As well as our services at St Stephen's, over the past year the choir have also sung services in Rochester, St Edmundsbury and Chichester Cathedrals, testimony to the high quality of music that they work so hard to achieve, and an opportunity for alumni members of the choir who have since moved away from Canterbury to join with us again.



I should like to thank everyone who supports the musical life of our church, and every member of our choir; they really are an amazing group of musicians—and there are not many parish churches that can offer the level of choral music that they achieve week by week at St Stephen's. We all hope that the musical ministry that we offer helps to bring you closer to God.

Stephen Barker, Organist and Choirmaster



"Nutkins" Toddler Group

We continued to have a good team for this group with one mother/team leader coming in before the session to set up the toys and activities but we lost the one who helped with the general running of the group but the mothers/guardians of the children help with activities such as colouring and play dough! I was there as the overall leader to oversee everything and provide the refreshments and welcomed Margaret Powell as a very special helper for the snacks. Our numbers fluctuated but we had a good nucleus of mums and children each week and they all seemed to get along well. We continued to welcome several nationalities who were always welcomed to our group. However, after the summer holidays numbers began to drop with several children leaving to go to pre-school so we did an advertising campaign to encourage others to come along. One or two came and said they thoroughly enjoyed our sessions but after several weeks dropped by the wayside. We organised a visit from Father Christmas again this year but everyone had to book and a few extras came and again each child was presented with a book as a gift and a lovely snack. However, by this time we had one regular child, who was the daughter of the helper who set up the sessions each week. Due to this situation we had a serious discussion and decided to close the Nutkins Toddler Group for the time being and see if there were any enquiries about a toddler group; we would then decide what to do. I will, however, be stepping down from being part of this group from January 2025.

Margaret Horwood (Leader of the Toddler Group)



Parish Disclosure Officer (PDO) / Parish Safeguarding Administrator (PSA)

The titles are interchangeable; but the Diocese now seems to be majoring on the former.

The purpose is to support the Incumbent and Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) with administrative tasks—ensuring training courses and DBS records are up to date.

Thank you to all those whom I have cajoled into taking and completing their relevant courses for the first time and to those who, when requested, have renewed their training certificates. (In most cases training needs to be renewed after 3 years, from when first taken).

I am now stepping back from this role, as I no longer have the time to do this work, but I will ensure that the DBS checks for the 1 or 2 people who need these are completed by the end of June / July this year.

The spreadsheets are up to date as far as they can be. There are one or two issues that may need clearing up, but these are for the Incumbent and / or the PSO to action as they see fit.

However, as the year progresses there will be those who need to be contacted in order to renew their safeguarding training for various courses as their 3-year period is nearly up. The necessary paperwork is in a locked filing cabinet.

NB: the CofE does not accept workplace training as transferrable. The relevant persons need to complete the actual CofE courses.

I will keep any paperwork that I have stored on my computer until 30 June **2026** in case of need (transferred to someone else) after which they will be deleted.

Most of the DBS checks are due next year (2026). Canterbury Diocese does not accept portable DBS checks. Those who need them for any Church volunteer work or as a paid employee need to have the checks completed under the auspices of the Diocese.

The Church of England has commissioned INEQE to conduct an audit into Safeguarding for the whole of the CofE: Dioceses and Cathedrals. Canterbury Diocese audit is due in November 2026. The Incumbent and PSO will be the persons to complete survey questions but may require help from the PDO (Parish Disclosure Officer) with up-to-date spreadsheets / paperwork / information.

The role does require a certain amount of attention to detail. The Diocese seems to have a habit of changing its mind on how and by whom training is to be completed, without necessarily informing people. (The paperwork in the appropriate folders will inform.)

Enid Dixon



Pastoral Group

GROUP MEMBERS: Margaret Horwood (convenor); Mary Brown, Libby Nichols, Enid Dixon, Sally Pickersgill, Shirley Hagger and the Rev'd Dr David Vannerley, who has joined the group and does as much as he can, attending most meetings.

During this last year we have we met a number of times when we discussed recent events, and we all managed to keep in touch with the majority of parishioners who the members felt might be isolated and need help.

'Tea @ 3' has been a great success yet again with around 25+ people attending each month. We have a quiz each month set by Sally Pickersgill and tea and cake is served at 3.00 pm. We had an excellent Christmas party again where a Christmas tea was served and we had a good sing-along without accompaniment of Christmas Carols after a game of Playing Card Bingo.

The Prayer Chain has remained the same and continues to provide emergency and much needed prayers for those in need. Margaret Horwood oversees its work along with Libby Nichols, and anyone who would like prayers offered either for themselves or on behalf of someone else should contact either one. Messages are now sent by email to ensure the same message is received. If anyone would like to be part of this important ministry, please speak to either Margaret or Libby.

The Community Lunches. We had two lunches in 2024, one in September and a Christmas Lunch at the beginning of December. It is hoped these connections continue and if it is only two lunches a year that is still a valuable connection with the young people of the school.

Anniversary Cards have continued to be sent to those who have been baptised in our church and in the last year 38 Baptism anniversary cards and 3 Sympathy cards, 3 Get Well cards and 1 Special Birthday Card. We are extremely grateful to a member doing this on behalf of the parish.

Members continue to either visit or telephone parishioners who are unwell or housebound to make sure they are kept in touch with the parish life and the numbers have increased quite a lot over the last year.

Margaret Horwood, Convenor

Property

Stained Glass windows

The APCM Report for 2024 suggested that work might start during the summer on the refurbishment of the stained-glass windows, here we are in 2025 with the likelihood that this may not now start until autumn 2025.

However, the project is now much further forward, the DAC has agreed with the choice of Easthope Studios as the main contractor and a meeting is being arranged between the contractor, DAC and St Stephen's to agree a timescale for the work. In the meantime, the Friends are looking at grants that may be available for the balance of the total cost.

Path to the Garden of Remembrance

This project has progressed well during the year; we have planning permission, and the DAC has agreed in principle to the design. The PCC agreed at their last meeting to approve the scheme so a faculty should now be forthcoming.

There is a minor issue that needs to be addressed; the Council has requested a Heritage Statement regarding the tree because the path passes close to its roots. British Standard 5837 is a survey conducted by a registered arboriculturist that considers the effect a path will have on trees in close proximity, but this is not a free survey. The Council will be consulted to determine if this is necessary given the shallow depth of the path base.

Manwood Achievements

The PCC have not approved relocating the Manwood Achievements from Diocesan House to St Stephen's, and fixing them above the Manwood tomb, until a response has been received from the Royal Armoury, and details of how they will be fixed are agreed with our insurers. Contacting the Royal Armoury and Ecclesiastical Insurers are two recommendations from the DAC.

Replacement external Noticeboard.

This project began last year. The DAC approved the design, but there is uncertainty regarding the requirement for planning permission; DAC states it is not needed, while Canterbury Planning states it is required.

The position of the new noticeboard is likely to be in the position of the existing noticeboard but slightly back from the wall.

Damp in Manwood Chapel.

A damp patch was noticed on the west wall of the Manwood Chapel, and a repair specification has been received.

Headstones

Several headstones in the churchyard have been deemed unsafe by the Council and subsequently laid down. As it is challenging to contact the respective families, the responsibility falls on the PCC to ensure they are repaired and made safe.

General comments.

Several projects were considered for 2024/25 but have not advanced.

In 2023, a proposal was submitted to remove the choir benches in the chancel to accommodate smaller congregations and community use. However, a recommendation to change the chair colour rendered the proposal unworkable, and the plan was cancelled. The space is currently not being used effectively, and the PCC is open to receiving further suggestions on how it could be developed.

The PCC considered electric under-pew heaters as an efficient alternative for heating the church when gas is unavailable. Power Networks inspected the church's electrical intake before Christmas and confirmed that it can support under-pew and wall heaters with its unused 3-phase supply.

Locating spare parts for the old gas heaters in the Hall has been difficult, so electric heating is being considered. Power Networks confirmed that the electrical supply could accommodate an increased load. Connecting them to a bank of solar panel appears logical, and a contractor has been involved with this project. It is hoped this will progress over the next year.

General maintenance has continued throughout the year: portable appliances, fire extinguishers, emergency lights, boiler checks, lightning conductor.

Anyone interested in Grade I Listed buildings and the planning and ongoing maintenance of the church is welcome to join a small team of dedicated individuals. Membership of the congregation is not required, only an interest in preserving the church for future generations

Peter Brown



Safeguarding at St Stephen's

SAFEGUARDING TRAINING. Depending on roles within the church, either a basic or enhanced DBS is required. Where possible, these have been completed. Any that are not yet complete are in hand, depending on the training opportunities available via the Diocese.

TRAINING In April 2021, the Church of England published a new Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework. The focus of this framework is on developing a positive culture of safeguarding within the church, rather than simply focusing on process. It does mean that additional training modules may need to be completed. Thank you to everyone for their willingness to go through this process; your cooperation has been much appreciated.

'Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse' training is also available online and is to be completed in line with other safeguarding training for any who take part in the 'Leadership' training.

SAFEGUARDING DASHBOARD. The Diocesan Safeguarding Team introduced the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard. This is an online tool which allows PSOs to complete an audit of safeguarding policy and practice in the parish. Following the audit, an action plan is automatically generated to assist them in maintaining and improving their safeguarding practices. The audit is an ongoing process which is updated by the safeguarding officer. Any relevant actions plans will be shared with the PCC in due course.

SAFEGUARDING HUBS. Safeguarding Hubs are making parishes safer by helping them to meet the Church of England's safeguarding requirements. They are fully integrated with Safeguarding Dashboards, which are now being used in almost 6,000 parishes. We are awaiting further information regarding this.

BELLRINGING. The bellringing team is compliant under the terms of KCACR (the County Governing Body for Church bellringers). The diocese is aware of the guidance and there are currently discussions taking place to clarify.

SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS AND INCIDENTS. No significant safeguarding concerns have been raised during the year. However, we need to maintain our vigilance to ensure the protection and well-being of everyone in our communities.

Joanna Heath, Parish Safeguarding Officer



St Stephen's Theology Group

The Theology Group continues to grow with 67 people on the mailing list. This year we moved all our meetings on to Zoom and as a result we have had people join our various speakers from across the country and abroad. Sadly, following advice from the Archdeacon's office and against the wish of the speaker, we had to cancel the talk by Rabbi Dan Cohn-Sherbok due to unfounded (but potential) security fears. The following month's talk was also postponed until September when Dr Peter Clough spoke on 'Religion in Victorian Literature'. This was followed in October by Rev'd Dr Kevin Maddy speaking on Salvation in an Uncertain World. Rev'd Dr Stephen Laird and Dr Rosemary Walters then spoke respectively in November and December on the Reality of Minority Groups in English Christianity and Don Cupitt. In January, Rev'd Dr Alan le Grys showed how the Bible is sometimes misused in the contemporary church and in February Dr Simon Wilson spoke on Orthodox spirituality. I hope as many of you as possible will be able to attend our next two talks: Rev'd Dr David Vannerley speaking in person in the church on Canterbury's Hidden Black History on 6 May and on 3 June on Zoom, Rev'd Professor Alison Milbank from 'Save the Parish' will speak on the topic of 'Why we Need to Save the Parish'. A full programme is beginning to take shape for next year and the new incumbent will be invited to offer a talk in the near future.

Dr Philip Knight



CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

2024 had the potential to be an unsettling year in the life of St Stephen's with us being in an interregnum. However, we were blessed by having Fr David Vannerley appointed as our Interim Priest-in-Charge at the beginning of the year, giving us stability and leadership as meetings went on with the Deanery and Archdeacon about the future of St Stephen's. During the year we also celebrated the ordination of Sally Pickersgill as Deacon and this saw her take on new roles within our worship and ministry amongst the parish.

Alongside our clergy, we have a wonderful community of people who work behind the scenes at St Stephen's to make our worship and other events run smoothly—many of these events you'll read about in other reports presented here, but special mention to those who read at our services, to those who lead the intercessions, to our team of bellringers that call us to worship each week, to members of the choir who spend many hours preparing music to enhance our worship, to our flower arrangers, to the Holy Dusters who keep our church clean, and to members of PCC and sub-committees—especially Peter Brown who chairs the Property Committee, ensuring that St Stephen's building is kept in good repair. Outside our building, our churchyard provides an oasis of calm within the local community and a haven for wildlife; thank you to Angela and the churchyard working party who work tirelessly weeding and planting each month.

Our worshipping community goes wider than just those of us who are in church each Sunday.

We have continued to live-stream our services, and each Sunday morning there are around a dozen streams being watched live with us (these could be being watched by multiple people on the same device)—that's more than 20% of those who are in church, so this is now an important part of our ministry. Some of these people we know, some are watching from around the UK and have chosen to regularly worship with us, and others are catching up from around the world.

We also had a wonderful Christmas Tree Festival in December, led by Fr David, which brought together many members of the local community to decorate trees and many more who came in to see them. It gave a glimpse of the potential that St Stephen's has to be at the heart of the community and we hope that there will be similar repeat events in the future.

One of the legal responsibilities of the Church Wardens is to ensure that the inventory is checked, and we can confirm that this has taken place.

The coming year will bring more changes to St Stephen's—we will celebrate Rev'd Sally Pickersgill's ordination as a Priest this summer, which means that she will be able to preside over the Eucharist. As we hold our Annual Parochial Church Meeting, we will be about to advertise for a part-time (0.5 + accommodation) Rector of St Stephen's, with the view to welcoming him or her to the parish at some time in the autumn. At this point, Fr David's role as Interim Priest-in-Charge will come to an end, but it is hoped that he will continue to be a part of our parish.

Thank you for your support over the past year.

Stephen Barker and Shirley Hagger, Churchwardens

REPORT OF THE INTERIM PRIEST IN CHARGE

I took office at Evensong on 21st January with my oaths being taken by the Archdeacon Ven Dr Will Adam. Interim posts always come with particular conditions attached to them and, in my case, there was a special charge to help the parish discern the kind of ministry that might follow the Interimcy and how we might afford such a ministry. There has been a deal of important, quiet work done in the background by the lay leaders in the parish and the PCC to reach a position where we could make an acceptable proposal to the Senior Staff. When the advertisement is posted it will be for a half-time post but with the house and for this parish alone. Senior Staff have accepted the financial case made by the PCC and we are optimistic that the post will prove attractive—particularly because it is a single church in a single parish.

In the meantime, the life of the parish has continued. Our attendance has grown somewhat during the year; Sunday mornings typically have a congregation of ‘fiftyish’ rather than ‘fortyish’. Although there has been only one wedding, the number of funeral and similar services has been noticeably higher and these have led to important pastoral contacts in the parish. The number of baptisms has been fairly steady and all are a delight but three particularly come to mind—those of Nkesichi, Oscar and Patricia.

An important innovation was the Christmas Tree Festival, which brought together almost every community group in Hackington to exhibit their own decorated trees. There was a remarkable atmosphere in the church on the Thursday afternoon as people from widely different strands of the community’s life met together in the church building. Another high spot was the impromptu carol singing on the Saturday afternoon which exceeded all expectations. Despite the dreadful weather attendance and donations were good and we were able to make a meaningful contribution to the Community Larder in All Saints’ parish.

The generosity of the church community was demonstrated in donations received for the Lent Appeal, in support of the Community Larder, and the Easter Thanksgiving offering, the Kenyan Garden Project. Particularly, this was clear with the Advent Appeal that was intended to clear some of our arrears of giving to diocesan funds. As a result, together with the matched funding from the diocese, we were able to clear two-thirds of the sum, remembering that the arrears represent the extent to which other parishes have supported us when we have been unable to meet our share.

The life of the parish depends on the generously given time and efforts of lay people who take on the management of the rotas that make our worship happen or support the services we offer to the wider community. St Stephen’s is very blessed in this regard and it is so important for the clergy to know that we are backed up in this way.

And, of course, clergy is now plural with the ordination of the Rev’d Sally Pickersgill to the diaconate. Sally brings huge community experience to her ministry as well as a sound knowledge of the workings of a church congregation. I have had the joy and privilege of walking beside her as she prepared for ordination and now as her Training Incumbent, and am looking forward immensely to her being presented for priestly ordination in the summer of 2025.

Have we not been very greatly blessed in this year of Our Lord 2024?

Fr David

DEANERY SYNOD

Synod has met 3 times since our last APCMs.

In June 2024 we met at *Canterbury Cathedral Studio* and discussed Revitalisation, one of the three bold outcomes of the Diocesan strategy. Following an introduction from Archdeacon Will Adams there were group discussions focussing on what revitalisation could look like in the parishes.

In October 2024 at *St Paul's* we focussed on another of the bold outcomes, New Worshipping Communities. After a presentation by Shiela Porter on the work of Myriad (a national organisation which helps lay leaders to form new communities) there was a short video on three such communities. After a lively period for questions there were group discussions.

In February 2025 at *All Saints'*, Synod was an entirely open meeting which focussed on the Deanery Mission Plan. Rev'd Nick White gave a short presentation outlining the structure and main elements of the plan followed by opportunities for discussion around six tables each led by a facilitator. These covered the main elements of the Plan: Ignite, Youth, Housing estates, University students, Buildings and Eco church.

Everyone had the opportunity to discuss each topic for 10 minutes during the hour long session. Each facilitator gave a brief summary of the main issues raised and these comments will be taken back for further consideration by the Deanery Mission and Ministry Committee (DMMC). The Plan will be brought back for formal approval at the June meeting of Synod.

The **Deanery Eco Group** continues to flourish, although Caroline Blamey is stepping back from the coordinating role. The Deanery is grateful for all the effort she has put into the group.

The **Care in a Crisis** initiative, networking local agencies working against poverty and disadvantage, was merged with the similar activity led by the Canterbury Society, to avoid unnecessary duplication.

Communication: The Deanery Facebook page www.facebook.com/CanterburyDeanery/ provides current news of the huge range of activities among our Deanery parishes and Christians Together in Canterbury.

During the year: the Deanery welcomed back Rev'd Jo Richards after a period of illness. Rev'd Brian McHenry was appointed as Assistant Area Dean. Liz Morrison (Lay Chair) and John Morrison (Treasurer) stepped down from their roles. Professor Roger Vickerman was elected as Lay Chair and Canon Treasurer Andrew Dodds as Treasurer

Thanks to all members of the DMMC for their hard work on the Deanery Mission Plan and for their continuing dedication to the needs of the Deanery, and to Harry Macdonald, our Administrator, for his efficient work in serving the Deanery.

Roger Vickerman, Lay Chair