

DIOCESE OF ST ALBANS
PARISH OF ST ANDREW'S BIGGLESWADE
Christ-Centred – Welcoming – Inclusive – Outward-Looking

A MEETING OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
held in the Chapter House
on **TUESDAY 17TH March 2026 at 7:30 pm**

PRESENT: Rosemary Bentley (Lay Chair) (RBe), Lucy Dilley (LD), Peter Giles (PG), Hilary Johnson (HJ), Claire Leeks (CL), Adrian Maynard (AM), Andrew Rutt (AR), H Shannon (HS)*, Nettie van de Weerd (NvdW).
Apologies were received from Revd Liz Oglesby-Elong (LOE), Rob Butcher (RBU), David Pilgrim (DP).

*Minutes

1. Welcome, prayers and apologies for absence

RBe welcomed those present and opened with prayers for St Patrick's Day. Prayers were also said for Chris Parker, his family and loved ones. Apologies were received as above.

2. To receive the Memorandum of Discussions for the Standing Committee held on 3rd March 2026

The Memorandum of Discussions was received.

APCM date was noted (Sunday 10th May 2026). There will be a number of PCC vacancies, plus 2 church warden vacancies.

ACTION: 'Save the date' for APCM in pew news plus church warden and PCC vacancies (HS).

3. To approve the Minutes of the PCC meeting held on 27th January 2026 and matters arising from that meeting

The minutes were approved. **PROPOSED: HJ; SECONDED: AR; ABSTAINED: 0. All in favour.**

Matters Arising

Point 5 (page 2): (CL) Foundation governor vacancies. Vacancies for foundation governors at both St Andrew's Church of England Primary School (1 vacancy) and Edward Peake Church of England Secondary School (2 vacancies) have still not been filled. Skillset and responsibilities for the role have not yet been formally articulated, making recruitment difficult.

ACTION: RBe to contact Duncan Gauld, Director of Education for the Diocese of St Albans, and Mike Sladen, Chair of Governors at Edward Peake school, to clarify job description/specific skillset needed for this important role.

Point 6b (page 2): (AR) Car park work (Building and Grounds). Car park resurfacing and other works is now a priority. Three quotes are needed urgently so that the work can begin.

ACTION: Refer back to Building and Grounds (RBe)

4. To approve the statutory accounts for 2025

(AR). Papers were received in advance of the meeting, following finance committee meeting held on Monday 19th January 2026, with LOE, AM, CP and AR present, plus subsequent updates. AR summarised key points as follows:

At the end of 2025, the general funds held a surplus of £814 (the budget was £4,000 deficit), in part due to the vacant Admin. Assistant post earlier in the year. General funds held £13,473 on 31st December 2025.

Restricted and designated funds available to the PCC closed at £13,822 and £6,296 respectively on 31st

December 2025.

Major Fabric Fund closed at £3,494.73 on 31st December 2025. Electrical works due in April 2026 will come from this fund (lights along the path, noticeboards).

Fund balance carried forward from the end of December 2025: Unrestricted funds, £19,768.35; Restricted funds, £461,082.46; Endowment funds, £16,380.03; **Total, £497,230.84.**

Draft 2026 budget suggests a deficit of £9,500, leaving general funds with cash in hand of £3,973 on 31st December 2026. The budget includes a fundraising budget of £3,000.

RBe thanked AR for his hard work and the following queries were received:

(PG) asked whether any bad debts needed to be written off. (AR) No bad debts, although one invoice is still outstanding. (RBe) the task of chapter house bookings has now been split, with Sue Thorn (Administration Assistant) dealing with bookings, using iKnow, and AR leading on invoicing.

(CL) sought clarification on where the tea/coffee and Sunday lunches are accounted for on the summary sheet. (AR) These come under 'other income', which includes Saturday, Sunday and Thursday coffee plus Sunday lunch. Gift aid can be claimed on refreshments.

Statutory accounts for 2025 were approved: Proposed: AM; Seconded: PG; Abstained: 0; All in favour.

5. Mission Action Plan (MAP) Update (RBe)

The Mission Action Plan process is currently under review by the Flourishing Churches team within the Diocese of St Alban's (led by Tim Lomax, Director of Mission and Ministry). Our current MAP is still valid and it is likely that the revised form and planning will entail a single priority rather than several different topics. Timelines will vary depending on the particular priority and once this has been achieved, a new focus will be developed. Further details and the new form have yet to be disseminated to the parishes.

(PG) Everybody needs to be on board with the single priority, otherwise there is a risk of tension. This will also need to be clearly communicated to the congregation.

(LD) The current MAP took a long time to develop and to be adopted, with few tangible outputs as yet. A single priority may be easier to work with. It feels like a potentially positive change.

Mission Action Planning will be taken forward by the new PCC in July.

6. Group Reports

a. Finance: finalise budget for 2026 (AR)

A draft budget was received by the PCC in advance of the meeting.

Regular giving (incl Gift Aid but after Missions) is £66,200.

Use of premises, £11,500.

Rental income from Compton Mead, £17,500.

Total income budgeted for 2026 is £112,200, total expenditure £121,700 (total deficit £9,500). Total brought forward from 2025, £13,473, leaving general funds cash in hand by the end of 2026, £3,973.

This budget and the financial situation require discussion since the general funds will be nearly depleted by December 2026, according to the current budget.

The Finance Committee proposed that a "Generous Giving Sunday" should take place on Sunday 21st June 2026.

RBe thanked AR for his hard work as treasurer and the following points were raised.

(AM), Since the January budget was set, there has been a decrease in Christian Stewardship owing to relocation or change of circumstances, approximately £3,000.

ACTION: AR to update the budget to reflect this change.

(PG) There is a need to welcome more people to church and encourage greater giving. Shifting demographics in the town mean that young families are moving into the area, who may not have the financial means to contribute substantially at this stage of their lives.

(PG) Time and talents also need to be acknowledged, with a small number of people continuing to undertake the majority of the work within the church.

(LD) Regarding fundraising and other events, we need to be careful that we are not asking the same people to contribute to multiple activities. New initiatives are needed. (AR) We could also apply to the Peter Vickers fund to balance the books each year, as has been done in the past.

b. Building and Grounds (RBe)

(RBe) Memorandum from 11 February 2026 was received and there have been significant developments on the North Aisle Roof since that time. There is now a need for some internal scaffolding, which can be delayed until after Easter. Although there have been no unexpected challenges (as yet), the entire works are likely to take more than 3 months to complete.

(NvdW) An estimate for plumbing has been received for work on the taps, toilets and heating.

(RBe) Chapter House cleaner. Currently, cleaning is undertaken flexibly for 2x2 hours per week. It would be useful to coordinate this better with times when the church needs cleaning.

ACTION: Liaise with the Chapter House cleaner regarding cleaning times (NvdW).

c. Growth and Mission (RBe)

(RBe) thanked LD for recommending the 'Acts of Hope' course, that we are following during Lent. Approximately 20 people have been attending the course, on either a Monday evening or Thursday morning. Positive feedback has been received.

(LD) Country Fayre: Call for help with all aspects of Country Fayre planning, preparation and on the day, particularly with the exhibition. Proposal to nominate two charities for the Country Fayre, Cruse Bereavement Support <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>, and Home-Start <https://www.home-start.org.uk/>

Chosen charities for Country Fayre were approved. Proposed: LD; Seconded: NvdW; Abstained: 0; all in favour.

(AR) Charities for annual mission giving have not yet been chosen for this year. No current urgency to this decision.

ACTION: Item to be placed in pew news after Easter, calling for suggestions (HS).

d. Eco Church (PG)

Report received from Mark Simmons ahead of the meeting. Given the disappointing response to the eco survey last year, the group are working on areas where they already have purchase. Current activities include the wild area on the south side of the church, worship services and youth work. The water butt received Faculty approval. Also linking with community ventures including Biggleswade in Bloom 2026 in the community and school category.

RBe thanked PG and the eco group for their continued efforts in this important area.

(RBe) Enquired as to whether there is progress with *A Rocha Eco Church Silver Award*. (PG) Currently we are not meeting this, in part due to lack of uptake on the survey which means that 'lifestyle' (encouraging the congregation to adopt sustainable habits) cannot be measured at the moment.

(HJ) Working on making some of the beds more insect-friendly. There may also be an opportunity to involve the youth with growing flowers/vegetables.

e. Communications (including website) RBe/PG

Communications committee have not met.

(PG) Website report received in advance of the meeting. There is still a lot of traffic originating from China, which is a worldwide issue. Since late 2025, a global wave of automated scrapers, many linked to Chinese IP ranges, has been hitting websites worldwide, inflating analytics. PG advised to be extra alert to information being placed on the website, particularly confidential or personal information.

7. **Safeguarding**

New safeguarding policy has not yet been finalised and is now an urgent priority.

ACTION: RBe to liaise with Helen Tranter (Parish Safeguarding Officer) for an update and to offer support.

8. **Deanery and Diocesan Reports (RBe)**

The Bishops of Bedford and Hertford offered their thanks to every person who continues to contribute to the flourishing of our churches.

The Diocese of St Albans will mark its 150th anniversary in 2027, because it was formally founded on 4 May 1877. Saturday 8th May will be a big occasion, with various celebrations being held and activities encouraged. This date has been crossed out of the diary for weddings and will be kept free for the Sesquicentennial celebrations.

9. **Correspondence**

None received.

10. **Any Other Business**

Received from LD and raised elsewhere under Growth and Mission.

11. **Closing Prayer**

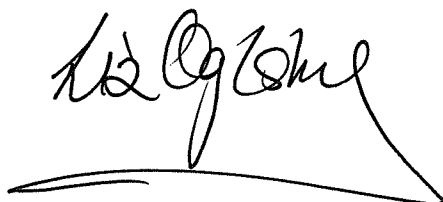
RBe led closing prayer and the Grace was said. RBe thanked everyone for their time and the meeting closed at 09:30pm

Date of APCM: Sunday 10th May 2026

Date of next SC meeting: Tuesday 30th June 2026 at 7.30pm in the Ivel Room

Date of next PCC meeting: Tuesday 14th July at 7.30pm in the Chapter House

Chair



Date

14.07.2026

