Worshipping God | Equipping His People | Growing His Kingdom | Serving Walsall

Church Council Minutes
7.30pm at St Matthew's Church
Monday 28 September 2026

	Time	Item	Notes	Action
	7.30pm	Present	Sandra Alleyne, Daniel Barker, Ben Butterfield, Ros Clewes, Jose Davenport, Diane Edlin, John Edlin, Joseph John, Rev Yemi Oladunjoye, Judith Ridgway, Rev Jim Trood, Lorna Williams, Nancy Candlin (Minute-taker), Alyson Green (Treasurer) Jeremy Sargent (Contributor), Samson Kamran (Observer)	
1.	7.30pm	Apologies	Christine Barkley, Sylvia Boss, Sara Gumpo, Mike Ray, Jimm Rennie	
2.	7.30pm	Welcome and prayer	Rev Jim welcomed the group and read a passage from the Apocrypha, before sharing a prayer.	
3.	7.35pm	Minutes of the previous meetings	**Minutes of the meeting Monday 13 July 2026** **Proposal:** To accept the minutes as a true representation of the Church Council meeting held on Monday 13 July 2026. **Proposer: Judith Ridgway** **Seconder: Jose Davenport** **Agreed unanimously.**	
4.	7.35pm	Declarations of Interest	None	
5.	7.35pm	Matters arising/Updates	**Outreach event** (Rev Jim) At the last Church Council meeting, in response to a suggestion that we run an outreach event for the whole church, Rev Jim invited people to suggest ideas for discussion at this meeting. None have been forthcoming, however, if anyone has an idea Rev Jim would be pleased to hear it.	
6.	7.40pm	Notification of Any Other Business	**Church leaders' event** (Rev Jim) On Tuesday 20 October there is an event called 'Responding to a divided culture', about social cohesion, Christian nationalism and the church's place in it. It will be held at Amblecote Community Church, DY8 4BS and is free. There are a few places left so if interested speak to Rev Jim. There are three going from St Matthew's so far and we can send two more.	
7.	7.40pm	Legacy Project	a. **Heritage Buildings Committee** (Rev Jim) As background, it was clear at the last Church Council meeting that it was felt that decisions were being rushed about various building matters and issues. The aim of this committee, therefore, is to help the Trustees know that due diligence has been carried out with proposals that come to the Church Council, to assist the Church Council in making important decisions about the building and ensure there's a stronger scheme of delegation to support Jeremy Sargent and the committee and to give clear accountability structures. The proposed committee details were circulated prior to the meeting.	

			The suggestion is to create a subgroup of the Church Council, formerly the Legacy Project Committee, and call it the Heritage Building Committee. There is also a suggested membership of the committee. Note: this committee would deal solely with the church and not the Centre. The suggested composition of the committee is Rev Jim as Director, Jeremy Sargent as Chair, Nancy Candlin as Secretary, and then possibly three more: a warden and a couple of others, possibly with specialist insight (whether fundraising, finance, engineering, etc.), or who are otherwise interested. John Edlin was happy to join the committee, and some other suggestions were offered for Jeremy to approach. The committee will not commission works, seek permission from the diocese or spend monies without the approval of the Church Council, unless an activity is warden-approved, with the warden spend being capped at £1k. **Proposal:** To create a Heritage Buildings Committee based on the Terms of Reference presented at this meeting. **Proposer: Rev Jim Trood** **Seconder: Daniel Barker** **Agreed unanimously.** b. **Update from Jeremy Sargent** A report was circulated prior to the meeting with an update after the last Church Council meeting regarding works on the improved disabled access to the toilet, repairs to the Georgian stairs and repairs to the clerestory windows. A grant application for £300k for repair of the south clerestory windows has been made to Historic England as the south side is in the most acute need of repair. This was developed from a grant application made two years ago. There followed a very lively debate about the pros and cons of different approaches to repairs and the possible ways to fund different approaches (there is a limited amount of money in the building fund so any major works need to be paid for from grants – financial pressures are exacerbated by the fact that VAT can no longer be reclaimed). There was also discussion about prioritising the necessary works in the church, which are based on the Quinquennial Report. There was concern at a possible conflict of interest with the historic architect overseeing St Matthew's also being on the decision-making committee, but the group were assured that the architect would leave the room when any discussion was made about buildings with which they were involved. There remained some disquiet.	

			It was also queried about whether an architect was needed at all for some of the work, but again the group was informed that it was extremely unlikely that any faculty applications for works without architect involvement would be approved. Also, it was questioned whether a grant application would succeed without this professional input. It was proposed, after considerable discussion, that if the £300k grant came through that repairs to the south clerestory windows would proceed forthwith. Also, because the toilet and stair works are underway, these would continue as planned. If the window grant does not come through, however, the subcommittee will convene to plan and present a plan to the Church Council for the next steps forward and order of improvements. This was agreed to by the group.	
8.	8.20pm	Church Council Governance & Housekeeping inc. Accountability Areas (Standing Item)	a. **Interfaith group** (Jose Davenport) A report was circulated prior to the meeting. Jose Davenport asked if there were any church events that she could put in the interfaith group's shared calendar. A number of suggestions were shared and Jose will contact Nancy Candlin and Rev Jim for more details. b. **Verbal Diocesan Synod report** (Rev Jim) There was an interesting session with Rev David Sims talking about his TikTok work but the rest of the meeting was mainly administrative. c. **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy** (Ben Butterfield) Ben Butterfield has had discussions with a few people who think it would be a good idea to have a policy governing AI use in church. There are two main strands: one is around data security and administrative use of AI (e.g. if you give personal sensitive aid to AI, it is then available for other people to use); the second is around use of AI in worship, such as helping with sermon writing, selecting songs or writing prayers. Ben is inviting anybody to contribute to creating a new policy that will go to the Church Council for approval, when ready, to have a word with him. Mike Ray has agreed to be on this group. Rev Jim suggested that Arun Kataria, Director of Communications at Lichfield Diocese, may like to be involved as this initiative is one of the first to be started.	Jose Davenport to liaise re: diary dates to share Rev Jim to give Ben Butterfield Arun Kataria's email address
9.	8.30pm	Safeguarding (Standing Item)	a. **DBS and Training update** (Nancy Candlin) Nothing to report but a general reminder that all trustees are registered for the Domestic Abuse training module and it is an interesting course. It is not mandatory but worth doing. Nancy Candlin can resend the link if anyone needs it. b. **Safeguarding matters arising** (Rev Jim) There are two safeguarding issues to report: one is an ongoing issue; one is a new issue. The relevant people and organisations for both have been informed and are involved.	

			c. **Parish Safeguarding Policy annual review** (Rev Jim) Rev Jim reported that he has recently redone the Safer Recruitment training with the Church of England as a new course has been issued. One outcome is that self-declarations for all volunteers for the church are going to be a requirement going forward. However, this ties in with the role descriptors work that has already been done. Barbara Parker, our Parish Safeguarding Officer, suggests the Church Council reapproves the current Safeguarding Policy at this meeting (reviewed annually) but there is then a very significant review to be completed and brought to the Church Council in January for approval. **Proposal:** To reapprove the Parish Safeguarding Policy and undertake a significant review for January 2027. **Proposer: John Edlin** **Seconder: Rev Yemi Oladunjoye** **Agreed unanimously.** d. **Parish Safeguarding Dashboard** (Rev Jim) Work on the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard is ongoing and the list of tasks continues to expand. One legal requirement is that all Church Council members have done the relevant training (Basic and Foundation Safeguarding). Every trustee, bar one (despite repeated reminders and requests), has done this and so the proposal to the Church Council is that all Church Council members must do the training. **Proposal:** That all Church Council members complete the appropriate safeguarding training in order to attend Church Council meetings. **Proposer: Rev Jim Trood** **Seconder: Ben Butterfield** **Agreed unanimously.**	Nancy Candlin to upload the reapproved Safeguarding Policy onto the website
10.	8.35pm	Personnel	a. **Town Centre Ministry representative** (Rev Jim) Rev Jim is hoping to find someone to represent St Matthew's, along with himself, Daniel Barker and Wendy Ross, as TCM representatives. It involves about four meetings a year and covers things like the Walk of Witness at Easter. If anybody's interested in being a representative or would like to suggest someone who might be, please let Rev Jim know. b. **Approval of extension to Chris Boden's contract** (Rev Jim) Chris Boden's contract has been approved via email.	

			c. **Training course – Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Heritage Skills (Woodwork)** (Rev Jim/Nancy Candlin) The course is run by the building construction industries and is on-site training at the student's place of work. Unfortunately, we would incur the full course cost of £1,300 plus VAT as St Matthew's is not a member of the CITB. The majority of the course would be undertaken during Chris' working hours in the church. There was a question about whether this was the correct level of course at Level 3 so Nancy Candlin is going to check if it is the right course. *[**Note**: following this meeting it was found that the Level 4 and above move away from hands-on skills and into project management. The Level 3 is the one that working craftspeople do with the heritage element is exactly what it says – the difference in techniques, woods, finishes, styles, etc. between heritage and modern skills. Heritage England says: 'The main heritage specialist qualification is currently the Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Heritage Skills (Construction)'. There are no others that could be found]* There was support for employees being able to train and have a personal improvement plan to develop their skills, so when the checks have been done this item can be revisited. Assuming this was the correct level, the Church Council approved the expense to train Chris, subject to appropriate clawbacks. d. **Cycle to Work Scheme** (Nancy Candlin) The Cycle to Work scheme is a salary sacrifice scheme designed to make purchasing a bike more affordable to staff. Both staff and employer benefit from lower tax and NI contributions as a result, as well as all the health benefits to the staff and eco benefits all round. Applications can be made on a case-by-case basis. The group was asked if they wished Nancy Candlin to leave the room as she has an interest in this, but there was not felt to be a need. **Proposal:** That St Matthew's offers the Cycle to Work Scheme to qualifying staff. **Proposer: Ros Clewes** **Seconder: Diane Edlin** **Agreed unanimously.**	Nancy Candlin to check the course level is appropriate and if there are alternative options Nancy Candlin to administrate applications from staff to the Cycle to Work Scheme
	20.40pm		**Comfort break**	
11.	8.45pm	Buildings/Health and safety	a. **Buildings and grounds update** (John Edlin) **1. Bell project** John Edlin reported that he has applied for diocesan permissions to do the work and is waiting on that. He hopes that when Archdeacon Liz visits and learns about the project things will move forward.	

			This item was raised at the last Church Council meeting as a Take Note item and so needs to be voted upon at this meeting. Note that there will be some minor costs that are up to perhaps £1k, which could be covered out of the Tower Fund. **Proposal:** the Church Council approves the Tower Sound Improvement Plan. **Proposer: Lorna Williams** **Seconder: Sandra Alleyne** **Agreed unanimously.** 2. **Roof report, proposal and quote** John Edlin informed the group that he is keen not to miss the good weather for getting the roof repaired where slates and rendering have failed or been damaged by falling masonry. The roofer is very experienced and has carried out effective repairs on the church roof in the past. As this repair is of some urgency, and the faculty applications system is down (see item b of this section), we will have to apply for a retrospective faculty permission in the hope and expectation that it is granted. **Proposal:** That the Church Council approves expenditure of up to £7k on roof repairs to be carried out by TJ Bowater. **Proposer: John Edlin** **Seconder: Ben Butterfield** **Agreed unanimously.** 3. **Stonework falling from heights** This is a Take Note item. Chris Boden and John Edlin have been inspecting as much as they can but there are some pieces of stone that they can't easily reach. They plan to go round at parapet level again to see if there are further loose pieces of stone that are at risk of falling. Assessing the stonework, mitigating risks and recording all concerns and/or incidents is a vital part of due diligence for the safety of church users. 4. **Churchyard Maintenance Plan draft 1** John Edlin requested that the Churchyard Maintenance Plan, which has been in place for some time, is approved at the Church Council meeting in support of the aim of improving our eco-church status. He was delighted to let everyone know that St Matthew's has achieved Silver status. Some minor wording amendments to the Plan were advised for clarity, which John will carry out.	

			Proposal: That the Church Council adopts the Churchyard Maintenance Plan. **Proposer: Daniel Barker** **Seconder: Ben Butterfield** **Agreed unanimously.** 5. **Buildings updates** (John Edlin) *Metalwork*: John Edlin is hoping to inspect all the high-level metalwork, which will require some detailed planning and time. The church has access to a scaffolding tower, which it is hoped will be high enough. *Electrics*: There are a few areas of unsafe wiring in the St Clement's Chapel that John has disconnected (a couple of sockets). *Boiler*: The boiler replacement plan is still awaiting permission. The DAC has asked for some more information that John has submitted. However, he suggests that the church ask for donations of blankets and rugs in preparation for winter and the risk of the working boiler failing. Ros Clewes volunteered to manage this activity. *Carpet replacement*: The greatest risk to the new carpets is from water leaks from the roof (see agenda item 2 above). Another threat is damage from the piano wheels, which have now been replaced. Whilst the staging was checked and repaired at the front of the church when the carpets was replaced, John will keep an eye on this area as the heavy traffic can damage the boards and joists underneath and there is risk of sagging and collapse. 6. **Eco church application (**John Edlin) Winning the Silver Award for Eco Church will be announced this Sunday at the Harvest Festival. As part of the process John Edlin had to nominate himself as Eco Church Champion but is happy to relinquish this role if anyone else is interested. John is now getting support from Jennifer at Rushall Church, a gold Eco-Church awarder, in working towards the Gold award. **Proposal:** That the Church Council appoints John Edlin as Eco Church Champion. **Proposer: Rev Yemi Oladunjoye** **Seconder: Ros Clewes** **Agreed unanimously.** 7. **Site and operations update**	John Edlin to amend the wording of the Churchyard Maintenance Plan prior to general publication Ros Clewes to organise the donation of blankets/rugs in readiness for winter

			Chris Boden circulated an update prior to the meeting. There was comment that the work Chris is doing is to be commended. b. **Faculty system platform** (Rev Jim) The current faculty system is being changed to make it much more user-friendly, and will be renamed as the Building Management Portal. It will make it a lot easier for churches to apply for faculties and to speed up the process. However, the old system closed earlier than notified and the new one will launch on 30 September. When it is live, users are asked not to register on it all in one go but to stagger registration. Note that if there are urgent faculty applications for emergency repairs during this period, these can be potentially obtained via the chancellor with a subsequent retrospective faculty application. If anybody would like to do training on the new Building Management Portal there is free online training available, but there are also dates that you can book online when the DAC will explain how it works at drop-in sessions. If anybody's interested in this, speak to Rev Jim.	
12.	8.40pm	Finance	a. **Appointment of auditors** (Alyson Green) The information was shared prior to the meeting that the diocese will no longer independently examine the church's annual accounts. In 2025 their fee was £470 and Alyson Green has found two independent examiners: Beverley Richardson of Charity Aid Accountancy Services and Sue Schultz, a former employee of Lichfield Diocese Board of Finance. Beverley would charge £500 and Sue £300. The general consensus was that both options were good, but to see if Sue Schultz was available as the first choice being cheaper and having diocesan accounting experience. **Proposal:** That the Church Council appoint Sue Schultz as the auditor for the current year. **Proposer: Judith Ridgway** **Seconder: Jose Davenport** **Agreed unanimously.** b. **Finance report** (Rev Jim/Alyson Green) No1 account: £54,753.88 Centre account: £12,511.20 COIF deposit account: £1668.48 Property Fund: £46,156.31 Ethical Investment Fund: £3167.33.	Alyson Green to see if Sue Schultz is available to do the 2027 annual accounts

			As a very rough prediction, the church income from giving will be down by about £4.5k, though Christmas is yet to come. Other church income is also down, but that also includes the fact that an expected £5k grant is still to be received. Not being able to claim VAT back from some spends has also impacted the revenue stream. The total income for the end of the year for the church is anticipated to be down between £5k and £10k. Church expenditure is about the same as last year – and is testimony to good housekeeping throughout the church family. With regard to the Centre, income looks to be about £20k up on last year, however, this is likely to be due to one group paying their whole year's rent upfront. Centre expenditure, however, also looks to be about £17k higher, which is partly due to salaries, so it looks like there will be about a £3k profit on the Centre at the end of this year. So the overall prediction for the year is about a £7k loss across the church and Centre, but it's too early to tell with any certainty. There was a question raised in regard to the giving statistics that Rev Jim shared in church on Sunday, whether there were any known reasons for the drop in the number of regular givers and if it needed addressing. Rev Jim noted it is difficult to give reasons as it is partly through the deaths of older regular givers and the fact that younger people tend to use contactless on an ad hoc basis rather than set up regular payments. There can also be confusion about what constitutes a regular giver. c. **Eco Church** (Alyson Green) The organisation that runs the Eco Church scheme is A Rocha UK. St Matthew's has been paying them £50 a year by a five-year standing order on the 31 March, since 2023. This means there is one more payment of £50 to come out on the 31 March 2027, when membership can be revisited. d. **Dates** (Rev Jim) The meeting dates for the remainder of 2026 into 2027 have been shared. Note: for those on the Standing Committee, one of the dates has had to change. The group were asked to look at the proposed dates and let Rev Jim know if there any clashes or problems. Rev Jim confirmed that Martyn's Law will be revisited at the next Church Council meeting.	
15.	9.25pm	AOB	None.	

16.	9.25pm	Confidentiality	*To decide whether any part of the proceedings of the meeting should be regarded as confidential once final minutes are published.* No items of confidentiality.	
	9.30pm	Closing Prayer	Rev Jim closed the meeting with a prayer.	

Dates of meetings

Suggested 2026 dates (Mondays unless otherwise stated)

Standing Committee	**Church council (PCC)**	**Focus**	**Leadership Team**	**Deanery Synod**
14 Sept	28 Sept	Annual Safeguarding Review Martyn's Law/Terrorism threats (deferred to November)	7 September	23 Sept (St Matthew's)
19 Oct	23 Nov	Annual Fees approved Martyn's Law/Terrorism threats	12 October	10 November (Embrace the Middle East – St Paul's, Walsall))
7 Dec (wardens' meeting)			16 November (prov)	3 December (Advent service at St Michael's, Pelsall)
2027				
11 Jan	25 Jan	Statistical review (annual return)	1 Feb	
22 Feb	15 Mar		22 Mar	25 February (Mark Davis Director of Education – Blue Coat Academy)
12 Apr	~~26 April~~ 19 April (change)	APCM preparation inc. Annual report & financial statement	17 May	20 May (Resourcing Mission - St Michael's Pelsall)
7 Jun	5 July	Annual Admin for new PCC	19 July	TBC July, (Summer Eucharist – Rushall Parish Church)
6 Sept	4 Oct	Annual Safeguarding Review	20 Sept	22nd Sept (Eco-church, venue TBC)
1 Nov	29 Nov	Annual Fees approved	15 Nov	TBC Nov
				2 Dec (Advent Reflection with Bishop Jan, St Thomas' Aldridge)
6 Dec (wardens meeting)				

APCM 2026: 9 or 10 May
Archdeacons Visitation 2026: TBC