



Parish of St Paul, Bedford

Papers for the 2026 APCM
Celebrating the Life of St Paul's Church



PCC Annual Report for APCM 2026



PCC Annual Report - Year ending 31st December 2025

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1. ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS (Meeting for the election of Churchwardens)

A meeting for the election of churchwardens will be held in Church on **Sunday 10 May 2026 at 11.45 am.**

This meeting may be attended by:

- All persons whose names are entered on the church electoral roll of the parish and
- All persons resident in the parish whose names are entered on a register of local government electors by reason of such residence

1.1. Agenda

1. To receive apologies for absence.
2. To agree as a correct record the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners held on Sunday 11 May 2025.
3. To elect TWO Parochial Church Wardens
4. Chair's closing remarks

2. ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

The APCM will be held in Church on **Sunday 10th May 2026** at the conclusion of the meeting to elect Churchwardens.

2.1. Agenda

1. To receive apologies for absence.
2. To agree as a correct record the Minutes of the APCM held on Sunday 11th May 2025
3. Matters arising
4. **Reports (as exhibited in church prior to the meeting)**
To receive:
 - 4a. A Report on the electoral roll.
 - 4b. A Report of the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council (PCC)
 - 4c. The Report and Financial Statements of the PCC for the year ending on the 31st December 2025
 - 4d. A Report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church
 - 4e. A Report on Safeguarding
 - 4f. A Report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod
 - 4g. Reports from Church Groups and Activities
5. To elect THREE Deanery Synod representative for a three-year term
6. To elect THREE representatives to the Parochial Church Council
7. To appoint an Independent Examiner for the PCC
8. A Report on the Ministry and Witness of the Church throughout 2025 (Curate-in-Charge's report)
9. To consider any other urgent items or matters of parochial or general Church interest.

These should be framed as a question and received in written form by the Chair (Vicar) not less than 48 hours in advance of the meeting

10. Closing Remarks (Churchwardens)

NOTES

1. All persons whose names are entered upon the Church Electoral Roll of the parish (and such persons only) are entitled to vote at the election of parochial representatives of the laity.
2. Subject to the provisions of rule 12(2)(c), a person is qualified to be elected a parochial representative of the laity if:
 - (a) his name is entered on the church electoral roll of the parish and, unless he is under the age of eighteen years at the date of the election, has been so entered for at least the preceding period of six months
 - (b) he is an actual communicant which means that he has received Communion according to the use of the Church of England or of a Church in communion with the Church of England at least three times during the twelve months preceding the date of the election and
 - (c) he is sixteen years or upwards
 - (d) he is not disqualified as referred to in paragraph 3 of these notes.
- 3.1. A person shall be disqualified from being nominated, chosen or elected from serving as a churchwarden, a member of a parochial church council, a district church council or any synod under these rules if he is disqualified from being a charity trustee under section 72(1) of the Charities Act 1993 and the disqualification is not for the time being subject to a general waiver by the Charity Commissioners under subsection (4) of that section or to a waiver by them under that subsection in respect of all ecclesiastical charities established for purposes relating to the parish concerned.
- 3.2. A person shall be disqualified from being nominated, chosen or elected or from serving as a churchwarden or member of a parochial church council, a district church council or any synod under these rules if the person is included in a barred list (within the meaning of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006).
- 3.3. A person shall be disqualified from being nominated, chosen or elected or from serving as a churchwarden or member of a parochial church council, a district church council or any synod under these rules if the person has been convicted of an offence mentioned in Schedule 1 to the Children and Young Persons Act 1933.
- 3.4. A person's disqualification under paragraph (ab) may be waived by the bishop of the diocese in question giving the person notice in writing
- 3.5. A person shall also be disqualified from being nominated, chosen or elected from serving as a churchwarden or member of a parochial church council if he has been so disqualified from holding office under section 10(6) of the Incumbents (Vacation of Benefice) Measure 1977.



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2.3. Electoral Roll Report

At the 2025 APCM, there were 101 on the roll (23 resident in the parish, 78 non-resident). Following the revision there are **114** on the new Electoral Roll (**25** in the Parish, **89** non-resident).

2.4. PCC Secretary's Report (A report of the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council)

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the Parish including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent.

Our PCC consists of the Incumbent (the Vicar or Priest in Charge), the Churchwardens, Readers, and members elected by those members of the congregation who are on the electoral roll of the church, to both the PCC and to the Deanery Synod. Currently, the parish is permitted to have 3 elected representatives on Deanery Synod and 12 elected PCC members.

All those who attend our services / members of the congregation are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll.

The full PCC met six times during the year, and the Standing & Finance Committee also met six times.

PCC members, as charitable trustees, are satisfied that they have met the requirements of the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the supplementary guidance on charities for the advancement of religion.

The PCC is also satisfied that in its arrangements for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults it has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have due regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

For a more detailed report on the report on the activities of the parish generally, please refer to the Report section of the Annual Report and Accounts.



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Parochial Church Council members who served from 1st January 2025 until the 31st December 2025 are listed below.

Unless otherwise stated, PCC members served for the full year.

The Revd Anthony Davis	Priest-in-Charge (Chair)
Alison Phillipson	Warden from July 2024
Florence Bignell	Warden from July 2025
Wendy Jones (Deputy Chair)	PSO, and Deanery Synod Representative from APCM 2023
Malcolm Smith	Deanery Synod Representative from APCM 2023
Pat Whittome	From APCM 2023, Secretary
Linda Byer	ER Officer from APCM 2025
Holly Barnard	From APCM 2025
Rachel Brown	From APCM 2023
Rachel Clover	From APCM 2023
Ann Collett-White	From APCM 2023
Susan Gray	From APCM 2025
Valerie Lane	From APCM 2022 to May 2025
Sumy Pappachen	From APCM 2025
David Price	From APCM 2024
Dulcie Stanhope	From APCM 2024
Susan Stewart	From APCM 2025

At the 2025 APCM we were pleased to welcome back Florence Bignell as Churchwarden, and Sue Gray as PCC member, both after a break. We were also delighted to welcome Holly Barnard, Sumy Pappachen and Sue Stewart as new PCC members.

At the APCM in April 2025, Val Lane stepped down from the PCC. We thank her for her valuable contributions and thoughtful perspective throughout her service on the PCC.

2.5. Fabric Report

The fabric committee met 6 times during 2025. I would like to register my thanks to the members of the committee who attended and contributed their ideas and opinions in the meetings and supported the work of maintaining the church building.

It was with thanks and affection that the memorial to the Sisters of St. Etheldreda was consecrated in June of last year. The service was very well attended and all those who had contributed in any way to the memorial were there, including Sister Hazel, Father Kevin and the artist, James Blackstone who designed and made the mosaic of the Mother and Child.

Over the course of the year various minor works were carried out around the building. All the outside, ground level doors were oiled. I am very thankful for the help I received from members of the committee in scrubbing blue tac from several doors. On two Saturdays during the year working parties weeded and tidied up around the churchyard. There was a cleaning day organised inside the church by Florence Bignell which was well attended.



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Work progressed on the High Altar plaster repairs and the Organ Blower and Organ trunking upgrade. Both these projects were agreed during the year and postponed until Lent this year when we could cope without the organ. The plaster work was to include some Quinquennial items on the roof which fitted in with Totternhoe Stones expertise. One of these items was to replace flashing which would prevent leaks, particularly the ones at the Trinity Chapel Altar and the occasional one by the main pulpit.

In early November there was a flood in the Narthex caused by overflowing drains and sewerage pipes. The diagnosis was that tree roots had grown into the drains and blocked various solids and hence water. After investigation the drains were lined by experts working for Ecclesiastical Insurance and they are convinced this will not happen again.

Malcolm Smith, Chair of Fabric Committee

2.6. Safeguarding Report

St Paul's continues to adopt and endorse the policy set out in the House of Bishops' 'Promoting a Safer Church' 2018 Statement. The PCC also confirmed their commitment to the Response to Domestic Violence Policy.

Safeguarding children, young persons and vulnerable adults is recognised by the PCC as an integral feature of our Christian life and is paramount to our focus on all issues set before us.

The PCC continues to ensure that all members of the committee renew their DBS every three years as required, we also ensure that each person representing you on the PCC completes updates to their Safeguarding training as appropriate every three years.

Safeguarding information is displayed on notice boards throughout the Church, i.e., in the Narthex, the Anderson Room, the Alexander Room and the Bell Tower.

There have been several safeguarding concerns during the year. Each has been dealt with according to the relevant safeguarding policies by the Parish Safeguarding Officer, the Vicar (Priest in Charge) and, where relevant, by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team, to whom we are always grateful for their continued valuable help and guidance.

Thank you to all of those who have completed the required Safeguarding training this year. Our church community is increasingly busy and our congregation is growing in diversity. More than ever we need to be aware of how to respond appropriately to those amongst us who are at risk. I would like to thank all those in leadership roles at St Paul's for their commitment to Safeguarding and the support they have given Pat and myself in our roles within St Paul's.

I would like also to thank each one of you for supporting St Paul's in its aim of being a safe and inclusive church to all. Personally, I would like to thank Fr. Anthony and Pat Whittome



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for their ongoing help to me to ensure that I can complete my part of the Parish Safeguarding task.

Lastly, I want to thank all of you for your continued help, support and prayers for us as a team during this past year.

Please don't forget you are free to contact any of us with any safeguarding matter that is concerning you at any time, we are always happy to discuss your concerns with you.

Wendy Jones, Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)

safeguarding@stpaulschurchbedford.org.uk / wpjones87@gmail.com

2.7. Report on the Proceedings of Bedford Deanery Synod

There have been three meetings of the Bedford Deanery Synod during 2025 APCM 2025. Your two Deanery Synod Reps are Malcolm Smith and Wendy Jones, who both attended all three meetings.

Our first meeting in March 2025 was held at Christ Church, Bedford.

The Rev'd Oliver Blease spoke about the Diocesan Year of Spiritual Renewal and Wellbeing, and how all could engage with the supporting initiatives and offers from the Diocese. Reps were encouraged to introduce this programme to their churches and to encourage worshippers to take part in the activities during the year.

This was followed by an opportunity to contribute to into the 'Vacancy in See' process for finding the next Bishop of St Albans. Deanery Synod split into small groups to discuss and feedback on 3 questions:

- What fills you with joy and hope about the ministry and mission of the Church in the Diocese of St Albans?
- What are the challenges and frustrations, and what would you like to change?
- What gifts, qualities and experience do you think are needed in an incoming Bishop?

The second meeting was held on June 25th at the Church of the Transfiguration in Kempston.

The Rev'd Ian Smith, who has been involved in the Alban Way process at Renhold since its inception, gave an update from the parish perspective and encouraged others to engage with this important initiative which is designed for Year 6. This is a critical time for children of this age, and the Alban Way encourages participants to understand what is meant by a 'Rule of life' and how they can reflect on scripture using the 'Examen' process.

There was then a presentation on Disability and Neurodiversity Inclusion by The Rev'd Ben Williams from Christ Church. The session focussed on what Neurodiversity inclusion in our churches really means, speaking from personal experience and research. The presentation centred on the four key elements, defining additional needs and neurodiversity, why listening is so important, and what practical steps might we take moving forward.



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Our third meeting took place at Elstow Abbey on 16th October.

Sam Cappleman noted that this meeting was the last for The Rev'd Ian Smith. He was thanked for his service to the Deanery.

Sheila Bissell welcomed our new Area Dean the Rev'd Helen Stewart, Priest in Charge of St John's and St Leonard's.

There was an interesting presentation from The Rev'd Canon Tim Bull on "Being the Church in a Changing World". His focus was on how the Church could approach the challenge of the new technology. Should we approach the challenges with open arms or with caution; what does the arrival of AI mean for us and for our faith? This address certainly challenged us to think about what AI could mean for our faith in the future and how we could/should respond to it.

David Lambert presented a written report on the Diocesan Synod held on 11th October, including the Bishop's address, personnel changes, finance, the budget, and Mission and Outreach including expansion of our Youth and Family work. Each meeting ended with a prayer and blessing.

For further information about these meetings please speak to either Malcolm or me.

Wendy Jones, Deanery Synod Representative

2.8. Reports of Church Groups and Activities

2.8.1 Music

Music & Liturgy

Music has continued to play an important part in the life of St Paul's, in particularly at worship. The choir continues to sing regularly at Sunday Eucharist, and we have now also introduced monthly Evensongs which have been well received. We are pleased that the choir has grown in number, particularly with the addition of two new basses, strengthening our balance and allowing us to sing more varied SATB music. We have also welcomed guest singers at special services, including the Advent and Christmas Carol Services, and we are always thankful of the contribution they offer. There have been a few extra events which the choir took part in throughout 2025 including the VE Service, High Sheriff Justice Service, and an RSCM event at King's College, Cambridge, a valuable and enriching experience. Finally, the church is grateful to the organists who have covered the playing at services throughout the year to ensure that music can contribute to the ministry and worship of the church. Plans are in place to strengthen the choir and we, as a department, look forward to seeing the music grow over the course of the next year.

Adam Wright, Director of Music



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Concerts & Recitals

It has been another very successful year for lunchtime concerts and organ recitals at St Paul's during 2025. There were 37 lunchtime concerts during the year featuring a wide range of local professional and amateur musicians and also students and postgraduates from the Royal College of Music (RCM) who continue to be great supporters of our concerts. Our new relationship with the Philharmonia also flourished during the year when we were delighted to welcome 6 young Philharmonia Instrumental Fellows who gave excellent and much appreciated recitals on a range of instruments; flute, harp, trombone, trumpet, viola and cello.

Our youngest performers during the year came again from local schools. First, a very impressive and assured performance in July by students from Bedford Modern School who played with panache on a variety of instruments: piano, cello, oboe, guitar and marimba. Then on 7th October, we welcomed three violinists from Years 9,10 and 11 at Sharnbrook Academy, who gave a stunning recital of works by Bach, Mozart, John Williams and other modern composers. We were also well supported by other adult local musicians, Richard Heyes, Alex Mnatzaganian, Min Min Peaker and Karen Mason and friends during the year. It is very heartening to know how much local musical talent there is in Bedford and how much it is appreciated by the recital audiences.

We also ran 8 Saturday organ recitals with organists recruited from a wide variety of other churches and including our own Director of Music, Adam Wright. All the musicians have been most generous with their time and enthusiasm, and we are very grateful for the loyal support of a growing regular audience. The donations received have also proved to be a significant addition to St Paul's income during the year; the total raised from lunchtime concerts and recitals this year exceeded past records again at £11,960. Several recitalists have again returned to perform at St Paul's saying they find our audiences appreciative and that the acoustics of the church space are excellent.

We have also continued to host evening concerts including 3 return visits by Lumos Live which have been popular and attracted a good number in the audience.

The Christmas Tree Festival in December proved an even greater musical success than in 2024; 49 school and community groups in total performed during the week, comprising some 1200 individuals. The Festival also included a popular evening concert by local musicians, led by Karen Mason, on the Friday evening of the event. Support for musical events from families and friends throughout the Festival was a major factor in enabling the best financial result for the Festival ever - £31,000!

Many thanks to Pat Whittome, Sharon Evans and Robin Bartlett for all their hard work and ingenuity in supporting recitals throughout the year.

Alison Phillipson, Concert & Recitals Organiser

2.8.2 Flower Guild

Sadly, I again have to report that we are desperate for new volunteers to help us! We are 6 in number but that is nowhere near enough to enable us to provide appropriate floral decorations throughout the whole church and to previously expected standards. As a consequence, we have had to concentrate on smaller selected areas rather than beautifying the entire building as we were once able to do. Please consider if you can help or know of someone who can!

We are the first to admit our disappointment that we have been unable to decorate the Church to the previously high standards, and as many will remember. However, without the hands we "certainly cannot make light work." (sorry about the pun!). If we are unable to get more help we shall have to continue to be selective as to what areas we can decorate each week.

The recent appeal for sponsorship of special birthday or commemorative flowers has helped finances considerably and we greatly appreciate support in this form. Thank you. There have been continued difficulties with access to the Church and on more than one occasion, having made arrangements for entry, we have arrived only to find the Church locked and access impossible. This can be enormously frustrating especially if reliant on public transport to get from out of town.

The Saturday closure of the Church also does not help those who work during the week! We are aware that there are some members of the congregation, and indeed the wider church, who would like to see us using more native flowers and ceasing the use of floral foam. We entirely sympathise with the need to care for the wider environment BUT would remind the PCC of our comments at this time last year after we had a demonstration of alternatives. It soon became clear that to get any colour in the church during the bleak winter months we would have to continue to purchase from as environmentally friendly a source as we are able. We have reduced our use of flower foam but to go further we would also need to replace at considerable expense most of the containers and equipment that we currently have in store.

All of the foliage and greenery that we now use is locally sourced and without cost. The congregation may be assured that we will continue to do our very best to see that our lovely church looks at its best for the major festivals and celebratory services, but can you help us to do more?

Susan A Stewart, Guild Lead

2.8.3 Servers

I must once again start with a massive thank you to our very small Serving team for their hard work, dedication, adaptability, and patience. Whatever the task, they always carry it out with a good sense of humour and high degree of professionalism. This is all the



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more amazing as the small numbers put increased demands on the team and two of them are constantly juggling a serving rota and a ministerial rota.

Since my last report, you may have noticed 4 new faces in the serving team around the altar; Stephen Buckle, Gigi Elia, Joanne Clifton and Lizzy Hedison. Stephen and Gigi after enjoying a few services each as acolyte decided for a variety of different reasons that it wasn't the right time for them personally to focus on being in the serving team. I thank them both for getting involved and "having a go" and for their hard work. In some cases, they may return back to the team when the time is right (a welcoming door is always open). Joanne and Lizzy are still involved and are proving valuable members of the team. They are both excellent Acolytes and, in some cases, keen to train further to take on other roles in the team. These new members of the team, fill me with hope that one day soon we can return to regular services with a full team of six servers back round the altar with all the "bells and whistles" allowing a fuller and smoother support for the clergy and a more majestic celebration of the Eucharist.

If you think you or someone you know may be able help the serving team, even once a month, then please come and talk to me, you will be warmly welcomed. Full training and support will be given, and the team is always very friendly.

Robin Harris, Head Server

2.8.4 Bell Ringing

During 2025, the 2nd and 3rd Sunday morning ringing, continued to be a success, with significant improvements being made in the standard of ringing. We have been able to maintain attendee numbers to ring on 12 bells on all but one occasion.

Quarter peals rung during the year include:

2 of Stedman Triples

1 of Stedman Caters

1 of Grandsire Caters

2 of Grandsire Cinques

1 of Erin Cinques

In August, we welcomed a group of visiting bell ringers from Waltham Abbey.

We recruited two new learners, both of whom progressed well.

Our learners' practices have been successful as have our first Monday advanced practices, which have been focusing on ringing Stedman Cinques.

The Tower, Clock and Bells restoration project progressed well during 2025, and we reached a point where an application for a Faculty was finally becoming a reality, as was the consideration



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of requesting updated quotes and plans for the work from the two companies tendering for the bell restoration work.

James Saunders, Tower Captain and Steeple Keeper

2.8.5 Mothers' Union

In 2025 the Branch met eight times.

Following the set programme, members included readings at the beginning of each meeting, and discussions frequently developed from these.

Talks included:

- Lorna Delayahu – Yarl's Wood (Beyond Detention)
- Wendy Jones – Work of the Blossom Service charity
- Cliff Harris – Harvest

On Mothering Sunday members made posies for the service and also distributed cards.

We enjoy our monthly meeting together, and value our fellowship. Through God's good grace we continue to uphold the aims and objectives of the Mothers' Union.

Sheila Smith, Branch Leader



APPENDIX A - Minutes of Meetings (2025)

A1. Minutes of Annual Meeting of Parishioners

Minutes of Annual Meeting of Parishioners to elect the Churchwardens ('Vestry meeting') held on Sunday 11 May 2025

Fr Anthony welcomed people to the meeting, and he led us in prayer
35 (Thirty-Five) people were present.

1. Election of Chair

Fr Anthony explained that legally, in the absence of the Vicar, the meeting should be chaired by the PCC Vice Chair unless another appropriate person is nominated. He then handed over to Wendy Jones (PCC Vice Chair) who nominated the Rev'd Anthony Davis (curate-in-charge) to chair the meeting.

Proposed Wendy Jones. **Approved Unanimously**

Fr Anthony took the Chair.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Sumy Pappachen and Tom Otley

3. Minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting of Parishioners

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Sunday 28 April 2024 were received, and it was **agreed with no votes against** that these be accepted as a true record of the meeting.

Proposed Wendy Jones, **Seconded** Val Lane. **Unanimous**

4. Election of Churchwardens

Fr Anthony outlined the attendance requirements of the meeting, which included all who were recorded on the electoral roll of the civic parish, as well as those on the ecclesiastical parish's electoral roll. The purpose of the meeting was to elect churchwardens, and he explained what is involved in the role of Churchwarden.

He thanked Alison Phillipson and Malcolm Smith for their careful and considerate service and support throughout the year. He also thanked Florence Bignell for agreeing to serve once again this year.

As he stepped down as Churchwarden Malcolm was thanked for his good sense, and his work on matters of the church building and fabric, including the many practical skills he brought to the role of Churchwarden, often completing practical tasks himself. Malcolm has shown love for the church building and the congregation, and we hope he will continue to be involved in the life of the community. A gift was presented.

There were two nominations for the office of Churchwarden received in writing before the start of the meeting. The nominees confirmed their willingness to serve.



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Nominated

Alison Phillipson
Florence Bignell

Proposed

Kath Unwin
Malcolm Smith

Seconded

Linda Byer
Wendy Jones

As the only nominees, Alison Phillipson and Florence Bignell were elected unopposed as Churchwardens for the coming year (effective after the Archdeacon's visitation).

2 Other business

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 12.06 pm.

Signed.....
Revd. Anthony Davis, Priest in Charge

Date.....



A2. Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on Sunday 11 May 2025

35 (Thirty-Five) people were present.

1) Election of Chair

Fr Anthony explained that legally, in the absence of the Vicar, the meeting should be chaired by the PCC Vice Chair unless another appropriate person is nominated. He then handed over to Wendy Jones (PCC Vice Chair) who nominated the Rev'd Anthony Davis to chair the meeting.

Proposed Wendy Jones. **Approved Unanimously.**

Fr Anthony took the Chair, and he explained that the request for questions in advance of the meeting was to prepare better informed answers. However, all questions would be welcomed.

2) Apologies

Apologies were received from Sumy Pappachen, and Tom Otley

3) Minutes of the 2024 APCM

The minutes of the previous APCM held on Sunday 28 April 2024 were received, and it was agreed **with no votes against** that these be accepted as a true record of the meeting.

Proposed Cliff Harris, **Seconded** Linda Byer. **Approved Unanimously.**

4) Matters Arising

None

5) Reports

The Annual Report and Financial Statements were publicly available for a week in advance of the meeting. Hard copies were available in church, and a digital copy was available on the website, with a link distributed in the weekly emails. Fr Anthony thanked all those who contributed to the production of the report.

a) Electoral Roll

Linda Byer (Electoral Roll Officer) reported on electoral roll numbers. At the 2024 APCM, there were 115 on the roll. On the new Roll (2025) there are 101, 23 are resident in the parish, 78 are non-resident.

Fr Anthony thanked Linda, Sharon and Pat for their help in the preparation of the new Roll.

b) Proceedings of the PCC

The PCC Secretary's Report can be found in the Annual Report.

Fr Anthony thanked Val Lane for her commitment to the PCC as she stood down

after a 3-year term. He stressed the importance of the work done by PCC members and thanked all members for their work over the past year, including Pat Whittome as PCC secretary.

c) Report and Financial Statements

Fr Anthony briefly explained the different sections of the document, which was available for the week prior to the meeting. He highlighted some of the most pertinent points, and was pleased to report that our Parish Share payments have increased from 28% in 2023 to 90% in 2024.

There were 2 questions:

Rachel Brown: *Will we be able to pay our full Parish Share this year?*

Yes, thanks to extra funding received

Ann Collett-White: *Why do we not mention the names of people who leave us a legacy?*

There is no reason why this can't be done in future.

Fr Anthony thanked the Dorothy Porter Trust and the Gale Family Charitable Trust for their support, and also Alison Phillipson for organising the very successful concerts & recitals, Robin Bartlett for organising outside hires and events, and of course the Christmas Tree Festival team who this year have won Fundraising Team of the Year at the Bedford Independent Everyday Heroes Awards.

Thanks were also given to:

David Price, who stepped down as Treasurer for health reasons and because of the death of his wife Claire who did so much for St Paul's and who is very much missed.

Florence Bignell & Val Lane for counting the money

Florence for banking and recording of Gift Aid envelopes

Sharon for admin and invoicing for special services

Robin for income and invoicing for outside hires.

d) Fabric, Goods and Ornaments

The full Fabric Report can be found in the Annual Report document. However this does not cover the Tower, Clock & Bells Project because the work has not yet started.

Fr Anthony briefly described the project to rehang the bells and repair the tower and clock. Fundraising is ongoing and it has been given a significant boost from an event hosted by Charles & Jane Whitbread and made possible by Ann & James Collett-White. We are absolutely indebted to Steve Stanford, a member of the bellringing community based normally at Elstow. Steve has liaised with the architect on the specification and has kept the project on track.

e) Safeguarding

The full Safeguarding Report can be found in the Annual Report document.

Fr Anthony thanked Wendy Jones for her work as Parish Safeguarding Officer, keeping abreast of safeguarding developments and ensuring that our dashboard is green!



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Pat Whittome was also thanked for her work as Lead Recruiter

f) Deanery Synod

The full Deanery Synod Report can be found in the Annual Report.

Fr Anthony thanked Malcolm Smith and Wendy Jones for their work as Deanery Synod representatives.

g) Church Groups and Activities

Individual reports can be found in Section 2.8 of the Annual Report. Fr Anthony thanked the report authors for their work throughout the year and their contribution to the report.

6) Appointment of one Deanery Synod representative

There were no nominations.

7) Appointment of Lay members to the PCC

There were five vacancies for a full three-year term and five nominations were received as follows:

Nomination	Proposer	Secunder
Holly Barnard	Florence Bignell	Wendy Jones
Linda Byer	Ann Whittome	Wendy Jones
Susan Gray	Sheila Smith	Florence Bignell
Sumi Pappachen	Florence Bignell	Valerie Lane
Susan Stewart	Ann Collet-White	Sue Gray

As the number of nominations did not exceed the number of vacancies and there were no further nominations, it was **agreed nem con** that all should be elected to the PCC.

8) Appointment of Independent Examiner

Fr Anthony Davis **proposed** that George Hay Chartered Accountants be appointed as Independent Examiner for the coming year. This was **seconded** by Alison Phillipson and **approved unanimously**.

9) Report on the Ministry & Witness of the Church (Fr Anthony)

The report is attached as an appendix to these minutes

10) Further Business

There being no further business, the meeting closed with prayer at 1.10 pm

Signed.....

Date.....

Revd. Anthony Davis, Priest in Charge

APPENDIX B - Curate-in-Charge Address and Churchwardens' Response

B1. APCM Address 2025 – Anthony Davis, Curate in Charge

I know it probably shouldn't surprise me, but it is amazing how often, when I am talking to people outside church, that the conversation turns to faith. I would love to think that it is the holy spirit moving, or Jesus calling his sheep, as I described in my sermon earlier, but I do wonder if sometimes people see the clerical collar and worry that they are being judged for not coming to church enough.

I will regularly have people saying something along the lines of "well of course, I do believe in God and all that, I just don't think I need to come to church to have faith.

So before we get into the detail of my APCM report for this 2025 APCM for St Paul's Church, a short digression if I may into St Paul's theology, and his answer to why we come to church, and indeed what "church" actually is. Why are we here and what is it all for.

In the Bible St Paul, talks a huge amount about church. Indeed, theologians suggest that the stability and integrity of the churches is the central concern in his letters.

The word Paul uses for church in the Greek of his letters is Ekklesia. This word in secular usage described the assembly of free citizens if a city who were entitled to vote (and therefore it is perhaps appropriate that at today's APCM there is a fair amount of voting and democratic process). Paul's usage of the word was probably influenced by the fact that in his time most Jews would have read their Old Testament bible in Greek, rather than Hebrew, and Ekklesia is the word used to translate the Hebrew Qahal in Qahal Yahweh or assembly of God, the congregation of the people of Israel when they are gathered to hear the Word of God.

So church, for St Paul is an assembly, or gathering of people, where they encounter God. But what is church for?

Let's start with worship and prayer, though for St Paul, church is not the only context for worship and prayer and, in his letter to the Romans (Rom 12:1) he makes it clear that we are called to worship in every sphere of life It therefore cannot be worship alone that brings us to church.

There is also teaching, discipleship, sharing in the Gospel, so Paul writes of the church as 'the pillar and bulwark of the truth [that Christ] was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory.' (1Tim:13)

There is mission too. The Ephesian church is 'to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called (Eph 4:1), the Galatian church is called to 'bear one another's burdens' (Gal 6:2), the Corinthian church to raise money to support those in need (2 Cor:8-9) and the Roman church to 'welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you' and by doing so, act 'for the glory of God' (Rom 15:7).

Worship, teaching, mission and welcome. But there is more:

For St Paul, the key purpose for church, the one which gets most attention in his letters appears to be mutual support and the building up of a community of diverse and unrelated individuals. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul talks of God's will for the reconciliation of all humans (1:9-14), which Christ's death and resurrection has made possible (2:13-18). He



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suggests that the church reveals God's plan (3:9-11), where it can be 'the symbol of the world's possibility, by being the place in the world where human differences do not separate but provide the basis for deeper unity in the spirit (4:11-16)'.

Paul uses metaphors of family and of the body of Christ, he describes the many gifts in the church community (1 Cor 12) for the building up of that community.

Worship, teaching, mission and welcome, community. Perhaps not a bad way to think of structuring an APCM talk. I want to start my reflections on St Paul's in 2024 with the area to which St Paul gave most attention: The community of the church.

Community

One way of thinking about the community of St Paul's Bedford is to start with our electoral roll. In her report in the materials you have, Linda Byer says that at the last APCM, there were 115 on the roll. Following the complete revision there are 101 on the new Electoral Roll. However, this small change of 14 in number masks a much bigger change.

Of the 101 on the new electoral roll, 43 were not on the electoral roll last year, indeed for some of you this is probably your first APCM. Welcome! This is a source of great hope, as we are continuing to welcome new people in the church community and we each, existing and new members, benefit from the support and gifts of each other as we journey together in faith.

St Paul's is an inclusive church, and we believe that we are enriched by the diversity of those people who now call this place their home church. A number of those who have been at St Paul's for a while have told me that it feels as though it is becoming more diverse, and in this we rejoice. The early churches to which Paul wrote, gathered people from all parts of Roman society, Jew and Gentile, Slaves and free citizens, men and women and were seen by him as a symbol of the hope made possible by God as being the context in which differences do not separate but provide the basis for deeper unity in the spirit. I pray that St Paul's might be a model for how diversity of view as well as diversity of background, ability, gender and sexuality and more can be a source of strength and holiness for us.

Given the large number of new people on the roll, the small downward change indicates an even larger number of departures. Inevitably there will be some catching up of people who left in prior years, as the last full revision was six years ago, but now is the appropriate time to mention and remember just some of the people who are no longer part of this community. First, I would like to remember together those members of our congregation who have died, acknowledging the loss that each one of them represents to the corporate life of St Paul's Church. Since the last APCM, sadly we have taken the funerals of no less than 8 members of the St Paul's community

- John Long
- Vernon Spicer
- Judith James
- Gordon Mitchell
- Claire Price
- Margaret Blake
- Jean Wyatt
- And just last week, Anne Wakeling.



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I personally will miss each of them, and, though I am confident they have all now gone to be with our Father in Heaven, we are saddened by their leaving. May they rest in peace, and Rise in Glory.

Some of those who are no longer with us have simply moved to a different part of the country. Of those, I would especially like to mention Kaye McLelland, who with her family moved to Wales, partly to explore further Jesus' call on her life. We will miss Kaye who, as a Lay Leader of Worship was often out front during our services and who also organised the St Paul's singers for most of last year. We will also miss Kaye's ministry to the LGBTQ community in Bedford, being the driving force behind starting a now annual service to commemorate Transgender day of Remembrance as well as organising a songs of praise service specifically targeted towards the LGBTQ community last year.

Of course, the biggest change in the St Paul's community in 2024 was the retirement of Fr. Kevin after 10 years as vicar. The valedictory Eucharist was both joyful, as we celebrated Kevin's long ministry, but also sad as we said our goodbyes to him. To list all that Fr. Kevin did for St Paul's would need more time than we have today (and indeed I wasn't here for most of it) but from what I did see, Fr. Kevin brought with him some wonderful gifts – a great experience in music, a passion for liturgy, a pastoral heart and much, much more. He had a real love for the people of St Paul's. We pray that Kevin will now be able to enjoy a well-earned rest.

Kevin's leaving marks the end of an era at St Paul's, and we are now in a vacancy as we await the process to appoint a new vicar or priest in charge. I was licensed as Curate in Charge in December last year to provide some stability during this process, and I sincerely hope to continue to be part of the new era at St Paul's, once the vacancy is over.

Worship

Details of our worship during 2025 can be found in the Trustees Report included in our accounts document. Rather than reiterating those words, I will commend that report to you and use this time to offer some thanks.

Leading our worship is not simply the job of the vicar or curate-in-charge but is a real team effort. So, I would like to thank to thank some of those who enriched our worship in 2024:

- The serving team Robin, Rachel, Rachel, Wendy, Tom, Shirley and Joe
- The choir Kaye, Kath, Alison, Linda and Holly
- Our organists especially John Wearmouth who played for the majority of our Sundays until September and Adam Wright our new Organist from October.
- The office: Robin B for changing altar frontals, moving furniture and much more and Sharon for her support for Kevin and me, especially in the context of worship, preparing orders of service and pew sheets.
- And last, but by no means least or wonderfully supportive ministry team of Wendy our LLW, Cliff and Tom our readers, and Fr. Michael and Fr. Roger our Honorary Assistant Priests

I really don't know how I and Fr Kevin before me could manage without you.

I do want to say a bit more here about music in worship though. This time last year, Fr. Kevin reflected briefly on his sadness that a good number of the choir felt unable to continue at St Paul's after September 2023 and thanked the St Paul's Singers who loyally remained with us.



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The St Paul's singers have continued to do a great job, coordinated first by Kaye and latterly by Kath Unwin (thankyou Kath), and they are supplemented now occasionally by some male voices and visiting choir members from St James' Biddenham thanks to Adam's contacts there. We do have plans and hope for rebuilding a larger choir here at St Paul's, under Adam's leadership, and I ask for your patience and your prayers as we do so.

Teaching and discipleship

It has been one of my joys at St Paul's to walk together in faith and learn with and from the members of the congregation who have taken part in learning and discipleship last year. Both the Lent course on "Inclusion" and our Advent course on "God With Us" were incredibly well supported and I look forward to seeing how these classes can be developed further this year. I do want to specifically mention our confirmation candidates Jenny, Gigi, Alex and Marjan – it was a pleasure to teach and encourage you and to pray with and for you as you took an important step in your faith journey. I am looking forward to journeying with those who have already expressed an interest in confirmation this year.

Mission and welcome

Again, our activities around mission and welcome are detailed in the Trustees report, so I will limit my comments largely to thanks. Thank you to the warm room volunteers, from St Andrew's church as well as St Paul's; to Robin B, Sharon and the welcomers, both members of the St Paul's congregation and others, for the pastoral care they show to our weekday visitors; to our partners, especially Dine with us on the Streets for their Christmas Meal and Bedford Creative Arts and Brass for the art installation for refugee week.

I would also like to thank the pastoral team – Wendy, Cliff, Linda, Robin and Rosemary, and our outward giving group of Cliff, Wendy, Linda and Val.

The Future

Finally, If I may, a few words about the future.

I mentioned in my sermon earlier the need to listen for Jesus' call on our own lives.

In determining the future direction for our church, we will also have to listen hard for God's call on our corporate life as the community of St Paul's, Bedford.

I mentioned that sometimes we hear God's call through other people. As you are all probably aware, the Bishop of Bedford has commissioned a wide-ranging external review of St Paul's to help identify the opportunities for development of St Paul's over a 5–10-year period. The review team have not yet finished and are due to report at the end of June. By the time they are done they will have engaged with tens or even hundreds of stakeholders with a real affection for and concern for our future as the Body of Christ in this place. Although I wouldn't want to pre-empt what might be in there, I am confident that in the pages of their report there will be much for us to consider in discerning where God is calling us next.

There is also work to do ourselves, in dialogue with each other and in dialogue with God through prayer to determine our priorities for the short and medium term, which may come from the pages of the report, but will also reflect the spiritual and practical gifts of the members of this community.

St Paul's church is at the threshold of an exciting new era in its life, where there are many possible futures, and we must walk forward in confidence, trusting in God's plan for each of us, and for us as a community.

One of the short-term tasks is the discernment of who might lead St Paul's beyond the vacancy. At the announcement of my appointment of Curate in Charge, Bishop Richard



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indicated that there was an expectation that I would be licensed for an additional period of ministry after the end of my curacy (which legally must come to an end before the end of September). This is still my hope and prayer, and, I believe, still the expectation of the Bishop and wish of the PCC. Exactly what this might look like will not be determined until after the end of the review but do watch for further announcements in due course (and pray for me, the PCC and the Bishop in the meantime).

As we look towards the future and discern God's call we note that the church here, just as the first century church to which St Paul wrote, is not a static thing – Our St Paul's community is starting to show shoots of recovery after a difficult few years, as new members hear something of God's word here in our community, as new members are added to our electoral roll or seek baptism and confirmation here - to use another Pauline analogy, new branches are being grafted on to the roots of the existing olive tree, leading to new flourishing.

As the new shoots of growth are grafted onto the existing roots I pray for a future where we may continue to grow in number, in faith and in diversity and that, like St Paul's hopes for the early church that we might as a community "lead a life worthy of the calling to which we have been called" that we might grow into the body of Christ in which each part is joined and knit together, working properly and building itself up in love and hope. And that we may be a blessing to ourselves and a blessing to this town of Bedford.

B2. Closing Remarks – Alison Phillipson, Churchwarden

Many thanks, Fr Anthony, for your very encouraging review of the past year. The APCM is, of course, an important annual event in the formal life of St Paul's and in discharging our obligations as a charitable concern. However, it also is a vital occasion to take stock and to reflect on how many good things have happened in the past year.

Malcolm and I would like to echo Anthony's thanks to all of you who selflessly work to ensure that St Paul's can be a place of welcome and a thriving place of worship. It has been a real pleasure to us, at the back of the church, to see the increasing number of people attending 10.15 Eucharist on Sunday mornings. It is good too to see that the average age profile of our congregation has been getting younger! That is a testament to the unsung but warm welcome given by so many of our volunteers over the past year – sidespeople, welcomers, flower arrangers, those of you who provide coffee after service and those who organise occasional events such as the Fellowship lunches, the annual Bike and Hike ride and those who enabled our Warm Spaces initiative during the winter months. Just to name a few. Many of you will know that the Bishop of Bedford initiated a review of St Paul's role earlier this year. We are very grateful to all of you who have taken the time to contribute views to the Review team and we expect to receive their observations and thoughts as to how the Diocese will work with us to grow the future direction of St Paul's very shortly. In the meantime, the steady quiet welcome given to visitors and newcomers throughout the week is a touchstone of St Paul's mission and vital to our future.

St Paul's has continued faithfully to fulfil its role as the Civic Church of Bedfordshire hosting a number of civic services during the year – and then, later today, being the venue for a special



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VE anniversary day service. This role is also a crucial part of our mission and we look forward to working with the Council and other civic authorities during the coming year to develop that role.

As you will have seen in Malcolm's report as Chairman of the Fabric Committee, we have looked after the church building well this year. It was great to see the works on the North Porch completed at the beginning of the year and after a very long and winding road, via various permissions and differences of expert opinions, to get there! I am sure you will agree that the improvements have given much needed light and focus to what is a vital entrance to our building. A churchyard working party, comprised again of volunteers, did excellent work in clearing and tidying the church yard during the Spring. The Tower Clock and Bells Sub-Committee has worked hard during the year to obtain funding for necessary improvements and looks well set towards its fundraising target.

We continue to be very grateful to the Friends of St Paul's and to the Dorothy Porter Trust for their financial support of all fabric works.

We were delighted to welcome Adam Wright as our new Organist at the end of September 2024. The small group of St Paul's Singers (Kath, Linda, Holly, me, John Wearmouth and, more recently, Marcus Enoch) has kept music alive at our liturgy and at special services during the year. We were very pleased to be joined by friends from St James' Biddenham, and by other musical friends at Christmas 2024 and at Easter 2025. It is great now that, with Adam, we have relaunched an initiative to rebuild the St Paul's Choir; we'd love to hear from any new interested singers; do please speak to Adam! In the meantime, heartfelt thanks to all the organists who have cheerfully signed up to play at 10.15 on Sundays and at other services during the year, and prior to Adam's arrival. Tuesday Lunchtime Concerts and Organ recitals have continued to go from strength to strength with Lunchtime concerts, in particular, attracting larger loyal audiences and now raising significant income for the church. We were very pleased to welcome the Philharmonia Orchestra as new partners for the Lunchtime Concerts, alongside the Royal College of Music, last Autumn. We were all devastated by the sudden passing of Claire Price last year. Claire had been a loyal member of our church, our Concerts team and also had led on recruiting choirs and music groups for the Christmas Tree Festival. It was only when some of us took over that last responsibility at short notice that we realised just how much Claire had done quietly to organise such a vast variety of musicians and so successfully to make them feel welcome on the day. The Christmas Tree Festival continues to be a vital component of our mission, musical outreach – and our fundraising. We were delighted, therefore, that the Festival Committee, chaired by Margaret Oakley, was recognised as Everyday Heroes Fundraising Team of the Year 2024 at the awards sponsored by the Bedford Independent on 1st May 2025.

Thank you very much again from the Churchwardens to Robin and to Sharon for all that they do, often under the radar and with good humour, to run the church office, our social media, and to support concerts and to initiate extra evening fundraising events. Thanks too to Miriam, our cleaner, not just for her impeccable cleaning standards but for her commitment in being prepared occasionally to come back to church to lock up after evening events.



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We have continued to be very fortunate with the calibre and commitment of our PCC members over the past year. Special thanks to Pat Whittome, PCC Secretary, Wendy Jones, Lay Vice Chair, and to the members of the Standing and Finance Committee for their wise counsel. Also, to Pat and Wendy for ensuring we continue to meet stringent Safeguarding requirements and, special thanks to Linda Byer for her excellent and thorough work in reviewing our Electoral Roll this year.

Fr Anthony, thank you *so* much from the Churchwardens, and from all the St Paul's congregation, for all that you have done to give us stability, structure and direction since Fr Kevin retired at the end of September last year. Your calm demeanour and clear management experience have been crucial in steering us through any number of challenges, including the Bishop's review, over the past six months. That our finances are now on a much more stable footing is proof of your careful attention – and your willingness, for now!, to combine the role of Treasurer with being Curate in Charge. There are clear signs of growth in our congregation, particularly now in new younger members, which is very much down to your leadership and inspiration. We look forward to continuing to work with you to grow St Paul's mission over the coming year. We are most grateful, too, to the loyal ministerial team: Fr Michael, Fr Roger, Tom Otley, Robin Harris and the servers for all they do week on week to ensure that our services are well organised and spiritually meaningful.

Nearly there! Malcolm, I have very much enjoyed working with you as a Churchwarden and have appreciated your dry sense of humour, particularly when we have both been grappling with obscurer and opaque points of Diocesan guidance. I hope you will forgive a few literary references but the first that came to mind was that reflection from Hamlet, "that within that passeth show". You have been quietly and faithfully dedicated to St Paul's over many years and, over the past year, I have come to realise more exactly what that dedication means. You have just got on with stuff, oiled the kitchen door and the West door, repaired annoying bumps in the stone floor near the pulpit. In themselves, small tasks compared to the major refurbishment of the North Porch, which you also oversaw as Chair of Fabric, or the replacement of the Pinnacles but, vital for the effective running of the church day to day. As George Herbert said, "A servant with this clause, makes drudgery divine: who sweeps a room, as for thy laws, makes that and the action fine". You are a true Anglican, Malcolm, and St Paul's has been very fortunate to have your service as Churchwarden and Chair of the Fabric Committee. It is good to know that you will continue to be involved in fabric matters in future. Thank you!

Florence and I have previous form as a Churchwarden team, so, I am looking forward to working with her again in future!

Thank you all again on behalf of the Churchwardens and here's to every success for St Paul's in the coming year.