



**The Parish of
St Lawrence's Church, Bidborough
& St Peter's Church, Southborough**



**ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS
AND
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**

To be held at St Peter's Church, Southborough on Monday 22nd May 2023 at 8.00pm

A G E N D A

Welcome and Prayer

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

1. Welcome
2. Election of Churchwardens

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

1. Welcome
2. Apologies (to the Secretary please)
3. Minutes of APCM 25th April 2022
4. Matters arising from the minutes
5. Rector's Report & Curate's Report
6. Trustees Report
7. Receive revised Church Electoral Roll
8. Churchwardens' Reports
9. Deanery Synod Report
10. Parish Treasurer's Report
11. Re-appointment of Independent Examiner
12. Elections
 - Election of Deanery Synod Representatives
 - Election of PCC Representatives
13. Any Other Business

Prayer to close



**St Lawrence's Church, Bidborough
& St Peter's Church, Southborough**



**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING
OF THE PARISH OF
ST LAWRENCE, BIDBOROUGH AND ST PETER, SOUTHBOROUGH
Held on Monday 25th April 2022 at St Lawrence Church**

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

1. Welcome

Stephen Hills welcomed everyone to the meeting, the first APCM to be held in St Lawrence Church after the completion of Project 800.

20 people attended the meeting.

Stephen Hills opened the meeting in prayer.

2. Election of Churchwardens

Two Wardens are elected for each Church.

The following nominations had been received:

St Lawrence:	Bob Gibson Ed Dix-Perkin
St Peter:	Roy Langman Richard Stanbury

It was proposed that the above be duly elected.

Proposed:	Rod Hillen
Seconded:	Marion Short

Stephen thanked the Churchwardens for being willing to continue for another year.

3. Resolution regarding Churchwardens Measure 2001

It was proposed that:

“The Annual Meeting of Parishioners resolves that Section 3 of the Churchwardens Measure 2001 shall not apply in relation to the parish of St Lawrence, Bidborough and St Peter, Southborough”.

Proposed:	Anne Hinds
Seconded:	Pippa Hillen

The resolution was unanimously passed.

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

1. **Welcome**

Stephen welcomed everyone to the second meeting – the APCM.

2. **Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Peter Dillon, Bob Gibson, Michael Lee, Gordon Mungeam and Rob Masters.

3. **Minutes of APCM Meeting on 26th April 2021**

The Minutes of the APCM on 26th April were approved.

Proposed: Ed Dix-Perkin

Seconded: Pippa Hillen

4. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

5. **Rector's Report**

Stephen Hills gave the following report:

“This time last year, as I gave my Rector's report on the life of the church in 2020 before taking some sabbatical time of rest and reflection I expressed the hope that things would quickly get 'back to normal' in the summer and second half of 2021.

In fact that proved not to be the case, as the pandemic continued to have a significant impact on the life of the church, as well as the rest of society, right through 2021 and into the beginning of this year.

One thing that this prolonged period of change has done for churches, including ours of course, is to prompt innovation and exploration of new ideas and ways of doing things.

The timing of last spring's lockdowns and the fact that we remained online with our services, which was then followed by my time of sabbatical, and then a gradual return to live services, led to us initiating a new service pattern, with both morning services taking place at 10.00am

This new pattern has allowed others in our leadership team to take a fuller role in leading worship and preaching. I have felt hugely blessed and supported in seeing how people have stepped up into those roles and it has enriched our times of worship to have the wider range of prayerful and inspired voices leading our Sunday gatherings.

The acceleration in use of technology that the pandemic forced upon us in 2020 – which was a good thing that has brought us more in-line with an increasing on-line society, has continued to develop through 2021. Our presence on Facebook groups and pages is now more embedded and seeing greater engagement, and our Towerandsteeple website, with its user-friendly interface, is regularly kept up to date and used by many who seek information about the life of the parish.

We still keep in touch with those who are not online, with our pastoral care team working hard behind the scenes. Anne Hinds has been faithful in offering CAMEO lunches and in keeping in touch with people. During the past year – and in some cases since the beginning of the pandemic, some of our most faithful members have become more frail – sadly despite the improvements to St Lawrence that P800 brought, we cannot change the fact that St Lawrence's church building is a good stretch away from the nearest road, whichever pathway one approaches it from. With several of our church family now in their 90's, and one to be 100 this week, this will remain something to be aware of in the life of our church family.

We also keep in touch with the wider community through the Tower and Steeple Magazines which go around the whole parish – there were two issues in 2021 – one before Easter and the other before Christmas.

Again, the pandemic made us revisit how we mark those festivals, and whilst it was good to be back in St Peter's for Christingle on Christmas Eve, having missed 2020, a new venture at St Lawrence – Carols in the Churchyard, was highly successful, with a couple of hundred folk coming, some of whom would probably not have come to a conventional Carol Service in church.

Although it will be for next year's report rather than this, I was really encouraged by the numbers who attended and seemed to appreciate the various outdoor service and events which we offered this Easter 2022, and this spring we have added Forest Sunday Schools to our Forest Church outdoor menu that seems to be really appealing to families

Having said all that – and there is so much to be thankful for in the life of the parish, the reality is that 2021 was a very challenging year for us and other local churches. We have seen attendances fall – in that there are not as many of us gathering in our morning Sunday services as there were at this time in 2019 before so much change came along.

My reflection on this, and which was part of my reading and thinking during last spring's sabbatical, is that whilst the fringe of our church family has become a little more ragged in terms of attending services, as family habits have changed over the past two years, the core of our church family has remained strong or become even stronger.

Our small groups have met through thick and thin – on Zoom, in gardens with blankets on, indoors with the windows open. These small groups, huddles, prayer triplets in all their different shapes and forms are in many ways the heart of the body of Christ in this parish.

Zoom morning prayers had become a constant in many of our lives. Half an hour a day spent in worship, scripture, reflection, prayer and fellowship – a daily community of faith at the heart of our churches.

Through Forest Church, some families have become fully engaged – not just coming along to the services but getting involved in making them happen.

2021 was another year when we said farewell to some lovely folk – Graham Wilkinson joined those heading west for retirement, and Olly and Karen Gillett settled in a church near their new home. We saw the funerals of Charles Cullimore, Pat Tomlinson, Robin Loveday, Sue Ramsey, Robert Mackenzie, and Keith Hutton. And we hold in our prayers those who are missing them so much. I was very struck at an evening service a few weeks ago, that there were 4 ladies sitting along in the congregation who only yesterday it seemed had their husbands next to them.

I know that last year I looked forward to easier times and yet they remained challenging, but this year does feel different again, and I am looking forward to some conversations in the next month or so with some of the leadership team in the church about looking ahead to the next few years of ministry and mission in this place.

I close with thanks to all who have worked so hard and faithfully during 2021. Enormous thanks to those who have held roles for many years – I think of Steve Bull who has now stood down from the St P treasurer role of many years. I think of Roy and Richard who have been churchwardens for so many years at St P and each year are willing to carry on. Thanks to Bob and Ed at St Lawrence, and to Alison for her role as Secretary. Thanks also to Vicki Trueman who held the PSO role – and this, and the fact there are vacancies on our PCC, highlight the fact that there is always a need for folk to prayerfully think about where they can serve in their local church and then offer to do so. We do need a PSO – and I will be

approaching one or two folk shortly about that.

My thanks to those who lead and preach – to Clare and Allan as LLMs, to Michael and Ray in their PTO roles in 2021 and special thanks to Michael who is trying to rest after many years of serving us so wisely. To Graham as he moves on. To Pippa as she embarks this year on training for Licensed Lay Ministry, and to Lin and Sophie on our preaching team. To the many who encourage faith in our children and young people, on Sunday in our Sunday Schools and on Fridays at Tots&Co who have a special ministry to young families and are often the first folk from St Lawrence to welcome newcomers into the community. To tech folk, musicians, singers, those who decorate our churches, to David Hunter, vergier at St Lawrence for all his help and support, to those who offer hospitality, and keep our churches looking beautiful, to those who lead prayers, and read scripture for us, and welcome us with a smile – to so many who are part of the Body of Christ in this place – each playing their essential parts. And thanks too to any I have undoubtedly forgotten to mention!

I would like to close with my favourite words of the New Testament I think – the description of the worshipping, loving, living, learning community that was the early church – a vision I always see glimpses of in the life of our churches, and always pray will become our pattern and our purpose. I refer of course to Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

May we be that sort of devoted community – devoted to prayer, to worship, to learning together, to caring for one another, to reaching out to others – and may we enjoy the favour of the Lord and our communities and see Him add to our number those who are finding healing, wholeness and salvation through the work of the Body of Christ in this place.”

Curate's Report

Dave Bubb gave the following report:

“So, this is what the new normal looks like! 2021 started just as 2020 had finished, in lockdown with many of us staring at computer screens for church services, morning prayers and countless zoom meetings. But at least this time we were not starting from scratch. Putting together a video for the Sunday service or a collective worship seemed like a normal activity and I must admit there is something comforting about preaching a sermon on a Sunday morning which you have already preached to a video camera and watched back, whilst preparing an online service.

Thank you for the huge vote of confidence in me, shown both through your trust and your support during the period of Stephen's sabbatical. Being thrown in at the deep end is much less daunting when you know you are surrounded by life jackets, floats and buoyancy aids. Producing the online service each week and coordinating those contributing to each church service was a real privilege. Especially when Stephen had rota'd everything down in great detail, even to which passage we were to reflect on at Morning Prayer. Those three months were a time of real growth for me, in skills, in relationships with people and in developing my ministry. During that time I also completed my first 'lone funeral' from start to finish was not only a huge privilege but an enormous blessing.

The Community Larder has continued at Christ Church and Lin, Allan and Sue have all joined Sophie on our amazing team of faithful volunteers. With the café now running regularly we are able to make an even greater contribution to the wellbeing of our community. On behalf of the larder I would like to thank again all those who contributed through our Harvest Festival services and those who faithfully give produce to the larder each week via my porch. We very much appreciate your generosity.

Forest Church has been another highlight of my year. I never cease to be amazed at the creativity of the whole team and the way everything just seems to incredibly come together each month. Whilst I would want different circumstances for Clare, it has been a privilege to lead this team on a number of occasions, most notably for the Four Winds Farm Nativity service, what an amazingly joyful Christmas service that was, at a time when many were feeling nervous of meeting inside.

During the course of the year, I was able to work with all the ACTS churches and the Mayor and Town Council of Southborough to arrange our participation in a number of community events. From the autumn and Christmas Festivals; the Remembrance Day and Remembrance Sunday services, to the Carol Service, Flag Raising and Hot Cross Bun Giveaway, the Anglican Churches in Southborough are now becoming a more visible and welcomed part of our community. More events are in the pipeline, including Forest Church during the May Day Festival this coming Sunday – so please do watch out for more details.

Thank you everyone once again for your continued support, your encouragement and your friendship. It is difficult as a curate trying to balance ministry over three churches in two different parishes but with incredible tolerance you allow me to dip in and out of your lives on a regular basis. I am aware that I have not got to know many members of the congregations nearly as well as I would want to, but I am always welcomed with open arms and joyful hearts.

Finally from me, a huge thank you to Stephen for your wisdom and your patience, for providing opportunities and forgiveness and for your love and friendship. I count myself as a very lucky curate to be in such good hands.”

6. Trustees Report

The report was accepted.

Proposed: Ed Dix-Perkin
Seconded: Pippa Hillen

7. Electoral Roll

Rod Hillen, Electoral Roll Secretary, reported the current number on the electoral roll was 135, 93 St Lawrence and 42 St Peter.

The electoral roll report was accepted.

Proposed: Anne Hinds
Seconded: Marion Short

Stephen thanked Rod for looking after the roll.

8. Churchwardens' Reports

The Churchwardens' reports for St Lawrence and St Peter were accepted.

Proposed: Jon Kersey
Seconded: Lin Hutchinson

9. Deanery Synod Report

The Deanery Synod report was accepted.

Proposed: Allan Jonnes
Seconded: Marion Short

10. Parish Treasurer's Report

Stephen Hills highlighted points raised by Peter Dillon, Treasurer, who was unable to attend. The budget for the year had been a cautious one and, despite the enormous challenges faced in responding to the Covid-19 outbreak, thanks to the generosity of our parishioners both churches benefitted from improved income compared to budget. At St Peter's major works costing £40,938 were required for repairs to stonework and the replacement of the gas boiler.

2022 was likely to be a challenging year due to the effects of global recession and political instability (war in Ukraine). Utility prices had already seen unprecedented rises and St Peter's had already spent its annual gas budget after only 3 months.

Peter wished to record his thanks to Steve Bull who handed over the Treasurer's reins at St Peter's after 13 years sterling service. He was also grateful for Steve's guidance which Steve has offered to continue.

Stephen Hills expressed his enormous thanks to Peter Dillon for all his hard work as Treasurer and for looking after the St Peter's accounts following the retirement of Steve Bull.

Stephen explained that the Diocese were introducing a new Parish Giving Scheme which had not yet been discussed. The Parish were also investigating the possible use of a card reader as an alternative method of collection at services.

The Parish Treasurer's Report was accepted.

Proposed: Roy Langman
Seconded: Ed Dix-Perkins

11. Appointment of Independent Examiner

It was proposed to re-appoint David Stephens as the Independent Examiner for 2022. This appointment was agreed.

Proposed: Rod Hillen
Seconded: Allan Jonnes

12. Election of PCC Members

Allan Jonnes, Jon Kersey and Marion Short were retiring after three years. It was proposed that Marion Short be re-elected for a further term.

Proposed: Allan Jonnes
Seconded: Anne Hinds

Marion Short was duly elected.

Election of Deanery Synod Representative for St Peter

There was a vacancy for a Deanery Synod Representative for St Peter

Lin Hutchinson was nominated to fill the vacancy.

Proposed: Richard Stanbury
Seconded: Mary Cottle

Lin Hutchinson was duly elected.

13. A.O.B.

Ed Dix-Perkins proposed a vote of thanks to Stephen Hills for his spiritual leadership and to Stephen and Elizabeth for all they do for the Parish which was much appreciated.

The meeting ended with prayer.



**TRUSTEES REPORT
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF
ST LAWRENCE, BIDBOROUGH AND ST PETER, SOUTHBOROUGH
For the period January to December 2022
Charity No. 1184753**

Aims and Purposes

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Lawrence, Bidborough and St Peter, Southborough has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, the Reverend Stephen Hills, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the two church buildings and Ivy Cottage, Franks Hollow Road, Bidborough. In addition, with Christ Church, Southborough it is responsible for the house at 54 Holden Park Road, Southborough.

Objectives and Activities

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our churches and to become part of our parish community. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions on how our services can involve the many groups that live within our parish. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament.

When planning our activities for the year, we have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the supplementary guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. In particular, we try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship and prayer; learning about the Gospel; developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus
- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish
- Mission and outreach work

To facilitate this work it is important that we maintain the fabric of the church buildings.

Major Risks

Major risks to which the charity is exposed, as identified by the trustees, are regularly reviewed and systems or procedures have been established to manage these risks.

Safeguarding and GDPR

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults). The PCC is committed to implementing the House of Bishops' safeguarding policies and good practice guidance. The PCC has adopted the House of Bishops' "Promoting a Safer Church; safeguarding policy statement".

Regulations on safeguarding and GDPR are followed under the guidance of our Parish Safeguarding Officer and administrators. Safeguarding is a regular item on the Agenda at PCC meetings and there were no Safeguarding incidents during 2022. The Parish Safeguarding Officer as at the end of December 2022 is Mrs Alison Mighell.

Achievements and Performance

Worship and Prayer

A range of services are offered in both churches during the week and over the course of the year. St Lawrence and St Peter became one parish in June 2019 and since then service patterns have continued to evolve. After the pandemic and following a trial of a Sunday 10.00 service in each church with Stephen Hills alternating between the churches each week, the pattern reverted to having 9.30 services at St Peter and 11.00 at St Lawrence with a combined service for both congregations on the 5th Sunday. The service from St Lawrence is recorded each week and put on the website in the afternoon for those unable to attend to view. Sunday evening services at St Lawrence have alternated weekly between in church and on Zoom. Weekday morning prayers continue to be held on Zoom.

At Easter there were new initiatives: on Maundy Thursday members from both churches gathered in the churchyard at St Lawrence for sunset soup, breaking of bread and Last Supper readings. Good Friday was marked at the Cross in St Lawrence churchyard and in the afternoon there was a walk of witness carrying a cross from St Peter to St Lawrence with Bible readings along the way.

Christmas celebrations included the popular Christingle Service at St Peter's on Christmas Eve and at St Lawrence, as well as the traditional Carol Service in church, there was carol singing in the churchyard. A Nativity service was again held at a local farm, run by the Forest Church team, and was well attended despite the snow.

During the year there was a gradual return of children and families to church following the pandemic. Forest Church, a monthly service for families on Sunday afternoons with outdoor activities, continues to be well supported. Forest Sunday School at St Peter's on Sunday mornings is a new initiative which has been well received.

All are welcome to attend our regular services. At the end of the 2022 there were 135 names on the Church Electoral Roll (93 St Lawrence and 42 St Peter).

Attendance numbers have been gradually increasing since the end of the pandemic. However, in common with the experience of other local churches attendance has not been as high as pre-pandemic. The 'usual Sunday attendance' in 2022 was 60 adults at St Lawrence (68 in 2019) and 30 adults at St Peter's (37 in 2019). Numbers increased on festivals and special days.

As well as our regular services, we enable our community to celebrate and thank God at the milestones of the journey through life. Through baptism we thank God for the gift of life; in marriage, public vows are exchanged with God's blessing; through funeral services friends and family express their grief and give thanks for the life which is now complete in this world and to commend the person into God's keeping. There were 15 baptism services in church. There were 6 weddings in the parish. 10 funerals were held in our churches, and 8 associated with our parish at the crematorium.

Deanery Synod

The PCC has one Deanery Synod representative for each church. The Deanery Synod provides the PCC with an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the church. The new Bishop of Rochester, Bishop Jonathan, attended the November meeting and spoke about his journey to faith and his vision for the future of the church and the Diocese.

Buildings

A quinquennial inspection of St Lawrence found the church to be in good condition and drew attention to one or two minor maintenance issues. A quinquennial inspection of Ivy Cottage was also carried out.

At St Lawrence Church we continued to enjoy the benefits of the increased worship and fellowship space in the south aisle including for an Alpha course and a first community café.

At St Peter's Church, Project 2022, the refurbishment of the toilet and kitchen facilities, was completed.

Pastoral Care

The pastoral care teams work very hard to ensure the holistic care of individuals in need including, when possible, hospital visits, home visits where people are ill, suffering or unable to leave their homes. House groups, and other groups, continued their care and support for one another.

CAMEO "Come and Meet Each Other" lunches. Six Cameo lunches were held during the year attended by around 25 people and were much appreciated.

"Tots & Co" meet weekly in the village hall on Friday mornings in term time.

PALS – St Peter and St Lawrence Ladies – meet monthly for walks on Tuesday mornings which offer a time of fellowship together. A PALS book club was launched in October.

Mission and Evangelism

One issue of "Tower and Steeple" magazine, containing articles, news and information about the life of the churches of St Lawrence and St Peter, was distributed to all houses in the Parish at Easter time. The Tower and Steeple website and the Tower and Steeple Facebook group allow the church family to keep in touch. Notice sheets are emailed weekly giving details of services. The Rector's weekday Rectory Reflections are received by over 100 people. An Alpha course was run at St Lawrence in the autumn.

Helping those in need is a demonstration of our faith. The Diocese Poverty & Hope Appeal was supported, along with a number of organisations including Christian Aid, CPAS, Tearfund, Youth for Christ, Life and Soul, Tunbridge Wells Street Pastors and Mosaic Resource Centre Tunbridge Wells. St Lawrence and the wider community in Bidborough have links with the Church of St Mathew's Kibagwa in Tanzania.

At the Harvest service gifts were donated to the Southborough Community Larder run by Christ Church in Southborough. The "Shoebox" Christmas appeal, "Operation Christmas Child", run by Samaritans Purse was supported by a number of volunteers at the South East processing centre in Tonbridge.

The Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II was celebrated in St Lawrence church with floral tributes commemorating different aspects of her reign. Following the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II in September a book of condolence was placed in St Lawrence church offering a place of reflection and prayer.

Ecumenical Relationships

The churches of St Lawrence, Bidborough and St Peter, Southborough are part of "The ACTS Group Ministry" (Anglican Churches Together in Southborough) which includes Christ Church, Southborough and St Thomas, Southborough. The churches joined together for the Remembrance Service at the Southborough War Memorial and also worked together to support events in Southborough Town Square at Easter and the December Winter Festival. St Peter's took the lead in a special Christmas service with carols and readings around the Christmas tree in the Southborough Town Square and mulled wine and mince pies were served while the snow began to fall.

Bidborough School

We have close links with Bidborough Church of England Primary school. Stephen Hills, Claire Rorke and Amanda Harris are Foundation Governors at the school, and Clare Masters, Stephen Hills and Rev Dave Bubb led weekly acts of collective worship throughout the school.

Financial Review

2022 was a difficult year for both churches. Regular Giving was substantially affected by a number of generous donors dying and others moving away from the area. Fortunately, the return of Christmas services, a heating grant (c£1k) and some one-off donations, lessened the final deficit. Expenditure generally, other than heating, was contained. Despite some category differences, the total was only marginally above the expected figure.

Reserves Policy

The PCC has determined that it would be wise, in case of unforeseen expense or temporary reduction of income, to maintain reserves of unrestricted current assets, insofar as these are within the PCC's control, at a level of between three and six months 'normal expenditure' excluding items of large, special or project expenditure. As at 31.12.2022 Net Current Assets were £191,112. The Accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis.

Volunteers

We would like to thank all our volunteers, too numerous to mention individually, who work so hard to make our church the lively and vibrant community it is. Thank you to those who continued to care for our buildings during this difficult time. In particular we would like to thank our churchwardens Ed Dix-Perkin, Bob Gibson, Roy Langman and Richard Stanbury, the team who lead our worship week by week, and those who care both for our churches and our church family members, including our children and young people.

Clergy/Lay Ministers

In May we gave thanks to Stephen and Elizabeth Hills for their 20 years of dedicated service and ministry to the Parish. Dave Bubb, Curate licensed to Christ Church and our parish completed his second year in the parish in September.

Pippa Hillen is training for licensed lay ministry. We were sorry to bid farewell to our LLM Clare Masters and are most grateful for her contribution to the life of the Parish over the years. We wish her and Rob well in their new home.

Structure, governance and management

The PCC is a corporate body established by the Church of England, constituted under Trust Deed dated 1st June 2019. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure and is registered with the Charity Commission. Charity Number 1184753.

Members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. All those who attend our services are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

New PCC members are issued with the Church of England guidance on responsibilities and duties as a charity trustee and all Trustees are kept up to date with any additional guidance from the Charity Commission. PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent.

The full PCC met six times during the year (including the APCM) with an average level of attendance of 72%. Meetings were held either in person or on Zoom.

Each Church has a standing committee (consisting of Rector, Treasurer, Churchwardens and one PCC representative) to consider fabric and finance matters and there is also a Ministry Team.

Matters from these committees are reported back to the PCC and discussed as necessary. A PCC Standing Committee is required under Church Representation Rules and has the power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the PCC. The Standing Committee consists of the Clergy, one churchwarden from each church, PCC Secretary and Treasurer. The PCC Standing Committee did not meet in 2022.

Administrative Information

St Lawrence Church is situated in the High Street, Bidborough, TN3 0UJ and St Peter's Church in Church Road, Southborough TN4 0RX. The churches are part of the Diocese of Rochester within the Church of England. The correspondence address is: The Rectory, Rectory Drive, Bidborough, Tunbridge Wells TN3 0UL. Email: towerandsteeple@gmail.com
Website: www.towerandsteeple.org

Patronage Board includes Church Pastoral Aid Society and The Mabledon Trust

Bank: HSBC Bank Plc Lloyds Bank Plc
Independent Examiner: David Stephens FCCA

St Lawrence Church is supported by a verger, David Hunter, who resides at Ivy Cottage.

Curate - Rev Dave Bubb, Curate licensed to Christ Church Southborough and our parish

Licensed Lay Ministers – Allan Jonnes, Graham Wilkinson, Clare Masters

Reader PTO – Alan Richards, Michael Lee

Bishop's Licence – Sophie Kersey, Lin Hutchinson, Emma Lawrence, Pippa Hillen

Clergy PTO – Rev Ray Skinner

PCC members

Ex Officio members

Rector: Reverend Stephen Hills (Chair)
Curate: Rev Dave Bubb
Churchwardens: Bob Gibson – St Lawrence (Vice Chair)
Ed Dix-Perkin – St Lawrence
Roy Langman – St Peter
Richard Stanbury – St Peter
Diocesan Synod: Rodney Hutchinson
Deanery Synod: Mary Cottle – St Lawrence
Lin Hutchinson – St Peter (from APCM 2022)

Elected members:

Steven Boulton – St Lawrence
Steve Bull (Treasurer, St Peter) (until APCM 2022)
Peter Dillon (Parish Treasurer)
Pippa Hillen – St Lawrence
Anne Hinds (Pastoral Co-ordinator)
Allan Jonnes - LLM St Peter (until APCM 2022)
Jon Kersey - St Peter (until APCM 2022)
Alison Lush (Secretary)
Marion Short - St Peter
Vicki Trueman (Parish Safeguarding Officer) (until APCM 2022)

Co-opted member:

Alison Mighell (Parish Safeguarding Officer)

Approved by the PCC on 27 March 2023

Signed

Reverend Stephen Hills (PCC Chairman)

St Lawrence Church, Bidborough Churchwardens' Report

Report on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of St Lawrence Church 2022

The beginning of the year saw a continued, improved physical presence of worshippers to Sunday services at St Lawrence after a gradual and tentative return after the pandemic period. We do miss those that have moved away from Bidborough and those who have gone to glory in the last couple of years. The daily ZOOM prayer meeting, introduced when COVID struck, has really taken hold and regularly attracts a dozen people to a daily 'rectory reflection' which can also be shared in email form by those unable to attend the ZOOM meetings. And what everybody wanted as a consequence of the re-ordering of the south aisle, that the area be used for post-service refreshment and catch-up, for PCC meetings, for evening courses, such as a successful Alpha at the end of last year and the 'Dust and Glory' Lent sessions currently organised and run by Pippa Hillen, is finally now beginning to happen. We look forward to more events in the church space. Baptism services have been well attended and the Mungeam and Masters weddings were well supported by locals and friends alike.

The conclusion (para 16) of the St Lawrence quinquennial which took place in March, 2022 reads as follows:

"St Lawrence is in good condition and much work has been carried out since the last inspection (2017) with a number of the issues raised in the previous report picked up as part of the major project to build the extension and re-order the South Aisle (Project 800). The tasks highlighted now are nearly all relatively minor maintenance issues with the single biggest single tasks being the redecoration of external woodwork and metalwork where painted. It is hoped the parish will now have a period in which they can enjoy and make full use of the new facilities."

Notwithstanding this excellent bill of health given to us by Thomas Ford Chartered Architects and Surveyors, there is no let up in keeping all aspects of the church building properly maintained. Recently, the keyboard/piano was finally repaired so that certain keys now emit sound and the pedal system is back working properly; a number of broken and dislodged tiles have been replaced on the church and lychgate roof (north) since the survey, thanks to Darren of Oakland Roofing who made no charge for this work and we will be turning our attention to redecorating/repainting of rainwater goods, barge boards, timber frames and the recoating of stained glass window metal guards plus some minor repointing at some point this year.

The quinquennial report suggested we introduce a 'grab rail' and hook device at the top of the entrance to the tower in order to hold back the access hatch whilst negotiating the top part of the ladder; small branches on the yew tree (southside) have been gently trimmed in order to accommodate funeral processions as parties approach from the south side of the church; CSG, the cleaning services company whom we have contracted to dispose of waste material from the septic tank, paid their first visit this year.

Ivy Cottage also had a quinquennial survey carried out this year which has highlighted a number of issues, such as replacing some parts of ceilings areas and flooring, windows and external decoration, including the possible rebuilding of a retaining garden wall which is situated above the beginning of Franks Hollow Road.

A risk assessment by our insurers Ecclesiastical has resulted in our providing a first aid kit and 'accident report' book now clearly visible in the refreshment zone; some quotes are being sought in order to secure a PAT certificate (Portable Appliance Testing) and also quotes for the removal of vegetation and general detritus which needs clearing out from the hoppers, gulleys and gutters around the church. We have had the lightning conductor tested and forwarded resistance readings made by the consultants to insurers and there is a requirement to update the terrier/log book with a photographic record of new items that have been installed in the church of late (eg projector, camera and monitor).

As ever, we are grateful to those who make themselves available for maintaining and cleaning the church, providing flowers, those who willingly offer refreshments as well as those who give financial support and to all who are involved in, and contribute to, the smooth running of the church and its life. Our thanks also go in no small measure to the unstinting efforts of Stephen and Elizabeth who give so freely of their time to serving the church congregation and the local Bidborough community.

Robert Gibson and Ed Dix-Perkin
Churchwardens – St Lawrence Church
March 2023

St Peter's Church, Southborough Churchwardens' Report

Report on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of St Peter's Church for 2022

2022 saw St Peter's recovering from the Covid epidemic with services back in church. Whilst numbers were initially down from pre Covid levels we were delighted to see numbers rising in the second half of the year with many new faces including young families. The new children were no doubt attracted in part by our forest church activities superbly run by Jon and Sophie. Sadly some of our previous congregation have not returned after Covid and they are really missed.

Richard Stanbury, my fellow churchwarden, has moved away and will be standing down as Churchwarden at the APCM. His positive help and assistance will be greatly missed and we wish Richard and Sally every success in their new home in Five Ashes.

By far the largest event regarding the church fabric has been the completion of our new toilet and kitchen facilities which were satisfactorily completed in December 2022. The works were completed on budget at around £25,000 plus VAT. With contributions from the congregation and from various charities we were able to more or less cover the cost without using other church funds. A special thank you must go to Pat Rendall who provided a legacy to the church in memory of her late husband a few years ago. These funds were to be used for a special project and the majority of these funds were utilised on this project.

I am pleased to report that the Diocese has now approved the new railings to be installed on the balcony at a cost of around £1,000. We are still awaiting the final document of approval but hopefully the work can be carried out in the next three months.

During the year we have investigated the possibility of heating the Narthex area independently using ceramic electric heaters. This would enable us to use the Narthex area without the cost of heating the whole church via the expensive gas boiler. Our deliberations are on going.

Southborough Council have applied to the Diocese to carry out a survey of the churchyard relating to walling, graves and trees. It appears that any remedial works agreed by the council would be quite limited and relate to areas of health and safety, so we will look forward with interest to their findings. I have brought to their attention the large conifers close to the church west side which I feel could be a danger to the church, to the memorials and to human remains, should any one of these mature trees become up rooted.

Lastly, I would like to thank Stephen for his incredible dedication to St Peter's and also to thank the army of helpers that make our church so special.

Roy Langman
Churchwarden - St Peter's Church
March 2023

**DEANERY SYNOD REPORT 2022
FOR THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING
Monday 22 May 2023**

To enable the PCC to be made aware of the meetings that have transpired since January 2022 I report as follows:

CHRIST CHURCH, SOUTHBOROUGH – 23 February 2022 (this being the last of the previous Synod year!)

The main topic was a presentation on Intergenerational Worship by Cheryl Trice, Diocesan Team Head, Children and Young People's Mission and Ministry Team.

The meeting was open to anyone involved in youth work and churches had been urged to invite all interested to attend. Needless to say it was well attended.

KING CHARLES THE MARTYR, TUNBRIDGE WELLS – 15 June 2022

Quite a number of members attended this first meeting of the Synod year where we all sat down at tables of 6 and enjoyed a Jubilee celebration meal.

The Reverend Laurence Powell, Vicar of King Charles the Martyr, introduced our new Archdeacon of Tonbridge, Sharon Copestake.

Following the delicious meal Sharon stood up and gave a very informal introduction of herself.

She spoke of ten things she wanted to cover, some of which were as follows:

She said clergy are awesome
Church wardens are awesome
Retired clergy are awesome
Lay people are awesome
Plus many more.

As you can imagine she received a big clap from everyone and endeared herself to all.

Sharon proved to be very approachable with a good sense of humour.

ST PETER'S CHURCH PEMBURY – 8 November 2022 – Joint meeting with Paddock Wood and Malling Deaneries

It was at this meeting that everyone was introduced to the new Bishop of Rochester, Bishop Jonathan. He told us about his journey to faith and his vision for the future of the church and the Diocese.

He stated he is keen to see growth, which he believes can be brought about by reaching out to young people becoming more diverse and reflecting the communities we serve. He stated we needed to be intentional about mission, embrace new ways of doing things and above all focus on hope.

(My grateful thanks to Lin Hutchinson for taking notes in my absence)

26 APRIL 2023 – This will be the third and last meeting of the Synod and will be held at St John’s Church in Tunbridge Wells. The guest speaker will be Jenny Ross, Communications Manager and Bishop’s Media Adviser for the Diocese.

For some lay members the April meeting will be the last meeting of this Synod should anyone not be intending to stand again.

Just for information: Wednesday 12 July 2023 will be the first meeting of the next Synod, which will include the annual meal.

Looking further ahead there will be a meeting on Wednesday 26 October 2023.

Mary Cottle
Deanery Synod Representative – St Lawrence
March 2023