



'Here we stand'

St. Peter's Church was built in 1938/9. As the world was fearing another war, the people of St. Peter's were investing in God's future for this parish. Their vision and commitment has been an inspiration for those that came later. The church was dedicated on March 4th, 1939. It had recently become a parish in its own right and owed much to the remarkable 33 years ministry of the first vicar, Bernard Hartley. It was he who helped establish the clear Bible and gospel ministry of the church and ensured that from the first St. Peter's was a classic evangelical Anglican church. We continue to want to stand in fellowship with all to uphold, defend and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ according to the doctrine of the Church of England. (That doctrine is defined and set out in Canon A5 as being "... grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures. In particular such doctrine is to be found in the 39 Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal).

That tradition and vitality has been continued now through eight vicars: the last four being Richard Bewes 1965-74, Miles Thomson 1974-86, Wallace Benn 1987-97, and the current vicar since 1998, David Banting, along with a series of outstanding lay leaders and Wardens. The last two incumbents were appointed with the *Crosslinks Statement of Faith** being central to the Parish Profile.

Since 1993 St. Peter's has been a *church* member of *REFORM* with the last two incumbents on the Council, so the *REFORM Covenant** has identified our theological foundation and position since then. Since the *Act of Synod* was put in place in 1993 as a result of women's ordination to the priesthood, the PCC has affirmed "Resolution B" three times (1993, 1998, and 2003). This is the provision that makes it possible to ensure St. Peter's incumbent is male. On the last occasion in 2003, the PCC specifically did not consider 'Resolution C', but reserved the right to do so later, if necessary.

The doctrinal and moral debates and uncertainties of the 1980s and 1990s not only in the C of E, but also increasingly in the Anglican Communion, were brought into focus at the 1998 Lambeth Conference and, as many hoped, duly resolved there. St. Peter's was particularly re-assured by the clarity of Resolution 1.10* on the place of Scripture and the compassionate, but unmistakable, re-commitment to traditional sexual morality.

However, along with other conservatives, St. Peter's has been concerned that this position was not universally honoured and carried through in the CofE, whose House of Bishops soon authorised Civil Partnerships as acceptable for those in same-sex relationships and individual Bishops assumed the patronage of organisations campaigning for a change in the Church's practice and teaching. The PCC asked the Vicar to request all visiting preachers to state their adherence to Lambeth 1.10. and it further seemed important for St Peter's to be clearly separate from such creeping revisionism (i.e. the "advocacy of a revision of core Christian doctrine and morality, in the sense of their broadening or evolution") as described above, and to re-articulate its long and consistent position of standing on the historic faith and teaching of the Scriptures, the priority of the gospel, and the traditional order and morality of the Church.

This recently led the PCC to identify with The Jerusalem Statement and Declaration* of 2008 from the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON), and the ensuing Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (UK) launched in 2009. The revisionist direction was continued by the General Synod in July 2008 with the decision to legislate for women as bishops. This prompted the PCC finally to consider and eventually petition for 'Resolution C' which enables us to seek alternative oversight from an orthodox bishop. That was granted in 2009, and so we have been episcopally served by the Bishop of Richborough (till his resignation in late 2010) while also continuing to be served by the Area Bishop of Barking. In the light of this, the *REFORM Covenant** was again re-affirmed in November 2010 by the Wardens and PCC as a benchmark for our position and practice.

On behalf of the fellowship of St. Peter's, the Wardens (past and present) affirm the long-standing consistency of this church's classic or conservative evangelical tradition and its present vitality and commitment to its inheritance of Anglican evangelical faith. The wider Church has for nearly twenty years continued to assert the "integrity" of this position, its "Anglican loyalty" and its "theological conviction and coherence". We re-affirm it today in 2010, and request our Patron, Bishops and diocese to honour, protect and support St. Peter's in where it has long stood in its mission and ministry and in its place and provision within the CofE locally and nationally.

This means that St Peter's will find itself out of fellowship with church leaders who are involved in same-sex partnerships or who teach that such conduct is Biblically valid and acceptable. Equally, if the General Synod makes no structural ecclesial provision for our integrity and for the conscientious minority caused by the introduction of Women Bishops, we will find ourselves without adequate and necessary Episcopal cover.

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Crosslinks Statement of Faith

<https://www.crosslinks.org/about-us/what-we-believe/>

Reform Covenant

<https://www.reform.org.uk/about/the-reform-covenant>

1998 Lambeth Conference Resolution I:10

<http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1998/1998-1-10.cfm>

The Jerusalem Statement and Declaration

<https://www.gafcon.org/resources/the-complete-jerusalem-statement>

SIGNED:	Current Wardens	Matthew Harrison
		Colin White
Former Wardens	Kevin Gilderson	
	Larry Morris	
	Dave Brunyee	
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Autumn 2013

The second Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON 2) was convened in Nairobi in October 2013 and concluded by issuing the *[Nairobi Communique and Commitment](https://www.gafcon.org/news/nairobi-communicue-and-commitment). This built on the earlier Jerusalem Statement and Declaration of the first GAFCON in 2008, which was endorsed by St Peter's PCC in its Theological Position Paper of 2010. In the light of developments within the Church of England during 2013, St Peter's PCC unanimously endorsed the Nairobi Communique and Commitment at its meeting of January 2014.

By the end of November 2013, the Church of England (principally through the General Synod and the House of Bishops) had finally laboured towards an agreed way forward on the issue of consecrating Women to the Episcopate and making possible provision for the traditionalist (Catholic) and conservative (Evangelical) conscientious minority. It had also received and published the 'Pilling Report', the House of Bishops two-year Working Group on Human Sexuality. At its January 2014 meeting, St Peter's PCC unanimously adopted from the Pilling Report the Bishop of Birkenhead's Dissenting Statement (and appendix) and, as a 'Reform church', the Reform PCC Resolution

In addition, the St Peter's PCC has re-affirmed to the Bishops of Chelmsford and of Barking that, as under the proposed arrangements for Women Bishops agreed by General Synod, it will in due course be writing a Letter of Request for the provision of appropriate Episcopal ministry and seeking assurance that they can continue to expect that their incumbent will be a man and that he will be understood to be able to continue to make his Oath of Canonical Obedience without compromise to his integrity and good conscience.

This *addendum* is made in recognition that the concerns in the final (italicised) paragraph in the original Theological Position Paper are now more urgent and substantial as a result of where the Church of England has taken itself.

6.1.14

* <https://www.gafcon.org/news/nairobi-communicue-and-commitment>

Addendum (2) to St Peter's Theological Position Paper**Ascension/Pentecost 2016**

In Autumn 2014, the ReNew conference was launched. ReNew is a partnership between Reform, Church Society and Anglican Mission in England (AMiE), all of which St Peter's supports, and has focused its aim and energies as 'pioneering, establishing and securing a nation of healthy local Anglican churches'. The St Peter's PCC has identified with this conference and aims to be represented there each year.

In November 2014, the CofE's General Synod's new canon allowing both men and women into the episcopate was 'promulged'. It allows two years for the provisions of 'Resolution C' to continue, but then lapse. The legislation promised the appointment of a 'conservative evangelical Bishop' to be made for that constituency, and the appointment of Rod Thomas (the national Chairman of Reform) as the new Bishop of Maidstone was announced in March 2015. The PCC explicitly, but probably unofficially, petitioned the Diocesan Bishop in July 2015 to 'transfer' St Peter's in effect from the Bishop of Richborough (under 'Resolution C') to the Bishop of Maidstone (under the new arrangements). Rod Thomas was consecrated in September 2015 and immediately began a nation-wide ministry. Two early occasions brought him to St Peter's – a Confirmation in November 2015 and a Leaders Away Day in January 2016. In January 2016, Bishop Rod was made an Assistant Bishop in the diocese of Chelmsford (and will so be in about eleven others in due course). Discussions have begun with the Diocesan Bishop and (new) Area Bishop to discover what role Bishop Rod might be able to play in the ordination of future staff.

In January 2016, the guidelines in Chelmsford Diocese for a parish to petition the Diocesan Bishop according to their theological (conservative evangelical) convictions for appropriate episcopal ministry were finally and officially published,

and a number of other parishes in the diocese have also made their petitions. Bishop Stephen has given to each an interim response suggesting he will wait to see how many petition him before the two years elapse before making a more specific response.

This second *addendum* is made in the light of developments after the Women Bishops legislation was passed, and the particular impact for St Peter's. The concerns over Issues in Human Sexuality remain, and are heightened by the recent 'Shared Conversations' around the dioceses in the last 18 months and their imminent resumption at General Synod in July 2016 and proposed conclusion in February/July 2017.

9.5.16

Addendum (3) to the St Peter's Theological Position Paper

8.1.2018

A third addendum is occasioned by significant developments in 2017 and inevitably by the notice of the Vicar's intention to retire after 20 years 'on or around Easter 2018'. When agreed, it will be added to the original Theological Position Paper (with its two addenda), but combined as near as possible into a single document with appropriate updates on online links.

The *ReNew Conferences (of autumn 2016 and 2017) continue to be supported by St Peter's ordained and lay leaders and strategically positive and visionary as St Peter's builds locally on the commitment 'to pioneer, establish and secure healthy local churches' in our locality, diocese and nation. In the course of 2017, St Peter's entered into a new partnership with three other neighbouring parishes (All Saints, St Michael's, and St Paul's with St Thomas'). This NE Havering Partnership in Mission & Ministry (PiMM)* was inaugurated on April 30, 2017, with its own Covenant Commitments and an annual rotation of Convenors, starting with the Vicar of St Peter's, but expecting to pass by April 2018 to the Vicar of St Michael's. The four Incumbents and their fellow clergy now commit to meet at least four times a year for prayer and counsel. This new level of gospel partnership is evidenced already by new links with all three other churches – clergy cover, sharing in prayer, leading new services, youth & children's work training and events, grafting over members from St Peter's into the other churches (esp. St Michael's).

St Peter's new curate was ordained as Presbyter by the Bishop of Maidstone at St Peter's on June 20.

The trajectory of the General Synod continued to make it harder for St Peter's to have confidence in the national Church structures and leadership. The Shared Conversations (July 2016) ended with a call all round for significantly more responsible discussion on the Bible foundations for Issues in Human Sexuality. The House of Bishops' Paper on Same-Sex Marriage (February 2017) was defeated (not 'taken note of') and led to a surge of further pressing the boundaries for revision. In July 2017, so-called conversion therapy was outlawed and the process for baptismal liturgy for the Transgendered was initiated, in debates that were widely condemned as professionally ill-informed, procedurally hasty, and ugly in tone and mood. Bishops in this diocese (Bradwell, then Chelmsford) made Statements which caused widespread confusion and concern, and prolonged further dialogue both from St Peter's and in conjunction with a wider coalition of Reform and New Wine has not secured any significant row-back or clarification. This has led many significantly to lose confidence in our wider leadership and some in this diocese into a form of impaired communion, articulated for some at ReNew as 'unavoidable avoidance' of false teaching. Marriage has been notionally maintained as between one man and one woman, but has been insufficiently taught and commended as the foundation of family life, community and society.

At a national and international level, this kind of apparent continuing revisionism precipitated in June 2017 the consecration of Andy Lines (Mission Director of *Crosslinks*) as an AMiE Bishop by the GAFCON and Global South Primates. Though his role is outside the formal structures of the CofE, St Peter's were keen to support him, especially in view of the fairly universal rejection by the various powers-that-be. The St Peter's PCC (in July) agreed to send a letter of support, calling others also to accept and support him. A further more local response came (after

some 18 months in the brewing) in the inauguration of the Essex & East London Partnership Synod (November 2017) and establishment of an associated Good Stewards Trust. The St Peter's PCC is invited to identify and join, and will consider this at its meeting in January 2018.

The prospect of a vacancy in the incumbency (from April 15, 2018) has brought much of this into vital and necessary focus as the Parish Profile is updated and the Person Specification for the next Vicar is considered. The Bishop of Maidstone will be 'thoroughly involved' in the whole appointment process. The Parish Profile of 1997 was undergirded by a Statement of Faith, articulated by *Crosslinks*. That Mission Agency continues to be wholeheartedly supported by St Peter's, and has had its own commitment to 'complementarianism' (as it is now called) and 'orthodoxy' and 'faithfulness' in matters of human sexuality, scrutinised and sharpened for the times. St Peter's is clear, confident and cheerful in wishing to retain and remain in its position and commitment as a historically faith-ful Anglican local church, 'holding on to and holding out the word of life', the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, as 'uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures'.

8.1.18

* <https://www.renewconference.org.uk/>