



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



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**ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS  
AND  
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING  
To be held at St Lawrence Church, Bidborough  
on Wednesday 8th May 2024 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 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023
4. Matters arising from the Minutes
5. Rector's Report
6. Interregnum update
7. Trustees Report
8. Receive revised Church Electoral Roll
9. Churchwardens' Reports
10. Deanery Synod Report
11. Parish Treasurer's Report
12. Re-appointment of Independent Examiner
13. Elections  
Election of PCC Representatives
14. Any Other Business

**Prayer to close**



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



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### MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING OF THE PARISH OF ST LAWRENCE, BIDBOROUGH AND ST PETER, SOUTHBOROUGH Held on Monday 22nd May 2023 at St Peter's Church

#### ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

**1. Welcome**

Stephen Hills welcomed everyone to the meeting and opened the meeting with worship and prayer.

23 people attended the meeting.

**2. Election of Churchwardens**

Two Wardens are elected for each Church.

The following nominations had been received:

<b>St Lawrence:</b>	Bob Gibson Ed Dix-Perkin
<b>St Peter:</b>	Roy Langman Lin Hutchinson

It was proposed that the above be duly elected.

Proposed:	Rod Hillen
Seconded:	David Marriott

Stephen thanked the Churchwardens for being willing to continue for another year and for Lin Hutchinson for taking on the role at St Peter's following the retirement of Richard Stanbury who had moved away. Richard had been thanked in a recent service at St Peter's celebrating the completion of the Project 2022 Toilet Refurbishment Project.

#### ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

**1. Welcome**

Stephen welcomed everyone to the second meeting – the APCM.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Anne Hinds and Alison Mighell.

**3. Minutes of APCM Meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

The Minutes of the APCM on 25<sup>th</sup> April were approved.

Proposed:	Marion Short
Seconded:	Pippa Hillen

#### **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

#### **5. Rector's Report**

Stephen Hills gave the following report:

"This evening's Rector's Report will be brief, as I took the opportunity yesterday in my sermon to speak at some length about 'the church' – and in particular 'the church' in this parish.

The very expression 'the church' has of course a number of different meanings, and all of them are relevant to our meeting this evening, as we look back and give thanks for all that happened here in 2022.

The first thing that 'the church' brings to mind is often the building one worships in. We are very blessed to have 2 fine buildings in our parish, and 2022 was a particularly satisfying and good year for our church buildings.

St Lawrence continued to enjoy its new facilities, and as Covid restrictions at last faded, we began to use the South Aisle for courses, meetings, worship and social events – all things that we simply couldn't do in the buildings before Project 800.

St Peter's simply feels more welcoming, now that one knows that anyone needing to use the facilities will not be going into a damp and peeling corner of the church.

Those two capital projects in our two church buildings took enormous amounts of work – as well as fundraising of course – and I remain hugely grateful to those who made them happen.

This evening, very special thanks to Roy for his work on the reordering at St Peter's, which was completed in 2022.

It took 20 years to happen – we don't like to rush things in the Church of England – but in both church buildings in 2022 my name appeared for the first time on the Vicar and Rector's boards.

I have been surprised how touching I have found that small addition – and am constantly humbled and honoured as I catch sight of the boards, to be included in the rich history of these two fine buildings – as well as being deeply proud of our churchwardens, flowers guilds, cleaners, hospitality teams, welcomers and all who make St Peter's and St Lawrence wonderful places to visit, to spend time in, to sit quietly and enjoy, to worship in, and to gather in as the family of God.

The second thing that 'the church' may bring to mind is the human structure of our parish – the PCC, the licensed ministers, the clergy, the children's and youth leaders, the small group leaders, the pastoral carers, the administrators, our wonderful PCC secretary Alison, reps on Deanery and Diocesan Synod, the all-important roles of treasurer and safeguarding officer held by Peter and another Alison – so many who have taken seriously the call to play their part in the body of Christ. I am truly grateful to each one who plays their part in their different ways and callings.

The third thing – and I talked about this yesterday – that comes to my mind when I think of 'the church' in this place is the whole people of God – which of course includes many I have just mentioned, but also many more – all those who are seeking to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

And there are 3 special things that happened in the life of our church during 2022 that I am particularly grateful to God for, for they demonstrated the seriousness with which many take

their faith. I quoted yesterday from a book by John McGinley who said that the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021 had led to some people realising that – quote – *‘their faith was essentially a Sunday service observance and involvement in church programmes.’*

The three things that I am very grateful to God for as I look back over 2022 in this parish are:

1. Zoom Morning Prayer – 12-15 people every day reading the Bible, reflecting on God’s word, praying together – every weekday.
2. An increase in the number of people who receive and read the Rectory Reflection on the Bible – for that creates a sense of community with others. Well over 100 people receive the emails, and I know that many read them.
3. The continuing faithful life of our small groups. They took a knock in the pandemic and some have struggled to regroup, as it were, with some folk changing their patterns of life, and some still anxious in 2022 about meeting with others face to face – but still 60-70 people across the parish meet regularly to study the Bible, learn from it, pray – and to love one another.

I know that not everyone is involved in all or any of those three elements of the life of the parish, for all sorts of reasons, but those three things are signs of real hope for the future, for they speak of a church that is living beyond its walls and its structures – that is living out its faith day by day wherever God’s people find themselves.

I also know that for a parish of 3000 or so inhabitants, and a church electoral roll of around 140, they are really unusual numbers, and numbers to be celebrated and encouraged by . . . . . just as are the number of children we had in our Sunday School groups last year, and the number of families that came to Forest Church.

As I look back at 2022 in our parish, I see plenty of evidence of Biblical faith and obedience to the call and command of Christ within the church that is the people of God in this place, and that gives me great hope and encouragement for the months and years ahead.

I do commend to you our Trustees Report for 2022, in which Alison has included much detail of our ministry and work during 2022.

Thank you.”

### **Curate’s Report**

Dave Bubb gave the following report:

“Everyone studying hard in vicar school has an idea in their heads of what ministry looks like. For everyone that is slightly different, but at long last, unlike previous years, 2022 was something like I envisaged. Having just about fully escaped from the restrictions that the pandemic placed on us we could find out what it meant to be church again.

Amongst the highlights for me were undoubtedly the services where we were struggling for seats. Those have included several weddings, where I have experienced both churches filled with friends and families. Joyful occasions where two people, in the sight of God, celebrate and renew their relationships. It is an honour to conduct every wedding, especially getting to know the couple in the months that lead up to their happy day, and sharing something of the love that God has for them, mirrored in their own relationships.

Then there are the funerals. Again the churches are often filled to overflowing, especially for those who die young and unexpectedly. Again it is a privilege to hand the deceased over into God’s hands and share something of God’s eternal life and certain promises for us all.

Then there are the school services. To see Bidborough Church accommodate the whole of Bidborough school is quite a sight. Not only was every seat taken but also every possible space on the floor. But to witness the joy of their praise and their exuberance of faith really is quite something.

And not forgetting the Christmas services – the Christingle at St Peter’s and the Carol Service at St Lawrence, again we were bursting at the seams with young and old gathered to celebrate God.

Forest Church continues to be a real highlight for me. Despite missing Clare’s expertise and wonderful organisation terribly, but I’d like to think that the combined efforts of the amazing team working together come something close to her expectations.

Finally, there is the daily highlight that is sharing morning prayer with the faithful bunch every morning on zoom. What an incredible way to start each day. Thank you.

I want to add my thanks to those Stephen has given. I’m not even going to try to mention everyone, but thank you for your support, your permission to try new things (some which even work!) and being so welcoming to a curate that you only see once a month or so. Thank you to those who continue to contribute to the Community Larder through lending your time or faithfully delivering food and cakes on a weekly basis – not forgetting the apple crumbles, what a blessing they were!

Finally thank you Stephen and Elizabeth. For your wisdom and leadership; for allowing this not so young upstart to come in and take over on a regular basis; but most of all for your friendship. Sadly, it won’t be long before the bishop tells me it’s time to move on, such is the nature of curacy. My prayer is that my next church will be filled with such loving, generous, faithful, patient and wise people.”

Stephen Hills expressed his thanks to Dave Bubb.

The Rector’s and Curate’s Report were accepted.

Proposed: Ed Dix-Perkin  
Seconded: Steve Boulton

## 6. Trustees Report

The report was accepted.

Proposed: Roy Langman  
Seconded: David Marriott

## 7. Electoral Roll

Rod Hillen, Electoral Roll Secretary, reported the current number on the electoral roll was 137: 97 St Lawrence and 40 St Peter.

The electoral roll report was accepted.

Proposed: Bob Gibson  
Seconded: David Marriott

Stephen thanked Rod for looking after the roll.

## 8. Churchwardens’ Reports

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

Proposed: Marion Short  
Seconded: Thomas Bird

Ray Skinner asked whether any progress had been made on the digital recording of the organ as there was no mention in the St Lawrence Churchwardens' report. Stephen Hills replied that he was still on the case and had asked someone to investigate the digital files required.

Communication with the expert had not been straightforward.

**9. Deanery Synod Report**

The Deanery Synod report was accepted.

Proposed: Rod Hillen  
Seconded: Michael Lee

**10. Parish Treasurer's Report**

Peter Dillon, Treasurer, reported that the year had been an interesting one. A decline in planned giving owing to deaths, people moving away and the war in Ukraine with its attendant rise in utility prices caused great concerns that our budgets would be substantially affected. Fortunately, however, the return of Church Service Collections, funeral and wedding fees, a heating grant (c.£1k) and some generous one-off donations brought the year more or less within the expected figures.

Stephen Hills expressed his thanks to Peter Dillon for all his hard work as Treasurer.

The Parish Treasurer's Report was accepted.

Proposed: Michael Lee  
Seconded: Peter Stone

**11. Appointment of Independent Examiner**

It was proposed to re-appoint David Stephens as the Independent Examiner for 2023. This appointment was agreed.

Proposed: Peter Dillon  
Seconded: Linda Stone

**12. Election of Deanery Synod Representatives**

Election for members of the Deanery synod were held every three years. Two nominations had been received:

Mary Cottle St Lawrence  
Lin Hutchinson St Peter

Both were duly elected.

Proposed: Rod Hillen  
Seconded: Michael Lee

**13. Election of PCC Members**

Peter Dillon and Pippa Hillen were due to retire after three years and offered themselves for re-election. Alison Mighell had been co-opted on during the year as Parish Safeguarding Officer and was proposed for election. Nominations had been received for Thomas Bird and Karen Bull from St Peter. It was proposed that Peter Dillon, Pippa Hillen, Alison Mighell, Thomas Bird and Karen Bull be elected.

Proposed: Lin Hutchinson  
Seconded: Bob Gibson

These people were duly elected.

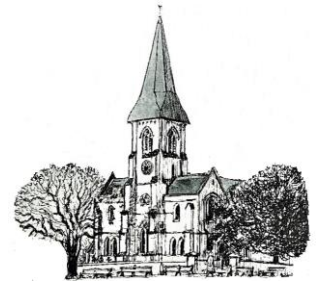
**14. A.O.B.**

Ray Skinner asked if consideration could be given to having two Church Councils, one for each church. Stephen Hills replied that pre Covid there had been a standing committee for each church, but that these had only met when there were significant issues to discuss.

Ed Dix-Perkin proposed a vote of thanks to Stephen and Elizabeth Hills for their inspirational spiritual leadership, for their ongoing widespread ministry and for their boundless love and care for all in our community.

Rodney Hutchinson noted that there had not been a Diocesan Synod report in the APCM agenda, but this is due to the fact that it is not a statutory requirement.

The meeting ended with worship and prayer.



**TRUSTEES REPORT  
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF  
ST LAWRENCE, BIDBOROUGH AND ST PETER, SOUTHBOROUGH  
For the period January to December 2023  
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 during the year we joined the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard online tool which enabled us to identify areas where action was required. Safeguarding is a regular item on the Agenda at PCC meetings and there were no Safeguarding incidents during 2023.



## **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. Weekly, 8am Communion services alternate between the two churches and morning services take place at 9.30 at St Peter's and 11.00 at St Lawrence. A combined morning service for both congregations is held on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday. The service from St Lawrence is recorded each week and uploaded to the website for those unable to attend to view. A Sunday evening service is held at St Lawrence at 6.30. Weekday morning prayers are held on Zoom.

At Easter a Maundy Thursday supper and communion was held at St Lawrence and Good Friday was marked by carrying the Cross from St Lawrence to St Peter's for a service of worship and reflection.

Christmas celebrations included the popular Christingle Service at St Peter's on Christmas Eve and the traditional Carol Service at St Lawrence. The planned carol singing in the churchyard at St Lawrence had to move inside due to adverse weather conditions and the church was so full some unfortunately did not stay. The popular Nativity service was again held at a local farm the previous Sunday and in the evening Pippa Hillen led a Blue Christmas Service, a new initiative recognizing that it can be a time of sadness for some.

A Memorial Service in September at St Lawrence for those who had lost loved ones was attended by around 70 people.

It has been encouraging to see more children and families returning to church following the pandemic. Forest Church, a monthly service for families on Sunday afternoons with outdoor activities, continues to be well supported as is Forest Sunday School at St Peter's on Sunday mornings, a new initiative last year. 25 young people went to Fellowship Afloat in July. A Youth Club was launched in November with 25 secondary school children attending and now meets monthly. New Wine was held in Maidstone for the first time and around 20 people from the Parish attended.

All are welcome to attend our regular services. At the end of the 2023 there were 137 names on the Church Electoral Roll (97 St Lawrence and 40 St Peter).

The usual Sunday attendance numbers have declined slightly in 2023 – from 60 to 57 adults at St Lawrence and 30 to 28 adults at St Peter's. This represents a few more folk no longer attending, due to becoming elderly and frail, than the number joining us for the first time during the year. The numbers attending festival services, especially the Christmas services, were significantly higher in 2023 than 2022 at both churches.

As well as our regular services, we enable our community to celebrate and thank God at the milestones in journeys of life and faith. There were 6 baptisms in church, 6 people were confirmed at a service at Christ Church Southborough, there was 1 wedding in the parish, and 15 funerals took place either in one of our churches or 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 Bishop of Rochester, Bishop Jonathan, spoke at the July meeting about his objectives of "Change, Serve, Grow". The October meeting explored the way local churches were approaching the challenges of mission and ministry in Tunbridge Wells.

### *Buildings*

At St Lawrence the increased worship and fellowship space in the south aisle has been well used during the year. The new weekly South Aisle Community Café on Tuesday mornings has welcomed members of the community for coffee and home made cake and has been much appreciated, with a regular attendance of around 15 folk. In November the school choir sang in church with round 50 children and their grandparents attending. The south aisle was also used for the relaunch of the youth group in November and also for a Lent course.

At St Peter's the installation of a thermostatic heat pump in the toilet area completed the Project 22 refurbishment of the kitchen and toilet facilities and a service celebrating and giving thanks to all the team involved in the Project was held in May.

Other work at St Peter's included the installation of a safety rail on the balcony and the repair of broken windows. Repair works to the bell support structure are required and a quotation has been obtained for the installation of a night silencing unit.

### *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. Six CAMEO "Come and Meet Each Other" 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 and a PALS book club also meets regularly.

Opportunities for exploring the Christian faith and Bible study are offered by House Groups which meet on a regular basis and comprise around 80 people. A new initiative was "The Chosen" Watch Party. Steve and Karen Bull hosted a series of evening sessions watching an episode from The Chosen, a film version of the life of Jesus, followed by a discussion.

### *Mission and Evangelism*

The leadership team met during the year to discuss Vision and Mission in the Parish. 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. A Lent course "Dust and Glory" – a journey of faith, failure and forgiveness was run at St Lawrence by Pippa Hillen.

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, and Mosaic Resource Centre Tunbridge Wells.

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 Coronation of King Charles III was celebrated in St Lawrence church with floral displays celebrating some of the interests and activities of the King.

### *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.

In November a Memorial Service of thanksgiving for any in Southborough who had lost loved ones was held at St Peter's. It was attended by 50-60 people.

#### *Bidborough School*

We have close links with Bidborough Church of England Primary school. Reverend Stephen Hills, Claire Rorke and Amanda Harris are Foundation Governors at the school, and Reverend Stephen Hills leads weekly acts of collective worship throughout the school.

#### **Financial Review**

Relative to budget expectations (set in November 2022), 2023 concluded entirely satisfactorily, cost excesses being absorbed by corresponding income gains. Insurance (£900), Maintenance (£2300) accounted for most of the excess costs. On the plus side, increased Donations (£3000) and Collections (£2500) less a reduction in Fee Income (£2500), helped to balance the situation.

The opportunity was taken to drawdown some of the (30%) Rental Income (net £2600) from 54 Holden Park Road which is currently let externally. The parishes continue to meet, in full, our agreed share of Diocesan costs (£60,000) which accounts for 70% of our total expenditure.

Finally, BLINK – a charitable initiative between St Lawrence Church and a twin parish in Kibaigwa, Tanzania – has been inactive for some time. In addition the principal trustees have moved away from the area. For administrative practicality, with Diocesan written approval, funds of £7200, in a completely separate deposit account, were incorporated into the accounts. These are fully restricted monies, are subject to separate mandate arrangements and will not affect the parishes' Diocesan share calculations.

#### **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 31.12.2023 Net Current Assets were £221,342. 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. We would like to thank our churchwardens Ed Dix-Perkin, Bob Gibson, Roy Langman, Lin Hutchinson and in particular Richard Stanbury who stepped down during the year after many years service. We are grateful to 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 July we bid farewell to Dave Bubb, Curate licensed to Christ Church and our parish. We are grateful for the contribution he made to the life of the Parish and wish him well as he moves to a new parish near Peterborough.

Pippa Hillen completed her Bishop's Certificate as part of her training for licensed lay ministry.

#### **Structure, governance and management**

The PCC is a corporate body established by the Church of England, constituted under Trust Deed dated 1<sup>st</sup> 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 71%. There was one decision by email.

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 2023.

### **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: Zachary Ramsden

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 until July.

Licensed Lay Minister – Allan Jonnes

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	(until July)
Churchwardens:	Bob Gibson – St Lawrence	(Vice Chair)
	Ed Dix-Perkin – St Lawrence	
	Roy Langman – St Peter	
	Richard Stanbury – St Peter	(until APCM 2023)
	Lin Hutchinson – St Peter	(from APCM 2023)
Diocesan Synod:	Rodney Hutchinson	
Deanery Synod:	Mary Cottle – St Lawrence	
	Lin Hutchinson – St Peter	(from APCM 2022)

Elected members:  
Thomas Bird – St Peter (from APCM 2023)  
Steven Boulton – St Lawrence  
Peter Dillon (Parish Treasurer)  
Pippa Hillen – St Lawrence  
Anne Hinds (Pastoral Co-ordinator)  
Karen Bull – St Peter (from APCM 2023)  
Alison Lush (Secretary)  
Alison Mighell (Parish Safeguarding Officer)  
Marion Short - St Peter

Approved by the PCC on 13 March 2024

Signed .....  
Reverend Stephen Hills (PCC Chairman)

## **St Lawrence Church, Bidborough Churchwardens' Report**

### **Report on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of St Lawrence Church 2023**

2023 has seen a real fruition of all the work and foresight in the reordering the south aisle at St Lawrence. Not only does the space provide invaluable fellowship after the main Sunday worship for informal coffee amongst parishioners, but we are now expanding the use in lots of exciting ways to support many different cross sections of our community – the regular weekly Community Café, a newly initiated youth group, a monthly games group and the forthcoming Lent Courses are all examples of how this space is now being used to support fellowship, learning and worship in different parts of our church community. The church leadership continue to explore new opportunities to use this space to further our church mission to “Love God and Love People”.

After the significant works of Project 800 in St Lawrence and the very supportive report from the quinquennial review in 2022, the church fabric remains in good condition. Therefore, the focus this year has been on the close out of any residual minor items from recent reports, low level maintenance and management of any issues as they arise. There has been good progress in closing out recommendations from the Ecclesiastical Review at end of 2022 including lightning conductor tests completed, first aid kits and accident report books acquired and gutters cleared. As a result, the recommendations have now largely been completed. The main outstanding item is the updating of the terrier for recent inventory changes as a result of the more significant works completed in Project 800.

New signage has been prepared using a professional sign writing company to match the colouring, format and branding of the signage used at St Peter Southborough. At St Lawrence, we now have a free standing sign at the south lychgate and a sign board in the existing notice board at the north lychgate. Other more minor maintenance items have included repairs to the south aisle video screen and ongoing clock maintenance to ensure its good timekeeping and chiming.

At Ivy Cottage, it is recognised that some more significant works may be required in due course after the Quinquennial report in 2023, but for now there has been a ‘run and maintain’ response to any issues as they arise. For example the householder took action to fix a water tank leak, and an external plumber was required to perform minor boiler repairs.

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 to the unstinting efforts of Stephen and Elizabeth who give so freely of their time in serving the church congregation and the local Bidborough community.

**Robert Gibson and Ed Dix-Perkin**  
**Churchwardens – St Lawrence Church**  
**March 2024**

## **St Peter's Church, Southborough Churchwardens' Report**

### **Report on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of St Peter's Church for 2023**

2023 has been a good year for St Peter's. The number of new faces in the congregation continues to grow as life after Covid gets back to near normality. The number of children grows as Sunday school and Forest church become even more popular.

Following Richard's departure we were delighted that Lin stepped forward to take up the vacant position of Churchwarden. Well done Lin!

Regarding new works in the church, it has been a relatively quiet year but the following works have either been carried out or are planned for the future:

1. The new safety railings on the balcony have been installed and look very much in keeping with the original design of the building.
2. The heating system in the new toilet block has been enhanced by the installation of a thermostatically controlled pump.
3. The broken leaded lights windows have been replaced.
4. Quotations have been obtained for the installation of a night silencing unit for the bells and for repairs to the bell support structure. The estimate is around £4,000+VAT. We are now endeavouring to raise funds from the local community before giving the order for the works.
5. During the summer a group of our ladies came up with an idea to use our grounds to create a spiritual eco friendly garden. Unfortunately progress has been slow due to fact that we are awaiting an official survey of the church grounds which is being carried out on behalf of Southborough Council who are responsible for the upkeep of the grounds surrounding the church building. The Council have already instigated the cutting of the grass and some serious trimming of the trees and shrubs. We are hopeful that the survey will be carried out in the next few months.
6. An anonymous donation of £1,000 was given in December primarily to get three out of the four exit doors painted. The works will be carried out in the spring.

Lastly we would like to give thanks to all those people who tirelessly continue to dedicate their time and effort to keep our wonderful church so vibrant. In particular we give thanks for Stephen and Elizabeth's leadership.

**Roy Langman and Lin Hutchinson**  
**Churchwardens - St Peter's Church**  
**March 2024**

## DEANERY SYNOD REPORT 2023

To enable the PCC to be made aware of the meetings that have transpired since January 2023 I report as follows:

### **ST JOHN'S CHURCH, AMHERST ROAD, TUNBRIDGE WELLS – 26 April 2023**

Andrew Smith opened up the floor by welcoming everybody with a prayer. His announcements included the appointment of Revd Nick Cornell as Area Dean.

The Revd Cornell finished the business items on the agenda and included a few words about the presentation to be given by Jennifer Ross, Communications Manager and Bishop's Adviser, Rochester Diocese.

Before Jennifer Ross gave her presentations entitled 'Communicating Your Church in a Changed Landscape' everyone stopped for some refreshments with a variety of puddings made by members of St John's Church – which were delicious.

Jennifer began by saying that people are one of the best communicators of all. She pointed out the changed social landscape being a result of COVID, cost of living; isolation and mental health, not to mention generally busy lives.

Also the biblical landscape has changed as a result of social media, pod casts etc. To succeed, she said we don't need to do everything, but to keep things simple. For example, it was suggested we think about our church building – is it a vibrant church? What about the welcome when people walk in? Outreach to families? What do our churches say about us? Is there a nice notice board to give a good impression? Is there a holiday club available? Jennifer said it is good to have relationships with schools and she ended with several suggestions to inspire people.

The evening ended with the Dean giving thanks and asking everyone to join in with The Grace.

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### **KING CHARLES THE MARTYR, TUNBRIDGE WELLS, WARWICK PARK – 12 July 2023**

The second meeting of the Deanery Synod began with items on the agenda in which members of the Standing Committee and a new Treasurer were elected.

The main focus of the evening was an opportunity to meet up with Bishop Jonathan who has now been in Rochester for a year.

Following an excellent meal Bishop Jonathan began his talk with opening remarks about his background and his vision for his leadership of the diocese. He said he has very much enjoyed going out and about meeting people, visiting local churches and offering encouragement during his first year. Apparently, he firmly believes that the local church is at the heart of our mission, offering many opportunities to make the love of God visible and tangible to those around us.

He outlined three main objectives for the ministry in this diocese:

The first is CHANGE. We are called to bring about change in the world around us, particularly caring for the poor and needy.

The second is SERVICE. The service of the church expresses the love of God in a community and opens doors to speak about God's incredible love.

The third is GROWTH. To reverse the current narrative of managed decline in the church by doing what we have always done, but doing it better!



After his talk the Bishop dealt with a number of questions previously submitted.

He addressed the matter of challenging finances facing many parishes at the moment. The Church Commissioners are working with the national dioceses to release funds to support work of the parishes.

Finally he touched on the vexed question of Living in Love and Faith and the challenges of the widely differing views of Christians regarding prayers of blessing for same sex marriages and the churches' doctrine on marriage. He was keen to say that nothing had yet been decided and there was an acute awareness of the strength of feeling across the Anglican Communion on this and related matters. Pastoral guidance is still being discussed.

The Bishop ended his evening by saying that he had been surprised and encouraged by the diversity, morale and commitment of Christians in the Rochester Diocese. He urged us to pray regularly for him.

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### **CHRIST CHURCH, PROSPECT ROAD, TUNBRIDGE WELLS – 18 October 2023**

The meeting began with a short welcome by the Revd Nick Cornell, the Rector of Christ Church. He explained that there would be several short presentations during the evening, exploring how local churches are approaching the challenges of mission and ministry in Tunbridge Wells. He stated we all have a plan in life, touching on engagement with children's work in schools.

Our first speaker was Susan Schibli from St James' Church. She began her talk by saying how much she, personally, is involved with a Christian Care Home in Tunbridge Wells, which I believe is Milward House. Susan spoke on the loneliness in older people, and saying that among other things being widowed and having health issues is a contributing factor. She stated that working with older people is so interesting and inspiring.

This presentation was followed by a talk by Jan Humphries from Christ Church who talked about children's work and the youth work that she is involved in. She mentioned about the challenges in young people, saying how youngsters don't come if their friends don't come! What does prove popular is camping in the summer. She is getting support and involvement from parents.

The final speaker was Father John Caster from St Barnabas Parish Church in Tunbridge Wells. His first comment was there is not enough engagement with young people. He said that every church school is a community school and clergy have a legal responsibility if you have a church school. Clergy should pray with children as an act of worship.

Father John said there is a lack of Governors across the diocese for church schools, and volunteers are not as forthcoming as they used to be. Clergy must be resident theologians in their parish. He suggested anyone could offer to go into schools and read to children.

After the presentations there was a brief refreshment break provided by Christ Church.

Finally, Revd Nick Cornell thanked everyone and ended the evening with prayer.

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**Mary Cottle**  
**Deanery Synod Representative - St Lawrence**  
**March 2024**