



St Peter and St Paul Wadhurst
Minutes of the Annual Vestry meeting (AVM),
held on
16 May 2024 from 7.30pm in the Church

CHAIRMAN: Revd. Dr Paul Ratcliff, Vicar

The agenda and all supporting papers and reports referred to in these minutes had been available on the Church website in advance of the meeting for anyone to consult and raise questions. In addition, copies of the Annual Report and Financial statement had been made available in the church in advance of the meeting.

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received in advance from John Bateup, Chris Bithell, Penny Dobson, Lorraine Grant, Michael Hardcastle, Vanessa Sharman and Clare Wordsworth.

There were 24 persons in attendance: 22 members of the electoral roll plus Revd A Goy and Revd P Ratcliff.

The Annual Vestry Meeting (AVM)

1. Opening Prayer

After a moment of silence for quiet reflection, the Vicar opened the meeting with the reading for the day from 'Thy Kingdom Come', (Revelation 1: 17-18), concluding with prayer.

2. Minutes of the last Meeting

The minutes of the AVM held on 11 May 2023 were agreed and signed by the Vicar as a true record.

3. Election of Churchwardens

A single nomination for churchwarden had been received:

Nominee	Proposer	Seconder
Ruth Dunnett	Roger Lockwood	Paul Burstow

There being no further nominations, Ruth Dunnett was elected unopposed.

The Vicar expressed thanks to her for serving once again and for being such a dedicated and capable churchwarden. It is necessary for there to be a second churchwarden, and this will be addressed in the next few weeks.

The meeting also noted thanks to Vanessa Sharman as she steps down after 5 years as an excellent churchwarden.

4. Churchwardens' Visitations

The services held to swear-in churchwardens will be in St Leonards, Crowborough and Battle. Ruth Dunnett will join other wardens from the benefice at the service in Battle on 18 June.

5. Reports on Church Life

Reports on activities in the life of the church, submitted by leaders of the various groups, had been made available on the website, with copies in the church. They were reviewed at this point.

Afternoon Fellowship – This is continuing to go well under the leadership of Jackie Scott and Chris Bithell, who were thanked for their service.

CAMEO - This activity for the elderly meets every Wednesday from 11am to 3pm. Anne Brignell asked that thanks be recorded to the whole team behind it.

Carillon Cottage - Anne Brignell took over as Chair in 2023. The Cottage's work relies entirely on volunteers and is as effective as it is because of the work of the Team Leaders.

CTiW - CTiW organises several ecumenical services each year and a Prayer for Healing group which meets once a month. Thanks were extended to Steve Stordy who chairs CTiW and Polly Bradford who represents Wadhurst Church.

Churchyard – A lot of effort has gone into a new 'churchyard project' to improve the path and the views, and to manage the churchyard in an environmentally friendly way, in collaboration with Wild Wadhurst.

Fabric Report – A good deal of effort is going into achieving carbon zero. The Eco-Church initiative has included buying 100% renewable gas and electricity. The carbon footprint is 30.72 TCO2 tonnes a year and to offset that, we can buy trees for £247 per annum. Part of the project includes replacing the church heating boiler and putting underfloor heating into the church. This would also lend itself to re-ordering in the church.

Health and Safety - The report submitted by the churchwardens ties together the work that Anthony Dunnett has been doing, since taking on the role of Health and Safety Officer later in 2023.

Home Groups – These continue to thrive with two new groups set up as a consequence of the Alpha course held at the end of 2023.

Pastoral Team - This group functions well with an active team. The training material developed by Revd Paul and Hollie Butler when the group was set up is now used in Frant, and other churches in the deanery intend to use it in the future. Anne Brignell and Mary Burstow have joined to course at Frant.

Safeguarding (Recruitment) – Penny Dobson reported that 47 DBS checks had been done in the past year which reflects the number of volunteers active with younger, older or vulnerable people.

Safeguarding – Dominic Bolas is the new Safeguarding Officer. He has a professional background and is very experienced in the matter at national level. He plans to introduce changes in record-keeping and is reviewing along with Revd. Paul anything reported since 2018 to make sure that any ongoing cases are still being handled appropriately.

Senior Lunch - Two lunches are held each year with around 80 people attending. Thanks were extended to Jackie Scott and the team.

St George's Hall - The plan to sell the Hall to the Parish Council (WPC) is on-going. WPC was keen not to see it lost to the community. WPC will refurbish and bring the Hall back into use as a community space. The cost for the church to refurbish it to be safely reopened for a reasonable shelf-life was beyond what could be afforded.

Ministry with Young People - The report submitted by Kat Fisher shows the amount of work done in the parish with young people. The end of School Pastors is the only negative. Alternative options have been considered but none is active at present.

Ruth asked that thanks be recorded for the work Kat Fisher does with the young people and that the relationships built during the time at Uplands will continue.

6. Chairman's Report

The Vicar gave an overview of the year.

The church has adopted the Mission Statement : *Worshipping God in every Aspect of Life*

The Vicar showed a schematic showing the four main pillars of activity. These are Prayer and Worship; Discipleship; Pastoral Care; and Evangelism. These pillars are underpinned by good governance, including firm finance, buildings which are fit for purpose, and good communications.

This is articulated in the 'Mission Action Plan' which also includes development actions to enhance the life of the church. The MAP is reviewed regularly, updated annually and is available for all to review on the website.

For 2023 the PCC set eleven objectives. Six were completed and four are ongoing. For example, Alpha had 32 sign-ups, and the church achieved ECO-Church Bronze Award. We have an increased social media presence and a stronger entry on 'A Church Near You' website. These latter aspects are thanks to Mary Burstow.

For 2024-5, seventeen objectives have been set down and some have made progress already. Penny Dobson has been appointed as a Prayer Coordinator (and has set up prayer stations in church for 'Thy Kingdom Come'). There are seven new confirmation candidates and Wadhurst will host the service. We aim to increase the fellowship opportunities and build more links with local schools, particularly through the churchyard project. We aim to re-introduce pew sheets and expand the service planning group.

Total adult Sunday attendance was hit in 2020 by Covid, but since 2022 there has been a significant increase in people coming to this church. The 8am service numbers are falling but at 10.30am the numbers are up. Initial data for 2024 indicate an increase is continuing. RD noted that patterns of church attendance at this time are very different now with 'regular' attendance being not every week, so the increased numbers suggest a wider reach. The email list keeps growing as does the number of Facebook followers. Regular attenders are encouraged to be welcoming to those returning to church.

In 2023 the church issued a warning that a £45K deficit was projected at the start of the year. Thanks to stewardship, cutbacks, and donations a £10K surplus was achieved. Thanks be to God for that.

In 2023 there were lots of changes in personnel. Peter Thompson retired as Reader after many years' service and the Vicar expressed appreciation for his work then (and his continuing assistance on financial matters). Jean Sermon retired as Administrator and Jemma Johnson has been a very successful replacement. Hollie Butler moved to Maidstone to take up her curacy. Other members of the congregation also moved away. The Vicar noted the deaths of members of the church community including Peter Pilch, Rowan Hudson, Ruby Morris and Dennis Brewster.

The Vicar welcomed Andrew Goy as Associate Vicar working across the benefice and thanked him for his support.

Overall, there has been much to be thankful for. More volunteers are of course always needed especially for work with older and younger people.

The Vicar concluded by reporting that the Archdeacon of Brighton has recently made specific reference to Wadhurst as an encouraging example of a thriving church. This is due to dedicated service from many members of the church – too many to thank by name - who ensure that all the activities are so successful.

7. Thanks

Anthony Dunnett expressed the thanks of the whole congregation to Revd Paul – for his servant leadership, humble and godly approach, his pastoral heart, and excellent teaching and

preaching. Anthony also thanked the Vicar's wife for her ministry in her own right and for her support and encouragement of Revd. Paul, which Paul warmly endorsed.

Signed: _____

Date:

