

Minutes of St Michael's Church APCM, 25 May 2025 in the WCC at 11.40 a.m.

Attendees: Rev'd Derwyn Williams (DW) (Chair), Claire Conquest (CC) (Churchwarden), Gillian Johnson (GJ) (Churchwarden), Rev'd June Knight, Rev'd Derek Hinge, Rob Klincke, Caroline Galwey (CG) (minutes), and about 35 members of the Congregation.

The meeting opened with prayer led by Rev'd Derwyn Williams.

DW thanked all those who had helped to prepare for the meeting, particularly Christine Solway and Katharine Stanley.

Apologies were received from Barbara and Peter Eldridge, Vivien Emmett, Carole Greenwood, James Hellis, Mark and Michelle Johnson, Bill and Carole Macdonald, Peter and Tracy Mannings, Fae Nelson, Martin and Diane Pettitt, Jenny Savage, Katharine Stanley, and Angela Weeks.

Vestry Meeting 2025

Item 1 – To receive the minutes of the 2024 Vestry Meeting. The 2024 minutes were received: proposed by DW, unanimously accepted.

Item 2 – Election of Churchwardens.

Claire Conquest was nominated and elected for a fourth year as Churchwarden, 2025–2026. Gill Johnson had decided not to renew her nomination, for family reasons. DW thanked GJ for her three years' service as Churchwarden. She will continue to work with the Wardens' team. A presentation was made to GJ in recognition of her service, warmly applauded by all present.

The Vestry Meeting was declared closed at 11.48 a.m.

The APCM followed immediately.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2025

Item 1 – To receive the minutes of the 2024 APCM. Proposed by DW, seconded by CC, the minutes were unanimously accepted as a true record.

Item 2 – Matters arising from the minutes. None were raised.

Item 3 – Vicar's Report (circulated).

The Vicar introduced his report, noting that it is his twenty-fifth APCM. He emphasised that safeguarding is the most urgent new issue for the church and one for which the whole parish must develop awareness. Three questions were offered for discussion in small groups: what does safeguarding mean at St Michael's, who performs it, and how might you contribute? After discussion, DW invited answers from the tables.

What does safeguarding mean?

- Protection must be there for people with various needs, including children, the disabled and older people, and we must remember that not all vulnerabilities are obvious.
- We need clear policies and people who are empowered to raise issues and know who to take them to.
- Don't forget the safeguarding of data and information.
- We must take care of the interactions of people with various vulnerabilities, for example the youngest parishioners with the oldest.
- Safeguarding also means safeguarding yourself, avoiding dangerous situations.

Who performs safeguarding?

- Everyone, but particularly those in positions of leadership and trust. Outside church premises, we should still be responsible.
- The clergy and Churchwardens' team as well as the Safeguarding Officer can be approached with any concerns. Don't be afraid to bring forward a concern even if you are unsure.

How can individuals contribute?

- We build our church family by making connections to people, which naturally creates vulnerabilities – we need to help as we can, and ensure no one is left out.
- CC: all who can do so should have training that prepares them for safeguarding problems.
- Dotun Akinde (Safeguarding Officer): we have various roles with defined safeguarding requirements, involving training, but if anyone else is interested in taking the training, he encourages them to look at the materials on the church website.

Item 4 – Safeguarding Report (circulated) and PCC Statement to the APCM.

Dotun Akinde introduced his report and the PCC statement. He reiterated that members of the congregation should flag any concerns about past and present safeguarding issues and hazards promptly, to himself, the Vicar or the Churchwarden. It would be beneficial to create role descriptions, from a safeguarding perspective, for the various leadership roles in the congregation (choir, Godly Play, etc). Safe recruitment is vital – meaning DBS checks (enhanced if necessary) and regular training for employees and volunteers with the church, according to diocesan guidance. Support can be given to volunteers to complete the training.

In response to a question from Val Ashwood, DA clarified that references, as well as DBS checks, are sought for applicants for leadership roles. Lynn Graseman mentioned the need to develop risk assessments continuously as risks become apparent.

DW concluded the discussion by asking for awareness and support of individuals for whom safeguarding has failed in the past.

DA proposed that the safeguarding report and PCC Statement be accepted; GJ seconded the motion and the meeting unanimously passed it. DW thanked DA for his work and development of his role.

Item 5 – Election of Lay Representatives to the PCC

DW recorded thanks to the PCC members who are standing down at the end of their three-year terms: Bill Macdonald, Angela Weeks, Dotun Akinde and Lynn Graseman. He looked forward to continuing to welcome Dotun and Lynn at PCC meetings in their capacities as Safeguarding Officer and Chair of the Worship and Music Committee respectively.

Nominations were received for Val Ashwood, Martin Pettitt and Nick Hughes. The three were declared elected to serve on the PCC for the next three years.

Item 6 – Election of Sidesmen (report circulated)

The Sidesmen's report from Carole Macdonald was received. It was noted that Tracy Osho-Williams is to join the sidesmen's team in the coming year.

CC proposed that the report be accepted, GJ seconded the motion, and it was unanimously passed.

DW recorded thanks to all the sidesmen for being the first point of contact with arrivals in church, and particularly to Carole for co-ordinating the team.

Item 7 – Electoral Roll Report (circulated)

DW thanked GJ for completing the new six-yearly roll, and Kathryn Roy for maintaining it. The roll under-represents the number of regular worshippers, and DW hopes that the missing members will be added in the coming months. A few more are needed to raise our numbers above 100. Below this figure, representational issues arise.

DW proposed accepting the report, PR seconded the motion, and it was unanimously passed.

Item 8 – Secretary's Report (circulated)

DW thanked Christine Solway for her report and for co-ordinating the PCC meetings. CS proposed accepting the report, CC seconded the motion, which was unanimously passed.

Item 9 – Treasurer's Report (circulated)

Graziana Maddolozzo, Treasurer, thanked the Finance Committee and others who support her role, and gave a powerpoint presentation of the key points of the report.

St Michael's has met all legislative requirements and fulfilled Charity Commission and diocesan conditions, producing an annual statement of assets and liabilities and of income and expenditure.

Peter Watson, our independent Examiner, has reviewed and signed the accounts and the PCC has recognised them. They are published on the church website and once approved will be submitted to the Charity Commission.

Legacies have helped to achieve a surplus of over £2000 this year, in contrast to the deficit of last year. There has been an 11% increase in tax refunds, but a 3% decrease of standing orders and 22% decrease in collections taken in church. Giving has not fully recovered since the Covid pandemic. In expenditure, our diocesan quota exceeds the standing orders we receive. Utilities bills have increased (10%), but not by as much as last year. Spending on salaries is up 8%. Major work has been done on building in this quinquennial year.

The Bells fund still contains £12,000; the current year will be the last for the Bells project but the fund will be retained for future needs.

DW thanked GM for her report and invited questions from the meeting. In response to a question, it was clarified that any injuries taking place in church are covered by church insurance.

A motion to receive the annual accounts was proposed by GM, seconded by Peter Rixson, and unanimously passed.

To receive the budget for 2025: proposed by GM, seconded by Peter Rixson, and unanimously passed. DW thanked GM for all her work, warmly applauded by those attending.

Item 10 – To Elect the Examiner for the Coming Year

Peter Watson being happy to continue in the role, his re-election as Examiner was proposed by GM, seconded by PR, and passed unanimously. DW recorded thanks to Peter Watson.

Item 11 – Churchwardens' Report on Fabric, Goods and Ornaments (circulated)

DW thanked CC and GJ for their report and in particular for their work related to the building in the past year. He also thanked the deputy wardens, Peter Rixson, Terry Pigram, Jonathan Inglis and others whose help has been vital. He asked the congregation to look at the plans for the proposed tower renovation and offer any comments/feedback. There being no questions DW proposed that the report be received. PR seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

Item 12 – Reports from the Charities Support Group, Education Group, St Michael's School, Churches Together in Bishop's Stortford, Windhill Churches Centre, TLC Club, Tower, Director of Music and Tiny Tots (circulated)

Representatives of the various groups briefly introduced their reports.

CSG: Val Ashwood thanked Peter and Christine Rixson, who are leaving the committee, for their service. Tracy Mannings and Shell Langston have joined. Anyone else who is interested is warmly invited. Margaret Webb proposed thanks to Rosemary Thomson for organising two very successful quiz nights in aid of the Night Shelter.

Education Group: report received from Bill Macdonald.

St Michael's School: report received from Clare Tozer. Val Ashwood reported that Mireille Baulcomb, Tracy Mannings, Mark Johnson, Catherine Wilkin, Michelle Durnell and the Vicar are all school governors, giving St Michael's Church excellent representation at the school.

Churches Together: Margaret Fox reported. There will be Churches Together representation in the 'Love Stortford' carnival this summer.

WCC: CC reported, with extra thanks to Terry Pigram for his close supervision of the building.

TLC Club: Rosemary Thomson reported.

Tower Report: report received from Nick Hughes.

Director of Music: Nathan Collins reported, thanking congregation members for their support and encouragement, particularly for the new intake of children in the choir, and thanking the safeguarding team. Peter Rixson thanked NC for his work in organising the series of concerts during the past year. Margaret Fox expressed thanks for the carol singing in 2024.

Tiny Tots: report received from Heather Tanner and Shell Langston. DW noted that the group is a great opportunity for outreach.

DW proposed and CC seconded the acceptance of the reports *en bloc*. The motion was passed unanimously.

DW thanked all the group leaders and also the Godly Play team, the school governors, the Churches Together representatives, Terry Pigram and the fabric committee.

Item 13 – Date of Next Meeting

May 2026, tbc.

Item 14 – Any Other Business

Rob Klincke: The Friends of St Michael's have been closed, as the group sadly proved unsustainable. The formalities of closure are ongoing. £22,000 still in the account is to be transferred to church funds. DW thanked RK and the Friends for their work.

Rosemary Thomson, on behalf of all present, thanked the clergy team for their ministry.

The meeting ended with the Grace at 13.15.