

ST. LEONARD'S CHURCH GLAPTHORN

Thursday 1st May 2025, at 7 p.m. in Church

Annual Meeting of the Parishioners

Minutes

Present:	
Rev Stephen Webster (Chair)	Ursula Wide
Richard Stark	Tracey Kerr
Brigitte Hilton	Tricia Newton
Penny Reading	Philip Hilton
Anne Cashmore	
4 members of the congregation	

1.	Opening Prayers: Prayers and a reading were led by Rev Stephen Webster.	SW
2.	Apologies: Rev. Annabel Copeland, Sonya Moss, Sid Charlton, Louise Foote, Charles Wide.	
3.	Election of Churchwarden: The Vicar thanked Ursula Wide for her hard work over the past year. Ursula was willing to stand again for a further year, although would welcome another Churchwarden to work alongside her. Proposed by Anne Cashmore and seconded by Richard Stark with all present voting in favour of Ursula's appointment.	All

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Minutes

1.	Minutes of the AVM dated 2nd May 2024: These were proposed as a true record by Richard Stark and seconded by Brigitte Hilton. All present voted in favour of accepting the minutes and these were signed by Stephen Webster.	
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2.	Matters Arising: Nil	
3.	Vicar's Report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you to Ursula Wide and all of the PCC for their hard work in ensuring the effective running of the church, and to those who provide invaluable support in the background. • Work is continuing on strengthening the connection between the Church, families and school. In terms of the school, several services have been held in church and some of the congregation attended the Christingle Service in December, which was held in the school itself this year. Sid Charlton has also started doing some voluntary work with the school. • A couple of "all-age" services have been held, the last one being on Mothering Sunday. • Average attendance at Sunday services is 20, with more attending special services e.g. Christmas, Easter. • We have welcomed 2 adults and 1 child from the same family into our Church in the last 15 months, with all three being baptised in February. The Vicar shared the story of their journey, which started with the parents reading stories from a children's bible to their son. The family have greatly appreciated the welcome and support they have received from St. Leonard's. • The Vicar is encouraged by a recent conference where there were a number of positive stories regarding people being interested in the church and wanting to find out more; locally, there is a very active Chattabox group of teenagers each year. Additionally, in our benefice there are currently two people training for ordination, with possibly a further one starting in September. 	SW
4.	Churchwarden's Report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Appendix 1 for report. 	UW
5.	Treasurer's Report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The accounts for 1st January – 31st December 2024 have been completed and independently examined by a chartered accountant and no issues have been identified. These will now be posted on the Church noticeboard. 	RS

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The figures show further improvement on the previous year – a surplus of £6915 v. £3972 the year before. • This is largely due to revenue from weddings and funerals, and fundraising activities such as concerts and a play. The 100 Club continues to be an important source of revenue – thank you to Pauline Davidson for running this. • Grants for some of the roof repairs were obtained during the year– thank you to Anne Cashmore and Ursula Wide for their work on this. VAT was also claimed back for these repairs. • A separate account has been set up for long-term projects such as roof repairs. • Expenditure has increased slightly, as the higher roof repairs were partially offset by reduced parish share. • Thank you to Mike Newton for collecting the monies from services, reconciling sources of income and completing the Gift Aid administration. 	
6.	<p>School Report:</p> <p>The Vicar and Associate Vicar alternate and visit the school weekly to deliver Collective Worship and provide pastoral support for the staff if required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children and their parents attend services in the Church – for example, at Easter, End of Year, Harvest – and this year members of the PCC attended the Christingle Service in School. • A bible is presented to every Year 6 pupil as a leaving present 	SW
7.	<p>Fund Raising/Social Committee Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful events have been held throughout the year, for example, concerts, a theatrical performance, Tearfund Quiz, Harvest auction and lunch. With many thanks to all those who have organised, contributed and participated in events. 	SW

8.	<p>Deanery Synod Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding - There was a useful presentation earlier in the year by Victoria Kellett, Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, who welcomed contact for advice. Victoria mentioned the activities of the Anglican Survivor Network. From a more recent update, the National Safeguarding team will now be independent of the church, although the Diocesan SG Team will still be employed by the Diocese. There had been some discussion about how much time volunteers could be expected to devote to safeguarding training, but the importance of this reassurance was emphasised. • Year of Prayer - The Bishop has instituted this year as a Year of Prayer. Online prayer courses have been available, and St Peter's have run Prayer Courses in home groups. • Rural Ministry - This would be a key theme going forward and the concept of "Focal Ministry" involving ministers, not necessarily ordained, to engage with the community has been discussed. • Mission and Pastoral Committee - The Deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee, focusing on ministry and mission review, have held their first meeting, but little information is available as yet. 	PH
9.	<p>Safeguarding Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PCC has complied with its duty to have 'due regard' to the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance. • During 2024 the Benefice Safeguarding Team comprised Revd Annabel Copeland (Clergy Safeguarding Lead) and Louise Foote (Benefice Safeguarding Officer based at Oundle St Peter's), our PCC safeguarding link with the Benefice Team is Sid Charlton. • In line with the Church of England's safeguarding policy statement 'Promoting a Safer Church' the Diocese of Peterborough provides access to an online application called 'Safeguarding Dashboards' to enable parishes to produce a safeguarding Action Plan. The Benefice Safeguarding Officer has used the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard tool throughout the year to audit and inform safeguarding practice and identify training needs. The PCC has worked through the action plans produced by the dashboard over the year and will continue to respond 	LF

	<p>to any updates through 2025. The Dashboard has 3 levels, St Leonard's has maintained its position at level 3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PCC are continuing to use the Benefice Safeguarding Policy which was written in line with the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance and meets statutory requirements whilst remaining relevant to activities within the Benefice, it was reviewed and updated as required during 2024, safeguarding concerns will be responded as described in this policy which continue to be reviewed annually. • Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at all PCC meetings. As a church we remain committed to vigilance around raising concerns regarding safeguarding, responding well in line with Church of England guidance to victims and survivors of abuse, and being up to date with our safeguarding actions. 	
10.	<p>Health and Safety Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The yearly risk assessment was carried out in October 2024 and identified some queries relating to fixed and portable electrical appliance checks . After discussions with Brigitte Hilton and Ursula Wide it was agreed that an electrician should be commissioned to resolve the queries. • This will also be an opportunity to improve labelling of switches and decommission two unused under-pew electric heaters. • Tracey Kerr is currently putting together a statement of requirement to request quotes for the work, and prices will be shared with PCC members. 	TK
11.	<p>Election of PCC members:</p> <p>All current members are happy to continue in post and this was agreed by all.</p> <p>Stephen Dickenson was proposed as a new PCC member by Philip Hilton, seconded by Penny Reading, and all present voted in favour of this appointment.</p>	
12.	<p>Election of PCC Officers:</p> <p>Lay Chair – Sid Charlton (proposed by Richard Stark) Treasurer – Richard Stark (proposed by Philip Hilton)</p>	

	<p>Secretary – Anne Cashmore (proposed by Ursula Wide) Gift Aid Officer – Mike Newton (proposed by Philip Hilton)</p> <p>All present voted in favour of these appointments.</p>	
13.	<p>Electoral Roll:</p> <p>This has been re-done this year (a new roll is prepared every six years). There are currently 39 members. The full list of names will be held by the Electoral Roll Officer and the Churchwarden, with the number being published on the church gate noticeboard.</p>	PN
14.	<p>Any Other Business:</p> <p>The Vicar thanked Stephen Dickinson for his letter and read this out to those present. Some of the points had already been covered. A lively discussion ensued, with the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brigitte Hilton and Pauline Davidson always make contact with new people to welcome them personally into the village, provide them with information about the church, and then welcome them formally via the newsletter. Stephen Webster and Annabel Copeland will now also ensure a short welcome visit is made from the clergy. - “Back to Church Sunday” to be considered for the Autumn – bringing a friend to informal Morning Worship service. - Continuing to build relationship with School – Stephen Dickenson said he was appalled when he found out how little contact there was from the School with the church. All agreed it was an ongoing, joint process to further build the relationship, with the clergy now visiting the school weekly, and Sid Charlton visiting the school on a volunteer basis. 	
15.	<p>Date of 2026 Annual Parishioners’ Meeting and Annual Parochial Church Meeting:</p> <p>Thursday 30th April 2026 at 7 p.m. in Church.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 20.30</p>	

Appendix 1 Churchwarden's report

Mr Chairman, friends,

Firstly, I would like to pay a warm tribute to all the members of the P.C.C. who have helped in any way this year. You all have my grateful thanks. You have made my task as churchwarden rather easier than I thought it would be when I stood here last year. Sid has been a genial and efficient lay chair, as well as organising with Helen the annual Tear Fund Quiz, which is our big fund-raiser for an international charity. Anne has been a most efficient and sympathetic secretary, Richard has done the books with skill, Tracey is our invaluable health and safety guru, and Penny organises the church decorations, and with Bernard, the Christmas crib and Easter cross – which is our public statement of faith. Thank you so much to Tricia for corralling us all onto the Electoral Roll this year, something that has to be done every six years, for organising the Bluebell Teas and, with Pauline, producing the excellent quarterly village Newsletter. Brigitte has helpfully deputised for me, when I have been away on a Sunday, and she and Philip have been tireless organisers of events. Outside the PCC, it's my pleasure to thank warmly Brian Ashworth for playing the organ so well each Sunday, which adds immeasurably to the quality of our worship. Thank you also to Pauline for organising the mowing rota, and for those on that rota, who keep the churchyard looking so nice. Thank you to Sue Brewer for organising the coffee and cleaning rotas and to all those who clean, decorate the church and do the coffee after the services. And thank you, too, for everyone who makes coffee after church on Sunday. Last, but not least, all those who open and close the church each day; a sign that we are open to the world.

Average attendance for Book of Common Prayer is 18, informal HC 19.5, informal Morning Worship 16.5 and Holy Communion, 20. The attendances have declined slightly, but not precipitately, this year, and we have had some successful special services, especially Christmas and Easter. We joined the school at a Christingle service for the first time this year. We all understand the importance of a weekly service of worship at the same time, something that has died out in many parishes, and we thank Stephen and Annabel, and the lay readers, especially Charles, for ensuring that. A high point for the congregation this year was the opportunity to welcome the Gardners into the church family in February, when they were all baptised.

However, although I probably sound like a stuck record, I feel I have to end on a more downbeat note. As I said last year, the rural church is in an existential crisis. For decades, the centre has starved the periphery of money, without which the periphery cannot do its job properly. Sadly, the situation now is even worse than it was last year. As I pointed out at the last AVM, the Church Commission, which is separate from the Church of England, but whose function is to fund its parishes, has £10.4 billion in its funds. The dioceses between them have an additional £6 bn. In 2022, the Church Commissioners had £486 million to spend. This money rightly belongs to the parishes. Most of it comes from Queen Anne's Bounty, originally, founded to fund clergy. It's simply not getting through. Only 17% of Head Office investment income goes directly to parishes. Our own diocese has a Stipend Fund of about £75 million, but the investment advisers are achieving a return of less than 2%, which compares most unfavourably with other dioceses, that use total return accounting, and get as much as 6%.

The result of this starvation of funds to the parishes is a thoroughly demoralised, outrageously underpaid, Church of England clergy, who cannot do the two things that are proven to achieve church growth – provide weekly Sunday worship in all parishes and carry out energetic visiting, not just of the sick and bereaved, but all the parish. I feel enormously sorry for the national clergy; they are simply not given the tools to do the job.

Things are worse this year, because the Church is demonstrably not effectively led. The Archbishop of Canterbury left under a cloud, and the Archbishop of York had to take charge temporarily. Stephen Cottrell is a theology-free zone and is himself under a cloud. There are almost no Bible scholars amongst the Bishops now, most of whom were Welby appointees, and the leadership seems intent simply on managing decline, and wasting millions on marquee projects, which are not rigorously evaluated and many of which are not cost effective.

The bishops often sound like activist social workers, intent on secular concerns, and the public has noticed. Where is the distinctively Christian message? The Church of England just looks like another organisation, vying for space in the crowded secular public square.

There is still a great deal of good will towards rural parish churches and congregations and, in a secular society, a longing for spiritual refreshment, which is going unanswered. But it's downhill all the way unless the Archbishops, Bishops and Church Commissioners come to their

senses. And our church in Glapthorn, in a small village is likely to be one of the casualties, at risk of closure in the not-too-distant future.

Thanks to hard work by committed and faithful individuals, we in Glapthorn have bucked trends to a certain extent, with our weekly services and the fact that we pay our parish share in full. But our fortunes are on a razor edge, and the time has come when we can no longer be self-sufficient but need to look to our pastors, our clergy, for a growth plan for the future.

Ursula Wide 1/5/2025.