



The Parish Church of St George, Jesmond

Parochial Church Council

Chair: The Reverend Debbie Loughran

Lay Chair: Professor Janet Wilson

Secretary: Dr Nigel Russell-Sewell

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 10 March 2025

at 7.30 pm in the Choir Vestry, St George's Church

Present: Hilary Cullingford, Joan Grenfell, Debbie Loughran, Alison Mattinson (from 7.55 pm), Ian Ness, Kay Plumley, Mike Ranson (Treasurer), Nigel Russell-Sewell, Margaret Vane, Janet Wilson.

Apologies: Izzy McDonald-Booth, Enid Pearson, Brent Swinburne.

Absent: Mike de la Hunt, Lana Liu.

1. The Chair opened the meeting with a scripture reading (Psalm 19 vs. 7-end) and prayer.
2. All were welcomed to the meeting.
3. Apologies were noted.

4. Declaration of Interests

- 4.1 The Secretary declared an interest in Item 18 on the Agenda, Music Department approvals.

5. Safeguarding (standing item)

- 5.1 Dr Sue Vernon (Safeguarding Officer) is unwell and in hospital. The PCC send Sue their best wishes for a speedy recovery.
- 5.2 A report was received. The new Diocesan Director of Safeguarding is Sharon Devlin.

6. Minutes of the last meeting

- 6.1 The minutes of the PCC Meeting held on 08 January were approved. Proposed: Kay Plumley, seconded: Margaret Vane.

7. Matters arising and action log

- 7.1 *See revised Action Log appended to the Minutes.*
- 7.2 2501-7.4: PCC recommended revisiting the material or construction of the speed bumps as the current 'blocks' keep coming up and are a potential trip hazard. PCC would like to keep speed bumps in some form. Chair to discuss with BGG.

ACTION: Chair

8. Finance

- 8.1 Report and draft 2024 Accounts had been received.
- 8.2 All details for the Accounts have now been received and are ready for formal approval.
- 8.3 There is a deficit of £15k for 2024, largely due to work on the boiler, which was committed to in 2024.
- 8.4 Reported, income from planned giving has been declining over the last few years. Income from the church hall has only increased by £1,000 over the previous year. Fundraising from fundraising activities has not increased. We are on a plateau but costs are increasing.
- 8.5 Savings have been made on utilities, and the vicarage; but this will go back to normal for 2025 (~£6k) and there is an increase in Parish Share for 2025. This means there is at least an extra £13k to raise in 2025.
- 8.6 Treasurer expressed concern that the congregation is put under a lot of pressure due to a number of significant fundraising activities as well as planned giving.
- 8.7 The two houses earn ~£25k per year, which has not increased for a number of years. However, costs have increased, including the recent purchase of a washing machine.
- 8.8 1888 Project (the 'organ project'). Grant of £81,800 received from Heritage Lottery Fund. St George's are custodians of this fund; noting we are equal partners with the United Reformed Church. The funds are restricted in the accounts.
- 8.9 PCC asked to approve accounts subject to finalising. Agreed unanimously.
- 8.10 Noted that repairs to the church are missing from the report. A schedule of repair costs was produced by Derek Nicholson for 2025. The total cost comes to £36,215. The boiler, netting and other work (£20k) has been completed leaving £16k to be found. Suggested that a budget be provided to Derek so that costs can be approved.

- 8.11 The Catherine Cookson fund could be used for the repairs and would cover the outstanding costs for 2025.

Grant Application

- 8.12 Kay Plumley presented a net-zero grant application for Diocesan funding available for 'quick wins' up to £10k. PCC considered a completed application form for the LED lighting in church and was asked to formally approve this. Unanimously approved.

ACTION: Kay Plumley

- 8.13 It was also proposed that the fluorescent tubes in the Hall are replaced with LEDs. Proposed that the grant be made. Unanimously approved.

ACTION: Kay Plumley

- 8.14 A question: should we seriously consider putting solar panels on the roof? The Eco group has investigated, but the shadow from the campanile falls across a significant area of the roof that is available for panels. Technology is changing all the time. This would cost tens of thousands of pounds at the present time. Recommended by Kay Plumley that this is not the time to look at this. We should revisit once we have an alternative for heating first. PCC noted and agreed to revisit annually at March PCC meetings.

ACTION: Secretary

- 8.15 A question was raised about the rent for the housing. The Chair and Lay Chair will investigate.

ACTION: Chair & Lay Chair

9. David Gregory Legacy

- 9.1 A legacy of £24,900 has been received without restrictions. Proposal that £20,000 goes to the Hub and the remainder into general funds for building maintenance and repairs. PCC approved unanimously.
- 9.2 An additional £2,000 from another benefactor has gone into Hub funds.
- 9.3 A question was asked about a permanent item in memory of David Gregory. This to be considered in consultation with Bryan Vernon.

ACTION: Chair

- 9.4 A record of legacies and contributors will be part of the Hub.

- 9.5 Agreed a book of legacies be kept.

10. Building and Grounds Group (standing item)

- 10.1 Meeting notes received.

- 10.2 Scouts requested to have barrels to light fires, with barrels stored at the back of the church hall. BGG do not want these stored behind the hall, and do not support the lighting of fires on church grounds. PCC agreed with BGG and do not support the lighting of fires.

ACTION: Chair

- 10.3 Chair asked to investigate the lights outside the boiler house, which should be motion-sensitive.

ACTION: Chair

- 10.4 The Chair has spoken with BGG about boundaries and reporting. Suggested works up to £1,500 + VAT can be approved by BGG. Anything over £1,500 + VAT must come to PCC for approval. Anything urgent can be approved by BGG and Standing Committee with PCC informed at the earliest opportunity. One quote for under £1,500 + VAT. Two quotes for £1,500-£5,000 and three quotes for anything over £5,000 + VAT. Noted that for some work it isn't possible to get more than one quote as the work may be so highly specialised, eg stained glass; in these cases we would have a 'preferred contractor'.
- 10.5 Treasurer recommended limits include VAT to avoid any confusion.
- 10.6 Recommended that a list of preferred suppliers be compiled so it is clear who we are approaching in certain circumstances.
- 10.7 Noted that all avenues for grants should be sought.
- 10.8 PCC formally approved the proposal put forward in 10.4, subject to clauses 10.5, 10.6 and 10.7.

11. Preparation for the Annual Meetings

- 11.1 The Chair will be setting a vision at the APCM and does not want this to be "the Vicar's vision". Thoughts were invited on where the PCC would like see us in 12 months time. Each asked to provide three words:

<i>Cohesive</i>	<i>Organ</i>	<i>Bigger</i>
<i>Secure</i>	<i>Families</i>	<i>Young</i>
<i>Children</i>	<i>Connected</i>	<i>Engaged</i>
<i>Innovation</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Community</i>
<i>Accountability</i>	<i>Unity</i>	<i>Teaching</i>
<i>Growing</i>	<i>Warm</i>	<i>Energised</i>
<i>Outreaching</i>	<i>Aware</i>	<i>Love</i>
<i>Welcoming</i>	<i>Recognition</i>	

12. Gift Audit update

- 12.1 Reported: no-one wanted to step down from what they were currently doing. Increase in interest across all activities except two: no offers for churchwarden or treasurer. Otherwise, this was an extremely successful activity, and everyone is being followed up by appropriate activity leaders.
- 12.2 Noted: Enid steps down at the APCM.
- 12.3 PCC congratulated the Chair on this activity.

13. St George's Community Hub 2025 (standing item)

- 13.1 Reports received. Advent fund-raising campaign brought in sufficient funds to enable the fundraiser to approach larger grant-awarding bodies.
- 13.2 Consultation on the hall is open until Easter. Fundraising will begin at the Summer Fête in May.

14. Cornerstone

- 14.1 This is a new initiative from the Church of England to increase generosity and giving, recently launched in the diocese. Online information commended to PCC members. Best practice examples are provided.
- 14.2 The questionnaire PCC members completed showed St George's scores very well on having mechanisms; but we did not score well for having a clear vision (eg the impact of the money given) amongst other areas including building trust, and inspiring people. The regular St George's giver gives £2 less than the national average.
- 14.3 The Chair considered 'quick wins' such as a QR code at the end of live streams. A banner showing the cost of £260 a day to keep the church building open will be displayed. 'Thank you' letters with gift-aid information will be sent annually to those who can be identified.
- 14.4 A sermon-series on 'giving/generosity' is planned for Ordinary Time.

15. Liturgy Rewrite

- 15.1 Noted: liturgy is being rewritten over the coming year. Reported: congregation appreciated having music in the service sheet.

16. Reports from Deanery/Diocesan/General Synods (standing item)

- 16.1 The report from General Synod was received. Izzy McDonald-Booth was happy to answer any questions.
- 16.2 The Diocesan report was received.

17. 1888 Organ Project update

- 17.1 A paper was received.

18. Staffing Matters

Having declared an interest, the Secretary left the meeting. Minutes 18.1-18.3 were noted by the Chair.

- 18.1 A proposal was received to increase the salary of the Director of Music. After discussion it was felt that further information was needed, previous minutes consulted, and information passed to the Chair.

ACTIONS: Lay Chair and Chair

- 18.2 A proposal was received to appoint an Assistant Director of Music. A stipend of £50 per month, in addition to the £100 currently paid for the proposed role-holders position in the choir, was suggested. This was carried with one abstention. The job description was to be agreed and the person interviewed.

ACTION: Chair

- 18.3 A proposal was received to appoint a Choral Outreach Worker with a salary of £4,000 per annum. This was not approved with six votes against, one vote for and the rest abstaining. Further conversations will be necessary to explore potential ways of funding this activity; however, PCC funds are not in a good enough position to carry this cost.

ACTION: Chair

The Secretary returned to the meeting.

- 18.4 Office update: the Parish Administrator has not had any professional development opportunities during his six years here. He would like a week off to explore an aspect of faith development. Proposed he receives an additional week's paid leave to enable this project in recognition of the skills he has brought to the role. PCC approved unanimously.

ACTION: Chair

- 18.5 The Treasurer recommended training in the use of 'Xero' to better understand its functionality. Online courses are available and recommended that time be given for Jonathan to complete. Going forward a day a quarter be given to development activities.

ACTION: Chair

19. Churchwarden updates

- 19.1 VE Day Big Friendly Gathering (3 May), encouraging attendees to bring a picnic. Stalls will be available along with cream teas. Donations will be requested. Others are being approached to support activities for the day. This is not a fundraising event.

- 19.2 The Summer Fête will be held on 31 May, which is fundraising. There is currently no organising team. Input was requested. Names from the Gift Audit will be passed on.

ACTION: Lay Chair

20. Any other business

- 20.1 No other business was notified in advance.
- 20.2 This being the last meeting before the APCM, Ian Ness was thanked for all his contributions to PCC during his time as Member.

21. The meeting closed at 10 pm with The Grace.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

PCC Meeting	Deadline for Agenda items
Sunday 20 April (Easter Day) – sign off accounts before 9.30 am service	
<i>Annual Meetings, Sunday 11 May (separate notification)</i>	
Tuesday 20 May	Sunday 11 May, midday

All meetings will begin at 7.30 pm. Venue will be confirmed in the agenda papers.

Dates to note:

- 25 May Joint Benefice Service during the Jesmond Festival, 10 am, St Hilda's

ACTION LOG

Future agenda items:

May 2025 Dogs on the Green (24-11 7.2)

January 2026 Review of EV charging (annual)

March 2026 APCM format (annual)

March 2026 Solar panels on church roof (annual)

Meeting	Item	Action	Progress	Status
24-09	10.1	Treasurer to add the new Vicar to the Lloyds account as signatory; and ask if Kay or Mike would remain on account	Still ongoing (25-03). Mike to investigate with the local branch.	
24-09	13.5	Chair to explore a 'calendar'	This is ongoing.	
24-11	8.5	Churchwardens to enhance Ministry of Welcome provided	Area for development following the Gift Audit	
24-11	10.11	Treasurer to continue investigations into endowment fund	Ongoing	
25-01	11.3	Chair to speak to BGG about pulpit barrier	An email has been sent. Ongoing (25-03).	
25-01	15.1	Janet and Chair to speak to user groups about Food Hygiene certification	Ongoing	
25-03	7.2	Chair to speak to BGG about speed bumps.		
25-03	8.12	Kay Plumley to submit grant application for LEDs		

25-03	8.13	Kay Plumley to submit grant application for LED lights in hall		
25-03	8.15	Lay Chair and Chair to investigate housing rents	<p>The Tower House rent will increase from £1050.00pcm to £1100.00pcm on 11th May 2025 and will increase again on 11th May 2026 to £1150.00pcm.</p> <p>The Close House rent will increase from £1000.00pcm to £1050.00pcm on 3rd May 2025 and will increase again on 3rd May 2026 to £1100.00pcm.</p>	
25-03	9.3	Chair to speak to Bryan Vernon about David Gregory		
25-03	10.2	Chair to inform Scouts that fires are not permitted on church grounds and barrels cannot be stored	Complete	
25-03	10.3	Chair to speak to BGG about lights outside boiler house		
25-03	18.1	Lay Chair and Chair to investigate proposal re Director of Music salary		
25-03	18.2	Chair to speak to Director of Music to pursue		
25-03	18.3	Chair to speak to Director of Music to pursue		
25-03	18.4 & 18.5	Chair to speak with Parish Administrator about development opportunities		
25-03	19.2	Lay Chair to collect names of those interested in helping at the Summer Fête	Tom Klenka has kindly agreed to lead (with support from Enid Pearson)	
NEW ACTION		COMPLETED	NOT YET COMPLETED (UP TO 4 MONTHS)	NOT YET COMPLETED (OVER 4 MONTHS)