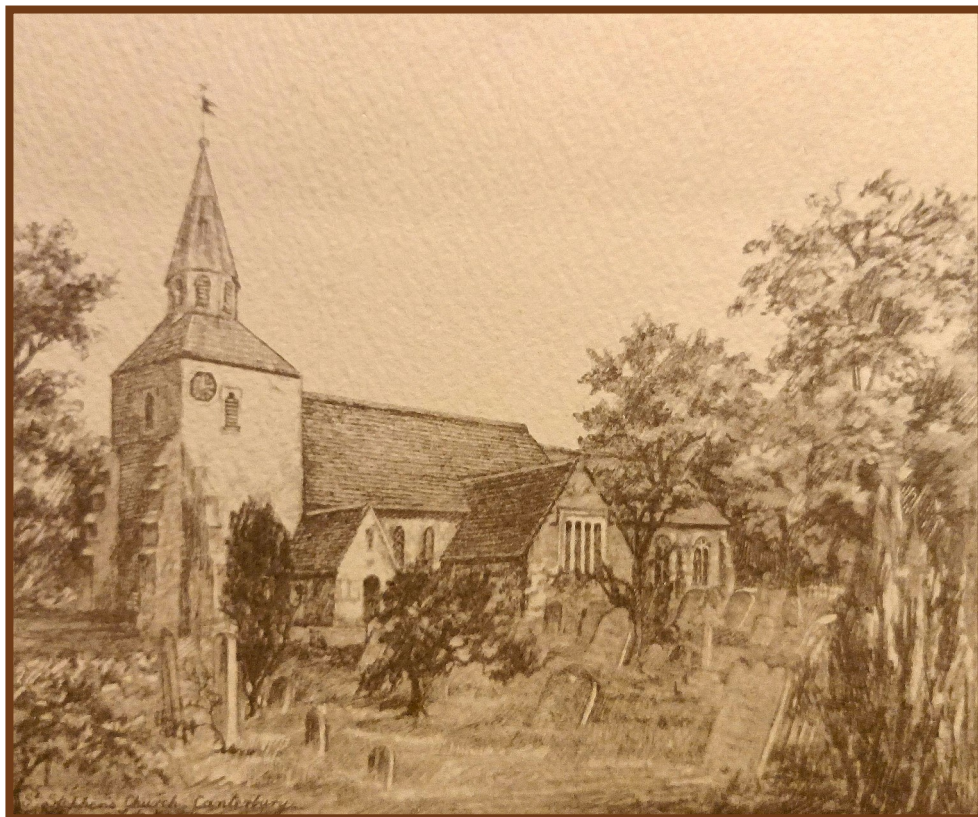




*St Stephen's Church Canterbury*

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



Held in the Church Hall

Sunday 26 April 2026 at 12 noon

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# Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2026

## Agenda

- 1 Prayers
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Minutes of meeting held on 27 April 2025
- 4 Tenure of position of Churchwardens
- 5 Tenure of membership of the PCC
- 6 Election of Churchwardens
- 7 Election of PCC
- 8 Approval of Sidespersons and Senior Sidespersons
- 9 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
- 10 The Financial Statements for 2025
- 11 Appointment of the Independent Examiner of the Accounts
- 12 Questions and Announcements
- 13 Closing Remarks



# Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

27 April 2025

The meeting commenced at 12.07 p.m. in the Church Hall after the morning service. The Interim Priest in Charge, Rev'd Dr David Vannerley, the Curate, Mrs Sally Pickersgill, and 42 parishioners were present.

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

**APOLOGIES** were received from four members.

**THE MINUTES** of the meeting on 27 April 2024 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 nominated and seconded as Churchwardens for the coming year, and were elected.

Mrs Angela Doe had been duly proposed and seconded as a Deputy Warden; she was unanimously endorsed by the meeting in this role.

**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 a Deacon licensed to the parish, 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:

Mr Peter Brown	Miss Enid Dixon	Dr Victoria Field
Mrs Barbara Jackson	Ms Nicola Kemp	Miss Alex Knight
Mr Robert Mathews	Mr Jamie McLean	Mr David Wood

**DUTY WARDENS.** Our Duty Wardens and Deputy Duty Wardens continued as the previous year, 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 75, and the report was approved unanimously.

## **REPORTS ON THE WORK OF THE PCC AND OTHER GROUPS.**

These had been published online beforehand and were unanimously accepted by the meeting with no questions.

## **CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT.**

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

## **DEANERY SYNOD REPORT.**

This report, by Roger Vickerman, 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, 2024.

She reported that as a result of lower costs and increased income through the Advent appeal, there was a surplus on unrestricted funds of £38,816. The Advent Appeal had brought in £14,721; with some gift aid plus £1,950 from the discretionary fund and some cash we were able to pay off £21,000.

. Two areas which brought in more income were the coffee fund (from the Acorn café) and the Christmas Tree festival. There was also an increase in funds from the hall. However, with the new incumbency there would be additional parish share costs and it was to be noted that regular planned giving outside of special appeals remained relatively steady. With the new Incumbent the post would rise from 0.2 to 0.5, and the extra costs would stretch us, so we should need regular and sustainable income. Alex urged everyone to join the Parish Giving Scheme, which had a regular increase with inflation as an option. The website [easyfundraising.org.uk](http://easyfundraising.org.uk) was recommended for contributing to the church through online purchases.

The Friends of St Stephen's continued to raise money, and planned to assist with half the cost for the maintenance and renovation of the windows, with the remainder coming from grants. The amount owed (under 'creditors') is much less in 2024 because of the amount of the share paid off. The Parish share was reduced for the year because of the 0.2 post of the Interim Priest in Charge.

QUESTIONS:

**Q:** How popular is the card machine in the church?

**A:** Some money does come in each week.

The meeting showed its gratitude to Alex with loud applause 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.

## **REMARKS BY THE INTERIM PRIEST IN CHARGE.**

Fr David said that the advertisement for the new Rector would go live at the beginning of May. There were several interesting advantages and challenges in this parish and there had been inquiries already. Attendance had risen from 40-ish to 50-ish, and we were ambitious to do more. The Parish Profile would be put on the website.

Angela Doe expressed the meeting's thanks for all that Fr David had done.

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

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## THE ELECTORAL ROLL FOR THE YEAR 2025–2026

The number on the roll at the time of writing is **77**.

**Sadly, the following have departed this earthly life:** Joan Ball and Gordon Holter. May they rest in peace and rise in glory. Philip Tuohy has also resigned from the Electoral Roll as he is now attending St John's Church in Swalecliffe.

**Five new people** have been entered onto St Stephen's Church Electoral Roll: We welcome Jennifer Jupe, Peter Jupe, Tim Pettman, Ali Ahmedi, and Peter Cook.

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.

People on the Roll have voting rights at the APCM, and if they have been on the Roll for six months may stand for membership of the Parochial Church Council.

**A plea:** I am not permitted to approach individuals personally and 'tout for business' but should any current members of the Congregation—new or old—wish to consider becoming joining the Church Electoral Roll, please make yourselves known to me.

Please think about this for the coming year (during which the Church continues in interregnum, or vacancy) and the numbers for the Electoral Roll may increase and new faces will appear on the PCC.

*Enid Dixon, Electoral Roll Officer.*

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## ANNUAL REPORTS

### Proceedings of the Parochial Church Council

We have met on eight occasions over 2025: quite a busy year! However, this included two short extraordinary meetings to consider individual points. Happily modern technology means that these can be conducted online nowadays!

Much of the deliberations of the PCC over this year concerned the appointment of a new Rector, and we have worked closely with the Archdeacon. The post has been advertised firstly on 'Pathways' on the Church of England website, and secondly in *The Church Times*, but we remain no further forward and shall continue our search. We remain extremely grateful to Father David for continuing his role as Interim Priest in Charge when he would otherwise be retired. It has been very encouraging to see a growth in our numbers in services continue.

This year saw the ordination to the priesthood of Sally Pickersgill in the Cathedral, and the church and the PCC have been very grateful for her ministry, and for the way she has been able to share the running of the services and other work in the parish with Father David.

Our financial circumstances have improved, thanks to an increase in attendance and giving, and in the offer of the Diocese to reduce our debt by £1 for each £1 paid. There will be more details in Alex's report, and we are all very grateful to her for her expertise with our finances!

Plans for the repair and restoration of our windows have continued this year. Seeking out sources of grants and income has been a long business, complicated by unforeseen and frustrating snags. We are very grateful to Angela Doe and to Dr Victoria Field for their very hard work in this work, which may even get started in the coming year!

One of our Churchwardens, Shirley Hagger, has decided not to seek re-election to that position or to the PCC this year, having served since 2016 on the PCC and since 2017 as Churchwarden. We thank her for her valued long service and the benefit of her experience.

We were very sorry that Dr Nicola Kemp felt she had to resign from the PCC (temporarily, we hope) in January 2026.

Because of church hall bookings we have again been unable to help with the Winter Shelter run by Catching Lives, but our regular Sunday night slot has been covered by another church.

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## 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 also brings surprise offerings of vegetables for us to sell that he grows on his allotment, and Christine brings some of her beautiful cards and craft items. 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 local organisations—in March we raised £220.07 and in November £363, to be shared between Porchlight and L’Arche. These are always well supported.

Once again in December we joined in the Christmas tree festival in the church. Our ‘Crafty Lady’ Christine Richie took photos of all at the café and 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.

As many of the helpers are now in their 80s some of us find it difficult to use the larger table. It would be helpful if we were able to have 2 or 3 extra smaller tables. Many people are suggesting that the prices for coffee and produce are too low, and should be raised. It is difficult to decide how to implement this. A card reader would make transactions easier – eliminating the need for awkward change. We look forward to hearing from the PCC how to go about charging more realistic prices.

*Libby and Jenny*

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### **Baptisms**

Last year at the APCM I indicated that this year I would cease to be the baptism organiser; I felt it was time for someone with fresh ideas to take over. It has been a real privilege to meet and guide families through baptisms. For nearly the last 20 years I have visited the families in their homes and talked through the service and its meaning—I’ve loved meeting them all. I’m also pleased that I have achieved my aim to ensure that in each household there is at least a child’s book of bible stories—whether it is ever looked at I don’t know—but it is there!! I believe families have felt ‘at home’ at St Stephen’s even when they are not church-goers. My one sadness is that despite having personal invitations over the years to appropriate services few families have ever come to services. The most special baptisms of course are those of members of the congregation which take place in the Sunday Eucharist.

*Libby*

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## Bellringing

The bells of St Stephen's are ringing regularly and we aim to ring at least once on Sunday either before 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 quicker, and therefore leave.

Unfortunately, a mother and son who have been regular at practices for a couple of years, and have boosted our numbers for Sunday service ringing when we have had open ringing, decided to give up just before Christmas due to GCSE exams and extra-curricular activities. This is a loss to our band but we wish them well for the future. Having got to the level they had, Bellringing is something they can always revisit later when they have more time. We do have another lady who joined us in the last year, and she is now able to ring a bell on her own. She attends practices regularly and if we have open ringing on Sundays, we will be able to include her.

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 assisting me to teach learners.

During 2025 we rang a total of 105 times: 51 Sunday service ringing, 51 Monday practices and a Wedding. Sundays were 48 quarter peal attempts of which 46 were successful. This is up on our success rate from last year and an excellent effort by all, with more and more methods being rung in each quarter peal. We had open ringing on 3 occasions which included Easter Day, Remembrance Sunday, and 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 have been rung.

We entered two competitions in 2025: the Call Change Competition which we won, and in March this year we retained our winning position in the competition at St Vincent's, Littlebourne. The second competition, the Six Bell Striking Competition we came second to St Dunstan's but it was a good achievement and very respectable ringing. We will be entering a band for the Canterbury District competition again in May this year.

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

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## **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.

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 as and 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 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 that the King's School continues to support the churchyard. Students visit the churchyard each March and work hard to improve several of the graves and to plant flowers. Their hard work is much appreciated by the congregation and visitors.

We are always pleased to welcome people to get involved with improving and using the churchyard.

*Angela Doe*

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## **The Friends of St Stephen's**

The year has been busy with a mixture of well-established events and new innovations.

Our popular Soup Lunch in January and Quiz Night in October continued to be well-supported, with more than 50 people attending each event. We are deeply indebted to all who helped make both events so successful with their wonderful soups and desserts. As ever, we are most grateful to Jeremy and Rosie Barford for masterminding the quiz.

In May we marked the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day with a Cream Tea. Derek Butler kindly curated a fascinating exhibition of war-time photographs and memorabilia which prompted much discussion and memories. Again, we were supported by helpers who made delicious cakes and scones which were much appreciated by some 60 people who joined us.

On 20 September, we showed the first of five films made by our dear friend, Marten Rogers, about the history of Hackington. This generated a great deal of interest and conversation over drinks and nibbles afterwards. Some 50 people attended, many asking when the other films in the series will be shown; these are scheduled over the coming years.

Some 50 people joined us as we marked Remembrance tide with an evening of music and poetry by Eduard Heyning and Victoria Field. It was a lovely and very moving event setting the tone beautifully for Remembrance Sunday the following day.

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 (and the food!).

Overall, our activities generated income of £2,489, an increase of some 50 per cent on the previous year. We are enormously grateful to everyone for their support.

In recent years, we have been raising funds for the repair and restoration of our stained-glass windows and have been most grateful for the generosity and support of people in the area. During 2025, we decided to apply for funding to supplement our fundraising efforts and were helped in our preparation by a mentor provided by the charity Funding For All; he suggested possible sources of funding and acted as a critical friend to improve our applications, so we are most grateful to him. We submitted a first application for works to the east window, but this was not successful. Our second application, to the Friends of Kent Churches, resulted in a grant of £6,000 which will allow us to commission the necessary work to all the windows in the nave and the transepts. We hope that this work will be undertaken during the summer of 2026. Meanwhile, we shall continue to raise funds through our events and to apply for funding to support work to the windows in the Chancel.

We look forward to several events during 2026 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](mailto:friends@ststephenscanterbury.net)

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### **Hall Bookings 2025/2026**

The Hall continues to host a variety of groups

Some groups have a minimal number of attendees but provide opportunities for the local community to keep fit and to congregate socially; the Residents' Associations with their Great Winter Get-Together held in February; the Church with its weekly Acorn Café (and its fundraising events) and the monthly Tea at 3; and the Women's Institute (WI) with its various initiatives such as the hearts that they make to festoon the trees and some buildings for Easter and their monthly Swap Shop.

The local Community police have recently begun to have a session in the hall to meet local residents to hear of any concerns (as well as meeting in the St Stephen's Community Centre on the Hales Place estate), as do St Stephen's local Councillors.

The Classroom has returned for several sessions due to the need to get children prepared for the exam room etiquette and to get used to face-to-face interaction for those who are home-schooled.

The Tai Chi class has had a waiting list for its classes and is now tentatively expanding into an extra session on a Monday morning. The second session is running on an experimental basis for six weeks during the Summer term, and if successful will continue on a regular basis.

The Aikido (Martial Art Club) has also expanded and is now running a class on a Thursday evening as well on the Tuesday evening.

I should also like to express my thanks to Richard Madden on behalf of the Acorn Café members, because he currently puts up the tables after his Tuesday evening session so that they can be pulled into place by the organisers of the Café the next morning.

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## **Mothers' Union**

Here is our annual Report for 2025 and 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.

A few of us were able to go to the Cathedral on 1st April to a service where our newly appointed Worldwide President Kathleen Snow and several Trustees attended, and then went to lunch in St Paul's Parish Hall; we then continued to meet up with Kathleen in the church where there were displays of other Diocesan MU projects. We had several interesting meetings including a video presentation on the AFIA (Away From It All) holiday that had taken place in August 2024. These holidays are run every two years as they are funded mostly by members raising the funds—the holidays are completely free for the families invited. Approximately £20,000 per holiday is required. We do get one or two grants but these have fizzled out after Covid.

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

We have approached the TV show 'The Repair Shop' to see if they would be willing to restore our tired banner that is almost 100 years old and is suffering from having been rolled up over the years to be taken to MU events. A new design has been drawn up and is in the process of being made but it will take some time for it to be completed.

We are very excited as towards the end of the year we have several ladies wishing to know more about Mother's Union and to become members, so watch this space.

I hope we will continue to flourish and spread the word and works of the Mothers' Union during the coming year as it will be our 150th Anniversary, and perhaps even encourage more people to join us. I relinquished my position as Branch Leader at our AGM in February 2025 and we are now run by the members with several taking on specific roles; we hope this will work. I have to thank all the members for their support as and when they are able to come along and hope this will continue into the next year.

*Margaret Horwood (Contact Member)*

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## 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 of St Stephen's 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.

Membership of the choir has remained fairly static this last year. Alongside those who live in Canterbury and the surrounding area, we have welcomed a couple of singers associated with the university who have sung with us when they've been in Canterbury. Our choir are wonderful people who enjoy singing the music that we offer and are keen to share their God-given gifts with all of us at St Stephen's to enhance our worship. The music at St Stephen's is an important and significant part of our outreach. We always appreciate new members, 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 encourage them to come along!

As well as our services at St Stephen's, over the past year the choir have sung services in Rochester, Southwark 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. Future trips include Coventry and Winchester Cathedrals in 2026 and 2027.

I'd like to thank everyone who supports the musical life of our church, and to 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*

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## Pastoral Group

GROUP MEMBERS: Margaret Horwood (convenor); Mary Brown, Libby Nichols, Enid Dixon, the Rev'd Sally Pickersgill, Shirley Hagger and the Rev'd Dr David Vannerley.

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

The Rev'd Dr David Vannerley has taken over the chairman of the Group and Margaret has continued for the time being as the minute secretary.

'Tea @ 3' has been a great success yet again with around 35+ people attending each month. Philip Knight has, for the last four months been coming early to help put up the tables. We have a quiz each month mostly set by Sally Pickersgill but we have had quizzes set by Philip Knight and Jeremy Barford. We have, this year, introduced prizes for the winning table which seems to be appreciated. A range of different flavoured cakes are served at 3 p.m. along with a welcome cup of tea or coffee. We had an excellent Christmas party again where a Christmas tea was served and a good sing-along of Christmas Carols with the piano being played by one of our regular members, James Gleasure, after a game of Playing Card Bingo. Every guest was given a small novelty chocolate to take home.

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. Unfortunately members of the congregation don't seem to realise that this service is available and it might be good to promote it in the new year. 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 2025, one in June, 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 are still on offer, it is 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 6 Sympathy and Get Well cards. 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.

*Margaret Horwood, Convenor*

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## **Property**

### **Repairs to Manwood Chapel and south porch roof, and a gulley wall.**

The ridge tiles on Manwood Chapel and the South Porch roof were rebedded in April 2025, also the gulley wall at the east end of the church was rebuilt. The contractor was Coleman Contractors.

### **Noticeboard.**

A replacement noticeboard was installed in October 2025.

### **Flood.**

Much of the past year was devoted to dealing with the September flood and its aftermath. The boiler house was flooded to about a metre above floor level which damaged the two circulating pumps beyond repair. The experience with Ecclesiastical Insurance, the church insurers, was very positive and the church received costs for replacement pumps, less the Excess of £250. The heating control system also became a victim of the flood; a water temperature sensor could not be replaced because of the age of the system, so the programmer has been replaced with a HIVE system. This can now be controlled locally in church or by phone remotely.

The flood prompted the church to consider how a similar event could be prevented in the future, and it was decided to provide improved drainage along the path to the south door by installing an additional gulley across the path by the gates and to enlarge the slit gulley outside the south door. The church believed Canterbury Council was responsible for the gulley outside the gates, but they claim it's on unadopted land and deny responsibility. This has not yet been resolved.

### **Hole in Manwood Chapel ceiling.**

A faculty has been granted for this remedial work, and we have placed an order with Coleman Contractors, a company experienced in working with historic buildings.

### **Damp in Manwood Chapel.**

A damp patch was noticed on the west wall of the Manwood Chapel, and a repair specification has been received. This has not progressed during the last year but it is likely to be carried out during this coming year

### **Path to Garden of Remembrance.**

Unfortunately, this is another project that has not progressed this last year. However, the faculty has need received and it is hoped that the work will start during the spring or early summer.

### **General comments.**

- 1) General maintenance has continued throughout the year, portable appliances, fire extinguishers, emergency lights, boiler checks, lightning conductor were all checked.
- 2) Previous projects like providing toilets for the church, under-pew heating, a glass entrance door, and regilding the church clock are still being considered. A small, dedicated team is needed to move these projects forward. Any volunteers?

### **3) The Church Hall**

Checks on the fire extinguishers, portable equipment, emergency lights and the two gas heaters were completed during the year. The gas heaters are certainly more than 20 years old and alternative heating should be considered, either a straight replacement to more modern gas heaters or a change to electric heating.

The former Print Room has been thoroughly cleared by our enthusiastic DIY Priest and Assistant. The newly decorated walls have transformed the area into a comfy Parish Office.

*Peter Brown*

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### **Safeguarding (I)**

#### **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.

At 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 that affect current practice. However, we need to maintain our vigilance to ensure the protection and well-being of everyone in our communities.

*Joanna Heath, Parish Safeguarding Officer*

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## **Safeguarding (2)**

The parish has continued to seek to fulfil its Safeguarding commitments and the PCC has adopted the model policies commended by the diocese of Canterbury.

There have been no reported incidents or expressions of concern during the year. The PCC has included Safeguarding as an agenda item at every meeting, and our website is compliant with the regulations.

There have been administrative changes at the end of the report period. Enid Dixon has stepped down from the role of Parish Safeguarding Administrator and that function has been rolled back into the responsibilities of the parish priest. Also, Jo Heath has stepped down as Safeguarding Officer for personal reasons.

We thank them for their generous time commitment to their roles.

We are grateful to Jamie MacLean for taking up the Safeguarding Officer role and to Jenny Bennett for agreeing to be our Disclosure Officer.

*Fr David*

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## **St Stephen's Theology Group**

The Theology Group continues to flourish. All our meetings are now on Zoom, and we continue to attract speakers from across the country and abroad. The 2024–25 season ended with Rev'd Professor Alison Milbank from 'Save the Parish' explaining the aims of the Save the Parish movement. Rev'd Dr Kevin Maddy, Dr Deirdre Good, Canon Christopher Irvine, Dr Philip Knight and Rev'd Dr Alan le Grys have all given talks in the 2025–6 season on various Biblical and Philosophical themes and Rt Rev. Richard Llewellyn spoke on his experience of the Israel–Palestine situation which he characterised as one of occupation. There are still two sessions to run this season and a full programme is beginning to take shape for 2026–27. I had hoped to be able to invite our new incumbent to speak during this past season but the failure to appoint has meant this could not happen. I look forward to issuing this invitation for this coming season, in the hope that an appointment will be made in the near future.

*Dr Philip Knight*

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## CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

This time last year, we wrote that we would soon to be advertising for a new Rector of St Stephen's and hoped that the successful candidate would be installed sometime in the autumn. Regular members of St Stephen's will of course be aware that things haven't quite gone to plan. Whilst the initial advertisement brought three applications, none were felt suitable so didn't get beyond the shortlisting process. The Archdeacon has been supportive throughout, making time to meet with the PCC and explain the situation. He head-hunted other suitable candidates, but the one who perhaps had the most potential decided that God wasn't calling her to minister at St Stephen's at this time. So, in January 2026 we advertised again, including an advertisement in *The Church Times* to potentially reach a wider pool of candidates. Unfortunately, there were no applications.

So where does this leave us now? We are blessed to have the ministry of both Rev'd David Vannerley, our Interim Priest-in-Charge, and Rev'd Sally Pickersgill, whose ordination to the priesthood we celebrated in June 2025. They have both been wonderful in making sure that St Stephen's continues to have an active ministry and it would be easy to just let things continue as they are, but we must remember that they are both part-time, that Sally is self-supporting (meaning that she doesn't get a stipend for the work she does) and that David is the oldest priest licensed as priest-in-charge of a parish in the Canterbury Diocese, and possibly the Church of England! Please be assured that the Archdeacon is actively looking at ways to fill the post of Rector of Hackington; meetings are taking place and the Diocese are looking at ways to be creative with how the role may be filled; we hope to be able to share more of this soon. The Archdeacon and the Bishop have our best interests at heart and want to make sure that the right person is appointed to lead us into the future.

Of course, it's not just Fr David and Sally who are responsible for St Stephen's; 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, our team of bellringers that call us to worship each week, members of the choir who spend many hours preparing music to enhance our worship, our flower arrangers, the Holy Dusters who keep our church clean, 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)—whilst we know who some of these people are, often friends and family of those in church, others are with us quietly and anonymously. I recently received an email from someone in Northumberland who catches up with our Eucharist every Sunday afternoon and wanted to thank us for our lovely services. So live-streaming our worship continues to be an important part of our ministry and outreach.

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.

This APCM marks the end of Shirley's tenure as Churchwarden and member of the PCC. Over a number of years Shirley has quietly helped to keep the wheels of St Stephen's turning. As her fellow Churchwarden, I'd like to thank her for everything that she has done in that role, and for everything else she does for St Stephen's including as a member of the choir and leading the flower arrangers.

I'm perhaps a little more hesitant in finishing this report with a bold statement about having a new Rector in the coming months as I did last year, but I really do hope and pray that someone will feel called to St Stephen's—please pray the same.

Stephen Barker and Shirley Hagger, Churchwardens

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## REPORT OF THE INTERIM PRIEST IN CHARGE

I report on my second year of office—about which I am slightly surprised because we had all hoped that the process of appointing a new Rector would have made greater progress than it has. The first round of advertising produced no candidates who were appropriate to the place and a later, different, process produced one interested party who decided that they had no vocation to Hackington—and rose even higher in my estimation for that brave decision.

We continue in prayer that Our Lord will call the right person to our parish.

The parish has continued to register measurable growth in attendance and we have had a number of welcome new members—in a small parish like ours an increase of ten new people has much more impact than in a big congregation. Last year I wrote that Sunday morning attendance had moved from 'forty-ish' to 'fifty-ish': this year we have been regularly getting an attendance of sixty or more. Why? I would suggest two things that are important: the **welcome** that we give to visitors and also our **being faithful** to our intention to be an inclusive congregation that is comfortable in its gentle, liberal catholic identity.

The Priesting of the Revd Sally Pickersgill and her generosity with her volunteer time, means that there is much more ministerial resource in the parish. There are however two areas where we need to extend our work, with children and into the Hales Place part of the parish where we know there are people who are sympathetic to us but we have no actual members. We have also been delighted to welcome the Revd Joy Denton on placement with us to help with her curacy in our neighbouring parish of All Saints. We have continued to support the All Saints Community Larder project through our gifts of produce and also by sharing the proceeds of our second Christmas Tree Festival with them.

There have been fewer baptisms and funerals in this past year but we have continued to serve those families according to their needs. The number of weddings has continued at a low level. However, on a much brighter note, we were able to have a parish Confirmation Service for the second year running with another five candidates being presented to Bp. Rose for the Sacrament—ten candidates in eighteen months, another indication that there is measurable growth in numbers, which now appear to have returned to the typical levels of 2018, according to the numbers kept by the diocese.

I wish to express my thanks to three members who have stepped down from supporting roles in the parish's ministry in 2025.

Libby Nichols has given up her long-standing role as baptism co-ordinator in which she has been so caring and organised; this work has been taken back into clergy responsibility for the time being.

Enid Dixon has handed back the work of administering our Safeguarding procedures, for which we are very grateful; this work is intrinsic to the role of the parish priest and that is where it now resides.

James Taylor has stepped back from his role as the environmental advocate in the parish and this work will in future be covered by the PCC collectively.

We are very grateful to them all.

2025 has again been a year of blessings for all of us: let's look forward with faith and excitement to what God has in store for us in 2026!

*Fr David*

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## DEANERY SYNOD

Synod has met three times since our last APCMs. Each Synod has picked up one of the themes from the Deanery Mission Plan (DMP) discussed at the February 2025 meeting.

In *June 2025* at *St Mildred's*, and Synod discussed the plan's provision for student ministry, focusing on addressing the needs of students that were currently not being met. One positive development has been the move to make known the variety of services available across the Deanery, with a particular focus on Evensong.

In *October 2025* at *St Mary Bredin* the focus was on children and young people. It was stressed that not every church could be expected to follow the same path. From discussion groups a picture of the existing variety of provision across the Deanery emerged and it was agreed that more could be done to signpost the provision available.

In *February 2026* at *St Dunstan's* we experienced an Ignite meeting led by Rev'd Patrick Ellisdon of All Saints' together with members of his team. The Ignite group at All Saints' has been increasing and now has 20–30 active members. It was felt that this was a valuable resource to have in the Deanery.

**Communication:** We are trying to improve the level of communication of events as well as regular services by encouraging postings on the Deanery Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/CanterburyDeanery/](http://www.facebook.com/CanterburyDeanery/) which provides current news of the huge range of activities among our Deanery parishes and Christians Together in Canterbury.

**During the year:** We were saddened by the death of Canon John Morrison who had served the Deanery loyally for many years, most recently as Treasurer. During 2025 the Area Dean and Lay Chair undertook five Visitations to parishes: St Cosmus and St Damian, Blean; St Michael and All Angels, Harbledown; St Nicholas, Thanington; St Stephen's, Hackington; and St Nicholas, Sturry. At the February 2026 Synod Rev'd Canon Jo Richards completed her term of office as Area Dean along with Rev'd Brian McHenry as Assistant Area Dean. Grateful thanks are due to Jo and Brian for their leadership of the Deanery. Parishes had also been asked to compile a list of 'Three Things' which would be the focus of their Mission Action Plans by December 2025. These will feed into the ongoing review of the Deanery Mission Plan to

ensure coherence between parish and Deanery plans.

**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. The June Synod marks the end of the triennium for the Deanery and elections will be held for a new Deanery Synod at APCMs.

*Roger Vickerman, Lay Chair*

