

St Matthew's Annual Meetings 2025 - minutes subject to approval

St Matthew's Church Harwell
Minutes of the Annual General Meetings held on
Wednesday 21st May 2025 at 7pm
In St Matthew's Church

The meetings were attended by 27 people.

The Rector, Jeremy Parsons, welcomed everyone to the meeting and opened the Meetings with a Bible reading and prayer.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Jane Woolley, Adrian Rance-McGregor, Deborah and Mike Evans, Rebecca and Andy Lewis, Tony Hughes, and Elaine Shrimpton.

Annual Parochial Meeting

2. Election of churchwardens

Jeremy explained Jane Wooley was not seeking re-election as Church Warden. He thanked her for her work as Church Warden and for all the time and effort she had put into the job.

A nomination had been received for Stephen Manning for the post as Church Warden and his nomination was proposed by Marilyn Thomas and seconded by David Pyke and passed unanimously by the meeting.

There were no other nominations so the remaining position remains unfilled.

Signed as a true record:

Chair

Secretary

Date

Date

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Election of Deanery Synod Representatives

There were no nominations for either of the two vacancies. Jeremy commented that these were important roles and he wanted to encourage Church members to consider standing for them.

2. Election of PCC Members

A church with an electoral roll of 51-100 people can have up to 9 elected PCC members. Jeremy said Tim Roberts (Treasurer) Liz Roberts were standing down so there were two vacancies.

Elizabeth Clarke said a completed nomination form had been received for Nick Clarke as the new Treasurer. He was proposed by Tim Roberts and seconded by Roger Mawle. A show of hands indicated unanimous support for his appointment.

No other nominations had been received so one vacancy remained. The Rector asked if this could be filled during the year, and Elizabeth said someone could be co-opted and then nominated at the next Annual meeting. Jeremy said this could be helpful if the PCC identified that they needed help from someone with specific skills.

3. Appointment of Independent Examiner

Elizabeth said that after many years, Jane Moreton had decided to stand down as Independent Examiner, and Graham Beith had kindly agreed to take on the appointment. Jeremy thanked Jane for all her work as Examiner. Tim Roberts proposed her appointment and this was seconded by Nick Clarke and the appointment was approved unanimously.

4. Receipt of the Reports

The following reports had been available in the weeks leading up to the meeting and were “received” formally by the meeting:

- **Minutes of the Annual Meetings held in May 2024**

Liz Roberts proposed the acceptance of the minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting as a correct record. This was seconded by Eliza Wheaton. They were approved by a show of hands. A hard copy was signed by Jeremy Parsons as Chairman and Elizabeth Clarke as Secretary.

- **The Annual Report for 2024**

This Report included the Safeguarding Report from Sue Greatbanks. Jean Barton commented that the Report made no mention of Home Groups and that a report on these should be included in future Annual Reports.

Tim Roberts proposed the acceptance of the Annual Report and this was seconded by Stephen Manning. The Report was approved unanimously by a show of hands.

- **Fabric Report for 2024**

Eliza Wheaton proposed the acceptance of the Report and this was seconded by Tim Roberts and approved by a show of hands.

- **Financial Report and Accounts for 2024**

Adrian Bollon proposed the acceptance of the Report and Accounts and this was seconded by Nick Clarke. The Report and Accounts were approved by a show of hands.

- **Deanery Synod Report 2024**

Pam Rolls proposed the acceptance of the Report and Adrian Bollon seconded this. The Report was passed by a show of hands.

5. Number on the Electoral Roll as at April 2025.

There was a new roll for 2025 and at the end of April 2025 the Electoral Roll stood at 96 compared with 89 in April 2024.

6. Rector's remarks.

Jeremy began by thanking everyone who had contributed to the work of the Church over the last year. He said that there would be a specific thank you to Jane Woolley at a subsequent Sunday service when more people were able to be present. He thanked Tim and Liz Roberts for their service on PCC, and Jane Moreton for her years as Independent Examiner. He thanked Kate Evans for her service commenting that she had been an encouragement and inspiration to the congregation. Sue Greatbanks, our Safeguarding Officer, had a key role and was helping him with changes to safeguarding procedures. Finally, he thanked Deborah for her significant assistance particularly when he was off sick.

Jeremy said the Church had a history, a heritage and a future. We need to seek where Jesus is calling us and step into his will. 2024 was his first full year and Sasha had joined him as licensed Minister. The Church was blessed by a strong leaders and preachers team unlike many other parishes. In addition, Jane Woolley, as Church Warden, had spent a lot of time grappling with procedures and working with volunteers to simplify church life. Her organisational skills were much appreciated.

Jeremy had been able to re organise the preaching team to allow them to remain in the church they were preaching in for the remainder of the service, and therefore to be available to the congregation afterwards.

The Church financial situation was a challenge as it was not robust, and it is envisaged that this would continue into 2025. A Benefice wide fundraising team had been established to try to address the problem. Another 2024 challenge was to make services more diverse. The All Age services had enabled us to widen the shared Vision of our Church to create a vibrant young community. He also thanked Lucy Ryan for her contribution to this Vision. He was still looking for the right person to continue this work, and continue to put this Vision into practice.

After a period of ill health, Jeremy said he was back to full duties and thanked Pam, Jan, Marilyn and Deborah for their support during this period. Sasha would return from maternity leave shortly.

His plans for 2025 included continuing working on a structural revision of the Benefice as we adjust to the growth of Valley Park. Stephen Manning was helping with this work and he expected to bring their proposals to PCC shortly. Jeremy saw the future as the congregation leading the Church in a new Ministry underpinned by the clergy and lay ministers. We need to be a welcoming church, encouraging and nurturing others. He saw three stages in the development of a congregation:

Storming/ Normalising/Perfecting.

We are currently in the storming stage with resignations, disagreements, and polarisation. If the Church is to move on to the Normalising stage, we need to spend less time talking about each other, which leads to damaging behaviour, and more time talking to people. Jeremy went on to give some examples of this damaging behaviour. He said things were not working as they should, and we should commit to talking with each other. Conflict is inherent in a growing church and divisions needed to be

overcome. Conflict was imbedded in the current governance and leadership structure and needed to be smoothed over. Roles needed to be clarified, and a new style and standard of leadership was needed, for which, within budget limits, training will be provided.

Jeremy thanked the congregation for all they do and said it was a privilege to serve us.

8. Discussion and Questions.

Roger Clarke said he was unclear how Valley Park would fit into the Benefice. It would be nice to have it as part of Harwell and Chilton but it was geographically separate by the A.34

Jeremy replied that this was one area he specifically wanted to concentrate on in 2025. Valley Park was going to grow quickly and the Church needed to respond to this as it was part of our Benefice. He planned to set up a specialist team comprised of clergy and laity to concentrate on this with him and Sasha. The team might well be joined by another curate in 2026/7. He envisaged setting up this team by August and then asking Mark Bodeker to come and share his experiences in Great Western Park church with them. Mark was retiring in September, and the ministerial structure would then change as the new incumbent would be an Associate Vicar in the Harwell/Chilton Benefice.

God has given us what we need to move on and help us to give loving service in Harwell, we just need to trust him. We may not succeed in everything, but he will support and lead us as we try.

There were no further questions and the Meeting closed in prayer.

Signed as a true record:

Chair

Secretary

Date

Date