

St. Peter and St. Paul, Aylesford

Annual Meeting of Parishioners and Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2025, 7:30pm, in church

## Agenda

### 1. Welcome and Prayer

Welcome and prayer from Ruth

### 2. Apologies for absence

Joanna Frazer, Gordon Hunt, Peter Smith

### Annual Meeting of Parishioners (Vestry Meeting)

#### 3. Election of Churchwardens

This position is open to all parishioners and members of the electoral roll. Aline has stepped down and has been thanked as of 13<sup>th</sup> April 2025 for her hard work in this role, but it is now time to step back.

No nominations have been received for the role of Churchwarden.

Tania, Sharon and Aline are willing to assist in the role of Churchwarden. Thank you to all 3 people willing to volunteer to assist. No objections from anyone present and everyone is happy with this arrangement until a Churchwarden is appointed.

If someone decides they would like to be Churchwarden at some point during the year it might be possible to elect them, but someone should contact the Area Dean regarding the procedure.

### Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Persons present must be on the Electoral Roll to participate in this meeting.

#### 4. Approval of Draft Minutes of the APCM held on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2024

Minutes of the previous APCM (2024) provided to all present. It was agreed that the minutes are a true record of the meeting. Any matters arising from these minutes to be raised in Any Other Business at the end of this meeting.

#### 5. Report on the numbers entered on the new Electoral Roll

Our Electoral Roll Officer, Anita presented the numbers – 60 people on the Electoral Roll as of 6<sup>th</sup> April 2025 (on completion of new roll prior to 2025 APCM). 42% of these people are not resident in the parish.

Thank you to Anita for her ongoing work in this role and for giving this presentation.

There has been a drop in numbers on the Electoral Roll, which is to be addressed later in the meeting.

## **6. Parish Annual Report**

Read by all independently.

## **7. PCC Financial Report and Accounts**

Peter is no longer our Treasurer – thank you to Peter for all of his hard work until the end of March this year to see through the 2024 accounts.

We are all aware of the current financial situation and the urgent need for a new Treasurer. The finance report is more detailed than usual as it includes actions that need to be taken to address the finances. The auditor required information about what we are doing to address the situation. The Statement of Financial Affairs has been examined and the auditor is content with what we are doing.

## **8. Fabric, Goods and Ornaments Report**

The biggest concern is the major work that has been outstanding since the Quinquennial Report, particularly the plaster work. The cost of investigating and getting quotes is a big job as it requires scaffolding. Some work has been completed as it was a result of storm damage and had to be addressed immediately, but internal work still needs to be done. Faculty For Permanent Change to Internal Changes – we are waiting for a response and it has been chased, but we have received no reply to emails. We do not know how long it will take for us to get a response.

The fabric committee does not have enough members on it to ensure all necessary work is completed in a timely manner.

Money is available from a number of sources, but projects have to be specified clearly to use this money and this takes time and work. More help is needed on the fabric committee to get this done.

Thank you to the existing Fabric Committee, particularly Aline, Ian and Andy for all their hard work.

## **9. Deanery Synod Report**

Thank you to Tania and Des for being our Deanery Synod Representatives.

## **10. Vicar's Comments**

See appendix.

## **11. Election of members to the PCC**

There are less than 100 members on electoral roll which means that 9 elected members of the PCC are needed (instead of 12 as needed previously). We have 3 groups of 3 members to each serve for 3 years. Anita, Sharon and Ian – this year is end of their 3 year term. Ian has already moved away. Sharon is to stand again. Anita has resigned.

The PCC members whose 3 year term ends in 2026 are Ann, Ann Butterworth, Sue and Janet. Ann Butterworth and Sue are both stepping down.

The PCC members who 3 year terms end in 2027 are Tania, Christine, Des and Sheena. Christine resigned 12<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

5 PCC members are staying from the 2026 and 2027 cohorts, which leaves 4 vacancies. We have Sharon and Aline (to be elected) to fill 2 vacancies. This means we will have 2 vacancies to fill. No more nomination forms have been submitted. The 2 nominations we have received do not exceed the number of places available and therefore these people they can be elected to the PCC. Show of hands – everyone happy (unanimous). Thank you to Anita, Ann Butterworth, Sue and Christine for all the hard work they have undertaken as elected PCC members.

**12. Appointment of Independent Examiner**

Martyn Burt – all happy with proposal.

**13. Any other business**

No matters arising from the minutes of last year's meeting.

Thank you for all the other reports included in the report and for all the work that often goes unnoticed (the people who arrange the church flowers, music, cleaning, etc).

**14. Date, time and place of next AMP and APCM**

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2026 11:30am after the morning service. A new incumbent may suggest something different.

**15. Close of Meeting**

Thank you to those who attended this meeting.

Closing prayer by Ruth.

PCC members to stay behind for meeting.



## Vicar's Comments for 2024

Every year, for the Annual Meeting we have various reports from the main areas of the church's work, and we also have 'Vicar's Comments' - they are not an 'official' report of the church - just a view from my perspective.

So here are my brief reflections when I think about 2024 ...

Last year felt like more of a struggle than any of my previous years - only because of the issues we are well aware of - declining attendance, the finance situation and the shortage of volunteers.

So let's start with attendance ...

Two very unusual things happened last year. One was that there was a noticeable drop in attendance during late summer, early autumn, with no clear indication why.

The effect on the overall figures is not too bad, but will be seen next year I would imagine.

Average attendance decreased slightly from 45 to 43 adults. Most of the special services around Christmas for example saw an increase, except for midnight communion which was down. Also remembrance day saw only about half the attendance of last year because the uniformed groups chose to go to RBLI in the afternoon.

The worshipping community (those who attend a church service or equivalent e.g. in a care home, at least once a month) dropped by four from 154 to 150. We still have a really good spread across the three age groups - 24, 61, and 65. Basically healthy.

36 people joined the church in 2024, and 18 left including sadly those who died Sue Holmes and Margaret Terry.

Christenings were the same, weddings were slightly up and funerals were slightly down.

A drop in the electoral roll is not surprising. The 109 from last year included people who simply do not attend church anymore, many of whom have moved away. With a general decline in church attendance worldwide, a significant drop during a renewal year, after 5 years of revision only, is not a surprise.

I mentioned two very unusual things. The second one was that, for the first time in my church life, and that since I was four years old, I found myself with nobody else in this parish who has been a lifelong Church Of England attender, no one else with a kind of innate feel for the quirks of church life. Alan Longmuir and Gordon Hunt were the last of that breed. It has made me feel quite exposed at times. Obviously, I am now leaving you, but I have said a few times and stress again that the responsibility for this parish lays with the archdeacon - so any issues at all - you get in touch with our new archdeacon, Nick Cornell.

You are well aware of our main concerns, at the end of the year. The financial situation and the difficulty in finding volunteers, especially for the two crucial roles of treasurer and churchwarden.

These were exactly the 2 main problems I mentioned last year and the year before: There is a shortage of volunteers to enable all the things we would like to do, and the shortage of money ... and I said that the financial situation promises to worsen quite seriously this year. I promised that the PCC will be looking at both these issues with renewed commitment and with the aim of addressing them with practical solutions. And that is what we have done and is in progress. We were also able to establish the owner of 140 The Avenue as indisputably the PCC.

We have been very fortunate to recently employ a new church administrator following Anita's decision to retire earlier than planned. Clearly, there's a steep learning curve for Christina, and she has been very courageous to take on the role heading into an interregnum. Anita has kindly said that she will continue to be available when needed, as I will for the next month.

We are also fortunate to have safeguarding overseen by Sheena, who took on the role of PSO this year.

Sadly, we will be losing our pastoral assistant, as Janet's licence runs out at Pentecost. However, Janet has kindly said that she will continue to oversee the pastoral team.

I'm very happy to be leaving our outreach working in good hands – the hands of all the volunteers running the community hub, the dementia café, the food bank, the litter picking and so on. As I mentioned on Sunday, all these things combine to be a real practical outworking of God's care and his bias for the disadvantaged.

A major achievement in 2024 was gaining the Eco Church bronze award. As I have promised, I will buy the plaque as a leaving gift to the church.

As I said last year ... again in a spirit of gratitude and wonder, I draw to your attention the fact that a small group of people meets every weekday on Zoom to continue to

pray for the life and flourishing of this church. How privileged are we all, to know that group meets faithfully and constantly. Knowing and trusting in our dependency on prayer ... where would we be without them?

As usual, there is much more I could say. Please do ask me if you have any questions about church life. As always, I personally want to thank everyone who has worked so hard - I can't start naming names, a road to disaster as you know - but whether you are paid to work or a volunteer, whatever you support in church life, thank you for everything you have done to support me, and everything you will continue to do to support church ministry and each other.

Clearly, chairing this meeting is my final official function in my role as incumbent here, and as you know, I move away with a lot of sadness, but with a sense of what a huge privilege it has been to serve here. I'm not going to say any more than I said on Sunday morning; you will be very aware of how thankful I am for all your support and encouragement and dedication to the life of this church over the last six years. I just would like it on record that I am hugely thankful for the wonderful sendoff on Sunday.

My parting promise is that my prayers for you will not cease as you travel the months of the interregnum ahead.

Ruth

29th April 2025

