

THE PARISH OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH, OTFORD
Annual Meeting of Parishioners and Annual Parochial Church Meeting
Held at 11.30am on Sunday 11 May 2025 in the church

- 0.1 Janet Hunt, churchwarden and vice-chair of the PCC, welcomed everyone to the two meetings.
- 0.2 She opened with two passages from Scripture – Jeremiah 29:11-13 and Matthew 6:5-15 – which had felt important during the extended vacancy, and with a prayer of thanks and intercession for the arrival of Rev. Kelly Parsons.
- 0.3 Apologies for absence had been received from Cindy Davies, Russell Edwards, Christeen Malan, Catie Mucklow, Derek Shilling, Adrian Torry and Margie Torry.

Meeting of Parishioners (Vestry Meeting)

1. Minutes of last meeting held on Sunday 28 April 2024

- 1.1 Janet explained that this meeting had the purpose of electing the Churchwardens and was open to everyone living within the parish as well as those on the electoral roll.
- 1.2 There were no comments on the minutes of the 2024 meeting, which had been approved by the PCC. There were no matters arising.

2. Election of Churchwardens

2.1 Mark Holmes reminded the APCM that the Church Representation rules normally prohibited someone from serving as churchwarden for any more than six consecutive years, but also allowed the prohibition to be set aside by a resolution of the meeting of parishioners. Janet Hunt had already served for six consecutive years by the time of the 2024 APCM, at which a resolution was passed to allow her to continue to serve as churchwarden until the APCM after a Priest-in-Charge was *appointed*. But since Rev. Kelly had not yet taken up that position, it still did not seem to be the ideal time for a change in parish leadership. Accordingly he proposed that:

This meeting resolves to disapply the six-year time limit in the Church Representation rules, so that Janet Hunt can be re-elected to undertake the role of churchwarden in the Parish of St. Bartholomew's, Otford, until the next APCM.

- 2.2 The resolution was seconded by Mags Southgate and approved unanimously.
 - 2.3 Both current Churchwardens were standing for re-election: Janet Hunt (proposed by Clive Southgate, seconded by Penny Anderson) and Joan Beacom (proposed by Penny and seconded by Mary Brackett). There were no other nominations. Their election was approved unanimously.
 - 2.4 The Meeting of Parishioners ended at 11.38.
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The Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Notification of any other business

1.1 Janet explained that this meeting was open to those on the electoral roll of the parish. No items of any other business had been notified to her in advance and no others were put forward.

2. Minutes of meeting held on Sunday 28 April 2024 and matters arising

2.1 There were no comments on the minutes of the 2024 meeting, which had been approved by the PCC. There were no matters arising that were not already covered by the agenda.

3. Electoral Roll

3.1 Janet expressed her thanks to Deborah Vigis, who had acted as electoral roll officer over the year. Deborah provided the following report.

As you may be aware, a full revision of the electoral roll is required in 2025. All the current names were deleted and either an email or a letter was sent to each person inviting them to re-register their interest. Information packs were also available in Church and digital copies were attached to the weekly newsletter.

Due to the sad deaths of some of the congregation, people moving away from the parish and some not wishing to renew, there has been a decrease in numbers on the electoral roll since the report in April 2024.

There has been a drop in registered electors from 171 to 127, a reduction of 44. Of the 127 parishioners now on the electoral roll, 112 live within the parish and 15 live outside the parish.

I would also mention that of the 127 registered electors, 21 of those are new to the electoral roll.

3.2 There were no questions on the report.

4. Annual Report on the proceedings of the PCC and church life up to 31 December 2024

4.1 Janet noted that the annual report covering the calendar year 2024 included reports on the work of the Fabric Committee, the Deanery Synod and various church groups. It had been circulated and available for inspection in the church ahead of the meeting.

4.2 There were no questions about the annual report. Janet noted that its format might change the following year.

5. Report and presentation of examined accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024

5.1 Janet noted that the accounts were also included in the annual report and invited Heather Stanley to present the financial report.

5.2 Heather reported that the accounts had been independently examined. She thanked everyone who had responded to the stewardship appeal in Autumn 2024. She had previously been concerned about the parish's ability to balance the books by the end of 2024, but the strong response to the stewardship appeal – in both

increases in regular donations and numerous one-off donations – had resulted in a significant surplus in the general account.

5.3 Heather went on to explain that the parish's sequestration account held income and expenditure associated with the vacancy. At the end of 2023, it had a negative balance of about £12,000. At the end of 2024, it had a negative balance of about £4,000. It had been decided, together with the Independent Examiner, that this balance should be paid off from general funds at the end of 2024 rather than carried forward as a debt. The way that the sequestration account worked was that if there was a positive balance by the end of the vacancy, that balance went back to the Diocese, or if there was a negative balance it was paid off by the parish.

5.4 There were no questions on the accounts. Enormous thanks were offered to Heather for her many hours of hard work managing the finances.

6. Appointment of Independent Examiner for the coming year

6.1 Janet expressed the parish's gratitude to Bill Salmond for examining the 2024 accounts. He now felt that it was time to hand over the role to someone else. Nobody else had yet indicated that they were available, so the PCC would seek to find someone qualified who was willing to undertake the role. All present were invited to think of chartered accountants who might be able to help – or else, if no volunteer could be found, the parish would need to pay a firm of accountants to examine the accounts.

7. Election of Parochial Church Council members

7.1 Janet explained that PCC members were willing to stand again, given the advantage of continuity with the timing of Rev. Kelly's arrival in the parish.

7.2 There were two nominations to fill vacancies on the PCC: Chris Bishop (nominated by Susan Reid and seconded by Mark Holmes) and Cindy Davies (nominated by Clive Southgate and seconded by Janet Hunt).

7.3 They were unanimously elected *en bloc*, proposed by Joan Beacom and seconded by Dawn Hallam.

8. Update on the current vacancy

8.1 Janet reported that Rev. Kelly had moved into the Vicarage and her Licensing service would be held on 19 May, where she looked forward to seeing as many people as possible. Rev. Kelly would then be on a three-day course for new incumbents immediately following the Licensing, so her first services would be on Sunday 25 May. Informal events were being planned to enable her to meet and get to know people. She would also be working with the PCC and the wardens on wider plans.

8.2 After the Licensing, Rev. Kelly would be contactable at vicar@stbartholomews.co.uk – but parishioners were encouraged to allow a little time before making contact with non-urgent issues.

9. Any other business

9.1 None.

10. Closing thanks

10.1 Janet offered thanks to all those involved in parish life, mentioning in particular:

- a) Mark Holmes for his work on the minutes;
- b) Kevin Grafton, the choir and the worship band for their enrichment of services;
- c) Everyone who had led worship during the vacancy: visiting priests had already been thanked and offered tokens of the parish's appreciation, and she also specifically thanked Dawn Hallam, Mags Southgate and Margaret Lidbetter as Readers for leading so many services during the vacancy, sometimes at very short notice, and for stepping in to lead prayers when needed. They were each presented with Thomas à Becket roses;
- d) Clive Southgate, who always goes a long way beyond what was expected of him as a paid employee and had been central to keeping church life going during the vacancy; and
- e) Joan Beacom for her partnership as churchwarden.

10.2 Dawn Hallam thanked Janet and Joan for putting in so many hours as wardens to keep the fellowship of the church alive. Having visited other churches in the last year, she was very conscious how vibrant the community was at St. Bart's, and that much of that was thanks to the wardens. They were both presented with gifts of flowers.

10.3 Janet thanked all those present for their support. The meeting closed with the Grace at 11.57 am.

Date of next Annual Parochial Church Meeting: Sunday 19 April 2026

Attending (total 30):

Janet Hunt (chair)	Robert Hunt
Mark Holmes (minutes)	Nancy Jonsson
Colin Anderson	Margaret Lidbetter
Joan Beacom	Jenny Matthews
Susanne Beard	Vicky & John Oldershaw
Betty & Chris Bishop	Chris Reed
Chris Bourne	Susan & David Reid
Helen Casiot	Becca Southgate
Pat Downing	Mags & Clive Southgate
Pat Goddard	Heather Stanley
Tony Grogan	Deborah & Steve Vigis
Dawn Hallam	Isabel Wood
Naomi Hunt	