



Parish of St Paul, Bedford

Papers for the 2025 APCM
Celebrating the Life of St Paul's Church



Annual Report for APCM 2025



PCC Annual Report - Year ending 31st December 2024

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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 11 May 2025 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 Elect a Chair
Nominated: Revd Anthony Davis, Curate-in-Charge.
2. To receive apologies for absence.
3. To agree as a correct record the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners held on Sunday 28 April 2024 and the Minutes of the Special APCM held on Sunday 14 July 2024.
4. To elect TWO Parochial Church Wardens
5. Chair's closing remarks



2. ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

The APCM will be held in Church on **Sunday 11th May 2025** at the conclusion of the meeting to elect Churchwardens.

2.1. Agenda

1. To Elect a Chair
Nominated: Revd Anthony Davis, Curate-in-Charge.
2. To receive apologies for absence.
3. To agree as a correct record the Minutes of the APCM held on Sunday 28 April 2024
4. Matters arising
5. **Reports (as exhibited in church prior to the meeting)**
To receive:
 - 5a. A Report on the electoral roll.
 - 5b. A Report of the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council (PCC)
 - 5c. The Report and Financial Statements of the PCC for the year ending on the 31st December 2024
 - 5d. A Report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church
 - 5e. A Report on Safeguarding
 - 5f. A Report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod
 - 5g. Reports from Church Groups and Activities
6. To elect ONE Deanery Synod representative for a three-year term
7. To elect FIVE representatives to the Parochial Church Council
8. To appoint an Independent Examiner for the PCC
7. A Report on the Ministry and Witness of the Church throughout 2024 (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)



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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.



2.3. Electoral Roll Report

At the 2024 APCM, there were 115 on the roll (21 resident in the parish, 94 non-resident). Following the complete revision there are 101 on the new Electoral Roll (23 in the Parish, 78 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), the Curate, Churchwardens, 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 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 2024 until the 31st December 2024 are listed below.

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

The Revd Canon Kevin Goss (Chair)	Vicar (ex officio) to end October 2024
The Revd Anthony Davis	Assistant Curate (ex-officio), Curate-in Charge from 1 st December 2024
Alison Phillipson	Warden (ex officio) from July 2024
Florence Bignell	Warden (ex officio) from APCM 2019 to July 2024
Clifford Harris	Reader (ex officio) to May 2024
Wendy Jones (Deputy Chair)	Deanery Synod Representative (ex-officio) from APCM 2023
Malcolm Smith	Churchwarden (ex-officio) from APCM 2023, Deanery Synod Representative from APCM 2023
Claire Price	From APCM 2021 and Deanery Synod Representative (ex-officio) from APCM 2023 to August 2024
Pat Whittome	From APCM 2020, Secretary
David Price	From APCM 2024
Valerie Lane	From APCM 2022
Linda Byer	From APCM 2022
Rachel Clover	From APCM 2023
Kaye M ^c Lelland	From APCM 2023 to October 2024
Rachel Brown	From APCM 2023
Stephen Buckle	From APCM 2023 to January 2024
Ann Collett-White	From APCM 2023
Dulcie Stanhope	From APCM 2024

In January Stephen Buckle resigned from the PCC for personal reasons. At the APCM in April 2024 Florence Bignell stood down as Churchwarden, and Cliff Harris stood down from the PCC, both after many years on the PCC. We thank them all for their dedicated service to St Paul's.

In October, after over 10 years leading the PCC as Vicar, Fr Kevin Goss retired, and in the same month Kay M^cLelland left to move to Wales. We miss them and wish them both well in the new phase of their lives. We were sorry to lose them as PCC members, and we thank them for their valued contribution over the years.

We were all shocked and saddened by the death of Claire Price in August. She gave so much to the life of St Paul's, and she is very much missed by us all.

At the APCM we were pleased to welcome Dulcie Stanhope as a new PCC member.



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2.5. Fabric Report

The year began on a high, when the work on the North Porch was completed. As usual we celebrated with a rededication service for all. What has been so pleasing is that an issue of nearly fifty years has finally been resolved; maybe not to the satisfaction of all in the diocese, but to most. So that the North Porch truly looked finished the oak slip which reduced the gap between the frame and the door, thus keeping some of the draught out, was stained to match the original and the door cleaned and oiled.

As I am sure you all remember last winter was a time of low temperatures in church because of the cost of heating. During the early part of the year mould was found to be growing on the choir corridor cupboards, the seating on the balcony and in other areas too. Lack of heat, a coating of dust and less use over the last couple of years all were thought to have contributed. The areas were dusted, and in some cases given a wipe of linseed oil and the problem seems to have been sorted.

During the Spring the Fabric Committee set up a church yard working party. The moss on the Barnard Cross and at ground level outside the Trinity Chapel door was removed. Abandoned sand from a previous Christmas Tree Festival was shifted and the salt bin (full of water) removed. Weeding was done round the building and the area of the St. Etheldreda's monument cleared of Rosemary. My thanks go to all those who gave of their time and muscle on those Saturday mornings.

During the year there were several other problems which needed to be resolved. The high-level hoppers above the West Door needed clearing; we needed professional help with this. There were also problems with the pulpit lights which stopped working after they had been repaired. The uplighters in the nave and on the window ledges also needed replacing (more than once) and some plumbing items were needed in the toilet area.

This year was the time for the Quinquennial Report. The church architect visited and gave a report which highlighted all those things which we should consider having done in the next five years. Some of these were expensive! We have however made a good start by oiling the kitchen door, clearing the west window and various smaller jobs. Some of the listed items were ones for which the Borough Council are responsible. The churchyard wall is the Borough Council's responsibility. Work to improve the parking area at the west end was already included in churchyard work that was planned. There was a lot more than that which I will not detail here.

One of the areas of ongoing concern is the patch of plaster above and to the right of the high altar. The plaster/or paint is flaking off. During the last repair to this area the builders did not remove the carpet and made a mess on it. The floor area has been levelled by covering the uneven floor below this expensive carpet with MDF, thus filling in the shallow step down and making a safer surface for people to walk on. We have just received a quote for repairing the plasterwork again.

When the lead downpipes were replaced last year, they did not have smart water labels on them. I do not know whether this had anything to do with which ones were removed. I got in



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touch with Ecclesiastical Insurance and was able to secure new labels and smart water which has since been applied liberally to those requiring it.

Father Anthony was able to purchase chasubles, dalmatics and two tunics thanks to the generous donations of several congregational members. It also became time to replace the Advent Altar Frontal which was funded by the promise of a grant from The Friends of St Paul's. The previous one had lasted since the 1920's and was falling to pieces. I am sure we all enjoyed the new one in the run up to Christmas!

The Fabric Committee are grateful for the support they receive from the congregation both financial and physical. We will be having another working party in the Spring and urge you to join us in keeping our building beautiful and in a good state of repair.

Malcolm Smith, Churchwarden and Chair of Fabric Committee

2.6. Safeguarding Report

At its March 2024 meeting, St Paul's PCC confirmed that it continued 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.

The PCC affirmed their duty of care of the child, young person and vulnerable adult is always paramount. Safeguarding is part of our core faith and an integral feature of the Christian life in our church.

As Parish Safeguarding Officer and with Pat Whittome as Lead Recruiter we support those in positions of responsibility in the church to renew their DBS every three years. Safeguarding Training is key to updating all those who work and volunteer within the church and this also is on a three-year rolling programme.

Safeguarding information is displayed in the Narthex, the Anderson Room, the Alexander Room and the Bell Tower.

There have been a number of issues of safeguarding concern reported during 2024. These matters have been dealt with according to the relevant safeguarding policies and guidance by the Parish Safeguarding Officer, the Vicar, the Curate-in-charge and the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

The Diocesan Safeguarding team are essential as they support all that is done within the parish.

The diocesan team consists of :-

- Jez Hurst Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor
- Mandy Davies Assistant Safeguarding Advisor
- Dave Adams Assistant Safeguarding Advisor
- Warren Lucas Assistant Safeguarding Advisor



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Thank you to all 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. Thank you also to those in leadership who are totally committed to setting Safeguarding at the centre of all we do. I would like to thank them all personally for the support they have given me as Parish Safeguarding Officer and Pat as Lead Recruiter.

Since taking over responsibility for Safeguarding at St Paul's at the 2024 APCM it has been a year full of challenges and has made me fully aware of just how hard Sue Gray worked during her time in the post. Thank you Sue from all of us for all that you did to support us during your time as PSO. I have been blessed with the assistance of Pat as Lead Recruiter, looking after all our DBS checks and all the computer tasks that I find such a challenge.

You will all be aware that the CofE has been very much in the press headlines during this past year. In relation to Safeguarding matters. I would like to add that all of our Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors, Bishops all of our clergy speak very highly of the work of Safeguarding work done by our local PSO and our parish staff.

I would also like to give my very grateful thanks to Fr Kevin and Fr Anthony for their support to me in my Safeguarding role. I must also give my grateful thanks to Fr. Michael and Fr Roger for completing their Leadership Safeguarding Training. PCC members have all completed their required Safeguarding Training; Pat and I have both completed Leadership Safeguarding Training.

Thank you to each one of you for all the help and support you have given us in person and in your prayers during this past challenging year.

Wendy Jones - Parish Safeguarding Officer: safeguarding@stpaulschurchbedford.org.uk / wpjones87@gmail.com

2.7. Report on the Proceedings of Bedford Deanery Synod

There were three Deanery Synod meetings in 2024. Wendy Jones, Clare Price, Malcolm Smith and Fr. Kevin Goss supported the first at St. John's Bedford on 13th March. Amongst the usual agenda items was a Diocesan Synod update, a request for nominations for laity on the Deanery Standing and Pastoral Committee. We were informed of the Diocesan Elections and the process required for election. There was an interesting presentation from Suzanne Clackson and Amanda Young on the Diocesan Dispute Advisory Service. We also had the opportunity to raise or suggest potential discussion topics. Apparently, several groups expressed their desire to spend more time in discussion and less time hearing about reports which had already been circulated.

The second meeting of the year was at All Saints, Renhold. We used their meeting room which was not spacious enough. Time was spent on usual agenda items but most noteworthy was the new Diocesan Nominations Committee and how the members were chosen, the speed of implementation, its constitution and the democratic right of synod to propose and endorse candidates. Some people were not happy! There were reminders about opportunities for



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Deanery Mission Support grants. We were also reminded about safeguarding and the newsletter. Later there was a presentation entitled: A Church Inclusive for Racial Justice and Diversity led by David Lambert.

The third meeting of the year clashed with our last Standing and Finance Meeting with Kevin in the vicarage. Priority was given to Fr. Kevin and so this meeting was not attended by St. Paul's. At that meeting, Synod were joined by Becky Guynn and Jane Spencer from Impact who spoke about their work with children, youth and teachers.

Those of us on the Deanery Synod representing this church do our best to remain positive about the direction of future meetings.

Malcolm Smith, Deanery Synod Representative

2.8. Reports of Church Groups and Activities

2.8.1 Music

Music & Liturgy

As all members of St Paul's congregation – and visitors – know, music has been a vital component of our liturgy and will continue to be so. It was, therefore, very encouraging to see the continuance of music at our 10.15 Sunday services throughout the year, led by the Singers group. It was delightful also to be able to welcome singers from the choir at St James Biddenham to augment our choir for Midnight Mass on 24th December. We were very well supported by a number of talented visiting organists at our Sunday 10.15 services throughout the year. Many thanks to them all. We were then very pleased to confirm the appointment of Adam Wright as our new St Paul's Organist in October 2024. Plans to develop the choir and the variety of music in our liturgy during 2025 are already well in hand.

Concerts & Recitals

It has been another very successful year for lunchtime and evening concerts at St Paul's during 2024. There were 38 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.

The range of music has again been impressive: violin, piano, flutes, cellos, recorders, saxophones, solo singers and choirs. Our youngest performer during the year was Leo Little, a Year 13 student from Sharnbrook Academy, who gave a stunning piano recital in March 2024. Leo has now gone on to study music at the RCM in London. We also ran 7 Saturday organ recitals with organists recruited from a wide variety of other churches and from Cambridge colleges. All the musicians have been most generous with their time and enthusiasm, and we have enjoyed the support of a loyal and growing regular audience.

The donations received have proved to be a significant addition to St Paul's income during the year; the total raised from lunchtime concerts and organ recitals this year exceeded



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past records at £12,704. 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 were excited to start discussions with the Philharmonia Orchestra in late 2024 about the inclusion of some of their young instrumental Fellows in the 2025 Lunchtime series programme. Bookings were then confirmed for early 2025.

The Christmas Tree Festival in December proved an even greater musical success than in 2023; 42 school and community groups in total performed during the week, comprising nearly 1200 individuals. The Festival also included a popular evening concert by local musicians on the Friday evening of the event.

We were extremely saddened by the sudden loss of Claire Price in September 2024. Claire had been a stalwart in organising the Christmas Tree Festival music, as well as assisting with Lunchtime Concert recitals. She is very much missed. Many thanks also to Robin Bartlett and Sharon Evans for their support and hard work in publicising and promoting all these musical events.

Alison Phillipson, Concert & Recitals Organiser

2.8.2 Digital Communications

As I reported this time last year, the Church of England nationally has for some years been making the best use of the latest technology as part of its communications, to maximise the numbers and groups of people it can reach and to communicate its messages as effectively as possible. It is no different locally, and the need for Parish churches to make best use of available technology as part of its outreach is not a passing fad.

At St Paul's we have taken steps in recent years to embrace the newer channels of communication both with the existing congregation and, just as importantly, using digital platforms to reach potentially a much wider community. This is an area that does not stand still for long so we are always learning as to what works best for us, and, to establish the right mix of "new" and more "traditional" methods; we welcome any comments you may have.

Our Facebook page is well established continues to show solid organic growth. Results for last year show that its "reach" increased 38% to 81,000 people over the 12 months. The number of "visits" to the page - a key barometer of how well your page is being used - was just short of 10,000, up 30% on 2023. The church page now has 641 followers, up from 531 followers, around 70% of which are women.

Sharon Evans our Administrator posts many of the updates, often supported with excellent graphics and pictures and more recently Fr Anthony Davis has also been posting news specific to services and worship; I tend to use the page to promote forthcoming events. Consequently, the page has good balance of content to reflect the wider life of the church. Facebook is managed out of the office, and if you have your own Facebook account please remember to "like" and "follow" the church page to encourage growth and to keep in touch with updates.



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The weekly email appears to have cemented its place within the St Paul's community, such that people now routinely expect it each Friday. It is fairly popular too, with on average 65-70% reading it each week. The recent Keep in Touch form has enabled us to grow the database (the list of those who receive it) so that currently the number of subscribers is 164. In addition, anyone can sign up to receive it via the form on the homepage of the website: they do not need to be on the electoral roll or regular worshippers to keep in touch with church news.

To make better use of the email platform, last summer we decided to establish a separate audience for those attending the Tuesday recitals. These subscribers now also receive a weekly update (normally a Thursday) on recital news and what's coming up musically at St Paul's, an audience list that has grown from 70 to 105 in around six months. You can read elsewhere in the report about the growing audience attending Tuesday recitals.

We plan to keep the weekly emails going and indeed, as the audience grows, both the office and Fr Anthony can use this platform for other ad hoc news and updates as needed. There is inevitably some overlap with the notices found on the pew sheet, but the Friday notice allows us to attach links to other information sources and is reaching people who may not come into church to pick up a printed copy of the pew sheet.

Last summer saw the closure of *The Spire* monthly magazine. A one-off Spire Bulletin was printed to cover the Christmas period and while nothing further has been agreed, consideration is to be given to the resumption of a hard copy publication in the future.

Finally, do not forget that the church website (<https://www.stpaulschurchbedford.org.uk>) still contains a lot of the key information relating to service and opening times, events and other updates. The weekly pew sheet is always available for download from the homepage, which also has the links for our social media channels and other affiliate links such as *A Church Near You*, *The Major Churches network*, *Inclusive Church* and *Living Wage Foundation*.

Robin Bartlett, Centre Manager

2.8.3 Flower Guild

During the past year, though some weeks with difficulty, we have managed to continue to provide floral decorations in the Church. Sadly though, these have not always been of the quality and quantity that the congregation may expect.

I wonder for example if those attending services realise that it takes one person over an hour and a half to complete an arrangement in just one of the large urns in the nave, plus the time for the collection and preparation of the flowers and materials.

It is mainly as a result of our reduced membership that we have been unable to complete a full set of arrangements for the major festivals, and Christmas, Easter and Harvest were therefore especially difficult. We were all very conscious that there were one or two blank spaces in the Church that in earlier years would have been filled with flowers!

From a group of 10 people when I became involved with the Guild, we are now down to just 6 and although we were extremely pleased to welcome 1 new member this year, sadly she felt unable to continue due to other personal commitments.



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The result of the appeal last year for new volunteers can only be described as disappointing and we are being forced to consider inviting anyone – even from outside the church, but who has an interest in flower arranging and would like to gain a little more experience or expertise, to join us.

With an ever-reducing number of members we can only do our best!

There has been the usual pattern of additional or special services, such as memorials and weddings as well as 'significant' birthdays of members of the congregation when flowers have been requested.

Access continues to create some difficulties for all of us especially on those days when the Church is not actually open, and our planned attendances have to be fitted in with the advertised public opening times. Not always easy!

The price of flowers, especially those imported for winter use has continued to rise, and we would therefore again greatly appreciate any donations or contributions to the flower fund.

During the past year we had a demonstration and talk regarding the use of local grown flowers and foliage which was most interesting and well received. Sadly though, our existing equipment and containers were found to be not wholly suitable for this type of display and to convert fully would require a considerable investment from a fund which is presently being entirely used for the purchase of flowers.

I do appreciate that yet again this report sounds rather pessimistic as to the future, and indeed things are difficult, but we will continue to do our best to beautify our lovely ancient Church, using whatever resources may at that time be available to us.

Susan A Stewart, Guild Lead

2.8.4 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 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.

In recent months, you may have noticed the return of Joe Kinsella to the role of Acolyte. It's great to have him back on board and he's very happy and very enthusiastic to do as much as possible. Also, as I am writing I have a brand-new volunteer who I can hopefully slot in the rota, so you will see a new face around the altar by the time you read this. These new and returning faces, 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



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2.8.5 Bell Ringing

2024 has been an eventful year for bell ringing at St. Paul's.

Sadly, in February 2024, our former Tower Captain, John Long, died after a fall. John started ringing at St. Paul's in around 1947 and was a regular ringer here until the 1960's. John returned to ringing at St. Paul's in the 1990's after a break, during which he pursued other interests and held a post as an organist. John became Tower Captain in the early 2000's and continued ringing until 2017. After John stopped ringing, he still took a keen interest in our ringing activities

2024 saw a continuation of ringing on Sundays, ably coordinated by Stephen Stanford, with the 2nd and 3rd Sunday ringing proving to be a great success. This has provided a considerable number of bell ringers the chance to ring on 12 bells; something that many bell ringers will never have the opportunity to do.

The 4th Sunday Quarter Peals which take place between 1500hrs and 1600hrs have also realised a degree of success. However, not all the monthly attempts have been successful as the bells have proved to be too difficult for some bell ringers to sustain an hour's ringing. The successful ones were:

05/02/24 - 1287 Stedman Caters
24/03/24 - 1320 Grandsire Cinques
26/05/24 - 1320 Grandsire Cinques
23/06/24 - 1320 Grandsire Cinques
21/07/24 - 1320 Erin Cinques
28/09/24 - 1253 Erin Cinques
24/11/24 - 1287 Stedman Caters

A full Peal was successfully rung on 29th September 2024 by the Society of Royal Cumberland Youths, with a band consisting of some of the best ringers in the country. They rang 5042 changes of splice treble dodging Maximus consisting of four methods (Avon, Bristol, Photos and Zanussi) with 54 changes of method. This took them 3 hours 19 minutes to complete.

We have also have some learners' practices and have recently recruited a new learner, Marc Walhbe. We are always on the lookout for more learners, so please feel free to contact us and ask about learning to ring, we would love to see you!

James Saunders, Tower Captain and Steeple Keeper

2.8.6 Mothers' Union

In 2024 the Branch met eleven times.

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

In March, Cliff Harris gave a talk on the Stations of the Cross, and in May, Father Anthony joined us and led the afternoon.



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Cliff gave an interesting presentation, on Harvest in October. We visited the Panacea Society. On Mothering Sunday members made posies for the service and also distributed cards.

We enjoy our worship together, and value our fellowship and continue to uphold the aims and objectives of the Mothers' Union.

Sheila Smith, Branch Leader

2.8.7 Church Hire

Last year I reported on the increasing demand and use of the Nave to host a variety of outside organisations and events, ranging from craft fairs, to vintage sales, and a wide variety of musical recitals and performances. Momentum picked up considerably in 2023 and I am glad to report continued through 2024.

This is a positive development as it brings in valuable income as well as a wide range of local people through our doors and puts less strain on our current limited, volunteer base to provide regular fund-raising events in-house. Of course, we do not have a church hall, Centre or Chapter House that we can promote, and our current on-site parking remains a challenge. However, the main church space is a great asset, a space which lends itself to a variety of uses.

Income generated through 2024 totalled around £13750, up from £10,500 in 2023. Much of this was secured by a number of groups and organisations who have become regular hirers over the last two or three years and who we hope will continue to use St Paul's.

For 2025 by the time this report is published we will have hosted a number of different types of events through March and April. It remains a priority of the office to try and keep this area of our work growing.

Robin Bartlett, Centre Manager



APPENDIX A - Minutes of Meetings (2024)

A1. Minutes of Annual Meeting of Parishioners

The meeting was held on Sunday 28 April 2024 at 11.45 am.

The Vicar took the chair. 26 (Twenty-six) people were present.

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Sunday 14th May 2023 were received, and it was **agreed nem con** that these be accepted as a true record of the meeting.

Proposed Malcolm Smith, **Seconded** Linda Byer.

1. Attendance at and purpose of the meeting

The Chairman 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. The Vicar thanked Florence Bignell for her excellent service over five years as she stepped down from her role as Churchwarden.

There was one nomination for the office of Churchwarden received in writing before the start of the meeting. The nominee confirmed his willingness to serve.

Nominated	Proposed	Seconded
Malcolm Smith	Florence Bignell	Wendy Jones

As the only nominee, Malcolm Smith was elected unopposed as Churchwarden for the coming year (effective after the Archdeacon's visitation). The Vicar stressed the demands placed on the churchwardens and he thanked him for agreeing to serve.

2 Other business

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 11.55am.

Signed.....

Date.....



A2. Minutes of Special Meeting of Parishioners

The meeting was held on Sunday 14 July 2024 at 11.30am.

The Vicar took the Chair. 40 (Forty) people were present. In the absence of the PCC Secretary, Linda Byer took the minutes.

1. Attendance at and purpose of the meeting

The Chairman 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 a second churchwarden. The Vicar gave a resumé of the current situation.

Florence Bignell had stepped down as Churchwarden at the meeting on Sunday 27th April after excellent service over five years. While Malcom Smith had been re-elected as Churchwarden in April there was, consequently, a vacancy for a second Churchwarden.

There was one nomination for the office of Churchwarden received in writing before the start of the meeting. The nominee confirmed her willingness to serve.

Nominated	Proposed	Seconded
Alison Phillipson	Florence Bignell	Kaye McLelland

As the only nominee Alison Phillipson was elected unopposed as Churchwarden for the coming year (effective after the Archdeacon's visitation). The Vicar paid tribute to her past service as Churchwarden, and he thanked her for agreeing to serve again.

2. Other business

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 11.45am.

Signed.....

Date.....



A3. Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

This meeting was held on Sunday 28 April 2024 at 11.50 am.
The Vicar took the chair. 26 (twenty-six) people were present.

Before the start of the meeting the Vicar explained that the request for questions in advance of the meeting was to prepare better informed answers. However, all questions would be welcomed.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Rachel Clover, David & Claire Price, Andrew & Sue Gray, Kay M^cLelland, and Heather & Neville Posnett.

2. Minutes of the 2022 APCM

The minutes of the previous APCM held on Sunday 14 May 2023 were received, and it was agreed **nem con** that these be accepted as a true record of the meeting.
Proposed Florence Bignell, **Seconded** Val Lane.

3. Matters Arising

None

4. Appointment of Lay members to the PCC

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

Nomination	Proposer	Seconded
Dulcie Stanhope	Claire Price	Rachel Clover
David Price	Ann Whittome	Florence Bignell

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. This left three vacancies to be filled.

5. Appointment of Independent Examiner

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

6. Electoral Roll

Linda Byer (Electoral Roll Officer) reported that at the 2023 APCM, there were 116 on the roll. The current figure is 115, 21 are resident in the parish, 94 are non-resident. The Vicar thanked the Electoral Roll Officer for her efforts in maintaining the Roll.

7. Annual Report and Reports on PCC Activities

The Annual Report had been publicly displayed in church and on the web site, with the



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link distributed in the weekly emails in advance of the meeting. The Vicar thanked all those who contributed to the production of the report. The report was received and there were no questions.

8. Accounts for the Year Ending 31 December 2023

The signed accounts were publicly displayed in church and on the website in advance of the meeting. Fr Anthony Davis gave a clear and logical explanation of the Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet. He then asked for questions.

Question: How long can we continue to pay only part of our Parish Share and is the Parish Share payment voluntary?

Fr Anthony responded that it is not exactly voluntary. Although it is not legally enforceable as a debt, it will have consequences. If the Vicar's job were to become vacant, for example, there may not be a replacement.

9. Budget for 2023

Fr Anthony Davis confirmed that although there was no budget agreed for 2023, there is a 2024 budget. He briefly outlined the highlights, emphasising that although it shows a surplus thanks to an increase in planned giving and a legacy, it also assumes a shortfall in Parish Share.

10. Report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church of the parish

The Faculty Report was included in the Annual Report which had been publicly displayed in church and on the web site, with the link distributed in the weekly emails in advance of the meeting.

Question: When will the North Porch be rededicated?

The Vicar confirmed that this will take place on Thursday 27th June at 7.30pm, with a sung Eucharist at which the bishop will be preaching and presiding.

11. Report on the Proceedings of the Deanery Synod

Details of meetings were included in the appendix to the Annual Report, and no questions were raised.

12. Annual Report by the Vicar

The Vicar gave his report looking back on the past year and looking forward to the future, (Annual Report Appendix A). Malcolm Smith responded on behalf of the Wardens (Annual Report Appendix B). The Vicar thanked Malcolm and Florence for all their hard work.

13. Further Business

Ann Collett-White asked about the appointment of a new Director of Music (DOM) and choir members. The Vicar responded that due to financial constraints it has been decided to advertise for an organist in the first instance. James Stephenson suggested that this might be a fixed term contract to allow for the future appointment of a DOM. Alison Phillipson noted that some choir members left of their own volition, and we must work with what we have.



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Ann Collett-White asked about the decision to close The Spire. The Vicar said that the Centre Manager was consulted, and the decision was taken by the PCC after much discussion.

Ann Collett-White suggested that to increase volunteer numbers we should do more to welcome new people to the church, such as organise social events. It was suggested that any social events should take place at weekends to accommodate people who work. The Vicar asked Ann if she would be willing to organise an event. New people might feel diffident or unsure about doing a job, and we should create relationships before asking them to volunteer. Florence Bignell commented that volunteer numbers have increased over the last 6 months, but we still need more. However, we need to be sensitive when asking people to volunteer.

James Stephenson thanked Fr Anthony for all his work organising the Warm Room, which was a great success.

There being no further business, the meeting closed with prayer at 12.55pm

Signed.....

Date.....



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 suggests that the church reveals God's plan (3:9-11), where it can be 'the symbol of the



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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 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. The St Paul's singers have continued to do a great job, coordinated first by Kaye and latterly



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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 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



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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 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.



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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.

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



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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.