

OTLEY PARISH CHURCH

Minutes of Annual Church Meetings held on Sunday 5th May 2025

Opening Prayer: Reverend Aaron Kennedy welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with prayers.

Present: 37 parishioners

Apologies: Margaret Turner, Anne Walker, Liz Walker, Irene Dexter, Bryan Dexter, Angela Jew

Annual Parishioners Meeting

Minutes of Parishioners Meeting 2024

These were approved, proposed by Kevin Keefe, seconded by Rosemary Ellen.

Matters arising: Reverend Stewart Hartley has resigned from the PCC. Aaron thanked him for his service on PCC and all his other work in the Parish and wished him well in his new location.

Election of Churchwardens to serve 2025 – 2026

Churchwarden nominations:

Again, sadly, only one nomination for the two posts had been received:

Tom Raper Proposed by Barry Milner; seconded by Allan Boddy

The meeting voted unanimously to accept the nomination.

Tom will be supported in his roll by the Wardens Team.

Tom was thanked for his service over the last 12 months.

We need to pray that another candidate will come forward during the year to fill the second vacancy.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Minutes of previous meetings

Minutes of APCM meeting May 2024. These were accepted following a proposal by Trevor Williams, seconded by Tony Pike and unanimously agreed.

Matters Arising – none.

Electoral Roll 2025

The number on the Electoral Roll 2024 was 158.

2025 was a full sixth yearly review of the Roll. Sadly 4 people on the 2024 Roll had died during the last 12 months. Those on the old Roll who no longer came to church had received a written notification of the review including a new application form.

122 completed valid application forms had been received and a copy of the new Roll for 2025 had been displayed on the church noticeboard for the statutory period before the meeting,

Annual Report

The narrative report and the financial statement had been available on the church website and copies were available at the meeting. The financial statement had been externally examined and agreed by the PCC.

Aaron thanked everyone who contributed to the life and service of the church community:

Thanks to:

Tony and Barry for their work on the Annual Report.

Allan as Lay Chair of the PCC and to the other PCC members.

Jenny Liston for her service as Safeguarding Officer.

Ken and Kevin for their work on the new church website.

Tom and his team for their service as Wardens.

Norman and Barry for the service on the Deanery Synod.

Sarah for her dedication in the office.

Alison for helping Aaron with management of his e mail account.

Jackie for her coordination of the house groups; her work with the Pastoral Care group and her organisation of the Weekend Away.

All our retired clergy for their support in funeral ministry and the 11 am communion service.

Phil Moon for introducing the SACRED bible notes programme to many in the parish.

Martin Hird for his new service as Licensed Lay Minister.

John Leah for his work as vergers.

Eric and Alison for leading the Marriage Course.

All house group leaders.

Those who have helped with preaching, namely Jackie Hird, Martin Hird, Grace Kennedy, Eric Cairns, Tom Pettinger, Geoff Park.

Mary Pike and the other Sunday Club leaders.

Maria, Geoff, Katie and Abi for their new initiatives in Youth Work.

the Open the Book team and all those who maintain links with schools.

Tom, Katherine, Jackie and Rick and all those who organise the Activate service.

Allan Boddy, Margaret Parkin, Barbara Nicholls and everyone involved in the Christmas Tree festival.

everyone involved in Christingle, especially Colin and Jackie who stepped in during Aaron's illness.

those who lead Baby and Little Rascals.

the Friday Café Team.

the Welcome and Hospitality Team.

Pam Beck for her work with the choir.

Pam, Kevin and Rick for selecting the hymns each week.

everyone involved in church music.

the laptop operators and technical team.

those involved in Open House.

Stephen Hey for producing the weekly Notice Sheet and the monthly magazine 'In Touch';

Everyone involved in the Carbon Net Zero initiative.

John Simkin for his work in linking with other Christians in the community.

Jo Briscoe for her help with Prayer Breakfast.

Keith Wilson (Leaf Master General) for his stewardship of the churchyard.

Val Tait for her leadership of the Newall Ladies Fellowship and to her and her team for the church flowers.

All those involved in cleaning the church.

Financial Statement for 2024

Tony gave a Powerpoint presentation to the meeting.

Main points:

2024 was essentially a normal year – fairly standard level of activities.

One unusual feature: Church weekend away at Hayes conference centre. The fees and costs of this are included in the General Fund income and spending, so distort the numbers.

Weekend away first: income and expenditure were spread over two years. Total costs were £21,400. Covered by fees of £12,500, donations to subsidise the event totalling £6,600 and using the balance in the English Fund of £3,000. Small surplus of £700 which remained on the General Fund.

Income from regular planned giving has continued to rise and was over £10k higher than in 2023. Total income from gifts and donations was up by £9k, despite 2023 including some one-off gifts to help with higher energy costs. Income from other activities continues to increase and we received about £5k of deposit interest.

Spending on regular activities also higher with a “normal” level of activities. Gas and electricity costs were a bit lower than in 2023 but remain very high. Parish share was £101k last year (up by £7k, representing over half of total costs). Youth worker cost £20k. Spending on maintaining the building was £12,500 (up £3k, mainly because of sewage pump repair).

Overall income for general funds was £174k (cf £163k), spending £199k (cf £184k).

So, a large deficit of £25k for the second year in a row.

Comments about costs for this year:

Our Parish share continues to rise (7% in 2024 and another roughly 3% in 2025). This is the money that goes to the Diocese from which they fund clergy like Aaron (inc vicarage) and central diocese costs.

Secondly gas and electricity supply contracts reduced again in November last year but still much higher than three years ago. Should come down again in November this year.

Full year cost of having Maria as our Youth worker was c£20k and will rise to about £22k this year. All church maintenance was paid from the General Fund, including the expensive emergency repairs to the sewage pump. So no call on the Fabric Funds. However that has changed this year. We have spent c£6,700 on repairs and redecoration in the Bell Tower and £9k on roof repairs in The Chestnuts. As a result, the designated Fabric Fund balance has fallen from £24,500 to c£9k.

Donations to external charities from church funds were £1,500 (Kisiizi £800, Leeds Faith in Schools £700). A further £2,200 passed on to other charities, including £235 to Christian Aid and £1,460 to The Children’s Society

Figures in accounts can be a bit confusing! Balance in General Fund (£334k) not all cash! It includes the value we hold for The Chestnuts & a value for some church equipment (£217k). So cash of £93k and still a good position to be in. However that amount was down to about £83k at the end of April and, based on current level of offerings and spending, we expect the cash balance to be down to below £70k at the end of this year.

We still have substantial cash balances but have been using them quite rapidly. The PCC is well aware that we cannot continue to spend a lot more than we are receiving in donations and other income and we will need to address that in budgeting for 2026.

We are conscious that we have made multiple appeals for extra giving over the last two years but we continue to ask the congregation to review their contribution.

Also, we do have a lovely but expensive to maintain listed building for our use but we need to find ways of paying for its upkeep.

As you know, the poor state of the roof and the minimal insulation is allowing too much into the church in the way of water and too much out in the way of heat. So we are looking at replacement, which is a very significant and expensive project. We have created a fund to collect donations towards that and launched an initial appeal for funds. Delighted to report fund has now reached almost £60k.

Tony expressed a big thank you to all who faithfully and very generously support the church through gifts and donations. Without them, none of our church ministries could take place.

Tony reminded the meeting that there are multiple ways to provide financial support and the significance of Gift Aid

Legacies are a significant income for many charities and we were encouraged to consider leaving a legacy to the church.

5. Property Report

A written Fabric report had been submitted by Tom and circulated before the meeting. There were no questions arising from the report.

6. Safeguarding Report.

This was available on line and at the meeting.

Aaron thanked Jenny Liston for all her work and expertise on this important part of church life. He emphasised the need to be a safe church and engage with the Safeguarding Policy.

7. Deanery Synod

Norman had circulated a report of Deanery Synod meetings prior to the meeting.

Norman and Barry's term on Deanery Synod continue until 2026

8. PCC Elections

We received 4 nominations for membership of the PCC:

Jonathan Joslin, nominated by Jackie Hird, seconded by Beryl Hey

Tony Pike, nominated by Barry Milner, seconded by Ken Dale

Kevin Keefe, nominated by Tom Raper, seconded by Barry Milner

Ken Dale, nominated by Barry Milner, seconded by Tom Raper

As there were more vacancies than nominations all the above were elected unanimously by the meeting.

All other members of the PCC continued in their term of office.

9. Appointment of Independent Examiner for 2024

West Yorkshire Community Accounting Services had examined the 2024 accounts and Tony recommended that we continue to use them.

This was proposed by John Simkin, seconded by Martin Hird and passed unanimously.

10. Vicar's Report

Aaron reminded the meeting that he was appointed to focus on the development of life at OPC in three key areas:

1. Discipleship and teaching for all
2. Youth and children's ministry
3. Community outreach and mission.

Discipleship and teaching:

Aaron outlined the various themes we had studied during the year: our emphasis should be on setting God at the centre, to be more like Mary and less like Martha. One sermon series was based on Acts, looking chapter by chapter with a view to inspiring our church life through the power of the Holy Spirit. If what we're doing doesn't facilitate the ministry of Jesus in one way or another, then we need to reevaluate.

One recent development that reflects our desire to grow in holiness is our venture into 24-7 prayer. Our first 24 hours of prayer was a really positive experience for all involved, and it is with great expectation that we approach again the season of between Jesus' Ascension and Pentecost when the first disciples gathered to wait and pray until they received the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. Everyone was invited to get involved in this 'Thy Kingdom Come' prayer initiative this year.

Youth and Children's Ministry:

Aaron outlined the progress in this Ministry, in particular thanking Mary Pike and her team for all their hard work and dedication, emphasising the ongoing need for more volunteers.

Youth work: we are entering the third and final year of our current contract with Missional Generation – the agency who directly employ Maria O'Hagan. Given our budget deficit we will need to decide on the continuation of this arrangement, and Aaron asked everyone to prayerfully consider their giving.

Community Outreach and Mission

We have continued to reach out to and serve the people of Otley through several ministries.

We contribute significantly to the running of the Otley Foodbank.

Open House every Tuesday, provides food, community and support to many in need.

Little and Baby Rascals enables fantastic contact with folk who rarely if ever come to church.

Something that gets even less profile in church is Open the Book – an incredible investment in the lives of the school children of this town, with many gospel seeds planted every week.

Our ability to host external organisations here for their own events has developed over the past year, thanks to Tom Raper and those who have assisted him.

In Sunday worship throughout Lent, we have reflected together on evangelism through the Talking Jesus Course, and do begin to hear stories of how many are growing in this essential area of discipleship.

Maria and Aaron have been pioneering an outreach among secondary school children in the market square on Monday afternoons. That is now beginning to gather some momentum, as they have good conversations about God with young people, and express verbally and practically, the love God has for them.

Outreach is not an area many of us relish the prospect of, but it seems that without both growth in holiness and a willingness to be missional and share our faith, the church just doesn't grow – whether spiritually or numerically.

In his closing remarks Aaron spoke of the Quiet Revival. There has been a sea change in our society, and there is a renewed openness and curiosity about faith.

Aaron set out priorities in the three key areas for the year ahead:

Number one: Let's seek God's face, let's focus our ministry on him, and make sure that Christ really is at the centre – of our hearts, our homes, our church. For then we truly will be a place for everyone. A house of prayer for all nations. Because this isn't our church. It is God's. And we are not our own. We have been bought with a price.

Number two: Let's give generously to fund the work of passing the faith on to the children and young people of this town.

Number three: Let's continue to step out in faith and share the good news, and the joy of salvation, our love for Jesus, with the world around us.

The full text of Aaron's report will be posted on the church website.

Any Other Business

None.

Aaron closed the meeting with prayer