

Annual General Meeting 2023

26 November 2023

Holy Trinity Church, Melrose and
live-streamed to the online congregation

Draft Minutes

1. Welcome and opening prayer

The Rector welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the AGM in church and online. He opened the meeting with a prayer, remembering those members of the congregation who have departed during the year with a two-minute silence.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies from members of the congregation were noted, including Malcolm McVittie, Mervyn and Chris Anthony, Tricia Hodgson and Helen Legge.

It was noted that the number of people present in the congregation meant the AGM was quorate.

3. Minutes of 2022 AGM, 20 November 2022

The minutes of the previous AGM were accepted as a true record. Proposed by Pamela Gordon and Seconded by John Williams.

4. Elections

4.1. People's Warden

The Rector reported that John Williams had kindly agreed to stand for a further year's term as People's Warden and, in the absence of other nominations, this was agreed.

The Rector was also pleased to announce that Robert Marshall had agreed to be his Rector's Warden.

4.2. Lay Representative

The Rector reported that Mervyn Anthony had resigned from the Vestry and therefore the role of Lay Representative is currently vacant.

The Alternate Lay Representative role is covered by Malcolm McVittie.

4.3. Call for new Vestry members

In addition to a Lay Representative, the Rector asked for members of the congregation to consider standing on Vestry. A Vestry Secretary plus three ordinary members are needed to replace those who are standing down after the completion of their terms of office.

It was noted that one person had already said they would like to join the Vestry, meaning a further two ordinary members are needed. The Rector asked members of the congregation to contact either the Treasurer or the Secretary if they would like to join Vestry or for more information.

The Rector thanked those standing down for their input into the life and work of the Vestry and Holy Trinity.

5. Draft Annual Report and Accounts

The Treasurer reported that the church's finances had held up well during the year, however, unforeseen expenses such as tree removal and a considerable increase in the electricity bill had added extra financial pressure. This had been offset to some extent by the Rectory rental and a Diocesan support grant. Additional costs continue based on repairs and improvements required as part of the Quinquennial review.

In terms of income, the reduction in direct debits had been balanced a little by an increase in free-will giving and an increase in the amount of tax reclaimed.

In an attempt to capitalise on the successful giving via Smarties tubes, Caroline Green outlined a new scheme whereby members of the congregation could 'sponsor' a Christmas tree decoration. There would be a £5 minimum donation for one of 60 baubles.

The Treasurer explained that, although a good deal of repair work has gone ahead, repair of the church walls and the appointment of an administrative assistant had been paused. A stewardship campaign next year between January and March is planned to help offset inflation costs and support the general running costs of the church.

In closing, the Treasurer thanked Elizabeth Stockdill, Alasdair Johnston and Alexander Storie in the work to prepare and sign-off the annual accounts.

As there were no questions, the Annual Report and Accounts were Proposed by Liz Willams and Seconded by Carey Coombs, and this was unanimously carried.

6. Draft annual budget 2022-23

The draft budget for the coming year had been more difficult to produce given the increasing number of variables such as the power bills and inflation. The Rector concurred and explained that fulfilling all the requirements outlined in the Quinquennial report would have incurred huge costs. He added his sincere thanks to the Treasurer for managing a difficult financial situation this year.

There were no questions on the draft budget and it was therefore Proposed by Nancy Muir and Seconded by Sara Duncan, and this was unanimously carried.

7. Appointment of Independent Examiner of Church Accounts

Alexander Storie had agreed to stand again and was approved as the Independent Examiner of the Church Accounts.

8. Rector's Report

The Rector opened his report by recognising that many churches are suffering increased costs and reduced giving. Given the Rector's stipend forms part of the church's expenditure, he updated the congregation on his role in serving them and the community.

The Rector outlined the ideal balance of his work for the church, community and additional administrative tasks. As with most members of the clergy, more hours are worked during the week than required.

The Rector's wider role includes support for the congregation and their visiting families, and includes community connection and support for the staff and pupils of schools and the Borders General Hospital. Administration for the church, for example delivering online services, is also part of his daily role. The Rector also delivers spiritual support via various radio broadcasts, such as 'Thought for the Day'.

In terms of the church, the Rector supports and provides the usual daily, weekly and annual services. He thanked the Ministry and Pastoral Care teams for their support to enable him to carry out his role. The role of Vestry is to consider the governance of Holy Trinity and the Rector chairs these meetings. Additionally, he attends clergy and Diocesan events throughout the year, and is Diocesan advisor for those with a calling to the priesthood.

The Rector outlined some of the administrative tasks covering the website, service sheets, live-streaming services, for example, and admitted that these take more time than he would like.

A sabbatical, which had been delayed because of covid, was now planned for four months after April 2024 and the Rector explained that he aimed to explore pilgrimage, churches like Melrose, and investigate the spiritual history of this area in order to be refreshed and renewed and bring these insights back for the benefit of Holy Trinity. He was pleased that the local ministerial team within Holy Trinity and across the Borders would be able to cover services but called for more people to join and help the pastoral team, and also for help with the church's administration.

9. Any other business

Liz Brims thanked the Rector on behalf of the congregation for all that he does for us. The Rector responded with thanks and reminding the congregation that the church and its life belongs to us all and we should stand proud in a world needing the God of truth and love.

10. Closing prayer

The meeting closed with a prayer and The Grace.

(nb full copies of the papers were made available to the congregation in advance of the AGM.)