

Holy Trinity with St. Mary, Berwick Parish Church

Registered Charity 1182751

Annual Vestry and Parochial Church Meetings

Held on Sunday 6th April 2025 in the Parish Centre following the 10.00am Service.

The meetings were chaired by the Revd. Lee Taylor, Vicar of Berwick

Approximately 50 members of the parish were in attendance.

Apologies were received from Paula Short

The Vicar welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

Minutes of the Vestry Meeting

1. Election of Secretary for Vestry and APCM meetings

Revd. Lee Taylor proposed Linda Foley, seconded by Anne Horne.

Linda Foley duly elected as Secretary.

2. Minutes of the Vestry Meeting held on 21st April 2024

Revd. Lee went through all the pages and asked for any inaccuracies. It was accepted as a correct record.

The Minutes of the Vestry Meeting held on 21st April 2024 were duly approved.

3. Election of Churchwardens: Four nominations were received from David Mason, Joyce Currie, Ann Mawer and Roger Barrow. The nomination papers were shown to Revd. Lee Taylor.

Minute: The four nominees David Mason, Joyce Currie, Ann Mawer and Roger Barrow were accepted as duly elected and approved by the meeting.

Revd. Taylor thanked all the Churchwardens for their work over the last few years and for the welcome he had received to the parish.

The meeting concluded. 11.36am

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Minutes of the APCM held on 21st April 2024

The Minutes of the APCM held on 21st April 2024 were proposed, seconded, and approved by all present.

2. Appointment of Electoral Roll Officer and Electoral Roll update

Rod Sobey gave an update on the new electoral roll. He also announced that he is now retiring from the role.

On roll:153 as of 23rd March 2025 of which 69 "Resident in Parish" and "83 Non-Resident":

Revd. Taylor expressed his thanks to Rod Sobey for his nine years of service in the role. The search for a replacement was remitted to the PCC to identify and appoint a new electoral roll officer.

3. Election of PCC Members

12 elected members are allowed under the Church Representation Rules. There are 2 candidates for 4 vacancies. If anyone is interested in the remaining PCC vacancies, then please contact David Mason.

The nomination papers for Flora Moxon and Gwynneth Guthrie were shown to Revd. Taylor.

Minute: Flora Moxon and Gwynneth Guthrie were proposed, seconded and duly elected to the PCC, with two remaining vacancies.

The PCC can fill casual vacancies during the year, so if anyone is interested then please speak to Revd. Taylor or David Mason.

4. Appointment of Financial Examiner:

The Treasurer Ian Guthrie proposed that Mark McLeman of J H Greenwood & Company continue as the Financial Examiner. JH Greenwood & Company are happy to continue in this role with no charge for their services.

Revd. Taylor asked for a show of hands in favour of appointing JH Greenwood as Financial Examiner.

Minute: JH Greenwood and Company were duly appointed as Financial Examiner.

5. Financial report

HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT FOR THE ACCOUNTS FOR BERWICK PARISH CHURCH FOR THE YEAR TO 31st DECEMBER 2024

The Treasurer Ian Guthrie confirmed that that at the start of every year the PCC approves a budget based on estimated income and expenditure during the year. This forms an indicative budget of income and expenditure.

At each alternate PCC meeting he reports on the actual income/expenditure to the end of the previous month compared with the profiled budget to this date. Any financial anomalies are therefore able to be identified at an early stage and, if necessary, remedial action taken.

The Treasurer asked the meeting to refer to page 2 of his report, which showed details of expenditure.

During the year the Church had total Income of **£170,036 and expenditure of £175,509 resulting in excess expenditure of £5,473**. Included in the expenditure was £25,940 in respect of the cost of the Solar Panels and £4,640 for the cost of the audio/visual system in the Parish Centre. These costs have been capitalised and will be depreciated over the

coming years accounts. As a result, there has been an overall accounting surplus on the year of £25,107 and the total balances at the yearend were £231,310 which includes £28,772 of fixed assets.

Turning to the individual figures in the accounts the Treasurer highlighted the following:
Income

- A reduction in collections due to a number of regular givers leaving or dying
- An increase in income from social events. Note the previous year's figures were net income amounts after expenses, but this year income and expenditure have been shown separately
- A reduction in income from weddings/funerals
- Donations towards the cost of the protective cover for the new piano
- Substantial grants/donations towards the cost of the Solar Panels

Expenditure

- The Organ/choir/music expenditure includes the cost of the new cover for the piano
- The previous gas contract expired and there was also a large bill for servicing the boiler
- Reductions in both the vicar's expenses and the curate's expenses although some ancillary costs have continued during the interregnum
- An increase in the Parish Share
- The full year impact of the Parish Administrator post
- The capital expenditure on the Parish Centre
- The cost of installing the Solar Panels

In summary therefore 2024 has been a year where despite an interregnum some very significant steps have been taken to future proof the Church. The installation of solar panels will reduce our carbon footprint and help to mitigate the effect of future electricity price rises. The capital spend on the Parish Centre is part of a programme of work to upgrade the facilities on offer and to continue to attract outside use of the premises to not only generate a valuable source of income but also to further our outreach to the community we serve.

The Parish Centre has been operational for over 30 years and the tables/chairs need replacement. During the year 50% of the cost of the new tables was paid as a deposit, and this sum has been carried forward into the 2025-year accounts to cover part of the cost of the tables when they are delivered. A new wall mounted screen has also been installed in the Centre which enables greater use of digital facilities for anyone hiring the premises. The cost has been covered by a generous donation from a member of the congregation.

We have again taken the opportunity to review our overall balances and to designate these for different purposes to align with the future vision of the Church. We have allocated £87,217 i.e. around six months of expenditure plus the remaining depreciation costs on the solar panels as an unrestricted reserve; the accumulated surplus on the Parish Centre has been left as a sum to cover future capital works on the Centre and the depreciation costs on the audio/visual system; now that the Solar Panels have been installed the Eco Fund reserve has been reduced to £1,450 which still leaves a working balance to support the invaluable work the group are doing; and the remaining balance

of £85,201 has been left as a designated fund to cover any costs associated with the future mission and development of the church in its widest context. These designations are important to indicate why we need to hold reserves and will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that they continue to accord with our plans at that time.

In the current year we will face some financial challenges as a result of an increase in our Parish Share, the future effects of energy costs as our longstanding contracts end and general inflationary increases. These however, will be able to be considered against a background of substantial reserves and a very supportive congregation. This year is also the last year of our regular three-year funding cycle where we ask the congregation to look at their giving levels. Work, along with the Diocesan Generous Giving Team, is currently underway to review the current procedure to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and, if not, what the alternative options are.

The Treasurer added some personal thanks for the support given to him over the year

- To Rod Sobey for his work on the weekly donations and Gift Aid envelopes
- To Mark McLeman from J H Greenwood & Co for his independent examination of the accounts and their compliance with the statutory requirements
- To the Church Wardens, Standing Committee, Finance Committee, and the PCC for their support throughout the year on a whole range of items
- To Berwick Parish Church Trust for their financial support during the year
- To the Fabric Group for the numerous jobs they do on a voluntary basis
- To Gwynneth and the recently formed management committee for their work on the Parish Centre.
- To the Social committee and to our Organist Kit Hobkirk for their work on the Organ Concerts and other fundraising activities which they have undertaken

Finally, a huge thank you to all members of the Church for their continued support over the year which has enabled the accounts to show a healthy financial position at the year end. If you are not currently part of our regular giving scheme and would like to join, please speak to myself, in confidence, and this can be arranged.

The 2024 Draft Accounts were presented for approval.

Revd. Taylor thanked Ian Guthrie for all his work in preparing the accounts and asked if there were any questions.

Question: is there a cost relating to Council Tax in 2024? IG explained that as there was no one living in the Vicarage, there was no charge for Council Tax.

Tessa Sowerby proposed a vote of thanks to the Eco Group for their work in caring for our planet.

Minute: The HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT FOR THE ACCOUNTS FOR BERWICK PARISH CHURCH FOR THE YEAR TO 31st DECEMBER 2024 were proposed by Ian Guthrie and unanimously adopted by all present.

6. Annual Report of the PCC Trustees to the Charity Commission.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Appointment of new vicar

The parish has been in vacancy for the year of 2024 following Revd. Canon Dennis Handley's retirement in August 2023. During the vacancy, responsibility for the ongoing management of the church falls to the churchwardens and Area Dean, Revd Canon Dr Sarah Hills, incumbent of St Mary's, Holy Island. The PCC appointed two of its members, Dr David Mason and Mr Ian Guthrie, as PCC representatives on the interview panel for a new vicar, the other members being the representative of the Patron of the benefice, the Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral, together with representatives of the Diocese of Newcastle. In preparation for the recruitment, the PCC produced a Parish Brochure, setting out its priorities, the characteristics sought in the new vicar, and accompanying information about the parish and about Berwick-upon-Tweed. Initial responses to advertisements for a new vicar were disappointing, but following a second re-advertising of the role, candidates for the appointment were invited for interview on 4 December. Revd. Brian Lee Taylor has now been appointed to the vacancy, and will commence his ministry in Berwick on 2 April 2025

PCC Meetings

The PCC met eight times during 2024, and in addition held a brief meeting following the annual meeting in April to elect officers. The Standing Committee formed following the announcement of the vicar's retirement, to help the churchwardens and Area Dean in the management of the church met four times, but following a decision by the PCC to hold monthly meetings, is now suspended.

Financial Responsibility

The PCC reviewed Income and Expenditure statements from the Treasurer at each meeting (or alternate meetings following the decision to hold monthly meetings) and approved the End of Year accounts. The PCC's Reserves were reviewed in line with the strategic priorities and some adjustments made to the allocation to designated funds.

Worship

Following the retirement of the vicar, the full schedule of services, including 16 services each week plus additional services on holy days and religious festival, has been maintained, thanks to the assistance of several retired clergy living in the parish and occasional visitors, and, until his move to an appointment in Dalton-in-Furness in April, the former curate, Revd. Thomas Sample. We are very grateful to him for his commitment and dedication, and the esteem in which he was held was reflected in the large number of parishioners who made the journey to Cumbria to attend his installation.

Music

The Director of Music appointed in January 2023 continues to encourage greater participation in the choir and is continuing to develop the church's musical tradition, holding or sponsoring a number of concerts in church during the year, and expanding the sung liturgical repertoire and the music at special events.

Church Fabric

The PCC received reports from the Fabric Group at each meeting and reviewed the Programme of Works. In July, the quinquennial inspection of the church fabric was undertaken by the church architect, Ninette Edwards, who reported that the church is generally in very good order, with all work from the previous quinquennial completed. A programme of work, mostly to be completed within the next year, has been established, and work commenced on implementing the recommendations.

A proposal to install an automated fire detection system has been approved, subject to granting of a faculty and obtaining finance for the project from the Berwick Parish Church Trust. In addition, the Fabric committee oversaw numerous small repairs and improvements including cleaning of gutters, repairs to the external vestry entrance door, clearing grass from the church pathway, cleaning the roof, and replacement of lighting.

Eco Group

The Eco group has been particularly active during 2024. A major achievement has been the installation of solar panels on the south aisle roof, with associated battery storage in the area at the foot of the steps to the gallery, enclosed in a fire-proof cupboard in keeping with the aesthetics of the church. A special service was held on 22 September, led by Rt Revd Mark Wroe, Bishop of Berwick, for the blessing of these panels. The church is currently aiming for a gold "A Rocha" award.

Employees

There are two employees - the administrator and the Director of Music. The employee handbook setting out employment policies was reviewed, and it is planned to further review in 2025 in the light of anticipated new employment legislation.

Safeguarding

The PCC discussed Safeguarding at every meeting. All required training had now been accomplished with the exception of two items requiring in person training, which are planned for early 2025, having been delayed due to lack of resources in the diocesan safeguarding training team. Jan Casson, who had been safeguarding officer for a number of years, stepped down at the annual meeting in April, and we are grateful to Joyce Currie who has now taken on the role with dedication and enthusiasm. No safeguarding issues were reported in 2024.

Berwick Parish Church Trust

The PCC has two representatives on the Berwick Parish Church Trust and is entitled to nominate up to two more.

Communications

All normal communications, including the weekly pew sheet and email, and monthly messenger have been maintained during the interregnum. The 10am Parish Eucharist is broadcast live on the church's YouTube channel each Sunday, and other services, including weddings and funerals, are also frequently broadcast live. The Facebook channel is also regularly updated and gradually increasing in utilisation.

David Mason asked for the meeting to approve and adopt the wording.

Minute: The Annual Report of the PCC Trustees to the Charity Commission was unanimously approved.

7. Annual Report of the Church Groups

The Chair confirmed that the Annual Report of the Church Groups had been circulated and available on the church website two weeks prior to the meeting.

No questions had been submitted regarding the contents of the annual report, and none were asked during the meeting.

David Mason asked for the meeting to approve and adopt the wording.

Minute: The Annual Report of the PCC Trustees to the Charity Commission was unanimously approved.

8. AOB

Welcomers

Trudy Gray said that she was stepping back from her role with the team that greets visitors to the church. She thanked everyone who had been involved so far and said that Helen Mason is now taking over the administration of the group.

Easter Cards

Flora Moxon said that twice a year the parish distributes 600 greeting cards, to all the children in our church schools, those on the electoral roll as well as to families involved in baptisms, marriages and funerals. They were also sent to representatives in the diocese and deanery. She asked for support to distribute those that can be hand delivered to save on costs.

FM thanked Cameron Robertson for his work on the design and production and to Paul Marshall for his photograph.

Interregnum: David Mason thanked all those involved in supporting the parish work during this time and outlined all that had been achieved.

16 services a week

29 baptisms

2 weddings

30 funerals/thanksgiving/memorial services

Referring to the electoral roll he said that we had lost about 35 names which meant that we had also gained 35 new names as our numbers were stable.

Thanks to the Revd. Canon Sarah Hills, Bishop Helen-Anne and Bishop Mark for their support and guidance during the interregnum.

To the retired clergy and to Bishop Stephen for his work in schools.

To our Lay Reader Anne Horne.

Curate Tom who had remained a tremendous help behind the scenes after he moved to his new parish. Special thanks to Revd. Sarah Quilty, who when Tom was unavailable did a lot of extra work in our schools

Thanks to colleagues on PCC, none of the work we have been able to achieve could have happened without a supportive PCC

To all the readers, intercessors and sidespeople.

To the Pastoral group (led by Gwynneth Guthrie) for all their work in supporting parishioners and in our Care Homes.

To the Berwick Parish Church Trust led by Philip Mawer who is doing fantastic work in leading the Trust.

To all those who support the work involved in organising the civic services. Remembrance Sunday, VE Day, Visit of Coldstream Guards etc.

The work of the Fabric Group, those organising Lent and Advent Courses, the Communications Group for their work on the new logo, Phil Ravetta for his work on the Monthly Messenger.

The Flower Guild, for their work in keeping the church beautifully decorated.

Social /Hospitality Group for their work in the parish as well as fundraising.

Those working in Safeguarding, Jan Casson in the past and now Joyce Currie (Safeguarding Officer) and Christine Smith who undertakes the work on the DBS checks.

He thanked Kit Hobkirk, Director of Music for the way that music is flourishing and all those involved in the Berwick Music Group for their fundraising work which contributes to Parish Funds.

To those involved in the charitable giving group (led by Anne Horne) which gave away over £11k to external charitable causes.

Those involved in setting up the new Parish Centre AV system.

The work of the Solar Panel group and the Eco group for their work on bees, garden benches, cycle racks etc.

He thanked those who are stepping down, Rod Sobey, Trudy Gray and from the PCC Neil Thompson and Sue Philipps and Helen Mason.

Finally, thanks to Fr Lee for responding to God's call, we look forward to your guiding and helping us on our journey.

Ann Mawer spoke on behalf of fellow churchwardens and the PCC to offer thanks to David Mason, as without his support we would not have achieved so much.

Revd. Taylor thanked David Mason and said that nothing would have happened if there wasn't someone with the passion to lead. He also thanked him for his support as he prepared for the move to Berwick and presented him with a gift.

Revd. Taylor spoke about why he had come to Berwick. Did he choose Berwick or did Berwick choose him? He read everything he could, studied, prayed and was challenged but ultimately felt that he was called here. He referred to a blank card left on seats and asked the PCC to take home and write their hopes for the future on one side and if they wish to write any concerns on the back and to return to him so that we can use these as a basis for discussion going forward together to make God's love visible in this place.

The meeting finished at 12.26 with grace

A PCC Meeting immediately followed the conclusion of the APCM chaired by Revd. Taylor

The following positions were agreed by the PCC members present.

Apologies: received from Roger and Wilma Barrow.

1. Appointment of the Secretary
Linda Foley was proposed and unanimously elected.
2. Appointment of the Honorary Treasurer
Ian Guthrie was proposed and unanimously elected.
3. Appointment of the Lay Chair of the Council
David Mason was proposed and unanimously elected.
4. Appointment of the Safeguarding Officer
Joyce Currie was proposed and unanimously elected.
5. Appointment of the DBS Officer
Christine Smith was proposed and unanimously elected.
6. Co-option of Maureen Jobson to the PCC

As MJ doesn't meet the requirement of being on the electoral roll for six months, she is co-opted and will then be eligible to be elected. David Mason clarified that according to the Rules if the total for elected PCC members is not met at the APCM then the PCC is authorised to find person/people to make up the full numbers. The PCC has the power to do this and there is still one vacancy.

7. Date of next meeting of the new PCC will take place on 12th May 2025 at 6pm in the Parish Centre
The meeting concluded at 12.35

Note: The following signed paperwork has been received from all PCC members and stored in the locked filing cabinet in the Parish Office.

- Code of Conduct
- Eligibility Declaration
- Church of England Declaration form