

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting and Annual Parochial Meeting of St Leonard's Church Lexden
held on

Sunday 30th April 2023 at 12 noon.

Present – Rev'd Matthew Simpkins, Chair and 21 attendees.

Easter Vestry Meeting

1. Apologies (for both meetings) had been received from Hugh and Mary Beavan, Janice Cocks, Tom and Kathleen Scrimgeour, Paul and Mandy Elms, Yvonne Romain, Rev'd Maggie Whiteman
2. Minutes of the meeting of 22nd May 2022 were agreed and signed.
3. Election of Churchwardens

A resolution was passed by the meeting that section 3 of the Churchwardens Measure 2001 ('Disqualification after six years period of office'), shall not apply in relation to St Leonard's, Lexden.

Two nominations had been received, Mr David Watkins and Mr Nick Allston. It was unanimously agreed that they be duly appointed. Rev'd Matthew Simpkins thanked Esther for 6 years of service as Churchwarden, he thanked David for his continued service and both of them for their service through Covid.

Annual Parochial Meeting

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd May 2022 were agreed and signed.
2. The Annual Report on the proceedings of the PCC and the activities of the Parish in general, circulated previously, was approved. Rev'd Matthew Simpkins gave a short summary of the report and thanked all those who give service at St Leonard's in any way.

There were no matters arising from the report.

3. The Financial Statement (Adrian Steward) The Statement had been independently examined by Peyton Tyler Mears and copies had been made available previously to the congregation.

Adrian reported on the annual financial statement and was available to take questions. He reported that very successful fund-raising events were held, income from Church Hall and church room lettings increased. The tax recovered from gift aided donations continued to be significant. Thanks, again must go to our outgoing stewardship recorder. A successful Stewardship Campaign was held during the year. We continued to support a range of charitable organisations.

Income was however down, and expenditure was up on 2021. Higher energy costs and higher parish share expenditure contributed. Almost £105,000 of our income was for the parish share – this money to support the wider diocese.

This year our expenditure did not meet our income and therefore the accounts for 2022 show a negative balance.

Thanks were expressed to Adrian and the Treasury Team.

4. Acceptance of the Financial Statement was unanimously accepted and approved.

5. Report on the Electoral

Following the 2022 annual review, the number on roll was 206. Three names have been deleted since the 2022 revision. Three new applications have been received since the 2022 revision: Paul Elmes, Dierdre Fordham, and Neil Crockford. Some applications were received from people whose names were already on the roll. The current number on roll, following the April 2023 review, is 206. 57% of those on the Electoral Roll live in the parish of St Leonard, Lexden.

Electoral Roll application forms and storage of information comply with requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018. The 'notes' section of the application form includes details of permitted uses of personal data.

Applicants are given a choice of application formats: an accessible electronic form or the paper version.

Thanks were expressed to Jo Burrows for all her work in keep the Electoral Roll updated.

6. Fabric Report

A report had been prepared by David Watkins and circulated.

7. Report of proceedings of the Deanery Synod

A report had been prepared and circulated. Margaret Smith, Maureen Watkins, and Julie Hinchcliffe were our parish Deanery Synod reps at the beginning of the year.

8. Election of Representatives of the Laity to the Deanery Synod

Nominations had been received from Maureen Watkins, Julie Hinchcliffe, and Linda Firth. They were duly elected. There is still one place available.

9. Election of Representatives of the Laity to the Parochial Church Council

One nomination was received from Amanda Allston – she was duly elected.

10. The appointment of Independent Examiners

Peyton Tyler Mears were proposed and unanimously appointed.

11. Appointment of Child Protection Officer and Adult Safeguarding Officer

Julie Hinchcliffe is our Parish Safeguarding Officer and Mandy Allston our Deputy Safeguarding Officer. They were both thanked for all their hard work during the year.

12. Churchwardens Assistants

Peter and Nick were thanked for their help in making then roll of churchwarden more manageable. Although Esther has had to step down as churchwarden due to becoming Parish Administrator she will continue to help as a deputy, and she was also thanked for all her work during the last year.

13. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

14. Priest in Charge Address

“On the 1st of April, I made the mischievous claim that below the removed floorboards at the back of St Leonard’s nave, we had found some treasure: the bones of the long lost, Saint Anway. I suggested this local saint had given his name to Stanway and was patron saint of all things that could be wound up (such as balls of string).

Beneath the unfortunate April Fool’s humour, there is – I believe – an important story for us:

When we are forced by circumstances to strip things back, with God there is always some treasure to be found. Found and then shared!

Recently, we have had no option but to strip things back – quite literally in the case of our nave floor. But this “stripping back” has also been known through the tail end of the pandemic, the death of the Queen, many of our personal circumstances, upheavals in the Church of England and nation, and a cost-of-living crisis.

Many aspects of the lives of those who reside in our parish have experienced some sort of “stripping back” too.

There is, however, a sense that in stripping back we are actually freed: freed to focus on the core of our callings and gifts. That is the real treasure that can be found and shared in testing times.

We saw in 2022 that the stripping back of so much during the lockdowns, and the consequent focus on the very youngest in our community, is now bearing fruit in a very busy parent and toddler group and increasingly busy Messy Church, Brick Club, and other activities for younger people. We have also seen 11 people come forward to be confirmed, many of whom are new to our church. The growth in attendance of adults in their 30s and 40s is a particularly encouraging time.

So, this time of change for our nation and community is a time for us to double down on spreading the Good News of Christ Jesus. It is a time to see each one of us – every member of Christ’s body in Lexden as bringers of salt and light! A time to see every person in the parish as beloved by God – whether or not they yet realise it!

So do not be demoralised when times of “stripping back” come – be energised and filled with hope – attend to the treasure of the Gospel in your hearts so that together we can continue to share it.

St Leonard’s does – and will continue to – make a tremendous difference to the community of Lexden – to the glory of God.

I believe that future generations will not judge us by whether or not we could keep the old show on the road, but by how faithful we remained to God’s call and how we shared that faith with all in our parish”.

David said he knows it has been a difficult year and he wanted to thank everyone for all they do and Matt for his leadership, for all he does. We thank him from our hearts, and he has our support and love. He thanked Sian for everything she does to keep Matt going.

He thanked Viv Maggie and Jacquie for everything they do.

The meeting concluded at 12.50 pm with prayers.