

## **Minutes of The Fifth Meeting of the 2025/26 Parochial Church Council of St Francis of Assisi held on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2025 at 8pm in Church Hall**

Present: Rob Smith (RS – chairman), Carol Jager (CJ), Stuart Richardson (SR), Graham Bloye (GB), Cathy Bloye (CB), Sarah Branwhite (SB), Eric Pavyer (EP), John Owen (JO), Andrew Watkinson (AW), Jo Dunstan (JD), Paul Dunstan (PD), Montse Day (MD), Pui San Appling (PSA)

Apologies: John Butler (JB), Gavin Johnstone (GJ), Rachel Basch (RB)

The meeting was opened with a prayer

### **1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

The Chairman started the meeting by welcoming everyone to the meeting

### **2. Minutes from the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

An amendment was requested to second paragraph under section 11: Parish Profile – Discussion and Adoption to the following:

A PCC member felt that some of the amendments were difficult to accept but acknowledged that the profile was more focused. Another PCC member asked that inspirational leader was changed to inspiring leader.

Subject to the above changes being made the PCC approved the minutes as a true record and that they could be signed by the PCC Secretary.

### **3. Matters arising from the minutes that are not already on the agenda**

The PCC agreed that St Francis could the Royal British Legion Service on the evening of 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2026.

**Action: Churchwardens to agree with the organisers what the service would entail so that we have a better understanding of what we are taking on.**

**Action: Churchwardens to confirm the date with Royal British Legion**

### **4. Outstanding Actions from previous meeting not on the agenda**

**Art Festival:** Closed, budget was agreed with Treasurer

**Choir members meeting with the PCC:** meeting arranged for 23rd November

**Risk Assessments and new forms:** Closed, these can remain in current format until the next time they are updated

**Choir Update:** Closed, Director of Music to be invited to the November meeting to provide an update.

### **5. Treasurers Report**

The reports issued ahead of the meeting were noted.

The Treasurer reported that finances were stable, and a finance meeting has been arranged with the Archdeacon, the St Albans Director of Finance and the Standing Committee for 5<sup>th</sup> November.

The Treasurer also reported that the Art Festival had been a great success not just financially but as a means of outreach too.

Giving has stabilised and we are doing everything we can to increase our giving, we have had one person return and two new givers. The Treasurer also speaks to those who are new to St Francis.

There was then a lengthy discussion about the Parish Share formula, how it is derived and the impact that this is having on our finances and the potential impact this could have in attracting a new Priest-in-Charge. This will be the main focus of the meeting with Archdeacon Janet and Glyn Barker on 5<sup>th</sup> November.

The budget for 2026 is being prepared ready for discussion at the next PCC

## **6. Safeguarding**

The Parish Safeguarding Officer advised that there had been one safeguarding concern raised, this has been investigated and resolved, noting that everything that should have been done was.

## **7. Wardens Report**

**Poppy Arch:** the churchwardens advised the PCC that the poppy arch would be installed again this year ahead of the service on 9<sup>th</sup> November. The poppies from last year would be reused. The PCC was in favour of this being done.

**Youth and Children's Worker:** the churchwardens have also been liaising with Youth and Children's worker about what will happen when leave comes to an end. She is undecided yet and will let us know in December before her leave comes to an end. The churchwardens asked the PCC to think about what we want from a Youth and Children's worker and for this to be discussed at the next PCC.

The churchwardens asked the PCC to think about whether we want Toddle Time to continue if NC didn't come back.

**Action: PCC to come to meeting with thoughts on what we want from a Youth and Children's worker.**

**Action: the churchwardens to have a discussion with NC about what she wants from the role.**

**Replacement Lime Tree:** we need to replace the lime tree which was removed as the two-year period that we were given by the council has now elapsed. This will be done on 2<sup>nd</sup> November at a cost of £450. The council have already approved the replacement so no need to go back to them.

**Hall Lighting:** the old lighting is to be replaced with LED batons on 7<sup>th</sup> November at a cost of £850 which is covered by a diocesan grant. This has to be done before the end of the year so as not to lose the grant money.

**Damaged Down Pipe on North Wall:** the old lead pipe is split and causing water damage to the wall. A quote has been received to replace it at a cost of £650, there is no VAT. The Treasurer advised that as this is an emergency repair, it is outside of our normal scheme of delegation rules and therefore two quotes were not needed.

It was proposed by the Treasurer and seconded by the Chairman that these emergency repairs take place to remove the risk of further damage to the north wall. This was approved unanimously by the PCC.

**Woodwork on the West Elevation:** the quinquennial report noted that the woodwork on the west elevation was rotting. A quote to repair this has been received for £11k. This does not need to be done now but is something to think about for next year's prioritised maintenance list, need to consider if the roof is repaired whether this would then mean that this work would need to be done again.

It was suggested by the PCC that we should do more to publicise to the congregation what repairs and maintenance are needed and the associated costs of doing this.

The Treasurer also proposed that we have a fully costed/prioritised list of maintenance work as this will help us to understand fully what needs to be done along with helping us to apply for grants.

The PCC Secretary suggested that in April after the APCM and when new members have joined the PCC that there is a PCC Planning Day, this will help the new members get up to speed with what needs doing, help them understand in more detail our financial situation and establish a working group to take on the grant applications.

**Energy Supplier:** from 1<sup>st</sup> October we moved to Octopus energy, this will reduce our energy costs. It is a green energy tariff and if new cheaper tariffs are introduced by Octopus, we have the option to move to them without incurring penalty charges.

**Blind in Lady Chapel:** the firm who fitted this have been chased again for a date to come and assess what needs to be done to fix it.

## 8. Chairman's Report

**Altar Frontal Cloth:** a new altar frontal cloth has been donated by the Friends of St Francis. The design was chosen from the pattern book and was agreed with the vicar prior to her leaving but it is too small for our altar, despite the measurements being taken by the supplier, this resulted in a discount of £3k being given by the supplier.

The PCC is very grateful to the Friends of St Francis for this gift but as it is a full altar frontal it will need a faculty or Archdeacon's approval for it to be used. Before this is applied for it was suggested that representatives from the PCC liaise with the other Friends of St Francis trustees to see if there is some way for the altar frontal to be altered to fit. Until the faculty/Archdeacon's approval is given this cloth must not be used.

**Action: PCC to liaise with the Friends Trustees to find a solution that will allow the altar frontal cloth to be used.**

**Parish Profile:** this is now in its final draft and ready to be issued to Archdeacon and Bishop of Hertford. The PCC thanked the team for all their hard work on this.

The PCC approved the PCC Secretary to formally issue it to the Archdeacon and Bishop of Hertford.

**Christmas Tree Festival:** there are 50 trees taking part, programme is due to go to print at the end of October and the costs of this have been covered by the advertising. Press releases have been issued, mayor and MP have been invited. Volunteer lists for over the festival weekend will be going up in the porch the first weekend of November.

This is the last year that the Treasurer will be leading on this event, either someone will need to be found to replace him, or the event won't go ahead in 2026.

**Quiz:** the PCC thanked RS for running the quiz, it was a fun evening raised £250.

## 9. Health, Safety and Environment (including PCC Policies due for review/approval)

**Image Policy:** there was some lengthy discussion about the draft image policy and after much debate it was agreed that subject to:

- some minor changes to the wording on page 3, point 1 and point 4
- changing the review period from 3 years to annually
- that the notice to be displayed be reworded by AW

The PCC approved the adoption of the Image Policy subject to the points above being completed.

The PCC thanked the team who had worked on this for all their hard work.

## 10. Correspondence including Electoral Roll update

The PCC Secretary advised that there had been no change in the electoral roll figures since the previous meeting, with 61 Residents, 54 non-residents giving a total of 115.

There had been no other correspondence received.

#### **11. Any Other Business**

**Storage of Communion Wine:** it has been noticed that the lid on the carafe that is used to store the communion wine doesn't close properly and fruit flies are getting into the wine. To prevent this happening while the wine is waiting to be brought to the altar the carafe is now wrapped in cling film, but a more permanent solution is needed. Any wine left in the carafe can go back in the bottle as this won't have been consecrated, but it is also becoming more noticeable that there is an increasing number of the congregation who are not taking the wine.

Visiting church clergy are also to be asked not to break the host over the wine.

**Action: PCC to approach the Friends of St Francis Trustees to see if a replacement carafe would be something they would be prepared to gift.**

**Action: the churchwardens to look at whether there is a temporary solution that could be put in place that will allow the carafe to continue to be used.**

**Newsletter Articles:** if anyone has anything they would like to put in the newsletter please can they send them to the newsletter team.

**Suspension of Benefice Letter:** it was suggested that this be mentioned again in the church notices what this means as some of the congregation think this means we won't have a vicar for three years.

**Action: the churchwardens to mention it this week's church notices.**

The Meeting ended at 10pm with the Grace.

The next PCC meeting will be 8pm in the Parish Room on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2025