

The Parish of Olveston with Aust PCC

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting held Sunday 27th April 2025 7.00 p.m. in St. Mary's Church

There were 16 people present and 5 apologies were received (names recorded).

Minutes of the Meeting of Parishioners (Vestry Meeting)

Election of Clerk

Bernard Amos was appointed clerk to the meeting. Proposed David Moss, seconded Mike Wright voted unanimously

Election of Church Wardens

For the role of Churchwarden, there were only two candidates:- **Mrs. Debbie Harries** (proposed by Stephanie Fairhead seconded by Phil Savage) and **Mrs Sue Farr** (proposed by Shaw seconded by Bernard Amos), **both were unanimously accepted and endorsed by the meeting.**

Minutes of the APCM

1. Minutes of Meeting held on 28th April 2024

Copies of the minutes had been made available to those present.

That the minutes should be approved as a true record was proposed by Rev David Moss; seconded by Michael Wright. David Prothero pointed out there were two dates shown in his report, as 2023 should have shown 2022. (In para 7 General Fund.) after these amendments the minutes were adopted **unanimously**

2 Matters arising

Michael Kirby made a point that the minutes not being formally adopted from their draft form, should take place before the next year's APCM, so that people could read them. He suggested that the PCC should review them at the first meeting after APCM and adopt them. Rev David Moss advised that the APCM minutes are different from PCC minutes and can only be adopted by the parishioners at the following APCM according to consistory rules.

3. Electoral Roll

Michael Kirby, Electoral Roll Officer declared the following:-

Since the APCM in April 2024 we regret to have recorded the deaths of PAULINE WRIGHT, LINDA EVANS and GILLIAN SHEPHERD.

In 2025 a new Roll is required to be prepared, when new Application Forms are required from all wishing to be on the Roll. This was carried out between 21 February and 6 April 2025. The notification of the need to make a fresh application was accompanied by a Questionnaire prepared by Revd David Moss requesting consent to receiving information from St Mary's in order to comply with the General Data Regulations.

- *2 new applicants joined the Roll.*
- *6 former Roll members completed the Questionnaire but did not apply to join the Roll.*
- *7 former members indicated that they did not wish to renew, some citing Diocesan or National church reasons as contributing to their decision.*
- *The list of current members has been displayed in the porch.*

I therefore report that there are now 76 names on the Electoral Roll, of which 61 are Resident in the Parish and 15 are Not Resident in the Parish .

David Moss said that compiling the Electoral Roll is a complex job and thanks Michael Kirby for his work and the meeting supported this with a round of applause

Lindsey Henniker-Heaton noted the significant drop and asked why it was thought this has occurred. DM responded that it is connected to the mission of the church and with a new electoral roll, there always seems to be a drop. He added that there were 4 people who he had visited, who want to enrol, but he had committed to take the necessary forms with him. This will be rectified soon..

He had had meeting with some younger people who had expressed interest in enrolling, but after reading the CoE criteria, had decided they couldn't fulfil the criteria, so didn't join. There were others regular attenders he had spoken with who had not been baptised or confirmed in CoE.

Anne Lloyd asked if there was a cohort of such people who could be baptised and confirmed...as most go them were regular church attenders, it wouldn't need much preparation. She had baptised parents recently. DM said that one of the great aspects of St Mary's and the benefice is the inclusiveness and some people had been brought up, for example, in the Salvation Army and had reasons to feel the baptism/confirmation route not necessary. He would ask all to encourage people to do so, but they shouldn't be made to feel excluded. DP added that this is the first ER since Covid and some people are still reluctant to come as regularly as before. David Shaw said that a member of the choir had questioned him on what is the point of the electoral roll and that it seemed to reflect with a number of people .."Why should I bother?" Mike wright asked if it is simply a piece of bureaucracy and asked if this had been addressed at Synod. MK added that when asked by people , "what can you do if you are enrolled that you can't if not?", the answer is that they can influence the running of the church, harangue the officers etc,

4. Election of PCC Representatives

There were no nominations required in 2025

5 Appointment of Deanery Synod representatives.

The Clerk announced Sue Farr had been nominated for re-election; nominated Bernard Amos seconded Rev Ann Lloyd..

The meeting voted unanimously to endorse her re-election.

6. Appointment of Independent Examiner of PCC Accounts

David Prothero advised that Pat Savage, our current Independent Examiner, is prepared to continue. Rev David Moss suggested that she be thanked for her contribution and that the Church appreciated her continuing, whilst winding down her other activities.

7. Adoption of Accounts

DP advised that Copies of 2024 Annual Accounts in church for last couple of weeks and emphasised that the accounts are for Olveston with Aust.

A detailed commentary on the Olveston component of the accounts is presented in Section 6 of the St Mary's Trustees' Annual Report. Key points are as follows:

General Fund

- In-year deficit of £1,000 in 2024
- Overall increase of £3,800 (5%) in income compared with 2023 - due to increases of £2,000 in parochial fees and £1,500 in income from fundraising events.
- Planned giving – increase of £600 (1.4%)
- Expenditure £14,000 (19%) higher than in 2023 due mainly to an increase of £11,000 in church running expenses, specifically repairs and maintenance (electrical repairs and painting and repair of external doors), churchyard maintenance and utilities

Fabric

- Fabric Fund – Final instalment (£34,500) of Kathleen Hawkins legacy received. Total received – just under £150,000.

Outward Giving

- £6,500 to 8 different causes

Looking Ahead to 2025

- Financial challenge is to ensure that we generate sufficient income to meet our increasing expenditure commitments

DP wished to thank

- All those who have supported the church financially through regular giving and supporting fundraising events.
- Michael Kirby – Gift Aid Secretary
- Joyce Prothero - Cashier
- Mike Wright for advice and support
- Pat Savage – Independent Examiner

He then opened the floor for any questions or observations..

Peter Floyd made the point that there had not been an appeal for people to review their regular giving for some time and that inflation was diluting the value and asked if this is something we should be taking action about. DP responded that the last appeal was at the end of 2023, which was confirmed by DSM who added that at the time of the 2023 appeal, it was planned that we should repeat at end of 2025. DP added that the 2023 appeal had resulted in an increase of £600 netted against the loss of some givers during 2024. MG asked if the Parish share money was used by the diocese in the reparation payments for the slave trade, which DP clarified was not the case as it was for shared services of the Diocese which all parishes were expected to support. LH-H asked if it was good use of our money.

DM addressed this. He said that the Diocese have what's known as "Transforming Church Together" , (TCT), which is section 10 of the benefice annual report. We operate as an open door and reach out to the community with the powerful message of Jesus, through events such as breakfasts, coffee mornings movie club and particularly through Messy Church. He said that some of these were being enthusiastically led by younger people who he could see developing into PCC members of the future. We do support, generously, charities across the world and have close links with Uganda and Nepal. The present Diocese of Bristol has now developed a very lukewarm attitude towards these countries as they are considered to be homophobic. He added that he had friends who hold different opinions to him, but are still his friends...so, as our vicar he has nurtured these international links and will continue to do so unless the PCC specifically request he cease.

In terms of contested history, he has told members of a contested history group, that whilst he is vicar, no monuments will be taken off our walls. He went on to say that we have a wonderful person, (Alice), who is working with people in SMO to produce a balanced, fair account of our history. Sturge was a local member of our community and campaigned for the emancipation of slaves and bought 60% of the land in Montserrat which he used to allow freed slaves to earn wages producing limes. DSM is going to Montserrat in the summer of 2025, because Sturge is a local hero and he will be staying in the village of Olveston there.

DSM added that Transforming Churches Together (TCT) costs 40% of our Parish Share. DSM further added that we had received some money from the Diocese and clarified that reparation under contested history is funded by central Church of England. The 40% spent on TCT does not include any money from General Synod to support reparations. Alice does get financial support from General Synod, but it is not sufficient to cover all her costs, so she also supported by Bristol University.

Martin Gibson asked if this would be better spent on clergy and DSM explained some of the aspects on which Diocesan money is invested, such as training. DSM said that the Benefice Parish Share had been £81,000.

Nearly £19,000 went on ministry and Diocesan costs, a further £11,700 went on investments into the future. Janet McBride asked how much had been spent on contested history and DSM said none, as the contested history money came from Central Church, adding that no congregational money is involved. The Central Church money comes from investments they hold.

The 40% of Parish Share is spent on staff costs, including the appointment of a Racism Officer, Environmental and Eco officers etc. AL and MW suggested that the money for such appointments would be better spent supporting Uganda. DM added that aid from the USA to Uganda had also stopped along with Diocesan support, no-one in Uganda is getting vaccinated, as the public health agencies cannot operate. People are going hungry and those who have to go into the bush to hunt need transport, which requires fuel and support, which is lacking.

DM, after some discussion amongst the meeting members, said that he is concerned that of the Parish Share 40% is going towards services that we do not want, as they don't empower him to baptise or confirm people because some of the things demanded of him from these "services" erode time from his diary.

Peter Floyd said he sits on the DAC, which covers 200 churches and all of them struggle. He said that they are our roots and branches, and deserve the support that isn't coming from the Diocese. Others in the meeting agreed that something is wrong with the current "systems". DSM said he is very concerned that the communication structures within the Diocese are not working and that people who volunteer their services are being overridden by paid employees. He is extremely concerned that he doesn't have any line management, nobody comes to see him, nobody asks him what he does and, it seems, nobody wants to know what he does. He said that he is now being sent to professional a coach and when he has completed 3 years of being professionally coached, he may be able to get a senior clergy person. In answer to a question about this, he clarified that Diocese have introduced a programme of professional development and he is being paid to work with a professional life coaches, who are not Christian, aimed at creating more effective managers. The cost to the diocese is over £120,000 per year.

Several people expressed surprise and frustration about this.

Peter Floyd asked if we can feed our views and disquiet to the Diocese but added that, of course, DSM can't. MW said the process would need to go through Deanery Synod to Diocese, a system that is not deemed to be effective. DSM said that PCC set an agenda, (in TAR), Deanery set another agenda, and Diocese set yet another agenda, whereas what used to happen was that the PCC set an agenda, which vicars fed back to Deanery and people at Deanery said "how can we help you fulfil what your parish requires you to do?" The Bishops and the senior clergy then were responsible for pastoral care, the oversight and the shepherding, which is not happening at the moment. The Diocese has its own agenda which he, as a "middle manager", has to fulfil.

He added that the pressure on clergy, (some who have had breakdowns) from paid employees for things like installing heat source pumps etc limits the amount of ministry work he (and other vicars), can actually manage to do. He went on to elaborate on the impact of pressure to install heat source pumps...He said despite the fact that our congregation care deeply about the environment, including people who have switched to electric cars, and the work of our Greenforce team, we are working together to make this world a better place and the people who encourage us to do this are in this congregation. He said that if our heating system were to break down now, the PCC would sit down, think about the government agenda and make a rational decision. That may have been a "grey" decision, but we would be trying to move with the times and fulfil what the government want us to do. But if the Diocese has a purist agenda that says "no, you cannot install a gas boiler....you all have to freeze", an attitude which isn't going to help church growth. He cannot change the Diocesan agenda, but if the congregation feels strongly about it, the PCC should write independently to complain about the current way the Church of England is being managed. He added that he has written 10 times, asking for an appointment with the Bishop, but has had no response. He has written 5 times about the Glebe land next to St Helens and doesn't get any response.

MW said that the last time we got attention from the Diocese was when we requested they come along to explain and justify their agenda and went on to ask if it is now time we should be doing the same again. In response DSM said that throughout the UK it is becoming 'us & them'. In his opinion we should be a community of love working from the top down and that decisions have to be made to help parishes succeed and if 40% of what parishes contribute is going on superfluous services, that isn't helpful. We should be expecting some accountability for the money being expended.

The meeting was unanimous in condemnation of the waste of money on the management training

However, DSM said that this is a nationwide issue and to take actions to confront the Diocesan management, could lead to further barriers being created and that in his opinion we should focus on making this a brilliant church and loving our community. He said that if we want accountability the best way is to reflect it in what we give in Parish Share. But it must be done in an atmosphere of love, because any other way could break up the C of E, which is a precious institution. He asked if there are any issues that the meeting wanted to take to PCC for when they are deciding about next year's Parish Share

Janet McBride endorsed what had been said about working with an atmosphere of love and MW said that "excellence" had been mentioned a few times with the activities in our church and that can only continue if they are properly funded.

In summary, DSM said that given the national dissatisfaction with the central church, the feeling at the APCM is that our financial resources should be spent, on maintaining and improving our growth within the parish context. DS added to his summary that concerns were expressed about any reparations relating to contested history, concerns about the waste of resources in management development, (thought by the meeting to be wholly inappropriate), and the burgeoning growth of central bureaucracy in the C of E.

Michael Kirby proposed the adoption of the Church Accounts for 2023, seconded by Mike Wright which was carried unanimously.

Martin Gibson proposed a sincere vote of thanks for all the work the DP, which was supported by all present and the meeting responded with a hearty round of applause and wished to minute their thanks to him.

8 Trustees Annual Report.

DM wanted to also thank Bernard Amos for his work in preparing the TAR and asked if there were any questions.

Before any responses BA advised that since the initial publication, Michael Kirby had suggested some amendments

So paragraph 4 now reads that "The voluntary churchyard maintenance group continued their splendid work keeping the grounds in excellent condition, including areas allocated to wild flowers and observing now mow areas as advised by the Greenforce group"

Further, under the heading of "Volunteers" para 7, some figures were added and that in 2024 a church cleaner had been appointed although some church members help keep the church tidy, There are 10 members of the churchyard maintenance group and the flower arrangers numbers 13.

Finally, the last sentence of DM's report now reads "At St Mary's Olveston a project to improve Church insulation "was started", (as opposed to "was completed")

MW added that the church had faced a number of electrical faults which had shut down various facilities. Whilst dealing with this it was necessary to do a full electrical test of the building's electrics. As a result, a number of further faults were uncovered and addressed. As a result we are in much better shape for the future. There were other residual projects, such as church tower work and the drainage connection, which were also completed in 2024. The redecoration of the ringing chamber had also been undertaken. But he added that some work will be needed on the actual bells and structure relating to them that will need to be carried out in 2025. The roof of the main body of the church will need assessing for any major work and that assessment will also be planned for 2025. He also reminded that the maintenance of all the facilities in the building, which have become more complicated over the years, will inevitably mean that there will be some ongoing, as yet unknown, issues to address.

Mike was thanked and also given a round of applause for all his work on the buildings

9 AOB

There being no other business, the meeting closed with the Grace @ 20.20

