



The Friends of Steyning Parish Church

A G E N D A

For the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Steyning Parish Church
to be held on 10th October 2026 at 6 pm at Penfold Hall, Church St,
Steyning BN44 3YB

1. Welcome
2. Minutes of the 2025 AGM (circulated with this Notice).
3. Election of Trustees. Four of our current Trustees are offering themselves for re-election; they are

Jeremy Tomlinson (Chair)

Sarah Leigh

John Downe

Sarah Lavery who has been our ex officio Churchwarden Trustee but is no longer a churchwarden is now offering herself for election as a Trustee.

(Tony Struthers and our Treasurer, Julia Bonner are both standing down as Trustees.)

The Rev. Mark Heather, as Vicar, and **Judie Thomson** who is now a Churchwarden will be our ex officio Trustees so do not require election.

Other nominations for Trustees can be made by any member and should be sent to Sarah Leigh, the Secretary to the Trustees on the nomination forms enclosed with this notice before 8 October 2026 please at friends@friendsofspc.org.

4. Chairman's Report (attached)
5. Treasurer's Report and Accounts (attached)
6. Any other business.

Supporting Papers to the AGM 2026 Notice

1. Nomination paper for use to nominate a new Trustee
2. Chairman's Report for 2026
3. Accounts for 2025.
4. Minutes of the 2025 AGM.
5. Chairman's Report for 2025.

6.



The Friends of
Steyning
Parish Church

Nomination Paper

If you would like to nominate a trustee to the Charity please complete the form below, get your nominee to sign it to indicate consent, and return it to Sarah Leigh, Secretary to the Trustees, by email to friends@friendsofspc.org. or by hand or post to Rosebank, Jarvis Lane, Steyning BN44 3GI

I wish to nominate to be a trustee of the Charity.

Please print your name

Signed.....date.....

I wish to second the nomination

Please print your name

Signed.....date.....

I consent to be nominated

Please print your name

Signed.....date.....

FRIENDS OF STEYNING PARISH CHURCH

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2026

The essential spirit of the Friends of Steyning Parish Church was made manifest in home-made scones with cream and jam, local honey, widely contrasting works of art, horticultural wisdom, social interactions and intense voluntary efforts, as Sarah Leigh generously opened her garden in August and a large number of Friends came along, raising over £1400. It was a highlight of the long hot summer of 2026 and our principal event since the last AGM.

Warmest thanks are due to Sarah for her meticulous organization and for allowing us to trample about in her house and garden. Elisabeth Harden's paintings of Palestine in the 1990s and of Steyning Church were on display in the dining room (where Alec's honey was for sale) and Suzy Barnard's studio in the barn was full of her art. Penny Reeve gave a fascinating account of the genesis of her statue of St Cuthman, the illustrations for which will soon be on our website. Especial thanks to Lindsay Sharrier for her floral decorations and Layla Tunncliffe for managing the plant stall. Lynne Broome, Sue Reed, Debbie Chalmers and Alex Bell gave of their expertise at a Gardeners Q and A. Trustees and committee members and too many other Friends to name worked tirelessly to ensure that everyone enjoyed themselves while contributing as much as possible to the funds. As always John and Felicity Downe, Bill and Judie Thomson, Edward and Kate Harrison and Sarah Lavery were crucial to the success of the occasion. My heartfelt thanks to all these stalwart friends of the church.

The AGM in 2025 took place on 12 October. Thirty members were present. Hannah Betts was welcomed as a new member of the committee and as Secretary (for a probationary year), taking over from Sarah Leigh who had again stood in after Jane Keane had to step down. Jeremy Tomlinson (Chairman), Julia Bonner (Treasurer), John Downe (who with his wife Felicity has done so much to recruit new members and sustain the enthusiasm of the Charity) and Tony Struthers were re-elected as Trustees with, ex-officio, Fr Mark Heather (the Vicar) and Sarah Lavery (Churchwarden). Total funds stood at almost £112,000. A brief talk was given by Dr. Emma Arbuthnot, the Senior Church Buildings Officer for the Diocese of Chichester, about the role of the Diocesan Advisory Committee and the function of Faculty jurisdiction. Emma cast a reassuring light on what is sometimes seen as a forbidding formality.

Before the AGM, a questionnaire had been sent out in the hope of finding out what sort of activities members would like to participate in, and gleaning ideas about methods of raising money while also interesting and informing people about the church, which are our objectives. This gave rise to a lively and valuable consultation session in which an extensive list of possibilities was compiled. This list has been scrutinized by the committee in subsequent meetings and some

suggestions have already been adopted. A sub-committee has been drafting rules for a 200 Club which will be launched in the new year, giving members a chance to win some reward for making regular donations to the charity. On 27 February 2027 (put the date in your diary now) a Race Night will be held when you can have a modest flutter and all the thrill of the track in the comfort of the Steyning Centre, to the accompaniment of fish and chips. Plans are also afoot to revive the Holly Fair just before Christmas 2027 and combine it with a Christmas Tree Festival: something to look forward to but still a long way ahead. It will involve a great deal of work!

Meanwhile on 10 October this year at 6.00pm in Penfold Hall we have the ninth Annual General Meeting. The Trustees to be elected are slightly changed: Jeremy Tomlinson, Sarah Leigh and John Downe remain. Tony Struthers is standing down following serious health issues this summer from which we wish him a good recovery and hope he will soon be with us again. Also for reasons of health, Julia Bonner has resigned as Treasurer and Trustee and we thank her for all she has done for the Friends. This includes the preparation and submission of the latest accounts. The current balances are £5,370.65 with Barclays and £111, 923.84 on deposit with the CCLA. Sarah Lavery hands over to Judie Thomson ex-officio, having succeeded her as churchwarden, with the Revd Mark Heather, the Vicar. Brian Sawyer, to whom we also wish a speedy recovery, and Carol Mitchell represent the musical element of our activities and bring valuable experience to the committee. We have been delighted to welcome to the team two new and very enthusiastic recruits – Elaine Phillips and Kate Monahan who are already taking on responsibilities. All these volunteers make an enormous contribution to the work of the charity and we need to recruit more, younger blood to keep up the momentum. There is an immediate vacancy for a Treasurer.

After the formal business of the evening and a glass of wine, Derek Vine (of Star fame) will run a light-hearted quiz for members. We do urge you to be present and to bring guests (who do not need to be members but might be tempted to join). The questions will mostly be of general knowledge but there will be one section on Steyning Church itself: so do your homework!

Christine Aubrey, who is Safeguarding Officer of the church is preparing a Safeguarding Policy for the Friends which will come into force in the near future. Christine has chaired and propelled the Project and Fundraising Committee for many years, and extensive work has been done, notably by Tony Struthers and Stephen Holliday, on appeal documents and grant applications. It is immensely gratifying to record that, as I write, the scaffold is going up on the tower to enable the urgent works to be carried out in the next three months. This is a major step forward, and the Friends are ready to make a significant donation. We have also pledged to help repair two historic gravestones, the font and the door moulding, and to renew the list of (bona fide) Vicars. Completing the work on the tower, together with other recent repairs, will clear the decks for another

assault on the essential improvements which will make the church safer, more accessible, more inclusive and better equipped to be a cherished, self-sustaining cultural, social and spiritual resource for this thriving parish.

Jeremy Tomlinson

Chairman September 2026

Friends of Stegning Parish Church

Registered Charity No. 1169773

Income and Expenditure Account 1st January 2025 to 31st December 2025

	2025	2024
	£	£
INCOME		
Donations	1,240.82	1,561.89
Interest	4,504.08	4,697.57
Hanover Band Concert	240.07	699.40
Wine etc.at Events	149.00	200.00
Stegning Society - Winchester Trip	100.00	
Vicars Talk		225.60
	6,233.97	7,384.46
EXPENDITURE		
Stegning PCC towards Conservation Survey		
IT Support	153.77	
Ten Fee	21.00	21.00
Ecclesiastical Insurance	221.35	210.88
Web Design	75.00	
Printing (Leaflets)	280.00	390.00
Fastmail	51.30	
	802.42	621.88
		-
Deficit / Surplus	5,431.55	6,762.58
2024 Funds Carried Forward	108,992.94	102,230.36
Funds at 31st December	114,424.49	108,992.94
Balance Sheet at 31st December 2024		
Funds	114,424.49	108,992.94
Assets		
Barclays Bank PLC Current account	4,533.34	3,605.87
COIF Deposit account	109,891.15	105,387.07
	114,424.49	108,992.94

Julia Bonner Hon. Treasurer

Date.....

Independent Examiners Report

I have examined the income and expenditure account for the period ended 31st December 2025 and Balance Sheet at 31st December 2025 and confirm that they are in accordance with the records of the charity.

Paul Kirkbride

Date.....

Minutes of the eighth Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Steyning Parish Church held on Sunday 12 October 2025 at 4 pm in the Penfold Hall

Present about 30 Members. Apologies had been received 9 members (Sally Dench, Siobhan Denning, Melinda Tenant-Flowers, Alec Harden, Elisabeth Harden, Bill Thomson, Judie Thomson, Len Warner, John Charles Williams) but only Judie Thomson, Membership Officer was mentioned by the Chairman – she was ill.

1. Minutes of the 2024 AGM were approved and there were no matters arising.
2. Election of Trustees. Five of our current Trustees were re-elected en bloc.

Jeremy Tomlinson (Chair)

Julia Bonner, Treasurer

John Downe

Sarah Leigh

Tony Struthers

There were no nominations for new Trustees.

The Rev. Mark Heather, as Vicar, and **Sarah Lavery** as Churchwarden are ex officio Trustees so do not require election.

3. The Chairman's Report had been circulated and is attached to these Minutes; he mentioned a few of its features.
4. Treasurer's Report and Accounts had been circulated and Julia Bonner mentioned our present financial position; there were no questions on the accounts.
5. Fundraising Report; christine Aubrey had circulated a report (attached) and there was some discussion about the progress of the appeal which is going reasonably well given the current economic climate.
6. There was no other business and the AGM proper closed at 4.20.

It was followed by a talk by Dr Emma Arbuthnot on the work of the Diocesan Advisory Committee for Chichester Diocese; Emma will supply a text of this interesting session for the Friends' website.

That was followed by tea and a consultation session on the future of the Friends, which is now about 10 years old, having begun deliberations in the spring of 2015 although not finally incorporated until 19 October 2016.

Consultation session and review of Members replies to the August Survey.

This session was led by the Vicar Trustee, Fr Mark Heather, who with Judie Thomson and Sarah Leigh had formulated the Survey sent out to members; Bill Thomson had provided the feedback analysis with piecharts which was available at the meeting (annexed).

Fr Mark reported that 34 members had responded to the questionnaire which was a good response (from a membership of now 200).

The discussion focussed on the second part of the questionnaire.

7) Apart from concerts, what sort of events might be of interest to you personally?

This produced a splendid response from those present including the following contributions.

A Youth Club - Andrew Slater suggested a Youth Club such as many of us had been members of as young people (as it was acknowledged generally that we were quite an elderly membership and need above all to remedy that). Fr Mark welcomed this and said the Church has now recruited Gary Pickett as family and children's worker and also that the Grammar School is about to have a Mission session.

Poetry - Toli Lemon suggested a poetry evening.

Garden party - People recalled the splendid garden party at Saffons in Holland Road some weeks ago and suggested that if we served 'quality' wine and nice canapés we could charge much £15 or so – perhaps in the Vicarage garden which had been such a success for recent events.

Flower Festival - Jackie Flowers-Leek suggested another Flower Festival as that had been a great money-maker for the Friends in 2016 and this was enthusiastically supported although none of the Flower Team were present! The previous event had been largely on their shoulders but this was not a necessary feature of the planning – one of our members, Lindsey Sharrier, had done the beautiful flower arrangements for this event which were all round us and she later came to collect them and was prepared to entertain the idea for 2027 or later. Don Harry who had been Treasurer at the time and his wife Lynda said it had taken him a week to count the takings!

Sculpture and art – we have had art shows before but Gillian Venton suggested we might include sculpture.

Theatre - Elaine Phillips suggested a theatre production as this was recently done in the tiny St Botolphs with great success and our Church could hold a big audience. Various people including Tom Aubrey recalled the Christopher Fry play the *Boy with the Cart* and. Brian Sawyer remembered that Michael James, SGS music teacher had written an opera – Jenny Toomey remembered seeing it.

Opera - Brian Sawyer remembered that Michael James, SGS music teacher, had written an opera – Jenny Toomey remembered seeing it.

Trivia Quiz – Tony Struthers remembered the Friends of Street Church (Petersfield) which he had previously chaired running one of these with good financial results.

Race Night – suggested by Tony Struthers

We moved on to discuss concerts

Folk Music – David Lemon's suggestion.

Lunchtime concerts (someone else suggested and of course the Church is already doing these, by Brian Sawyer.)

Jazz concerts

Sea Chanties – Andrew Slater (who has attended such concerts by a group in Shoreham by Sea). (Later someone else remembered how serving beer (instead of wine) had been much welcomed – this could apply for several types of event).

Lighter classical concerts such as the one last year involving some operetta.

Younger people – we could consult Gary Pickett about possible solutions here. Or Tom Aubrey suggested consulting the 6th Form (year 11?) at SGS for ideas. Brian Sawyer (who had been a music teacher there) said these days there was limited contact as current the teachers were under such pressure and several work part time but he would be happy to approach them.

TASS might help (Lynda Harry)

A Youth choir from Sweden had heard. Several people pointed out that having a youth event from a local group would bring in families.

A Bookshop event has filled the church (the Gilbert White one).

Major Problem

We didn't have time to discuss help but Sarah Leigh pointed out that all these delightful suggestions required a varying amount of organisation and work and your Committee does not have the resources even to carry out its core functions!

10) Would you be able to help by becoming a member of our committee?

Fr Mark pointed out that the pie chart indicated that one person had said they were interested in joining the committee – was that person here? Apparently no!

Sarah Leigh

FRIENDS OF STEYNING PARISH CHURCH

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2025

It is the tenth anniversary of the revival and reconstitution of the Friends under Sarah Leigh's guidance, and considerable progress has been made in that time.

At the 2024 AGM the Trustees were re-elected with the addition of Julia Bonner, who had taken over as Treasurer. Sarah herself continued as Publications Secretary, having also covered as Secretary since Liz Harries retired. Judie Thomson succeeded Sally Barnard as Membership Secretary and John and Felicity Downe agreed to continue recruiting members. All these officials do amazing work for the Friends, and we are very grateful to them and all members of the Committee for their inspiration and support. Jane Keane served as Secretary for most of the past year but sadly had to resign for personal reasons. We hope to find a successor very quickly.

The Friends rely on volunteers who give generously of their time and talents. David Fitton has done the annual inspection of our accounts for many years. We thank him very much and welcome Paul Kirkbride who has agreed to take over. Newsletters have been published and Edward Harrison has kept the website up to date. Brian Sawyer and Carol Mitchell are the driving force behind the many musical events which benefit the church. Christine Aubrey chairs the Project and Fundraising Committee which is liaising with the PCC, the Friends and the professional fundraisers to explore every possible way to find money for the church's considerable needs. Tony Struthers has brought valuable experience and insights to bear on this. The death of Malcolm Donaldson was a great loss to us and to the whole community: we extend our warmest sympathy to Julia and the family.

The needs of the church are well known but grow more challenging as time goes by. The **urgent** necessity to repair the tower and move the central heating boiler has tended to obscure the **essential** works to improve access, toilet and catering facilities and create safe space to move. Ironically money is needed for match funding to attract significant grants and the very improvements we wish to make would in themselves make fundraising easier once complete. Where and when do you start? Dealing with these conundrums, seeking the statutory permissions, writing appeal documents and applications (assisted by Stephen Holliday) and waiting for results occupy a lot of time and energy. So the launch of the public phase of the appeal is still some way ahead.

Meanwhile, there have been memorable activities in this past year which have brought in some money and strongly emphasised those needs as well as the potential of the church. Last November, soon after the AGM, there was a presentation about the Vicars of Steyning over the centuries. This had been triggered by the plan to have the list in church revised and regularised with new calligraphy which the Friends will pay for. The existing list has anomalies, and painstaking research has revealed imposters and resurrected absentees as well as highlighting some outstanding characters from the past. The present Vicar (who survived unscathed), Sarah Leigh, Chris Tod and Brian Hanson gave spirited performances, and Christopher Whittick had contributed fascinating research. Bill Thomson's ingenious timeline provided historical context. Also in November there was a Children's Extravaganza organised jointly with the Church. On 12 April, just before Holy Week, the Hanover Band and Chorus with excellent soloists, performed Bach's moving St John Passion in the church to a large and appreciative audience. On both occasions and many others Edward and Kate Harrison, Bill and Judie Thomson, Sarah Lavery and Kate Burnett with many other volunteers gave tremendous support.

On 20 May the Friends organised a trip to Winchester in the footsteps of Bishop Henry of Blois, thanks to Sarah Leigh, Nicola Mason (Chair of Steyning Festival), Sarah and Brian Lavery and their team. We started at the Hospital of St Cross where the masonry and stone carving in the Chapel bears very close resemblance to the magnificent Norman arcade at Steyning. The Brethren gave entertaining tours of the secular buildings. Many of us walked along the River Itchen to the Cathedral, had lunch and were given appropriately focused tours followed by visits to the Kings and Scribes exhibition. The sun shone, anecdotes emerged, the Tournai font proved a distraction, Jane Austen may have smiled a bit and the historic and architectural importance of Steyning Parish Church was properly acknowledged.

At the time of the 2025 AGM our total funds are just under £112,000 with no major commitments. The Church has received generous donations and legacies, one of which was in the form of shares which is tax efficient as no capital gains are charged. There are 195 members which is nearly a 15% increase on last year. Those who support us remain loyal and enthusiastic. We need more funds to contribute to the great work when the time comes, more members to recruit support and more volunteers to help, especially in a Festival year. May I urge all Friends to spread the word and encourage others to join? Membership is free but together we can help raise the vital funds the church so urgently needs, increasing and diversifying its use. To this end, please attend the AGM and the consultation which follows. Thank you very much for the many returns we have received. Your ideas are greatly valued, and your financial support makes a real difference.

Jeremy Tomlinson
Chair