



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 Wednesday 18 March 2026

at 7.30 pm in the Winskell Room, St George's Church Hall

Present: Joan Grenfell, Mike de la Hunt, Tom Klenka (by video for item 8), Debbie Loughran, Alison Mattinson, Izzy McDonald-Booth, James Parkin, Kay Plumley, Nigel Russell-Sewell, Brent Swinburne, Janet Wilson, Libbie Wilson.

Apologies: Jonathan Booth, Lana Liu.

In attendance: Sophie Leach (Deputy Safeguarding Officer) – for item 3 only

1. The Chair opened the meeting with a scripture reading and prayer.
2. All were welcomed to the meeting.
3. **Safeguarding (Standing item)**
 - 3.1 The Deputy Safeguarding Officer highlighted a number of areas that required PCC approval.
 - The list of all groups at St George's and all involved need inputting into the safeguarding system.
 - All groups need to nominate a lead person to feedback to PCC and the Safeguarding Team ensuring all volunteers and personnel have received appropriate training.
 - Safer recruitment must be followed for all new appointments.
 - Role descriptions are required for all roles in church, and the lead person for each group will be asked to write these; risk assessments are required.
 - No volunteers will be able to start a role without a DBS in place first and appropriate safeguarding training completed (a requirement for Basic Training to be completed before they start).

- These requirements are decisions that should come from the PCC.
- 3.2 It was noted where Leadership training in safeguarding is required that there will be a time period allotted to enable participants to complete this.
 - 3.3 Question: would people on the coffee rota need DBS and Safeguarding? This doesn't apply here as these volunteers won't be on working on their own with vulnerable adults or children; there are many people present at this time.
 - 3.4 As Trustees the requirement is there for all PCC members to have DBS and Basic and Foundation Safeguarding. For all members of PCC from the May annual meeting, members must have completed these by the second meeting in July to retain their membership.
 - 3.5 PCC needs to set an example of building a culture of safeguarding so that safeguarding becomes part of the fabric of St George's. There is currently a lot of change and catching up to be done at present, but once this is complete it will become much simpler. A code of safer working practice is currently being prepared by the Church of England.
 - 3.6 Suggested: the nominated lead should have a nominated link PCC person for those groups that do not have direct PCC representation.
 - 3.7 Whilst not all groups of volunteers may need DBS/safeguarding training, the leaders of the groups will need basic training so they are aware of responsibilities and vulnerable adults; all groups should have a link to a PCC member.
 - 3.8 Where possible, help will be offered to support training if required either through in-person sessions or one-to-one support in completing the online training. It was noted that safeguarding abuse has destroyed peoples' lives and this is not to be taken lightly.
 - 3.9 Approval was unanimous for the Safeguarding Team to implement the proposals.
 - 3.10 The Social Media Policy was tabled for approval. Question: why can't 'phones be used to take photos? Only approved people will be permitted to use 'phones. The church apparently owns a camera and this will be sought out. Those with permission will be properly trained and know what they can post and how long photos can be kept for. The Chair will send an approved list to the SO.
 - 3.11 All approved with one abstention. The policy will be amended according to 3.10 then signed.

Sophie was thanked for presenting this evening, and left the meeting.

4. Apologies were noted.

5. Declaration of Interests

5.1 No declarations of interest were made.

6. Minutes of the last meeting

6.1 The minutes of the PCC Meeting held on 14 January 2026 were approved (proposed: Kay Plumley; seconded: James Parkin).

7. Matters arising and action log

7.1 See revised Action Log appended to the Minutes.

8. Finance (Standing item)

8.1 The Draft Financial Report (2025) had been circulated.

8.2 The Treasurer talked through highlights of the report. A lot of work had gone in to arranging and clarifying the accounts over the last year. Going forward, there should be a more meaningful indication of where money has come from, where it's going, and make decision-making simpler. New software, Cornerstone, is being used by Jonathan which is helping make this possible.

8.3 Total income £205,311 is slightly up on the previous year. The Gift Day and week of focus on contributions to the church made a contribution of over £4,000 and there was an increase in standing orders and GiftAid giving which form a major part of income; noted especially at a time when cost-of-living has risen so significantly.

8.4 Sizable donations had been received into the Hub and Organ Restoration project.

8.5 Commercial activities, lettings for Close House, Tower House and Church Hall: these were up by 2%. Lettings had decreased as organisations were reducing the time they were booking the hall for. The increase of rental by 15% in 2026 had not put groups off, and the rent is still good value for accessibility, booking, facilities etc.

8.6 Successful fundraising events were held, and there were a good number of weddings in 2025. Publicity for the fundraising events had drawn people in. The two fêtes and the pantomime were big community events.

8.7 Expenditure increased by 11.5% on the previous year. The lectern steps and sound system were large items of expenditure. We had no option but to replace the sound system as people were turning away. Some of this was offset through a legacy.

8.8 Parish Share increased, as agreed by PCC.

8.9 Catherine Cookson Charitable Trust continued to provide financial support, £16,000 in 2025, reduced from £21,000 in 2024; this does not represent a reduction in commitment but an acknowledgement of their reduced income in 2025.

- 8.10 The accounts show a modest surplus of about £2,000 at what is a very tricky financial time regionally, nationally and internationally.
- 8.11 The decision to fix our energy rates for two years towards the end of last year should help us to ride out the current volatile markets.
- 8.12 The overall picture should be seen as positive.
- 8.13 The Treasurer was thanked for all his hard work, and received a round of applause. Thanks too were given to Jonathan for his hard work in ensuring all the monies had been allocated accordingly and for learning new finance systems.
- 8.14 The PCC unanimously accepted the accounts. The accounts will be presented to the Annual Meetings.

ACTION: Treasurer

- 8.15 A request had been received from the Director of Music for the PCC to contribute £200 towards trumpets to enhance the 9.30 am Eucharist on Easter Day. Noted: this is a service not a concert; given the current financial situation we should not be spending this. Vote: 8 against, 4 abstain. The decision is for the PCC not to approve.

ACTION: Secretary

9. Health and Safety Report

- 9.1 The report had been circulated. Everything is now up-to-date.
- 9.2 Recommended, David Cullingford be appointed H&S Officer; agreed by PCC unanimously. Tom will arrange a handover.

ACTION: Tom Klenka

9. APCM Format (10 May)

- 9.1 This will be same as last year, as part of the 9.30 am service. Reports will be circulated in advance.

10. Hall Bat Survey & Solar Panels

- 10.1 The Bat Survey, circulated, showed we have no bats. Planning have yet to complete their assessment for permissions and we should hear by mid-April. A grant for £1,500 had been received to cover the preparations for planning permission. Once we have planning permission, further grants can be applied for.
- 10.2 We are not pursuing solar panels on the church roof, and this can be removed from the annual agenda.

11. Buildings and Grounds Group (Standing item)

- 11.1 Minutes had been circulated from the January meeting and were noted.

12. St George's Community Hub 2025 (Standing item)

- 12.1 A meeting was held last night to discuss applying to the National Heritage Lottery Fund for elements of the extension (it won't pay for foundations, bricks and mortar etc). This requires further work to engage community groups.
- 12.2 The PCC Chair and Ian Watson have discussed fundraising for the One Site Project. He suggested a sponsored event which St George's could be involved with. The ancient pilgrimage route known as the Angel's Way, one of the Northern Saints' pilgrimage routes, from Seaton Sluice – Holystone – Longbenton – Jesmond – St Mary's Well – Chester le Street (30 miles) could be followed. Ian will look at publicity. This will be done in the month of September. The idea is people do it at some point, either in small sections (or a small section), all in one, cycling, walking, jogging, in groups or individually, etc and that people get sponsorship to do it. Concern was raised about the lack of 'pilgrimage' in a sponsored event; noted that there would be an organised day that would be more prayer-focussed. It must be well-thought-through and well-publicised. There would be an accessible part of the route in Jesmond from St George's to St Mary's Well that could begin and end in acts of worship and include community groups/schools. PCC met the idea with enthusiasm.

ACTION: Chair

13. Anna Chaplaincy (Standing item)

- 13.1 Joan Grenfell noted she visits Cestria House and Craghall once a week. She has run a dementia awareness session on a Saturday afternoon at St John's Killingworth, which was well received. She also supports an online module on dementia for training Anna Chaplains. In the run up to Easter she will be talking through the events of Holy Week in the care homes.
- 13.2 A monthly service is held at St Hilda's which is attended by residents and staff from care homes as well as others – all are welcome and encouraged to attend (2.30 pm on the first Wednesday of the month).
- 13.3 Suggested: a 'spotlight' on the notice sheet/The Lance of the service at St Hilda's to provide further details of what this is about to encourage further attendance. The next is on Wednesday 1 April and will focus on Holy Week.

ACTION: Chair/Joan Grenfell

14. **Standing item: Reports from Deanery/Diocesan/General Synods**

- 14.1 Deanery Synod had met in St George's. The focus was the new Diocesan Year of Sharing and how it will impact the deanery and parishes, working together; new worshipping communities; discipleship.
- 14.2 Diocesan Synod met on 28 February in Hexham. Discussions were held on safeguarding following new legal definitions and trustee responsibility. A Bishops' Group is looking at income generation for the diocese. The National Churches Trust have developed a way of expressing social good in financial terms. This tool is available for all to use to generate a value. Our social value to the community is over £2 million a year. The assimilation of new worshipping communities into regular worship was discussed and will require further thinking. Alan Smith, First Church Estates Commissioner, spoke on financial decisions in the church and the wider need for a "theology of money".
- 14.3 A written report of the February meetings of General Synod will be circulated. A highlight was hearing Archbishop Sarah's first address. All are to note the Archbishop's installation is on Wednesday 25 March will be broadcast on BBC1.

ACTION: Izzy McDonald-Booth

15. **Churchwarden updates**

- 15.1 At the Annual Meetings on 10 May there will be four vacancies for PCC members. Should any PCC members who have not declared an intention to step down wish to do so, they are asked to speak to either the Churchwarden or PCC Chair as soon as possible. Deanery Synod members are also up for election this year (3 representatives).

16. **Any other business**

- 16.1 None submitted.
17. The meeting closed at 9.40 pm with The Grace.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

PCC Meeting	Deadline for Agenda items
<i>Annual Meetings, Sunday 10 May (separate notification)</i>	
Tuesday 19 May	Sunday 10 May, midday

All meetings will begin at 7.30 pm.

ACTION LOG

Future agenda items:

January 2027 Review of EV charging (annual)

March 2027 APCM format (annual)

July 2026 Review Experian support (2025-09-7.2)

September 2026 Volunteers for Advent/Christmas events (2026-01-10.2)

Meeting	Item	Action	Progress	Status
25-05	19.1	Chair to pursue signage for Memorial Garden	Complete	
25-09	11.3	Janet to explore temporary staging for use at font	Debbie to look at creation of a platform	
25-09	16.3	Janet to explore locking bins	General waste bin now locks.	
25-11	3.3	All to send any activities not on list to Graham		
25-11	3.6	Graham to circulate action list via Secretary	Received, to be circulated with draft minutes	
25-11	3.7	All to check training is up-to-date and to complete any requested, sending certificates of completion to Graham	Some are not aware they have to do training and will wait for Graham	
25-11	4.3	Graham and Safeguarding Team to prepare social media policy to present to future PCC	In preparation for March 2026	
25-11	9.1	All to send ideas for what we can offer students to James	One item received	
25-11	9.2	James and Kay to explore banner	James created some mock-ups	

25-11	10.4	All to pilot 'Inclusive – Rooted in Christ – Serving You' as strapline for St George's		
25-11	17.1	Kay to pursue funding for hall solar panels	The solar panel project has progressed to an application for planning permission and listed building consent, which went in on December 9 th (David Cullingford). And 2 grant applications have gone in. One to BEST (Newcastle City Council) and one to the Community Foundation. I plan to submit one to the Diocesan Net Zero Quick Wins fund, but they don't yet know when their next application date will be.	
25-11	17.2	Chair to send letter to the Bishop	Sent	
26-01	3.1	Secretary to inform Safeguarding Office of approval of Action Plan	Complete	
26-01	7.5	Kay to pursue bat risk assessment	Complete (March agenda)	
26-01	10.5	Secretary to add Anna Chaplaincy to agenda as Standing Item	Complete (March agenda)	
26-01	13.1	Chair to commission restoration of railings	Will be started on 13 April, and the Porch work will begin on 7 April	
26-01	13.3	Tom to update risk assessment for those visiting, using, exploring the building	On agenda	
26-01	14.3	Chair to organise meeting		
26-01	16.2	Secretary to write to Barbara		
26-01	17.1	Kay to pursue water butt project	Waiting for Faculty – being applied for	

26-03	8.14	Treasurer to obtain necessary signatures and formalise the accounts for APCM			
26-03	8.15	Secretary to inform Director of Music re trumpets			
26-03	9.2	Tom Klenka to arrange H&S handover			
26-03	12.2	Chair to speak to Ian Watson regarding Angel's Way pilgrimage			
26-03	13.3	Joan Grenfell/Chair to write a 'spotlight' for the weekly sheet to focus on the dementia-friendly service at St Hilda's			
26-03	14.3	Izzy McDonald-Booth to provide secretary with summary of February General Synod for circulation			
NEW ACTION		COMPLETED	NOT YET COMPLETED (UP TO 4 MONTHS)	NOT YET COMPLETED (OVER 4 MONTHS)	