



WHITWORTH
C H U R C H



Annual Report for 2025

**ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS
to be held on Sunday 19th April 2026**

AGENDA

1. Prayers
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Election of Churchwardens

**ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING 2026
to be held on Sunday 19th April 2026**

AGENDA

1. Appointment of Secretary/Clerk for the Meeting
2. Minutes of the APCM held on 18th May 2025
3. Matters Arising
4. Report of Electoral Roll: Resolution of PCC members for 2026
5. Elections: PCC Members
Deanery Synod Representatives
6. Appointments
(a) Independent Examiner (Accounts)

7. Reports from PCC

(a) Secretary's Report of Business of the PCC during 2025

(b) Treasurer's Report and Presentation of the Accounts for year to 31st December 2025

(c) Churchwardens' Report on Fabric of the Church

(d) Curate's Report

(e) Deanery Synod Report

(f) Churches Together Report

(g) Safeguarding Report

8. Reports from Church Groups and Activities

(a) Eco-Church Environment Group

(b) Home Group

9. Vicar's Report

10. Question Time

11. Closing Prayer and Grace

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF
PARISHIONERS**

held on 18th May 2025 in

**Whitworth Church, during the Sunday Holy
Communion Service.**

9.15 a.m. The meeting opened with a prayer.

1. Present: Rev. Matt Tarling, Rev. Lee Trevorrow-Earl, Verna McEneny, Linda Crowe, Enid Alderson, Kathleen Hall, Joan Lowes, June and Ken Wilson, Wayne Rhodes.

2. Apologies for Absence: Vivienne Lowe and Christine Rhodes

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 4th May 2024 were approved as a correct record

4. Election of churchwardens: Kathleen Hall and Wayne Rhodes had been nominated to serve again. The election of Wayne was permitted even though he has served for more than 6 years. There were no other nominations and both were unanimously elected for the coming year. Both were thanked for their work over the past year.

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

held on 18th May 2025 followed the above meeting.

1. Appointment of Secretary/Clerk for the Meeting:

Kathleen Hall was appointed as Secretary for this meeting.

2. Minutes of the APCM held on 4th May 2024 were approved as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.

4. Election of PCC Members: At the meeting held in 2023, the members of the PCC had drawn lots to decide whose period of service would be for 1 year, 2 years and 3 years. Linda Crowe's period of office was for one year and she was re-elected for 3 years in 2024; her term of office will cease in 2027. The terms of office of both Verna McEneny and Enid Alderson ended in 2025. Both have been nominated for re-election at this meeting.. There were no other nominations and both were unanimously re-elected. Their term of office will end in 2028. Vivienne Lowe's term of office will end in 2026. Chris Rhodes had been co-opted onto the PCC in the autumn of 2023 and her term of office will cease in 2026. One vacancy remains unfilled. All members were thanked for their work on the PCC

5. Appointment of an Independent Examiner: Mr. O’Hehir Jnr. of Geoff O’Hehir and Co. Ltd. was appointed as Independent Examiner for the coming year and thanks were given to him for his work.

6. Report of the Electoral Roll Officer: Verna reported that our Electoral Roll was completely revised this year and we now have 20 people on the Electoral roll.

7. Reports from the PCC:

Treasurer’s Report and Presentation of the Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2024 and Gift Aid Claim 2024.

Copies of the audited accounts had been circulated some weeks previously and the Financial Report was printed in the Annual Report for 2024. Both the Report and Annual Accounts were approved and thanks given to Stuart for his ongoing work.

The following reports had been circulated in the Annual Report and all were accepted:

The Curate’s Report

Secretary’s Report of business of the PCC during 2024

The Churchwardens’ Report on the Fabric of the Church.

Parish Safeguarding Officer’s Report

8. Reports from Church Groups and Activities

The Eco-Church/Environment Group and Home Group

These Reports had also been printed in the Annual Report and were accepted.

Thanks for their work and reports were extended to all who have contributed to the life and work of Whitworth Church.

9. Vicar's Report and Question Time

Matt read from John 13:31-15. He added that if nothing else is attained in 2025, we were to follow John's reading and love one another. Matt was thanked for all his work and leadership over the past year.

The usual Holy Communion service followed the meetings.

VWL from notes kindly taken by Kathleen Hall

22.5.2025

PCC SECRETARY'S REPORT OF THE BUSINESS OF THE PCC DURING 2025

The PCC has met on seven occasions. As usual, it has been a busy year and the Church of England's determination to ensure all churches are up to date in relation to their safeguarding procedures has meant that every PCC meeting has had tasks to discuss and to be satisfied that we are adhering to the rules. PCC members are also required to undertake various levels of training – some online, some on face to face courses and the PCC are extremely grateful to June Wilson, our Safeguarding Officer, who copes with all the demands that come with this role and keeps us on track.

The usual pattern of services throughout the year continued and we were very grateful to a number of retired priests who took services while our Vicar, Matt, was on extended leave in the early part of the year when there was severe illness in the family. Our Curate, Rev. Lee Tremorrow-Earl, was priested in the summer but, sadly, also had to take a period of extended leave in the latter part of the year when a family member became very unwell but we looked forward to his return to full time work in 2026.

We had a Parish Inspection on behalf of the Archdeacon in September. These visits are designed to

enable advice to be offered to parishes if any areas are lacking but we appear to be functioning satisfactorily.

Raising funds continues to be an ongoing concern for the PCC; particularly given the likely cost of outstanding work needed to keep this historic Grade II listed building in good order. The two concerts we organised were very well attended, enjoyable and raised some much needed funds. In the autumn the Hotel reopened as a wedding venue and quickly had a very high number of bookings. We have been grateful that we are able to use their lower car park for our events and for the gift of a fine Christmas tree for the church. However, it has proved very difficult to attract couples to hold their wedding ceremonies in our church and this is an area we hope to focus on during 2026.

The PCC produced a Christmas card outlining our Christmas and other services and delivered it round part of the new Burton Beck housing as well as within the Parish. This seems to have been worthwhile as the church was packed for the Carol Service – with a good number of younger people attending as well. Given that there are only 35 houses actually in the Parish, we urgently need to reach out to some of the nearby new

housing. As we are an ageing congregation, the need to bring in younger people is not only our mission, but vital for the survival of this parish church.

Vivienne Lowe

PCC'S ANNUAL REPORT ON SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding is on our PCC Agenda for every meeting we hold. We have been working through different worksheets which cover different safeguarding issues. This has been very fruitful. Kath and June, as well as Matt, have just completed their Leadership Training. All other training is up to date. We completed a Risk Assessment when the Easter Egg Hunt was held on Easter Monday. All helpers were DBS checked. Safety issues were followed.

June Wilson, Parish Safeguarding Officer

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT ON FABRIC OF THE CHURCH

General

2025 at Whitworth Church has been another difficult year with the continued temporary closure of Whitworth Hall Hotel and the loss of access to the hotel car parks. This has affected attendances at Sunday

services and the number of weddings and baptisms. Sunday morning Holy Communion Service and Monday Morning Prayer continue with Evening Prayer every 1st Sunday of the month. The year ended with Christmas Eve Midnight Service.

Services were held for 3 Baptisms, 2 Funerals and an Easter Sunday Dawn service. A Carol service was also held together with a Musical Evening and a Christmas Drop-in event in lieu of the usual Taste of Christmas. An Easter Egg hunt with stalls and refreshments was held on Easter Monday. There were no wedding services held.

As Whitworth Church is on the pilgrim route "The Way of Life" from Gainford to Durham Cathedral the opening of the church unmanned on Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays, whenever possible, during daylight hours continues.

With regard to the installation of the accessible toilet and upgraded lighting system, the Defects Correction Period of 12 months for the contract with Monument Design and Construction terminated in November 2024. A number of items needed attention in particular the faulty uplighting to the chancel ceiling, faulty pillar lights to the footpaths, clearance of stones in the churchyard and large stones scattered in the carpark which were a

health and safety hazard. Several of these items remained outstanding at the end of year 2024 and was not until late 2025 that they were largely resolved and final bills could be paid.

The Quinquennial Report highlighted the need for replacement of the cast iron guttering and repointing of some stonework – the problem of damp will not be resolved until this work is carried out. Obtaining estimates for this work threw up the need to urgently replace the Vestry roof - work that should be completed prior to guttering and pointing. The likely cost of these works will be high and application for grants will be essential.

The organ suffered damage from rodents both mice and rats eating the leather bellows. Temporary repairs were carried out by Harrison and Harrison and Durham County Council Pest Control Unit placed poison for several weeks until evidence showed that the rodents had gone.

We had a Parish Inspection on behalf of the Archdeacon of Auckland in September. These visits are designed to enable advice to be offered to parishes if any areas are lacking but we appear to be functioning satisfactorily.

The potentially dangerous wall at the entrance to the church access lane, which was first reported to Durham

County Highways Department in November 2017 and again in September 2022 is still unresolved. The wall is actually owned by Whitworth Hall Hotel but is considered to be a danger to those using the public footpath alongside the boundary wall.

The Churchwardens Kath and Wayne were sworn in for another year at St. Edmunds Church, Sedgefield, on 10th June at the Archdeacons Visitation.

Whitworth Church joined with St. Pauls for Spennymoor Food Bank.

Operation Christmas Child shoe box appeal held in November yielded some 70 boxes from Whitworth Church and contacts with others.

Renewals and Inspections

11/06/25 – Organ bellows - repaired – Harrison and Harrison

23/07/25 – 5/08/25 – DCC Pest Control

19/08/25 – Fire Extinguishers serviced – Peterlee Fire Co. (Churches Fire & Security)

The 1722 Communion Church Plate consisting of Chalice, Patten, Flagon and Dish are held in Durham Cathedral.

All registers and records apart from the current ones are deposited in Durham County Records Office. There were no additions or removals.

The Churchwardens would like to thank Matt and Lee for their help and guidance during this difficult year, the Deputy Churchwardens Verna and Vivienne, Enid for playing the organ, Kath for flowers, all those who gave their time to clean the church and also Tom McEneny for all his hard work behind the scenes.

Wayne Rhodes and Kath Hall

Churchwardens

April 2026

ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT 2025

The financial performance for the period 1st January to 31st December 2025 shows an overspend of £4970. This shortfall needs to be broken down as follows:

Restricted Funds: Shortfall £2163

This is money allocated for specific purposes, the shortfall has reduced the balance we hold for these works/maintenance which is kept separate from the monies we use to run the Church (See Unrestricted Below).

Unrestricted Funds: Shortfall £2807

Unlike Restricted Funds above, this shortfall reduces our financial resources to run the Church. This can be seen from our Cash Balances held at the end of the year to £8280 from the £11087 from the start.

This is a worrying trend even if the deficit this year is lower than in previous years. This reflects the hard work of the PCC and Congregation through Giving and Fund Raising as well as be careful of expenditure.

Stuart Wright

Treasurer

PARISH GIVING REPORT 2025

There are eight steadfast givers whose regular monthly giving accumulated £4152 towards the total revenue of the Church. In addition some of the contributors gift

aided their giving and a further £762 was claimed from HMRC (see Gift Aid Report).

This is a regular income source which contributes to the day to day running expenses of the Church.

A big thank you to Linda Crowe for her continuing efforts to promote this scheme.

Stuart Wright

Treasurer

GIFT AID CLAIM 2025

A total of £2091 was reclaimed from HMRC. This was made up from Parish Giving (See Parish Giving Report) as well as donations made by Covenants and Gift Aid Small Donations (GASDS) during the Tax Year of 2024 /2025.

The breakdown was as follows:

Parish Giving £762

GASDS. £302

Covenants/Donations £1027

Stuart Wright

Gift Aid Officer

CURATE'S REPORT 2025

When I look back on the past year, first and foremost, I would say it has been a year of immense privilege.

It was an incredible moment for me to be priested in July at Durham Cathedral, alongside friends and colleagues I trained with, and with the smiling faces of many of you in the front rows—something I will never forget.

It was also a profoundly memorable moment to preside for the first time at both Whitworth and St Paul's, among two congregations I have grown very fond of. It was especially meaningful to have my mum and my close friend Emma there as well. I cannot fully express how beautiful and humbling that was.

I continue to be struck by the wonder of Holy Communion each time I say:

“The body of Christ, broken for you.”

My prayer is that I would continue to live and serve in that awe and wonder, together with you all.

At the same time, this year has also been one of significant challenge—both personally and for us as a church family.

In particular, it was a deeply concerning time when Matt's daughter was hospitalised, and Matt needed to

step back from ministry. This was especially difficult for Matt and his family, whom we held in prayer.

Nevertheless, I found it incredibly inspiring to witness how both churches came together—both in practical ways, sustaining the life of our communities, and in the care and support shown to Matt and his family.

Since then, it has been so encouraging to see Zoe's recovery and the way God has been at work. It has reminded me of the strength, compassion, and faithfulness that exist within this church community—and ultimately flow from the very heart of God.

Since September, I have also faced personal challenges alongside my family, as we have supported my daughter through significant struggles with her mental health. This led to her being hospitalised, and to my decision to step back from ministry for a time to prioritise our wellbeing.

This was a demanding season, with many hours spent travelling to and from the ward. I remain deeply grateful for your prayers and the many messages of love and support.

Following Asia's discharge, I have begun to resume my ministerial responsibilities. I have greatly missed being more fully involved in the life of the church and in the work I believe God has called me to. Although

returning initially felt daunting, I now have a renewed sense of confidence and a growing awareness of God's leading as I step back into ministry.

As I look ahead to this next year of my curacy, I do so with hope and anticipation. I look forward to taking my first wedding, becoming more involved in our Eco Church group, and continuing to serve and lead at Whitworth and St Paul's in a variety of different and rewarding ways, as well as within the wider community.

I look forward to all that God has in store for us as we continue to seek him together.

Revd. Lee Earl

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

We have had 3 Deanery Synod Meetings since our last APCM which included talks by Annwen Stone on "Thy Kingdom Come", Alasdair Prince on Diocesan matters, Nicky Chater sharing her work with Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller Friendly Churches. All three talks were very interesting. Also, we hear of what is happening in the Diocesan Synod and the Area Dean's Notices. Our next meeting will be held on 8th July at St. John's Church, Shildon, 7.30pm. The Confirmation Service this year will be held on 10th October 2026.

June Wilson

SPENNYMOOR AND DISTRICT CHURCHES TOGETHER

The year 2025 has been one of gentle growth, collaboration, and shared purpose as we have continued to walk together in serving our local communities.

During the year, we made the transition from *Churches Together* to *Churches Acting Together*, aligning ourselves with *Northeast Churches Acting Together*. This change reflects a desire not only to be united in name, but also in action, as we seek to live out our shared calling in practical and visible ways.

We have been encouraged by the continued opportunities to gather and support one another through shared events across our local churches. These moments of coming together have strengthened relationships and deepened our sense of community.

A particular highlight was our involvement in the local Gala, where we hosted a stall and created bug hotels. This provided a simple but meaningful way to engage with the wider community, offering space for conversation, creativity, and connection.

Our care for the environment has also been expressed through our November environmental gathering and litter pick, a small but important act of stewardship

that brought people together in looking after our local area.

During the Christmas season, we shared in the joy of carol singing in Asda and Wetherspoons, bringing a sense of warmth, familiarity, and celebration into everyday spaces within our community. With monies raised donated to Crisis.

This year has also seen the introduction of new social media platforms, with the launch of Facebook and Instagram pages. These offer gentle ways to stay connected, share news, and highlight the life of our churches and the work taking place across our communities.

As we continue forward, we seek to encourage one another in supporting both our individual churches and our shared mission. Each contribution, however small, plays a part in building stronger, more connected communities. We hope to have more collaborative events where we can bring the larger community together.

As we reflect on this shared journey, we are reminded of the words from Ecclesiastes 4:9–10:

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.”

We give thanks for all that has been shared and achieved this year and look ahead with hope as we continue to grow together in unity, service, and care.

With thanks to Emma Blagburn

ECO CHURCH/ENVIRONMENT GROUP REPORT

We did not meet very much last year due to Emma's mum's illness and finally her death. Emma was our Lead. People on the committee were Emma Blagburn, Paul Simpson, Lesley Parratt, Linda Crowe and June. The last thing we organised was the Litter Pick at St. Paul's Church, Spennymoor. Due to weather and lack of helpers it was decided to stay and collect litter around the church, rather than walk to Whitworth for activities and refreshments. I think we may have collected 2 or 3 bags which were left at the side of the road for collection by the Council. It was decided at our last PCC meeting that we would try to commence this activity with the help of Rev Lee as our Lead. A meeting will be held in Weatherspoons on Tuesday 7th April at 3pm. Please do come along if you want to know more.

June Wilson

HOMEGROUP

When all are present, we are a small group of 5 people who meet at the home of Norma Metcalfe in Spennymoor. Numbers do fluctuate with ill health and other commitments but we have enjoyed meeting together quite regularly to discuss different topics which Matt sets us. We start with prayer and some music, go into our discussion and end in prayer. This can take just over 1 hour then we enjoy refreshments and a catch up. Our next meeting will not be until Tuesday 14th April at 2pm, hopefully at Norma's. Anyone is welcome to attend.

June Wilson