

Minutes: St. Thomas' and St. Mary Magdalene's PCC
Registered Charity Number 1131459

Tuesday 25th November – 7.00pm at St. Thomas' Church

1	The meeting opened with prayer.	
2	<p>In attendance: Rev Ruth Gray (chair), Sarah Downes, Simon Goodchild, Kirsty Gill, Peter Speed, Jenny Corroboy, Mel Wilson, Katharine Emery, Irene Fitzgerald, Sue Burke (SLB), Peter Banyard, Elaine Smith, Dorothy Carter, Sheila Barton (SB), David Whalley</p> <p>Apologies: Rev Michael Ridley, Lee Marsh, Lynda Heesom, Dorika Roxby, Stuart Marley</p>	
3	<p>Minutes of previous meeting were reviewed: Names of clock service providers were corrected. Minutes were approved unanimously.</p> <p>The Action Log was reviewed and updated (secretaries hold live version)</p> <p>Matters Arising - none</p> <p>Virtual Decisions – none since last meeting</p>	
4	<p>Vicar's Remarks RG congratulated everyone for a successful Christmas Fayre which raised £4,145, commenting on great teamwork across the church and school.</p>	
5	<p>Church Wardens Remarks KE – nothing to report SG thanked KE for her help fixing microphones at SMM</p>	
6	<p>Pastoral team Clare Hutt will be stepping down from her role; moving forward more help will be needed as many of the current team have limited time available to support.</p>	
7	<p>Thanksgiving SLB reported that new pledges are still coming in; 75 forms have been returned to date – 4 PCC members have not yet submitted theirs. Existing pledges reflect an increase in giving of £4,790 for 2026. 15 people requested envelopes, including 3 new givers. No-one has switched from envelopes to the bank. It was noted that while total pledges have increased by £6,600, this figure is offset by a £3,000 reduction following a bereavement. Despite this loss, the overall trend in giving remains positive.</p>	
8	<p>Time & Talents Nothing to report yet, responses need to be shared and analysed.</p>	
9	<p>Finance SOFA SLB reported that we should finish in a slightly stronger position than last year; hoping for a surplus of £10,000 by year end. Fee income is down to fewer funerals & weddings taking place. There was discussion as to why St MM's hall hire income is down – the out-of-office message may need reviewing to ensure enquiries are redirected clearly.</p>	<p>SMAG committee to look at hall hire bookings.</p>

	<p>See Appendix 1 for full treasurer's report.</p> <p>PS queried why we still have a balance of £204 with Credit Union; SLB explained that this account was originally set up to support the union when they were based at St Thomas' church. PS suggested we close this as they no longer operate locally. <i>Proposed: PS // Seconded: SLB // agreed unan.</i></p> <p>Emergency Fund £1385 remains in the outward giving fund for 2025 – MR proposed sending some to support relief work in Jamaica following Hurricane Melissa. SB suggested an amount of £500. <i>Proposed: PB // Seconded: PS // agreed unan</i></p> <p>Church Fees Details of the current fees we charge were shared; SLB reminded the PCC that we don't increase all fees on an annual basis and proposed that we don't increase any that changed last year. SD commented that we don't pay bell ringers as much as other churches.</p> <p>Christmas gifts to cleaner, organists, office team, finance support and verger were also discussed.</p> <p>See Appendix 2 for agreed amounts for church fees for 2026. <i>Proposed: SLB // Seconded SG // agreed unan.</i></p> <p>MW asked if we should set a date when fees get reviewed annually, and suggested we increase in line with CPI at the end of September and round to nearest £. <i>Proposed MW // seconded SD // approved unan</i></p> <p>Fraudulent card use SLB reported that Carol's (church secretary) bank card was used for 4 telephone transactions to a garage in Watford. The bank is investigating; the card has possibly been cloned. A new card has been issued; money will be refunded. SG has done a virus scan on the office computer and didn't find any cause for concern.</p>	<p>SLB to arrange closure of Credit Union account</p> <p>SLB to arrange transfer of £500 to Jamaica</p>
10	<p>Committee Reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - St Thomas' Action Group (see report for full details). Key discussion points reported by KE: Occasional worship leader course – MR is keen to have more delegates than the 5 already booked on. The course starts in February at Church House on Thursday afternoons (need to attend 3 of 4 sessions). <p>KE reported that it is planned to remove the first two front pews on both sides of the aisle, to create more room for the piano and choir. This will also give more concert space. A full faculty isn't required as the pews are a moveable object; can apply for a TRMO lasting 2 years. PS advised that the exposed carpet would need sticking down to avoid trips.</p> <p><i>Proposed: KE // Seconded: DW // approved unan.</i></p> <p>Organ repair – a quote of £10K has been received Merseyside Pipe Organ Workshop this will be incorporated into E of I for major works. DC thinks there is a fund available somewhere for organ repairs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - St Mary Magdalene's Action Group <i>Kitchen refurb</i> is needed: replace tap & sinks, cupboard doors & flooring. SG will source a quote from Steve Delooze, which SLB will need by January for the budget. SG requested help with 	<p>KE to apply for TRMO to remove front pews.</p> <p>SG to get quote for kitchen refurb and begin sourcing items</p>

<p>choosing new items; it was suggested that Hazel & Gordon may be able to assist. Simon to action.</p> <p><i>Key safe</i> – might have implications for insurance. Mel W will contact Ecclesiastical.</p> <p><i>Defibrillator</i>– PB explained that the current defib cabinet is obsolete. The charity it came from no longer appears to be operating. NW Ambulance Service can install one for £460 that meets current requirements (heated, lit, left unlocked), plus a 10% admin fee that goes to charity. An online quote for comparable was £600. Electrical installation will be an additional cost.</p> <p><i>Proposed: PB // Seconded: ES // approved unan.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bridgewater Churches Together In addition to the service on the 19th there will also be a carol service, organised by SHMC, on 22nd December in Victoria Square at 5pm. All are invited. - Worship Action Group – not currently meeting - Youth Action Group – discussed as separate agenda item. - Fundraising Group Sue commended the hard work and generosity of the group. The new PTA chair will share feedback on the Christmas Fayre – they are looking to collaborate more closely for future joint events <p>SLB discussed Christmas bags and explained there is a risk of foodbank donations decreasing when people are giving for Christmas bags. She proposed included a Vantry voucher in each Christmas bag, so that Foodbank doesn't lose out. This would cost max £750. She clarified that there isn't just a Vantry at StMM; there are others closer to St James in Latchford for example, so all recipients should be able to access one easily.</p> <p><i>Proposed: SLB // Seconded SB // approved unan</i></p> <p>SD asked if we could use the church hall rather than the church for packing the bags as it is easier to access when dropping off supplies. PS explained we'd have to cancel hall hire bookings to do so.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Church Hall Action Group – haven't met - Pastoral Group – minutes from last meeting were shared. New members would be welcomed. Focus is currently Christmas cheer bags – deliverers needed. - Deanery Synod Discussion around clearing any debts of Parish Share to 2023, and potential changes to Parish Share amounts as parishes merge or expand to accommodate new area of housing. There are several vacancies in the diocese, so some churches are unable to offer eucharist every week: not enough clergy to cover all areas. - Eco Team Work towards the gold eco-award is progressing well in some areas, but there's still a long way to go for some categories. 	<p>MW to contact Ecclesiastical about installation of key safe</p> <p>PB to proceed with replacement of defib machine at St MM.</p>
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	<p>The diocese have appointed a new person who will be responsible for carbon footprint work, among other things.</p> <p>Sheila has been working with Stockton Heath Parish Council to find an organisation to take blister packs – STAG agreed we will act as hub and can publicise this. Items can also be dropped at StMM & brought down by clergy or admin staff.</p> <p>Eco survey results – graphs are being produced to go on parish website.</p> <p>Carbon Literacy Training – Sheila will deliver the course over Lent with Jill Elston. For certification, candidates must attend all 5 sessions and produce a personal action plan, so this is a significant commitment. MW asked if we can link it to the new food waste bins that are being introduced by WBC?</p> <p>KE flagged an issue with recycling bin in kitchen not being used properly – need new sign for lid.</p> <p>Tealight holders – SD shared that you can bend them and remove remaining wax then put the aluminium cases in recycling.</p> <p>Veg patch has been mulched with leaves from graveyard.</p>	<p>KE to replace sign on recycling bin in St T kitchen.</p>
11	<p>Advent</p> <p>Attendance at Advent services encouraged – 7pm at St MM’s on Wednesdays, where we will be watching the BBC series The Nativity, with evening prayer.</p>	
12	<p>Children & Youth</p> <p>JR reported that the committee met two weeks ago to review Hangout Hub. Numbers are steady with the same 6 or 7 children each week. The lack of growth means this is a big commitment for volunteers. There is also concern about setting up of equipment if short of able-bodied person – Jan has offered to help with this if she’s around.</p> <p>A silent disco & other events are being considered; we still have help from the Hillcliffe team – Lucas planning for 16th December session.</p> <p>Epiphany event not happening, but it will be covered in other events eg Encounters.</p> <p>Resumes 13th January – Janice needs to plan rota so needs to know availability of volunteers.</p> <p>Discussed crossover between FRASM & Youth and who should lead on which event? The two groups liaise well each time already.</p> <p>Bible Explorers – parents as well as children are enjoying it. Nativity format is changing this year slightly, with involvement from Michael & Ruth.</p> <p>Children’s Praise is going well -some Praise & Play mums are getting involved with leading songs etc.</p> <p>SLB commented that we need to keep the momentum that has been put in place by Ruth (there may be a dip in numbers once school church forms are signed...)</p> <p>Next YAG meeting 6th Jan</p>	
13	<p>Curate</p> <p>Ruth advised that she is still looking out for vacancies – there will be some in spring, so she’ll probably be at StT & StMM until June.</p>	

	<p>Use of curate's house – will there be a successor? If not, SLB advised we should consider letting it again, with a clause that it's a church house and may need to be re-used. Emerys would take on management responsibility from the Burkes if so. Alternatively, we may be able to offer it to a youth worker as a "house for duty".</p>	
14	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>Report was shared by DC ahead of meeting. No urgent issues. She advised that Safeguarding Sunday had raised awareness of our responsibilities to one another.</p> <p>DC reported on the regular homeless visitor with dog. She's had a 90-minute conversation with him - didn't find any areas of concern. Discussed whether we can support with behaviour management for dog, or if there's anything else we can do as a church community.</p> <p>DC will write to scout leaders to flag the need for them to improve risk assessment/communication of arrangements for Remembrance Sunday at the cenotaph.</p> <p>Safeguarding dashboard isn't showing all the people that have done training – everyone was asked to revisit their profile and add Dorothy's safeguarding email address as the secondary one: stsmmsafeguarding@outlook.com</p> <p>DBS – some need renewing – DC will be in touch with those whose do. This needs completing by 10th Jan.</p> <p><i>Safer recruitment documents:</i> Documents for role analysis, application process etc provided by the diocese were shared. The PCC would like to challenge this: General feeling that the amount of paperwork is off-putting and will dissuade new volunteers. RG suggested we redesign the forms so they can be completed by hand rather than digitally. JC asked if we could redesign the forms? RG will ask Rob at St James how they approached this, as they have completed this for the safeguarding dashboard.</p>	<p>PCC secretary to distribute details on updating safeguarding dashboard. DC to renew DBS certificates with relevant individuals.</p> <p>RG to discuss safer recruitment paperwork processes with Rob Icke (St James)</p>
15	<p>Major Works Update</p> <p>SLB shared report prior to meeting. Key takeaways following most recent feedback on submission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation should be 2% of project cost - Incorporate costs such as kitchen refurb / storage area / engagement activities / organ repairs <p>The current timeline would mean if we submit a revised expression of interest in December, a favourable response in January would enable us to put in full application later in the year (Sept or November) and we get a reply by March 2027.</p> <p>SLB advised that we need a name for the project and welcomes suggestions.</p> <p>RH expressed thanks to Sue and Suzanne (advisor) for all their hard work to date.</p>	
16	<p>Administering the chalice</p> <p>There are two new candidates: Anne Vaillant at SMM & Katharine Emery at StT</p> <p><i>Proposed: JC // Secoded: MW // accepted unan</i></p>	
17	<p>Any Other Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rob Icke's Last Communion @ St James before moving to a new diocese: 4th January 2026 at 4pm – all invited 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lanyards are needed for sidespeople at St MM's- It was noted that James Thornton has resigned from the PCC due to other commitments.- Church cleaning is taking place at both churches on Saturday 28th Nov.	KE to send details of lanyard provider to SG
18	Date & Time of Next Meeting: Thursday 29 th January – 7pm – St Thomas'	
	Close of Meeting	

Treasurer's report to PCC 25th November

Please find attached the SOFA report reconciled to the end of October.

Total unrestricted income is £156,129 (GF Income for the same period in 2024 was £162,871) and expenditure £138,835 (GF expenditure for the same period in 2024 was £153,671) giving an unrestricted surplus of £17,293, however we have transferred £13,985 Outward Giving to Parish Charities fund – a restricted fund giving an actual General Fund Surplus of £4,288.

Total funds brought forward 2025 £133,800 compared to £132,141 in 2024, although we were later paying all the OG in 2024.

In these figures Outward Giving has been paid out to a value of £6,750, total allocated £13,985. In fact, all Outward Giving has been paid, and we are just waiting for cheques to clear, these will be within the November statements. In the same period 2024 only £200 OG had been paid out.

We are therefore in a stronger financial position than in 2024 at this point.

The previous Parish Share anomalies have been resolved and you can now see the actual Parish Share payment for 2025 is £64,700 compared to £62,817 in 2024, an increase of £1883.

We still have GA Q3 to claim – I anticipate around £7,500 and we have busy fund-raising months in November and December. The Gas refund, as a consequence of our being charged 20% VAT on some invoices from the beginning of the contract, means we have had significant credit and have not paid for any gas for either building since August. I do have some doubts as to whether they have the calculations correct, especially for St Thomas' and need to spend some time on this. I will have to examine all invoices from the beginning of the contract and see which were charged at 20% and work out the difference they owe us.

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Income Comparisons all funds

Category	2024	2025	Change
Planned Giving	73,480	80,275	£6,795
Tax recovery	14,559	15,641	£1082
Plate Giving	13,263	14,465	£1202
Donations	26,216	21,359	£4857 *
Fund raising	6543	4999	£1544
St T Church Hall Hire	11,168	13,312	£2144
St MM Hall Hire	8,711	5,682	£3029**
Fees	7,086	4,616	£2470

- *Donation for the piano had been received in Oct 2024 £5000
- **not many parties or one-off bookings unlike St T's, anecdotal issues with email 'out of office' not reading the entire message and contacting Peter on the off chance St T hall is free.

Expenditure comparisons all funds

Category	2024	2025	Change
Parish Share	62,817	64,700	1883
Church running costs	29,800	30,547	747
Church Maintenance and repairs	15,598*	4,420	11,178
Church Hall running costs	11,168	13,653	2,485
Church Hall Maintenance and repairs	285	5615	5,330 *
Worship	8161	7419	742
Support costs	6019	6538	519
Vicarage costs	3204	3531	327 **
St Mary's house costs	2792	2084	708

- * includes the cost of the piano £7,699 in 2024 as category includes equipment purchase
- *new Kitchen costs
- **general cost of living rises – water, Council tax. No decorating has been done this year – in 2024 there was decorating and kitchen refurb but later in the year and not in these figures.

Cash at hand and in the bank

NW 2	£1,776
CAF 2	£61,879
CAF 6	£9,393
CBF	£93,606
Credit Union	£204
St MM FF cash account	£207

Summary

My analysis is that we are in a slightly better financial position than 2024, barring any major necessary expenditure. Planned Giving has picked up, plate collections are good, and St T hall hire in particular is strong. St MM HH maybe needs a little thought, in particular a deputy for Julie next year. For the first time Church Hall hire at St T is virtually covering running costs – last year (and in previous years) we subsidised this by around £2,000 as a church and community asset.

Reduced Church running costs are benefitting from the gas rebate on VAT which I need to double check to prevent any nasty surprises if they are wrong. This will not be a benefit in 2026 and we will have new gas contract for the church hall and new electricity contracts for both Hall and Church at St T which are higher.

I anticipate a year end surplus of around £10,000 - £12,000, which would be a very pleasing position.

Thanksgiving Update

75 Thanksgiving forms have been returned as of 19/11/2025 and the total pledged to date is £73,234

5 PCC members have not yet returned a pledge form

Of these

5 are new pledges totalling £1,820

36 have pledged the same amount as this year.

32 have increased their pledge an overall increase of £4,792

Nobody has decreased their pledge

15 people have requested giving envelopes, 3 of whom are new givers

7 current PGE givers have not yet returned pledge forms

No current PGE givers have changed to bank giving

Hence total increased pledged giving is £6,612 which is very encouraging.

Sue Burke

Parish Treasurer

FEES 2026

Most Diocesan and PCC fees are set by the Diocese.

We have control over the ones in the table below. I have included 2023, 2024 and 2025 so you can see how they have been increased recently. Do we want to increase anything in 2026?

Category	2023	2024	2025	2026
Organist	80 /95w	80 / 95w	85/100w	85/100w
Verger	70 /75w	70/75w	75/80w	75/80w
Utilities	50	50	60	60
Choir	75	85	85	90
Bells	?	250	250	300
Screen	50	50	55	55
Streaming	50	50	55	55

Christmas Gifts

In 2024 we gave:

£50 to Joanna the cleaner - approved

£50 to Ian Banks – he plays for free, we pay Keiko- approved

£50 to Ted Sharples- he plays for free - approved

£200 to Carol – give J Ridley £100 and Carol £100 this year

£20 to Joanne who had stepped in to help in the office from October when Carol was incapacitated. Joanne has done well over 50% of the work in 2025

Gift to Linda L and Stuart M – wine and chocs. Stuart is paid for verger, Linda isn't paid at all.

Stuart wine and chocs Linda £50