



# **Christ Church Eaton**

Here for Christ – here for you

**ANNUAL REVIEW OF 2025**

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# **PART ONE - CHRIST CHURCH REPORTS**

## **VICAR'S REPORT ON 2025**

Thank you to all who have contributed their reports to this Annual Review. I am, as always, deeply grateful to Ruth Thorp for collating the material, and to Catherine Richmond for her meticulous and patient work in formatting it. It is my sincere prayer that, as you read these pages, you are both informed and also inspired to grow in faith, hope, and love.

### **Growth in Discipleship, Service, Invitation and Welcome**

Our four-fold vision for growth continues to shape the life of Christ Church: growth in discipleship, service, invitation, and welcome. As I have reflected on this vision during 2025, I have become increasingly convinced that discipleship is not simply one commitment among four, but the root from which the others grow. Without it, service loses its spiritual meaning, invitation its importance, and welcome its depth. With it, all three are transformed.

But what is discipleship? It is not simply knowledge of the Bible, though that matters deeply. At its heart, it is sharing in Christ himself — being united to him, sharing his life, being changed by his presence. We are united to him in baptism, and we feed on him by faith, being nourished in communion. Discipleship is the outworking of that union: being apprenticed to Christ, learning to walk with him, to pray and to practise what we learn, becoming not merely hearers of God's word but doers of it (James 1:22). It involves specific practices — meeting with others, reading Scripture, praying, repenting, forgiving, giving, serving sacrificially — not as a ladder to climb, but as the natural rhythm of a life genuinely shaped by Christ.

This may not always be a familiar category for us. Many of us are wonderfully committed to serving, giving, and welcoming. But the deeper questions — are we being transformed as disciples? Are we growing in prayer and practice of our faith, not just in busy-ness? — are what I encourage us all to ponder, whether you are just beginning to

take discipleship seriously or have done so for many decades. It will be the central theme of our 2026 Away Day, and I look forward to exploring it together.

## **Stewardship of our Building**

In 2025 we have been faced with the practical reality that our beautiful church building — now over 150 years old — requires significant investment. Building on the 2023 Quinquennial report from our architect, Chris Mitchell has identified that repair of the nave roof, specifically the central aisle section, is likely to be needed in the next few years and will likely cost in the region of £150,000 at current prices. We will need to launch a funding campaign, and I want to put this in its proper theological context before we dive into the practicalities.

The New Testament is wonderfully clear that the Church — the true Church — is not a building but God's people. We are, in the words of 1 Peter, "living stones, being built up as a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5), with Christ himself as the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). Our worship is offered in spirit and truth (John 4:23), not dependent on any particular location or structure of slate and stone. The living Temple of God is the gathered community of the baptised, and no roof project, however necessary, changes that.

And yet our building is not irrelevant. For over a century and a half, it has served this community and its neighbours by providing a place where people come to pray, to sit quietly, to be married, to say farewell to those they love, and sometimes simply to wonder. To maintain it well is an act of generous stewardship, holding in trust what has been given to us, not for ourselves alone, but for the whole community. Indeed, the generosity it will require of us is itself a form of discipleship: a concrete opportunity to hold lightly what we own, to invest in something that outlasts us, and to trust God with significant resources. The building, rightly approached, can be an occasion for spiritual growth, not a distraction from it.

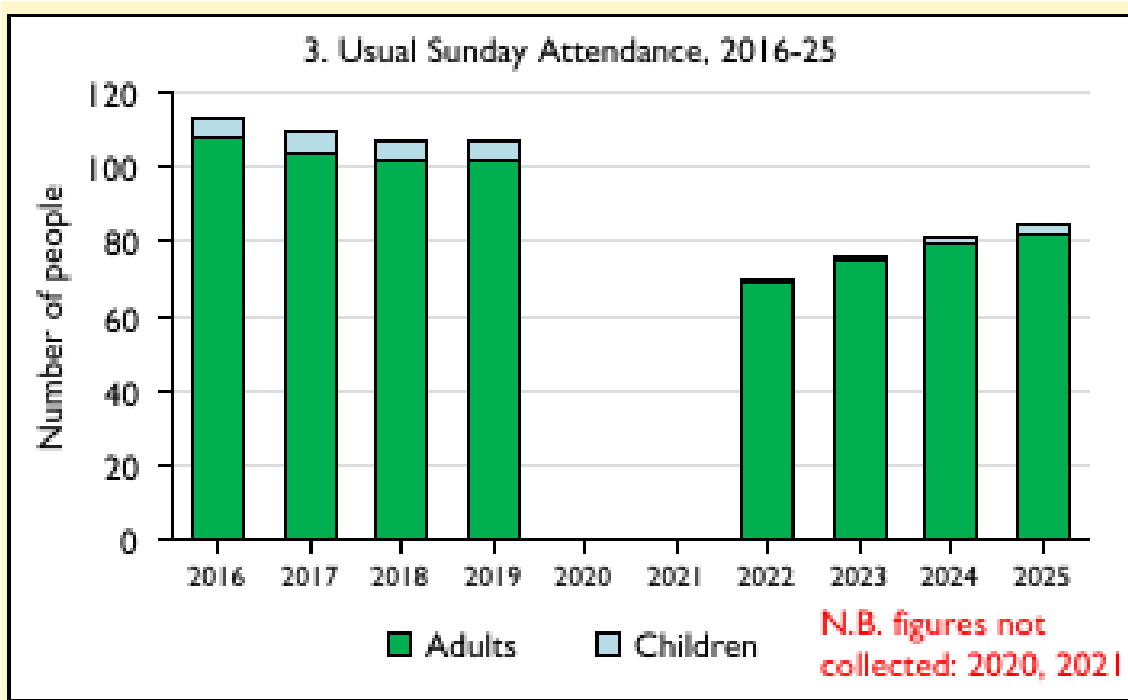
We must guard, however, against it becoming an all-consuming preoccupation. The physical building is a resource for discipleship, service, invitation, and welcome, not a substitute for them.

£150,000 is a substantial sum, but this congregation has risen to comparable challenges before: the restoration of our stained-glass windows and the renewal of the organ were both campaigns of similar scale, and both were met with remarkable generosity. We are a community with a proven capacity for this kind of sacrificial giving when the cause is worthy, and the faithful stewardship of this building, for the generations who will use it long after us, is indeed worthy.

There is also a genuinely exciting opportunity embedded in this challenge. Part of the roof repair may make possible the installation of solar tiles, which could significantly transform our energy use and carbon footprint — a practical expression both of our Eco Church commitments and of our calling as stewards of God's creation, which we hold as gift, not possession. We will bring more detail about the funding campaign to the congregation and the PCC in due course, and I warmly invite your prayerful engagement and generous support.

### **Attendance and Worshipping Community**

The Statistics for Mission figures for 2025 present an encouraging picture in most respects. Christmas attendance rose significantly, to 431 (up from 361 in 2024), and Easter attendance increased to 159 (from 155). Our Average Weekly Attendance in October reached 92 (up from 89), and our Usual Sunday Attendance was 85 (up from 81). Adults at the main Sunday services averaged 82 (up from 79), and children 3 (up from 2). Average weekly children's attendance rose to 6 (from 4 in 2024), which is encouraging, even as we recognise that reaching younger families is a continuing missional priority. This is not because our older members are anything other than the heart of this community, but because the gospel is for every generation, Jesus welcomed little children, and we want Christ Church to be here for those who come after us.



The overall Worshipping Community figure — those who attend at least once a month — has fallen from 148 to 136. 2025 was an Electoral Roll renewal year, and the Roll reduced from 153 to 130. This partly reflects that we have said warm, if sad, farewells to several members who have moved away from the area but also that it has become clear over the year that others are not coming at least monthly and so should not be counted, even if we see them occasionally. There has not been some sudden decision to avoid the church.

The good news is this: since most indicators of actual attendance have held steady or improved, those who remain seem to be attending more frequently. The improvement in our weekly averages, at a time when the Worshipping Community figure has fallen, suggests that what we have is a more actively engaged core congregation. At the same time, leavers continue to outnumber joiners (17 to 5), and that gap is a clear reminder that being invitational — giving genuine, warm, personal invitations — is clearly necessary. It is part of what it means to be a disciple: to share what we have found. Growing a church is not primarily a programme; it is a habit we should all have.

Thankfully, our Facebook following continues to grow, to 383 (from 347 in 2024).

## **Special Services and Worship**

As in previous years, we have marked the great occasions of the liturgical calendar with care and intention. Easter Day and Good Friday were both strong and widely appreciated. I would love more of our congregation to discover the Maundy Thursday Communion — it is a moving and atmospheric service, marking the institution of the Eucharist and the beginning and meaning of Christ's Passion.

Our all-age services have featured wonderful craft work by the children — and I am very grateful to Kathy Ladd, Caroline Gibbs, and their willing helpers for the creativity and effort they bring to these occasions. All-age worship matters not only for the children but for the whole congregation: it is a reminder that the body of Christ spans every age, and that the faith is something we receive, celebrate, and pass on together. We held an all-age celebration of Baptism and Godparenting, giving thanks for those who stand alongside children in faith, and an all-age celebration of marriage, to which couples were invited to renew their vows — a reminder that the commitment made at the altar is renewed in daily life, and is an image of Christ's commitment to his bride, the Church.

2025 marked the eightieth anniversary of VE Day and VJ Day, and we were glad to honour both occasions in our Sunday services. The VE Day tea was a particularly memorable occasion. We are grateful to two Deputy Lieutenants representing the Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk for attending: Caroline Jarrold DL (VE Day) and Ian Lonsdale DL (VJ Day). Their presence lent appropriate civic connection and dignity to our acts of remembrance.

There was a joint Ascension Day service for the deanery at St Mary's, Swardeston, who joined the deanery last year — a good occasion of wider fellowship, and a reminder that Christ Church belongs to a larger family of churches across this area.

Our "Come and Sing" Choral Evensongs — on the first Sunday of the month, mainly during the summer though not in August — continued to

provide rich worship. Choral Evensong offers something distinctive: an unhurried space for scripture, prayer, and music, and I warmly encourage people to come. Choir members and others generously provide afternoon tea beforehand, and the visiting organists who played during Matt's sabbatical brought their own warmth and skill to these services.

Last year I asked for prayer for our relationship with local schools, and I am glad to report that Colman Infant School visited the church during 2025. It was wonderful to welcome them here, and a genuine answer to prayer. We have not yet managed to restore services or assemblies with them, though it has been good to hold the Norwich High School Carol service and services and assemblies with Town Close School. Please continue to pray for our outreach to schools.

### **Courses and Formation**

We ran two courses during 2025. Our Lent course, "Talking Jesus," focused on the practical and relational dimensions of sharing our faith — how we speak of Christ to those around us, naturally and honestly. Our Advent course, "3 2 1," explored the meaning of life from a Christian perspective, offering a new and video-based presentation of the gospel. Both prompted real engagement, but we continue to explore how best to offer an enquirers' course. We are considering a different venue — perhaps with a shared meal — and a different course, depending on who is coming. The vicar's study, it turns out, can be a bit intimidating, and not everyone warms to an intellectual approach. More detail will follow as plans develop; in the meantime, if you know someone who might be interested in an enquirers course, please do mention it to me.

### **Baptisms, Marriages, and Funerals**

We gave thanks for 11 baptisms in 2025 — a significant and encouraging increase on the 5 in 2024 — and for 5 weddings. We accompanied 13 families through bereavement. Each of these “life events” — baptism, marriage, funeral — is an occasion of encounter:

with the great questions of life, and with the Christian hope that addresses them. I am grateful for every opportunity to serve families at these turning points, and to proclaim, in word and in deed, the grace and kindness of Christ.

Among those we have commended to God's mercy this year, I especially wish to name: Don Hobbs, a former Churchwarden whose faithful service to this church spanned many years; Beryl Watkins, a faithful and much-loved presence in the 8am congregation; Garry Wheatley, a longstanding member of our congregation, former Lord Mayor of Norwich, treasurer for both the Eaton parish and later for Christ Church, and loyal 8am sidesperson for over 40 years, who died shortly before Christmas; and, in 2026, June Bishop, who attended the 10am service faithfully for more than 40 years, and Ann Sykes, who attended the 10am service before the pandemic. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

### **A Heartfelt Thank You**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the many people who contribute so much to the life of Christ Church.

### **Churchwardens and Fabric:**

- Colin McLean, who has taken on the additional role of Lay Chair of the PCC alongside his continuing duties as Churchwarden — a significant commitment, deeply valued.
- Simon Girling, who stepped up to the role of Churchwarden with characteristic good humour and genuine dedication. It is wonderful to see him still smiling.
- Ruth Vaughan, who continues to serve faithfully as Deputy Warden and Sacristan after her retirement as Churchwarden. Her knowledge, experience, and commitment remain a great gift to us.
- Chris Mitchell, who very kindly agreed to continue overseeing the church fabric and to complete outstanding works on Kinchen Hall during 2025, while stepping back from work on the cottage. His

continued generosity, well beyond what anyone could have expected, is remarkable and greatly appreciated.

- Colin McLean and Simon Girling have put in considerable work to keep Kinchen Hall in good order for the Beehive nursery.

### **Worship and Music:**

- Matt Wright, our Organist and Choirmaster, whose sabbatical in the summer was well earned and warmly supported. His being awarded the HonRSCM in October — in recognition of his 20 years of outstanding service to the RSCM — was richly deserved.
- David Uden, Ellie Hanton, Dave Ballard, and Nora Rechel, who covered services, rehearsals, and the Choral Evensong programme during Matt's absence.
- Ros Wright, whose health has meant, very sadly, that ordination has not been possible. She continues to visit us, has sung with the choir, and has generously helped with communions at Chiswick House residential home and the Hawthorns nursing home, and with our Friday Zoom Morning Prayer. She remains very much in our hearts and in our prayers for a full recovery.

### **Clergy and Lay Ministry:**

- Alistair Bolt (LLM) and John Harrison (retired and active LLM), for their continuing ministry.
- Robin Quine (Authorised Worship Assistant), who has taken many services and also been offering occasional and valued support to the pastoral team. Robin has decided that he needs a rest from duties for a while and our prayers are with him for his sabbatical.
- The Reverends Maggie Diffey, Andrew Parsons, Kate Belcher, and Colin Reed, who have so kindly taken 8am services.

### **Service Coordination:**

- Richard Rivett (10am reader rota), Jeff Arden (intercessions rota and card distribution), and David Edmonds (8am rotas).

### **Youth and Children:**

- Geraldine Verschoor, for her continuing leadership of the Sunday School, the Praying for Growth group, and The Chosen viewing group.
- Caroline Gibbs, who leads safeguarding and whose flexibility and creativity in Sunday School have helped children feel genuinely valued and included.
- Kathy Ladd, Caroline Gibbs, and their willing helpers, for the imagination and care they bring to craft and activities in our all-age services.

### **Communication, Outreach and Hospitality:**

- Catherine Richmond, for her work on the parish website, notice sheets, service sheets, and social media.
- The magazine team, editors, and all who distribute the magazine to local subscribers.
- Steph Brookes, who retired in March 2026 as leader of Chat Over a Cuppa after years of faithful, warm-hearted service — we are very grateful for all she has given to that ministry.
- Jane Colman, who has stepped in to lead Chat Over a Cuppa, and whom we warmly welcome to that role.
- Bridget Archer and Julie Bolt for their continuing leadership of Talks@2.

### **Administration, Finance and Governance:**

- Ian Parkes, our PCC Secretary, and all who serve on the PCC.
- Tony Grubb (Treasurer) and Kyla Price (Finance Officer), for their careful and diligent stewardship of the church's finances.
- Catherine Jeffries, who continues to claim Gift Aid on donations outside the Parish Giving Scheme.
- Everyone who gives financially to the church. Your generosity enables us to maintain our building and grounds, support our staff, pay the parish share, and contribute to various charities and causes.

### **Pastoral Care and Community:**

- Vivien Humber, for her compassionate and thoughtful leadership of the Pastoral Care Team.
- Jacky Sutcliffe who helps with pastoral care, phone calls, and visits, and Julie Bolt and Robin Quine, for giving occasional support.
- Our grateful thanks to Anna MacDougall, who has stepped down after her valued service to the team.
- John Ladd, for hosting the men's discussion group on Saturday mornings.

### **Maintenance, Cleaning and Gardening:**

- Bridget Archer, for her excellent and professional work as Church Cleaner.
- Carrie Phoenix and Ian Phoenix, for their care of the church flowers and the Garden of Remembrance.
- Richard Rivett and his team of volunteers for maintaining the church grounds.

### **Friends of Christ Church:**

- David Scott and the Friends Management Team, for their ongoing fundraising efforts for the fabric of our building.

### **Group Ministry:**

- James Cook, Vicar of St Andrew's, whose close cooperation — particularly over the children's workshops throughout the year — continues to be a great support. It was also good fun to play various parts in his children's workshop dramas.

### **Parishes Office:**

- Ruth Thorp, our Administrator, for her outstanding and indispensable support.
- Kyla Price, for her flexible and excellent assistance.

## **Wider Ministry Beyond Eaton**

I retired as Rural Dean last summer, after several years in that role. James Cook also stepped down as Chapter Clerk as he settles into his incumbency, and I am grateful to him for all he brought to that role.

Our prayers go with Graham Wilkins, Vicar of Cringleford, who has taken on the Rural Deanery — a demanding and rewarding ministry, and one I am glad to have handed on to such capable hands. I continue to serve as a member of General Synod, Diocesan Synod and Bishops Council of Trustees as Chair of the House of Clergy.

## **Looking Forward**

As we move into 2026, I want to focus on three things that most need our prayerful attention and practical engagement as a congregation.

***Discipleship.*** Our *Away Day* this year will ask what it truly means to be apprenticed to Christ today — not merely to attend, give, and serve, but to be transformed by him. I hope you will come, and I hope you will consider the question throughout the year.

***Invitation.*** Leavers outnumber joiners. The good news we have is too good to keep to ourselves. Whether through a conversation over coffee, inviting someone to church event, or bringing a friend to a service — please do not leave invitation to someone else.

***The roof.*** The funding campaign further ahead will require real generosity from all of us. This congregation has met challenges of this scale before — the stained-glass and the organ are testimony to that. I have every confidence we will do so again. Please begin praying about your own contribution and look out for more information as we learn more.

May God continue to bless, guide, and grow Christ Church, Eaton, as a community that is truly here for Christ, and truly here for all those around us.

**The Rev'd Dr Patrick Richmond - Vicar**

## **REPORT OF PCC SECRETARY FOR 2025**

Christ Church's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of working co-operatively with the vicar to promote in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the church building, Kinchen Hall and The Cottage.

The PCC has considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and tries to help people in the parish grow as disciples of Jesus Christ and in service to others. It maintains and develops the building and keeps it open to the public throughout the year, subject to Church of England guidance.

The PCC met nine times in 2025, usually in the south aisle of the Church but retreating to the schoolroom when it was particularly cold. The average PCC attendance at meetings throughout the year was 8 members. There were 13 people on the PCC for the first 4 meetings and this increased to 14 in May. Overall, this represents a combined average of 59% attendance. Many of the absences were due to health issues and one member was on a sabbatical for a period of time in late summer/ autumn.

Ruth Vaughan retired as Churchwarden in May 2025 but remained on the PCC by virtue of being on Deanery Synod and we thank her for her recent term of office since 2022.

Colin McLean was re-elected in May 2025 as Churchwarden for a third consecutive year since 2023. He was joined by Simon Girling who was elected in May 2025 for the first time. Thanks are expressed to both of them for their Churchwardens duties since May 2025. We much appreciate and thank Tony Grubb for his work as Treasurer for the year. We are also grateful to Kyla Price our Finance Officer who has admirably supported Tony over the year.

Caroline Gibbs continued as Safeguarding Officer and regularly reported our progress on the Diocesan Safeguarding Dashboard at

PCC meetings. We are still on Level 2 but our percentage score has increased this year to 63%. We will need to exceed 80% to get to Level 3. However, the scoring system is quite coarse because, for example, although most of us are up to date on our mandatory CofE safeguarding training, unless everyone is up to date you fail that particular criteria on the Dashboard. Currently we have new volunteers who have yet to undertake their training.

No one retired from the PCC this year, and the number of members increased to 14 when Simon Girling was elected churchwarden at the APCM in May 2025. We thank all the PCC members for the time they devote to Christ Church as they continue to serve.

The Electoral Roll was completely refreshed this year as is required every 6 years rather than rolling forwards last years with additions and deletions. The process started in March with notifications in church inviting people to complete forms to join the Roll and it closed on 3<sup>rd</sup> May. At the APCM in May 2025 it was reported that we now have 130 on the Roll and the contact details and consents of those who had also completed a GDPR form. Last year we had 158 on the Roll but some are now in care homes, have died, moved away from the area or do not consider they attend enough services any more to be on the Roll. We thank David Archer who has served as Electoral Roll Officer once again this year.

The parish share was again paid in full, largely thanks to the regular donations we receive. A budget has been prepared and the accounts for 2025 will have been approved by April. The Church Terrier and Inventories will be inspected and presented at the APCM and reports from PCC committees and other groups are in this Parish Review.

The Treasurer, Tony Grubb, has submitted regular and detailed updates on the accounts to the 2025 meetings. The numbers of those making regular donations via the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) increased this year to over 50 people, in part assisted by testimonies made by several congregation members explaining how easy it was for them to switch from their previous direct debits. Colin McLean also

offered to sit down with people to run through the steps to help them to switch.

In addition to our finance team, we are immensely grateful to Ruth Thorp, our Parishes Administrator, for her steadfast support of Christ Church. While much of her work is done behind the scenes, helping things happen, her role was particularly vital this year in supporting the full Electoral Roll refresh and helping with the production of our new service booklets. We also thank Kyla Price for her flexibility in providing administrative cover for Ruth during her recent period of leave.

Although there is no immediate cause for concern, we have identified a trend in the accounts over the last few years that means we are spending a little more each year than the previous. Much of this is due to significant costs bills for maintenance work on the church and particularly Kinchen Hall where a lot has been spent on the roof. However, Kinchen Hall and the Cottage represent key income streams so these issues must be addressed. In November a small subgroup of the PCC was formed to look into the long-term maintenance and possible ways of maximising the income from the asset.

Thanks are due again to Chris Mitchell, Ruth Vaughan, Colin McLean and Simon Girling for looking after the fabric issues of both the Church and Kinchen Hall. Despite formally stepping down in 2024, Chris Mitchell has continued to assist in the work including meeting with the Architect to discuss issues arising from the quinquennial inspection. We thank him wholeheartedly for all he continues to do.

We thank Alistair Bolt for his work on the Eco Church award scheme and his continued efforts at looking at ways to achieve a higher standard. Unfortunately, the required standards for each category have been made more stringent so achieving the Gold award may be beyond our reach as many of the categories or aspects relate to individual congregation members actions, which may be quite difficult to influence.

After extensive work in by the Vicar and PCC in 2024, the new Ordinary Time green service sheet booklet was agreed and brought into use in 2025.

Minutes and reports were regularly received from the Kinchen Hall Committee, the Donations Committee, Eaton Parishes' Group Council, the Magazine Team, the Worship Committee, the Youth and Children's Committee, Norwich South Deanery Synod and the Diocesan Synod.

**Ian Parkes - PCC Secretary**

## **SAFEGUARDING REPORT**

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults at Christ Church is of paramount importance and is the responsibility of everyone. Anyone who becomes aware of a safeguarding concern or allegation involving someone at Christ Church should immediately report it to the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) or vicar, who will then contact the Parish Safeguarding Team. Our Safeguarding policies and relevant contact numbers are prominently displayed on the church notice board.

The PSO is responsible for keeping up to date records of DBS checks and training. All PCC members and leaders of church activities (Sunday School, Chat Over a Cuppa etc) need a DBS check every three years.

All volunteers who are working with children and young people or with groups which might include vulnerable adults should undertake training every three years. Those with roles that bring them into contact with the public should at least complete the Basic Awareness training module. Basic Awareness and Foundation level training is available online on the diocesan website and can be completed in one's own time. PCC members should undertake Basic Awareness and Foundation level training. Domestic Abuse Awareness training is also recommended. Those in positions of responsibility should undertake

training up to and including the Leadership training module which the Diocese runs regularly on Zoom. Face to Face training sessions are also available.

Thank you to all those who have undertaken the necessary training sessions this year. It means that a growing number of us are kept aware and vigilant about safeguarding issues. Please remember that safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility.

The Parish Safeguarding handbook and information about courses can be found on the Norwich Diocesan Safeguarding website.

There are also first aid kits located in the kitchen cupboard above the sink unit, in the toilet for the disabled, in the 'lighting cupboard' at the rear of the church and on the windowsill of the choir vestry.

**Caroline Gibbs - Safeguarding Officer for Christ Church**

## **CHURCHWARDENS' ANNUAL REPORT**

"Here for Christ, here for you". Building on last year's success, we have been delighted to welcome several new members to our congregation and to see the numbers continuing slowly to grow, particularly at the 10am service. We are delighted to see a growth in families with young children attending on a regular basis, a real answer to prayer. Thank you to Geraldine Verschoor and the enlarged Sunday School team for all they do to support this growth. Young couples are more visible in our congregation, and it has been a continuing joy to welcome couples and their families to wedding services during the year. Our major celebrations at Christmas and Easter are enjoyed by noticeably increased numbers, encouraging us to pursue our intention to be invitational.

One very significant change in the past year has seen Ruth Vaughan stepping down as churchwarden after so many valuable years in this role, spread over two stints. Ruth has been a tireless and loyal servant

of Christ Church and its community, and we cannot thank her enough for her hard work. Fortunately for us all she is not disappearing, and she will continue to contribute as a deputy warden, sacristan, and many other duties upon which the busy life of our church depends. Simon Girling was duly appointed in her place, and has been diligently, and cheerfully, adding great value to the role meanwhile.

As a church we are very fortunate to have so many people willing to help in so many ways, not only on a Sunday but at all other times as well. Having said that, we are always looking for more help so we are not always calling on the same people. For example, at the 10am service, as well as the choir and the wardens, we are assisted by a deputy warden and two sidespeople. In addition, there are three readers and an intercessor, a sacristan, two chalice assistants and two people providing refreshments. A very warm thank you to all who tirelessly provide these ministries as they enrich our worship and strengthen our worshipping community.

The wardens are very well supported by the Deputy wardens, Jeff Arden, Vivien Humber, Catherine Jeffries, David Scott and Ruth Vaughan, who assist them with the 10am Service and we are very grateful for their help. We also greatly appreciate the assistance of Alistair Macdougall and all the sidespeople at 10am, particularly their ministry of welcome and ensuring that the issue of car parking doesn't interfere with our neighbours. Our thanks also to David Edmunds who organises the rotas for 8am, to all who fulfil those roles, and to the sidespeople for Evensong over the summer months. Also, thanks are due to those who verge at Weddings, Christenings and Funerals; these are important ministries to those attending a life event and who are often not part of the church community.

One notable funeral service this year was that of Garry Wheatley, a regular member of the congregation and a former Lord Mayor of Norwich. His service was held shortly before Christmas 2025. Garry served our church for over 40 years, as a regular sidesperson at 8am services and also as Treasurer for the Eaton Parishes.

We also wish to thank Jeff Arden, Simon Back, Anthony Colman, Will Colman, Tanya Page, Ruth Vaughan and Matt Wright who regularly open or close the church for it to be open each day for visits or private prayer.

Our thanks to Carrie Phoenix for organising and arranging the church flowers; they always contribute so much. Further thanks to Carrie and Ian Phoenix who maintain the Garden of Remembrance. Thanks too to Richard Rivett, not only for organising our readers, but together with a team of volunteers, for helping to maintain the hedges and church grounds so well. Thanks also to the brass cleaning team, the flower arrangers, the sacristans, and those who prepare the pastoral gifts, who all play a vital part in the life of our church.

Thank you also to Caroline Gibbs for organising the rota for the refreshments following the 10am service and all who help with catering at other church events. This is another important ministry of welcome and is greatly valued.

One of the responsibilities of the wardens is the upkeep of the church building and we greatly appreciate the invaluable help we have been given by Chris Mitchell. He has not only undertaken the regular checks required throughout the year but has overseen the repairs required in the Quinquennial Inspection so that we are well up to date with the necessary maintenance. As we celebrated recently, our church is 150 years old, and so unsurprisingly there are some parts of the building including the roof that will require major repair and replacement in the next few years. Planning for this, including fund-raising, is just beginning, and if you would like to help with time or expertise please speak to Colin or Simon.

Kinchen Hall is a significant part of the parish estate, and our tenants in the hall and the adjacent cottage through their rental contribute to church income. Like all buildings, they too require expensive upkeep. In the short and longer term we must plan for how this expenditure balances the income they generate. In the year ahead we will begin the process of reviewing options - a big and complex task!

As well as maintaining the church building the care of the fabric is just as important and we are very thankful to Bridget Archer who cleans the church with such care and attention and also provides a cheerful welcome to those who visit the church while she is there. Our church is beautiful and looks very well cared for, something that is often commented on by those who are visiting for the first time.

As well as the many who work front of house there are also a few essential people who keep the show on the road. Our thanks to Catherine Richmond for all she does to manage our website, produce the weekly notice sheet, publicity posters and service sheets for special services. These are sent to the office for printing and Jacky Sutcliffe brings them with other post to Christ Church each week. Also Gerald Cooke who takes the cash collections and does the banking for us. Ruth and Kyla in the office work quietly and efficiently to support our administration and finances.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Hugh Back for putting out the bins each week, keeping an eye on the church for any signs of vandalism and keeps us in the loop with any issues concerning the residents of Church Avenue. A positive move this year has been the opportunity to meet some of our neighbours in Church Avenue, which we hope will help us maintain good relations going forward as we share the historic conservation area.

Of course, there are many other events and occasions during the course of a busy year, all of which call on many of the kind volunteers mentioned as well as many others. Without compiling an exhaustive list these include: Harvest supper, Lent lunches, exhibitions, school and other concerts, viewings of 'The Chosen', music lessons, Chat over a cuppa, Talk@2, Fish and Chips, and Children's workshops. That's a lot of organising and managing, but also very rewarding! It is wonderful to see our church building used in so many positive ways. So many activities offer the opportunity for fellowship, and it is a joy to record that this lies at the heart of our church year.

As mentioned, financial management is an ongoing responsibility and we thank our treasurer, Tony Grubb, for his hard work in that area and on the accounts. We thank all parishioners who are now contributing via the Parish Giving Scheme, and we ask as many as possible to consider this method of giving.

Music forms a central role at Christ Church. We would like, therefore, to express our huge appreciation for the time commitment and expertise of Matt, our organist (and David, Dave, Nora, and Ellie), all the choir members, and other musicians who contribute so beautifully to our liturgy during the year.

The modern world makes many demands of all organisations, including Christ Church. So it is we are obliged to obtain consent for video recording during church services and thank you to those who have signed these forms. The on-line recording via Zoom is enjoyed by a significant number of people so we wish to continue to offer this as part of our welcoming and invitational mission.

Our thanks to all who make our church such a successful welcoming community, often behind the scenes. It is a pleasure to serve the church in this way and we are very grateful to have the continued support from Patrick, and everyone in the Christ Church community.

**Colin McLean and Simon Girling - Churchwardens**

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

This report will be provided with the accounts.

## **DIRECTOR OF MUSIC'S REPORT**

2025 was a slightly different year to usual in that I was granted a sabbatical for June-August, so much of my church admin time during the earlier part of the year was taken up in preparing for that. I wrote an extended article for the magazine detailing my adventures and posted

photos each week on the choir Facebook page. I was most grateful to Patrick and the PCC for agreeing to my proposals and I returned refreshed in September (and to spontaneous applause from the congregation when I was welcomed back at my first 10am!). David Uden, Ellie Hanton, Dave Ballard & Nora Rechel covered the Sunday services, weddings and rehearsals and I heard good things about their playing, plus the welcome they received – it was a nice change for the congregation as well as a useful break for me. Amongst much else, I had an excellent cultural holiday in Kent visiting castles, railways and a vineyard and a couple of extended visits to London for the Proms. I played at St Mark's Lakenham for seven of the 13 Sundays I was away and it was good to experience a different style of worship plus seven different priests during their interregnum!

As well as providing music each week for the regular services and festivals, these annual reports tend to concentrate on the extracurricular events and special occasions. Food and social gatherings are always a highlight, and we had our traditional post-Christmas meal, a third visit to The Eagle, in January. There were also various Beehive visits, for pizza, beer and carol-singing (though not necessarily all at once). Saturday morning mid-rehearsal coffee breaks are always good opportunities for chat as are pre-Choral Evensong teas. Speaking of Evensong, we persevered with another summer of first Sunday Choral Evensongs and by October, the congregation finally outnumbered the choir! Please try to support these services in 2026 either as a singer (we advertise them as 'Come and Sing'), for tea or in the congregation. The choir enjoys preparing them as it gives them a chance to explore some different repertoire to that usually sung at communion. I don't think they just come for the tea, but there have been some fabulous creations!

Choir numbers have been steady throughout the year, and we were glad that Sue Mitchell decided to join us more regularly, fitting in singing between sacristan duties. We had a farewell meal for Ros Wright in May, and we were sad that her ordination was postponed.

Her health was an issue during the autumn, but we were glad she was able to join us for some Evensongs and at Christmas and wish her well as she considers future opportunities. We were sad to say goodbye to Alison Court in May and wish her and Ed all the best for their second retirement in Devon. We provided a choir for Geoff Morgan's Thanksgiving service in April and were glad to have Carol with us regularly on a Sunday morning during the summer in addition to her usual Evensong attendance. I played for Don Hobbs' funeral at Breckland Crematorium in May and we very much miss having Chris singing with us. There is a great sense of camaraderie and fun in the vestry, and many friendships have been formed over the years. Lifts are offered to church and there's usually a helping hand close by to prepare for a service or to reach the stalls. Support in the face of health issues is ever present.

In October, I was awarded honorary membership of the RSCM, HonRSCM, in recognition of my 20+ years' service in my day job working for the RSCM & Hymns Ancient & Modern. A presentation ceremony took place during a special service at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

We closed the year with Advent & Christmas carol services, the latter being especially memorable with the choir on top form.

I'd like to thank all the choir members for all their hard work and commitment, Patrick for his support and trust plus everybody who values our efforts – Christ Church has always been a musical church, and it's always been that reputation I've tried to enhance, develop and maintain.

**Matt Wright - Organist and Choirmaster at Christ Church**

## **CHOIR MEMBERS' REPORT**

This year the life of the choir has been enhanced in two ways - (with the underpinning support of David Uden for which we are always very

grateful), firstly by Matt having a short sabbatical over the summer, when he organised a variety of organists and choir colleagues known to him, who took over both providing the accompaniments to the services and also the practice of the designated chosen hymns, psalms and anthems. This meant that the choir were given the opportunity of encountering perhaps new ways of interpreting these musical events and the extra pleasure of hearing new and different music. This certainly refreshed our ideas about how we could sing in a different way.

This arrangement also allowed the choir to continue the evensong services in British Summer Time, still only catering for small numbers, but much enjoyed by the congregation.

We had a lovely summer party on 23<sup>rd</sup> May to thank Ros Wright for all that she had contributed to the church choir and a fitting send-off for Matthew to go off on his sabbatical. On Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> June, Matthew introduced Elly Hanton to the choir, who would be leading and directing the choir over the forthcoming month. We were delighted to welcome Nora Rechel back in July and Dave Ballard took charge of us for several services.

Our other discovery was that Matt had quietly been supporting many other people who were seeking further information about the Royal School of Church Music, and also tracing music copies for customers around the world. The RSCM acknowledged this by awarding Matt an Honorary Award (HonRSCM) for his 20 years of service at the RSCM's Celebration Day in Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025. This also coincided with his 20 years of fine leadership and musical direction at Christ Church so we can feel proud of all these achievements.

Matt still also held fast to supporting the choir and understanding any difficulties that might arise, fostering the generous companionship which exists in our 'choir ' family.

**Carol Morgan & Ros Evans - Choir Members**

## **SUNDAY SCHOOL & YOUTH GROUP**

Thanks to a group of willing volunteers there is Sunday School for children of primary school age in term time during the 10am service in the Children's Room at Christ Church. Usually, the sessions feature the New Testament reading for the week, and activities include artwork, craft, games, singing and storytelling. Geraldine Verschoor also offers activities for under-fives when possible. We now have five fairly regular attenders and have welcomed a couple of new families in recent months, which is most encouraging.

There are always colouring and puzzle sheets available in the Children's Corner at the back of the church for children who wish to stay in church during services.

This year's Nativity Service on Christmas Eve featured the story from a camel's point of view, narrated confidently and clearly from the pulpit by Alara, a former member of our Sunday School. Other members mimed the main scenes of the Christmas story with support from young audience members as extra angels, shepherds and wise men.

The Youth Group for young people of secondary school age met two or three times a term to watch and discuss episodes of the wonderful 'Chosen'. Thank you to Geraldine Verschoor and her helpers for running these sessions, which have been put on hold in 2026 as members have grown up or moved away.

We have been glad to welcome another new helper recently and would be delighted if anyone else was interested in joining the Sunday School Team.

**Caroline Gibbs**

## **PASTORAL CARE AT CHRIST CHURCH**

At major church festivals gifts are taken to those in the community who are frail or housebound, unwell or lonely and to residents of local care

homes and hostels. At Easter, Harvest and Christmas, a plant and card are delivered to local residents by church members.

At Harvest an appeal is made for donations of FoodBank-type items and this year these are taken to three local hostels - Leeway, YMCA My Place and St Martin's Housing Trust. (We previously also donated to Archway but this hostel has been closed). Similarly at Christmas, presents are donated for adults and children. All the hostels have a particular focus on homelessness and/or domestic violence and our aim is to highlight their work, as well as providing assistance to residents.

The men's fellowship group, set up in 2020, continues to meet fortnightly for fellowship. All are warmly invited to come along.

Our pastoral and community care work is only possible because of the contribution of many in the church family.

Particular thanks are due to members of the Christ Church Pastoral Care Team and those who helped prepare and distribute gifts. I am also grateful to the team members at St Andrew's with whom we work so happily collecting, sorting and delivering the Harvest and Christmas gifts to local hostels.

**Vivien Humber - for The Pastoral Care Team**

## **CHARITABLE GIVING 2025**

In addition to our joint giving (see report in Part 2), at Christ Church, generous donations for hot drinks after the 10am service are sent to **WaterAid and Toilet Twinning** alternately. Ruth Vaughan was able to send £240 to Toilet Twinning in March and August, £480 in all. Our toilet has now been twinned ten times! In June and November £250 was sent to Water Aid, £500 in all.

We held an emergency retiring collection for Tearfund in March because of the dire situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, raising £135.

The Norfolk Churches Trust cycle ride in September raised £1,063 in sponsor money, of which £678 was gift aided. Half of this came back to Christ Church. Thank you, Ruth Vaughan.

Our Harvest Supper raised £350 for Tearfund (the October Charity of the Month). The collections made at our Christmas services (Carol, Crib, Midnight and Christmas Day) were divided between the **Church Homeless Charity** and the **Friends of the Holy Land**, £521 to each.

**Caroline Gibbs**

## **FRIENDS OF CHRIST CHURCH**

For the past eight years, the Friends of Christ Church Eaton have been raising money for projects related to the fabric of the church building and its surrounds; these are subject to the approval of the Parochial Church Council. Money is paid in to a restricted Friends fund (and may not be used for the church's general running costs). The funds help towards meeting the cost of preserving the fabric of the church, necessary repairs and the replacement of major items.

The Friends Management Team met seven times during the year when the 2025 project and the programme for the year were discussed.

**2025 project:** At the start of the year, it was agreed that this year's project would be to raise funds towards some of the most urgent work to the fabric, including repairs to the main door of the church, the boiler room, school room and chancel.

**Events:** the Team continues to reaffirm the Friends important role in offering friendship and fellowship to the local community. Our goal is always to draw Friends and Team members from the community and the church. Our programme of events therefore has a dual function - community outreach and fundraising.

**Quiz and Chips:** was held at 7.30pm on 29<sup>th</sup> March at Eaton Park Community Hall, South Park Avenue. Once again, this popular event was very well attended and £501.05 was raised.

**Anglian Singers Concert:** took place on 21<sup>st</sup> June in Christ Church. We were delighted that – despite this being one of the hottest evenings of the year - it was a popular and well-attended event, and £539.50 was raised.

**6<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting and Summer Party:** took place on 11<sup>th</sup> September at 390 Unthank Road when members were updated on the work of the Friends and were able to socialise in very pleasant surroundings.

**Finance:** all the monies (fundraising, subscriptions, gift aid reclaim) have been released from restricted funds to be used for Friends projects - the objective had always been to spend these monies on the purposes for which they were raised, not to hold them for any longer than was necessary, to avoid money being locked up if projects were delayed or over-funded, or if no suitable project could be agreed.

At November's meeting it was noted the Friends had raised £34,000 since 2017, an excellent result.

A formal Friends Funds Policy was also adopted to confirm the objectives and security of funds raised. This confirmed that Friends funds are held within PCC accounts as a restricted fund.

We are very grateful to all our Friends for continuing to support us in the vital work of maintaining this much loved and valued building.

**Membership:** we were delighted that Audrey Jolliffe was able to join the Friends Management Team. Grateful thanks were acknowledged to John Ladd and Alison Court, who had both stepped down from the Management Team. Friends numbers remained steady throughout the year, with some new members added. There are now more than 70 officially recorded "Friends of Christ Church".

**Communication:** throughout the year members were kept updated through newsletters and letters.

**Patrons:** as ever, grateful thanks to our wonderful Patrons, David Walker, David Taylor, Mark Jeffries and Rachel Hore.

## **Management Team members 2025:**

David Scott (Chair)   Roger Glenwright   Vivien Humber (Secretary)  
Catherine Jeffries   Audrey Jolliffe   Carrie Phoenix

**David Scott - Chair of the Management Team, Friends of Christ Church, Eaton**

## **FABRIC REPORTS**

### **Church**

Christ Church continues to receive care and maintenance. Work completed in 2025 has been items listed as priority Category C of the 2023 Quinquennial Report. Further works categorised as Category D have been commissioned and will be undertaken shortly. These repairs and renewal works will complete the priority maintenance identified listing required to be completed by 2028, hence ahead of schedule.

Further to this a Project Specification and Schedule of Works Document has been prepared for the Nave & South Transept Roof repairs. This is listed in the current Quinquennial Survey as a medium-term requirement. The Document has enabled estimates to be obtained from experienced Contractors for future budgeting purposes, which has realised an estimated cost of £150K at November 2025 prices.

Similarly an investigation into a replacement of the internal West Doors with the Church Architect for a fully glass construction is being undertaken. This is in response to an enquiry by “The Friends of Christ Church” and a comparison of local Churches has been made where similar installations have been completed.

### **Chris Mitchell**

### **Kinchen Hall**

Kinchen Hall has been showing its age for a while now and, as with all buildings over 100 years old, things regularly need maintaining or

replacing. Last year major work on the flat roof areas was completed, which has resulted in a more secure, and certainly drier, interior. It was also discovered that lead pipes (or at least one) need to be replaced, to the main drinking supply tap and this work is currently out to tender. Bearing in mind that young children, as well as several adults, are dependent on this drinking water we have arranged for a Reverse Osmosis system to be in place, pending the pipe(s) replacement.

Major upcoming work, at least involving significant expense, include resurfacing all or part of the car park (once the pipe work is completed). Attending to keeping gutters and drains clear is a year-round challenge, made all the more important given the number of very mature trees in the immediate vicinity.

### **The Cottage**

There are currently no significant fabric challenges relating to the Cottage, although painting the exterior render is being considered. It would go some way towards making the building more visually appealing. This has not yet been costed, however. Arnolds continue to act as our agents and pass on tenant requests as they arise.

### **Colin McLean - Churchwarden**

## **CHAT OVER A CUPPA**

Chat has been having meetings on a Monday afternoon throughout the year. There is a core of regulars joined by others and usually 15 plus attend. Twice a year we have a special tea with some 35 people coming.

A team of 10 wonderful volunteers run the teas. Sadly, Jennie Nowell, one of the volunteers, died during the year.

We look forward to welcoming more people for tea and friendship in 2026.

### **Stephanie Brookes**

## **PRAYING FOR GROWTH GROUP**

The Christ Church Praying for Growth group has continued to meet weekly on Tuesday or Thursday evening, to pray for anything related to growth in numbers, spiritual growth and discipleship. In 2025 we prayed regularly for special services, courses, children's/youth work, outreach events, plus many more things. We have been encouraged to notice many of our prayers being answered, sometimes in unexpected or miraculous ways. This of course is in conjunction with the prayers of many others in the congregation, and our intercessory prayers during the service.

**Geraldine Verschoor**

## **NORWICH FOOD BANK**

We have been collecting for Foodbank for 13 years now, having started in November 2012. Last year we donated 3 - 4 bags of food every month. We had a good response to our Christmas appeal and were able to donate 20 bags of food and toiletries.

Our collection is on the first Sunday of the month, but donations left at any other time are welcome and are taken to the Foodbank warehouse. At the warehouse, all items are sorted and packed into food parcels for families. A certificate of thanks for Christ Church being a Foodbank Church, is on the board next to the collection box.

Thank you to all who have supported Foodbank. Every item donated is appreciated and helps people in our local community.

**Anna MacDougall & Jacky Sutcliffe**

## **GLASSES FOR AFRICA**

This year I have taken 71 pairs of old or broken glasses to Specsavers, down from last year which was 91 pairs. After repairing the glasses, Specsavers send them to Zambia to the training school which they set

up many years ago. These are then given to the disadvantaged with poor vision, many of whom live in isolated communities. Specsavers also regularly send optometrists to Africa to give eye tests and care. Please continue to put your old glasses in the box at the back of the Church. Thank you.

**Jacky Sutcliffe**

## **CLEANING**

What a great way to celebrate the seasons cleaning the church every week. On one occasion during the winter months, it was so cold I nearly had to down tools and go home! Then the sunshine comes streaming through the windows to herald spring, followed by the stuffiness of summer and finally piles of brown leaves fill the porch when autumn approaches. Life and seasons continue to turn despite what may be going on in the world.

This year, with the assistance of Colin and Simon, part of the main bathroom wall has been re-painted a fresh green colour which has really brightened it up. One of the old hoovers has recently been replaced with an upright Shark Hoover (other makes are available!). It has massive suction which has made a great difference, especially when cleaning the carpets. I now also possess two Henrys, a little Henry and a big Henry, which are especially useful for hoovering the pews as the big one has a very long lead. However, on the negative side, they are very hard to manoeuvre and often crash head on with any obstacle and then roll over!

With the help of Ruth Thorp, we now have the most eco-friendly toilet rolls we can, with packaging which can be recycled. Ruth has also sourced some large containers filled with hand wash which is used to refill existing bottles, thus saving on the use of plastics. I continue to refill bottles with cleaning products from The Green Grocers at Earlam Shops.

For the future I am going to be investigating the replacement of the mat in the porch as it is beginning to fray and tear. I am also working my way through cleaning some of the kneelers which are particularly dirty. I expect as the year progresses more jobs will emerge.

On a final note, I continue to welcome people into the church whilst I am cleaning on a Friday. A variety of people visit, some to sit quietly, some just sight-seeing, others coming to remember when they were married, or when their children were baptised in the church. The children's area has also been used by the occasional visiting young family. This welcoming remains an important part of my role as Christ Church Cleaner.

### **Bridget Archer - Bridget's Brooms**

## **TALKS@TWO**

A successful variety of talks were arranged last year including a history of the Paston Family, spirituality in the works of C.S Lewis, and an introduction to the writing of Mary Mann by David Taylor. Numbers attending varied from 20 to over 50. All talks are given free of charge and two of last year speakers travelled from London and York to give their talk.

None of the talks could be given without the assistance of other people to help, to whom I am extremely grateful.

A mixture of people attended the talks many of them being visitors to the church. Many people stayed afterwards for refreshments which provided a great opportunity for talk and friendship. Having people present from our own church family is really useful for this part of the afternoon. It means that whilst the organisers serve tea others can talk to visitors and make them feel welcome.

I would like to encourage you to attend the talks if you are able and to invite people you know. The talks are very informal with a wide range of

subjects providing a non-threatening environment. Some of the talks have been extremely well received.

At the back of the church there are some small leaflets with the talks listed. Please take some and pass them to people you know.

**Bridget Archer**

## **FISH & CHIP LUNCHES**

I had pondered about this idea for a while and decided to give it a try, with agreement from the PCC, in November and December last year - a bit of an antidote for the winter months. I was delighted with the uptake with over 30 people attending each lunch. The Christmas one especially was great, with decorations on the table and live music provided by Geraldine, Renata and Emile.

Ocean Bites the fish and chip shop down Unthank Road provided the meals which were very generous and piping hot! They also delivered free of charge with a box full of sauces.

Again this type of event would not be possible without the most wonderful band of volunteers to whom I am extremely grateful. We all had to work really hard at both lunches so if this event is going to happen again a rota of volunteers would be needed.

There have been requests for more lunches so watch this space.

**Bridget Archer**

## **STAMPS FOR EMBRACE THE MIDDLE EAST**

This is an ecumenical Christian charity which works to help marginalised and vulnerable people in communities in the Middle East. We support this charity with used stamps. This year we collected 700gms of stamps (up from last year which was 425gms).

Previously we were getting £10 per gm for bundles of British Stamps and £15 per gm for Foreign Stamps. 1 kg is approximately 6,000 stamps.

Whilst now not stated per gram, value still comes from selling the stamps by weight to dealers or collectors, with rarity, age (pre-1950s), and condition increasing the price. Please continue to put your stamps in the box at the back of the Church. Thank you.

**Jacky Sutcliffe**

## **THE CHOSEN**

At Christ Church a group of us are watching the “The Chosen”, a multi-season TV series dramatizing the life of Christ. We are currently half-way through Season 4. We watch the first and last episode of each season together at Christ Church, and the other episodes we watch at home. However, to keep this as a communal activity, we get together after watching 2 episodes at home to discuss the episodes. In 2025 we had several taster sessions so that more people in the congregation and guests could experience the Chosen. A high point in 2025 was watching the finale of Season 3 together on the large TV screen in Christ Church. We could be fully immersed in the Chosen’s retelling of the Feeding of the 5000 and the Walking on water accounts; it was a moving experience for all of us.

**Geraldine Verschoor**

## **MEN’S GROUP**

The Men’s Group meets every three to four weeks, on a Saturday morning at 7 Leopold Close. An informal meeting where we discuss a wide range of topics from religion to politics.

**John Ladd**

## **PART TWO: REPORTS COVERING JOINT ACTIVITIES WITH ST ANDREW'S**

### **EATON PARISHES GROUP COUNCIL**

Mission Statement:

*'The Group Ministry of St Andrew's and Christ Church seeks to Collaborate, Cooperate and Communicate in the Eaton Community.'*

The Diocese established a Group Ministry for the Parishes of St Andrew's and Christ Church in 2007 when the old parish of Eaton was divided into two.

Its Group Council is the vehicle by which they 'consult together on any matter of common concern". It has no decision-making power and acts in a consultative and advisory role to the two PCCs.

In 2010 the then Bishop of Norwich said that the Group Ministry should, firstly, facilitate what the people involved wanted to do to benefit and develop church mission in Eaton and, secondly, serve the future development of both churches.

Ongoing activities within the Group Ministry include:

- communications such as the parishes' magazine, Christmas and Easter cards
- supporting Mission Partners, through prayer and fund-raising events
- joint children and youth activities including Children's Workshops
- some joint services
- events such as the Summer Fair, Remembrance Day, and Lent Lunches
- the Joint Parishes' Office
- Groups, including the Mothers Union and the Julian Group.

These feature regularly on the agenda of Group Council's quarterly meetings, and the minutes of its meetings are circulated to both PCCs for report and/or response.

The Lent Lunches (10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> March and 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> April) were well attended. As usual monies were raised for two charities, In 2025 these were the Bishop's Lent Appeal for You Are Not Alone (YANA) – a charity which provides mental health support for those involved in rural businesses affected by stress and depression (£556.81) and Tearfund's Middle East Humanitarian Appeal (£686.50), A total of £1,243.31 was raised for them.

The Annual Summer Fair took place on 14<sup>th</sup> June at St Andrew's Church, Hall, and car park. The new Lord Mayor of Norwich, Paul Kendrick, kindly opened the event. The Fair took place during Churches Count on Nature week so there was a Family Eco-Trail around the churchyard. There were lots of other attractions including children's games, books, plants and home-made cake stalls, delicious hot food from Radu's Keswick Cafe as well as refreshments provided by the Eaton Branch of the Mothers' Union. Over £1,400 was raised for children and youth work in the parishes.

Eaton's Mission Partners, Dick and Caroline Seed in South Africa and Mirna Paulo in Argentina, continued to be supported by prayers and fundraising. The Spring Coffee Morning (10<sup>th</sup> May) raised £1,124.02 and the Autumn Fair (15<sup>th</sup> November) £1,286.34. As usual CMS divided this sum between the Seeds and Mirna Paulo.

We continued to communicate with a growing number of children in Eaton. Activity Workshops for junior school-aged children took place at Easter (on the theme of *Jesus can change your life!*), the summer holidays (*Dare to be Daniel*), Autumn half-term (*Forgiveness – the story of Joseph*) and concluded with a Christingle-themed Workshop at Christmas. All the Workshops have a mini drama (which has made a very significant contribution to the Workshops), crafts, games, songs and refreshments.

The joint parishes' Remembrance Service was held at the War Memorial on 11<sup>th</sup> November with a very encouraging attendance, including many local schoolchildren; we are grateful to David Scott for continuing to organise these Services and for the clergy from the two

parishes who lead them. Thanks must also be recorded to the War Memorial Trustees for their continuing loving care of this historic monument.

The Parishes' magazine continues to run successfully with its team of volunteer editors and magazine advertising secretary. As usual Easter and Christmas cards, with a message from the two vicars, were delivered to every home in Eaton.

More detailed reports on joint activities e.g. Mission Support, children and youth work, the Office and the magazine, can be found in other reports.

The following were elected or re-elected to Group Council at the APCMs: Marilyn Evans, Chris Smith, Douglas Durand, Jane Scott and Alison Black (for St Andrew's), myself, Vivien Humber (Secretary), David Archer, Leisa Devlin, Alistair Bolt and Tony Grubb (for Christ Church). Jane Scott and Leisa Devlin were both elected at the 2025 APCM. My thanks to all Group Council members - whether continuing, retired or new to the Group - for their continued enthusiasm and support.

**John Ladd - Chair, Group Council**

## **CHARITABLE GIVING– DONATIONS TEAM REPORT 2025**

The two parishes' Donations Teams merged in autumn 2023 and they continue to support twelve Christian-based international, national and local charities. In 2025 these ranged from international bodies including Christian Aid and the Mission Aviation Fellowship through local ones such as Emmaus Norfolk and Waveney, Star Throwers and 4Cs.

Information on all the charities selected is circulated through news sheets and the Parishes' magazine to raise awareness and encourage support,

Totals raised in 2025 were:

- the Bible Society (£435)
- Emmaus Norfolk and Waveney (£505)
- Toybox (£372)
- the Magdalen Group (£336)
- Christian Aid (£610)
- MAF (£450.50)
- Mercy Ships (£315)
- Leprosy Mission (£403.50)
- St Edmunds Society (£755.50)
- Tearfund (£708.00)
- Star Throwers (£330)
- 4Cs (£442.50)
- giving a total of £5,663.00 for the year.

The Team is very grateful to the congregations for their continued support which resulted in this wonderfully generous outcome.

Two charities are also supported each year through the Lent Lunches; in 2025 these were the Bishop's Lent Appeal for You Are Not Alone (YANA) – a charity which provides mental health support for those involved in rural businesses affected by stress and depression (£556.81) and Tearfund's Middle East Humanitarian Appeal (£686.50) giving a total of £1,243.31.

**Membership:** the Team is grateful to all its members and for the congregations continuing support for this important work.

*“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7)*

### **The Joint Parishes' Donations Team**

**Marilyn Evans (Chair), Caroline Gibbs, John Harrison, Trish Hodgson, David Hughes, Vivien Humber and Catherine Macmillan**

## **PARISHES MAGAZINE TEAM**

The magazine is an important part of the Eaton churches' communications package, offering an accessible Christian message to its broadly-based readership. It contains articles on subjects ranging from church events to local community matters, together with information on the goods and services of local advertisers.

The Magazine Team supports the magazine editors and the advertising secretary by reviewing contents, production, circulation and revenues at its two meetings held in the Spring and autumn of each year. The Vicars are ex officio members.

At the two meetings held this year (3<sup>rd</sup> April and 16<sup>th</sup> October) members reviewed the existing and potential future editorial content, including testimonials, pilgrimages, features on local groups and people and musical items. It was agreed there would be a special edition for the May issue (VE/VJ Day – 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary) which included an article on those who fell in WW2. It was agreed there could be more special covers in 2026, including May, Harvest Festival and All Saints Day). They also reviewed the magazine's income and expenditure, the advertisers and the editorial rota.

The magazine team is grateful to everyone those who contributed, with particular thanks to regular columnists who were able to pick up key topics whilst maintaining the local flavour which is so important in a parishes' magazine.

I would like to thank all members of the team for their enthusiasm and commitment during the year.

The magazine could not function without its advertising secretary, so thanks are due to Christine Mortimer, who works so efficiently with the advertisers and printers. We are also most grateful for the sterling work of those unsung heroes, the magazine distributors and the Office staff, who have worked seamlessly with them. Thanks also to the printers, BD&H, who continue to maintain their excellent service.

Finally, the magazine continues to generate a surplus which is used to support the work of the two churches. We are grateful to the staff in the Parishes' Office for financial updates, which inform the Magazine Team meetings.

**Vivien Humber - Chair**

## **EATON PARISHES OFFICE**

It was another 'steady' year in the office in 2025, with Kyla now well established. She and I work together very closely and support one another well.

For some time now, I have been a member of UCAN (the United Kingdom Church Administrator's Network). This national organization supports and trains church administrators, whatever their denomination. Much of the training is done via online zoom meetings, which is great – much more accessible. There are termly lunchtime meetings, called TAPAS training (Tips And Practices for Administrative Success!), in which a presentation on a given topic is discussed, helpful pointers made, with break out rooms for discussion. I find these very useful, and as they only last for 75 minutes, it's manageable to do them whilst eating lunch! There is also a local branch meeting of Norfolk administrators which meets bi-monthly. Occasionally I host the meeting here at St Andrew's. Again, this is a helpful and supportive group, and we use a WhatsApp group to share ideas and ask for tips. It's good to have the outside support and ideas – why reinvent the wheel, if someone else has already done it!

We always try our best for the churches to keep costs to a minimum for the regular items we need to order – toilet rolls, hand paper towels, cleaning products for St Andrew's (Bridget Archer arranges the cleaning products for Christ Church), paper for printing, teabags to fuel the office staff... Whatever it is, we do due diligence to ensure value for money (good stewardship!) for the churches. To that end, during 2025, we undertook a large research project regarding the office copier

machine, whose contract is due to expire in 2026. We contacted other local administrators to find out which companies and machines they use, to ascertain how pleased they are with them. Eventually we presented a proposal to both PCCs, sharing the results of our research, and both agreed to that proposal, which is to obtain a new machine via our existing provider, whose service contract we have always been very pleased with. The new machine will be installed post-Easter in 2026.

Since the closure of Revelation in Norwich some time ago, we have established a good connection with Green Pastures Christian Bookshop in Dereham, the only Christian Bookshop left in East Anglia. They are very helpful and supportive in sourcing what we need, including candles for church, Bibles for those who are baptised, certificates, communion wine etc. Whilst Dereham seems far away to those in Norwich, I drive passed it on my way to and from work, so it's quite convenient to pop in and collect orders.

One challenge in the office this year was the office boiler, which developed a popping noise. Suffice to say that it had to be turned off completely whilst awaiting a spare part. Thankfully this was before the winter really got cold, and we are grateful for that!

Last year I mentioned in detail a lot of the types of things which the office staff carry out on behalf of the churches. Suffice to say, it is almost impossible to include everything, and most likely, we do things which you wouldn't necessarily realise!

I would like to give particular thanks to Kyla for keeping the office going when I suddenly needed time off when my mother died in October. Following on from the loss of both of my in-laws in the preceding 12 months, this was an especially difficult time, as my resilience was already low. I'm very grateful to her, and to both vicars, for their unwavering support, and to both congregations who's thoughtful and kind words at a difficult time were very much appreciated. Thank you all.

We are very willing to help in any way we can. Many requests from church members to the office are around printing requests. We are very happy to help with this, but as always, do please give us as much lead time as possible. Whilst we can on rare occasions help with short notice requests, we really appreciate having time to plan in when we will print things, so that everything is completed in a timely and hopefully stress-free manner!

Thank you all for your continued support of the office staff. It really is very much appreciated.

**Ruth Thorp - Parishes Administrator**

**Kyla Price - Finance Officer**

## **EATON MOTHERS' UNION**

Mothers' Union is a global Christian movement which has been providing support for families since it was founded by Mary Sumner in 1876. Its work is underpinned by prayer and as an organisation we are working towards a future free of violence, poverty and injustice. There has been a branch in Eaton for well over 50 years. We meet most months of the year in one of the two churches, usually on a Wednesday morning. The Parishes Magazine and church Notice Sheets give details of the meeting.

We started the year on the Feast of the Epiphany when a group of us met for coffee and Midday Prayers. This is the Wave of Prayer which takes place daily at noon throughout the world and the work and members of a worldwide group of Dioceses are prayed for. Norwich Diocese is linked with The Kingdom of Eswatini; Ruaha in Tanzania; Aguata and Lagos Mainland in Nigeria and Chotanagpur in India and all are prayed for between 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> January each year.

- Our first meeting of the year was principally one of fellowship with a bring and share brunch and quiz. Our Lenten Reflection was led by Revd Sheila Nunney.

- In April Dame Lorraine Curston spoke about the work of Dawn's New Horizons, which is a non-profit-making domestic abuse support organisation, providing help and support for men and women in the Broadland area. As well as providing support and counselling for victims they also run a charity shop which helps to fund their work.
- The speaker at our May meeting was Tracey Le Gallex, The Regional Services Manager for St Giles Trust, 'Turning a past into a future'. The trust helps people held back by poverty, exploited, abused, dealing with addiction or mental health problems, caught up in crime or a combination of these. In Norwich it is based in St Saviours Church on Magdalen Street where it also runs The Magdalen Street Pantry, which offers nutritious food, expert advice and support through trained staff and volunteers, many of whom have experienced the same issues facing the people they support today.
- In June we heard about The Global History of the Mothers' Union from Sheila Tuffield, a member from the Sprowston branch and a Trustee.
- In July members met for lunch and fellowship at the Cellar House and also did some preparatory for our 2026 programme by suggesting suitable topics for our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year.
- In September one of our members Dr Valli Rao spoke about the work she and her husband
- Dr Sunder Bethapudy have done in India with The Leprosy Mission.
- On the first Thursday of each month The Mothers' Union leads Midday Prayers at noon in the Jesus Chapel at the Cathedral. For many years now, the Eaton group has led the October prayers and this year we took the theme of The Keys of the Kingdom.
- In October Hannah Worsley from Norwich Foodbank talked about the history of the Trussel Trust and current developments here in Norwich. She started her talk by saying the aim of the organisation was that it should no longer be needed which is the complete

opposite of a majority of organisations. We were thanked for the support both churches have given to the foodbank over many years and still do.

- Our final meeting of the year was our Advent Meditation which should have been led by our Diocesan Chaplain Revd James Stewart. Unfortunately, he was unable to do so at very short notice, so I led the meeting using one of Susanna Gunner's excellent study materials, Mapping Advent, Watching and Waiting.

The Norwich Diocese Mothers' Union Refugee Resettlement Project is led by Jenny Holcombe and members not only raised funds for this but also some people helped make up beds with new bedding in preparation for the arrival of a new families to Norwich. Eaton members supported the Angel Tree Project by buying Christmas gifts for 8 children in four families of prisoners in Wayland prison. They also raised funds for overseas work, particularly at the 10am Corporate Communion on the third Thursday of the month at St Andrew's Church.

We started the year with 18 members but very sadly in May, Jennie Nowell, a long-standing member and previous leader, died and at the end of the year Audrey Ridley moved away.

Everyone is welcome at our meetings.

**Ruth Vaughan - Branch Leader**

## **YOUTH & CHILDREN'S COMMITTEE**

The Youth & Children's Committee oversees the children and youth work done jointly by the two parishes, and is a forum for sharing and discussing ideas. Our mission statement is 'to make known the Good News of Jesus Christ to the children and young people in ways that are relevant to them and to coordinate and extend that work.' We meet termly, and receive reports from the Children's Action Team who plan the Workshops that take place four times a year (Easter, Summer, Autumn and Christmas).

This year the Committee discussed the following areas:

- Review of the **Workshops**: These continue to be well attended, especially the ever-popular Christingle Workshop. Many parents now join for the closing ‘service’. Children seem to understand and remember the key teaching points from the drama, which has developed with more adults with speaking parts and young helpers taking part.
- Exploring **new initiatives**: including eco opportunities, such as taking part in Churches Count on Nature; a more family-oriented replacement of the Summer Fair (which regularly raised funds for children and youth work); and RAISE Kids new Puzzle Pods, which have been a great success in schools across Norfolk.
- Encouraging **prayer** for children and youth ministry across the two congregations, including through use of Thy Kingdom Come resources.
- Challenges in establishing links with **local schools**, recognising the huge pressures faced today by teaching staff. St Andrew’s have managed to maintain strong links with the Eaton Scouts who attend services now 3 times a year.
- Finally, **safeguarding** is a fixed item on the agenda. During 2025 we discussed new parental consent forms, which now need to be re-signed annually. Additionally, we submitted to the PCCs new Photographer Role Descriptions and a photography policy to ensure photographs taken of the workshops are in line with best safeguarding practice.

**James Cook - Vicar of St Andrew’s Eaton**

## **EATON EAGLES**

The churches’ sponsorship of Eaton Eagles F.C. dates back to a nine-year stint in the Norfolk Christian Junior Football League (2002-11). We currently sponsor an adult team in the Norfolk Christian League, which continues to perform at a very high level. After winning the 2023-24

league competition, the team reached the final of the 2025 Bishop Maurice Wood Cup, narrowly losing to arch-rivals Heigham Park Rangers. At the time of writing the Eagles were three points clear at the head of this season's table after a convincing 6-2 defeat of Lighthouse.

Club captain Henry Aspin comments: 'We played 24 competitive matches in 2025, winning 16, drawing four and losing four, scoring 75 goals into the bargain. Win, lose or draw we'll be sticking together in the coming year and looking to achieve even more.'

Home games take place on Saturdays mornings at Sloughbottom Park and the fixture list can be accessed via the FA Full Time website. David Taylor from Christ Church is the link between the club and the churches. For further information, contact him at [djtaylorwriter@gmail.com](mailto:djtaylorwriter@gmail.com).

**David Taylor - Club Welfare Officer**

## **OVERSEAS MISSION SUPPORT**

In 2025 the Mission Focus team met nearly every month to pray for our link missionaries – Dick and Caroline Seed, based in Cape Town, and Mirna Paulo in Northern Argentina. There were only four of us meeting – Jane Cary is now living in Ivy Court Care Home and Rev Douglas Durand, who is still a member of our team, cannot now easily get to meetings. We will always welcome others who want to join us (on the second Monday of each month, except August and December, at 2 pm). We meet in Saint Andrew's Church Prayer Corner and Christ Church Vestry Children's room alternately.

We received Newsletters every 3 or 4 months from Dick and Caroline Seed through CMS, and monthly letters in between with their news and prayer requests, which Ruth Thorp in the Parish Office prints out and leaves at the back of each church.

In August Dick and Caroline marked their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of serving in theological education with CMS.

We sometimes heard news of Mirna Paulo's work through CMS Prayerlines - her work with Amare (a pioneering women's group) and her support of students at a new theological college training indigenous pastors.

The Spring fair (formerly called The Spring Coffee Morning) was held in the Church Hall in May with the help of members of both churches, organised by Jane Scott. It raised £1,124.02.

The Autumn Fair was held in November and raised £1,286.34. The money raised from both events was divided equally between the Seeds and Mirna Paulo. There was a children's stall for the first time in a long time at the Autumn Fair but, unfortunately, hardly any children came to the Fair, so there will not be one in 2026.

The intercessors of Saint Andrew's Church at the 10 am service each Sunday were reminded to include prayers for our Missionaries and this now they generally do. We want the congregation to be reminded of and to pray for our Missionaries.

**Maureen Blandford - Mission Focus Team**

## **NORWICH SOUTH DEANERY SYNOD**

The Deanery Synod is a meeting where clergy and lay representatives from churches across Norwich South come together to share in discussion, discernment, and decision-making for the life of our local churches. It connects our PCCs with one another and with the wider Diocesan Synod, and is a required part of the Church of England's governance. The Synod met twice in 2025, on 4<sup>th</sup> February and 10<sup>th</sup> June.

The February meeting focused significantly on poverty and social need. Presentations from Broadland Housing Association and Norwich Foodbank highlighted rising levels of hardship, the growth in foodbank use, and the need for both practical response and advocacy. Members were encouraged to support initiatives such as the "Guarantee our

Essentials” campaign and the emerging Norfolk Anti-Poverty Alliance, and to reflect on the Church’s calling to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

Safeguarding was a major topic of discussion, particularly proposed changes to national structures. Members considered two models before General Synod: greater independent oversight within existing diocesan systems, or more radical outsourcing to an independent body. There was broad agreement on the need for independent scrutiny, though views differed on the extent of structural change required.

Living in Love and Faith (LLF) continued to be a significant area of concern. Synod reaffirmed its desire for Diocesan Synod to address the impact of the process on clergy and parishes. Ongoing delays and theological complexities were noted, alongside the pastoral and ecclesial strain arising from disagreement.

The June meeting included a substantial focus on environmental stewardship. A presentation on Eco Church and the Diocese’s net zero ambitions encouraged practical action at parish level, grounded in the fifth mark of mission: care for creation. Members were urged to take achievable steps and to embed environmental concern into worship, teaching, and community life.

Updates from the wider Church highlighted major national investment in clergy wellbeing, mission, and safeguarding, alongside structural financial changes intended to support parish ministry, especially in lower-income areas. Locally, Synod noted continued strong parish giving, ongoing safeguarding training requirements, and the importance of filling key voluntary roles within churches.

LLF developments remained in view, including continuing disagreement across the Church and a forthcoming diocesan consultation. Parish updates reflected encouragements in youth work, discipleship pathways, and ministry among refugees and immigrants, alongside normal patterns of clergy movement and transition.

I am grateful to Sandra Isaac, Lay Chair, and to Vivien Humber for her faithful work in taking minutes, especially in the absence of a formal Synod Secretary.

## **Patrick Richmond - Rural Dean of Norwich South until Summer 2025**

### **NORWICH DIOCESAN SYNOD**

The Diocesan Synod serves as the representative body for governance and decision-making within the Diocese of Norwich. It manages mission strategy, financial oversight, and policy, while linking the national General Synod to local Deanery Synods. It typically meets three times a year to reflect on the shared life of our 600+ churches.

In March, Synod focused on revitalising the parish system. While attendance data showed a national decline, there was local hope, with 27% of our rural benefices showing growth. We addressed the "watershed moment" in national safeguarding, moving toward independent oversight while maintaining our local safeguarding team. A debate on redistributing Church Commissioner funds resulted in a call for national spending plans to prioritise the financial sustainability of parishes.

In June, the Annual General Meeting of the Board of Finance reported a 2024 deficit of £77,000. Despite a 10.7% rise in clergy stipends, Parish Share receipts remained below pre-pandemic levels at 80.6% of the request. Synod also began "Identifying Potential Solutions" for the new Diocesan Strategy, and members provided direct feedback to the National Church regarding the Prayers of Love and Faith consultation.

In November, Bishop Graham's address called for a "Christian patriotism" rooted in hospitality rather than nationalism. Baroness Sal Brinton gave a moving presentation on the "social model" of disability, challenging parishes to remove attitudinal and physical barriers. Synod approved a balanced 2026 budget of £14.72m and formally endorsed

the new "Streams of Growth" strategy. This model encourages churches to discern their current season—whether Fallow, Germinating, Regenerating, Flourishing, or Reforesting—to better target mission support.

**Patrick Richmond - Diocesan Synod member for Norwich South and General Synod, and Chair of the Diocesan House of Clergy**

## **GENERAL SYNOD**

The General Synod is the Church of England's governing body, responsible for making decisions on doctrine, worship, mission, and policy. It consists of bishops, clergy, and lay representatives who meet two or three times a year to debate and shape the Church's direction.

A major focus of 2025 was navigating a period of significant leadership transition following the resignation of Archbishop Justin Welby. In the February sessions, the atmosphere was one of lament and reflection as Synod engaged with the findings of the Makin Report. Safeguarding remained a primary concern, with members debating "Model 3.5"—a hybrid approach intended to provide greater independent oversight of safeguarding practices while attempting to respect the Church's complex legal structure. While some pushed for total independence, Synod opted for this middle path to ensure accountability without further delay, and in 2025 Synod endorsed the progress made developing this path.

The July 2025 sessions, held in York, shifted focus toward the Church's long-term sustainability and financial health. A landmark investment package of £1.36 billion for 2026–2028 was announced, aimed at supporting clergy pay, restoring pensions, and providing targeted aid to low-income parishes. This financial boost was coupled with reports of a "Quiet Revival" in attendance, encouraging a focus on intentional prayer and youth engagement. The Quiet Revival report has since been withdrawn, but there remain signs of a shift in culture towards more openness to faith.

On the ongoing "Living in Love and Faith" (LLF) project, 2025 saw a temporary de-escalation of the intense debates of previous years. Synod voted to withdraw the 1991 document Issues in Human Sexuality, replacing it with interim pastoral guidelines. However, this has been followed by a strategic pause; with the work on "stand-alone" blessing services and the status of clergy in same-sex civil marriages now halted until at least 2027, the Church remains in a period of discernment. This hiatus reflects the continued need for deeper theological work and a desire to maintain unity across the diverse traditional and progressive perspectives within the Church. Outcomes will be highly sensitive to voting for the composition of the next General Synod in the late summer of 2026.

**Patrick Richmond - Member of the House of Clergy of General Synod**



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