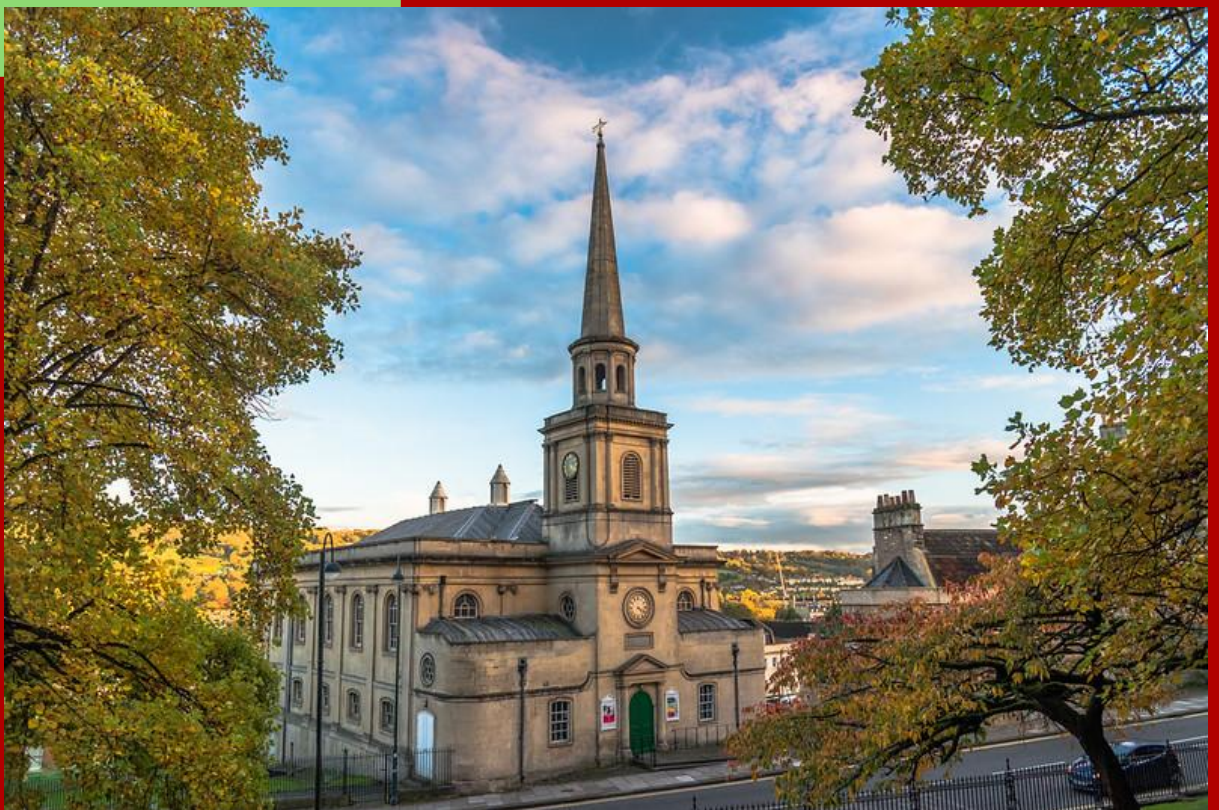




# APCM Report

## 2025/26



# Vicar

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Dear All

This year has been shaped by encouraging signs of Spring, of new life and of fresh opportunities. The invitation is always there, to listen to the Good Shepherd, to cherish His voice and to enjoy following Him. We have been fixing our eyes on the person and life of Jesus in the gospel of Mark all year, and as Jesus becomes clearer into our view, so we're 'Amazed again' by the gift of faith in Christ.

Two of the primary images of the church are as 'The body of Christ' (1 Cor 12) and the 'Family of God' (Eph 2), so it's been really encouraging over the last few years to see the missing generations quietly returning to St Swithin's. People regularly comment that we look like a family and increasingly a whole one. This matters massively for us to fulfil our desire to be a growing family which people from our beautiful and diverse parish want to make their spiritual home.

St Swithin's has a rich tradition of being a place and people of Encounter; we are the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Pet 2) where people love to come and meet together. Our heart continues for this to be the case, where people Connect with God and others, Discover more, Celebrate and Serve together.

There is always so much to be grateful for, every small act of kindness and generosity helps us fulfil our vision to make Christ visible, to Display God's Splendour. On the back of your generosity and sacrifice we've been able to continue to move the building forwards and complete necessary building work. Thank you for the many ways you sow seeds for God's Kingdom and play your part in the life of St Swithin's.

In God's incredible kindness we're increasingly seeing glimpses of what we're called to become. As we move into a new season, that's less consolidation and more moving forwards; God is calling us to choose to partner with Him in discipleship, to deepen our prayer lives, to lift our eyes away from ourselves, and empower those with humility and hunger, all so that we can grow in faith. It is a privilege to serve and partner with God to shine brightly in Bath and the wider world.

With every blessing in Christ

Tim

There is so much to be thankful for as we look back over the past year. Barely a week goes by without new faces appearing in Church, and it seems that we are starting to experience the 'Quiet Revival' that there has been much talk about in recent times. At New Wine last year one speaker, Pastor Agu Irukwu, urged the body of Christ to make buildings ready for this. Having been heavily involved in the complete refurbishment of St Swithin's, getting on for 20 years ago, I believe we are now starting to see God's purpose behind that being fulfilled.

We are blessed to be in a strong financial position, and it is so gratifying to see the response to the challenge of achieving a balanced operational budget. I have said before that anyone who is a regular member of our fellowship should be contributing financially towards its running, so thank you for doing just that. We continue to maintain and upgrade the building – more detail in relation to this is set out in the Operations Committee Report.

Above all we are blessed to have Tim and Jo as our leaders and my special thanks, on behalf of us all, goes to them for their sacrificial ministry. We are also blessed with a wonderful staff team. Congratulations to Suzi on the latest addition to the family, and to Bryony for doing an outstanding job, particularly in relation to events. Also, for the wonderful Threads exhibition that lifted the building and drew so many people in. It is great to have Esthea in place as Worship Pastor, with her enthusiasm and gifts and an amazing testimony of what God has done in her life. Special thanks to her for overseeing the AV upgrades – with a lot of help from others!

There are so many more people than it is possible to mention, who play a vital part in making the body of Christ in Walcot function well. You are all truly valued, but I am going to make a special mention of two ladies who, to me, embody humble service and faithfulness over a lifetime. To see Jenny Griffiths and Jeanette Self ministering to the parents and toddler group on a Thursday morning, which they have done over many years, has caused me to well up frequently. And, for balance, a special mention of one man – Keith Stuffins does so much behind the scenes to keep the external realm well-tended, as well as putting up Christmas trees and lights, etc.!

Being churchwarden is a challenging, but also a very privileged role that I am so grateful to have undertaken in partnership with Becs Armstrong for nearly all that time. We have worked well together and with complimentary giftings. There has been a lot of thanksgiving and laughter at our regular meetings with Tim!

Back in 2021 when Paul Brewster, one of the churchwardens at the time, moved to be nearer his family, I agreed that I would take on the role for six months initially. It hasn't felt right to relinquish it until now, nearly five years later! I want to acknowledge and thank my wife, Penny, for her support and (mostly!) forbearance. Also, to thank you for your prayers and encouragement. It is an exciting and challenging time for our fellowship, and Penny and I look forward to playing whatever part the Lord calls us to, after a period of 'sabbatical' to recharge our batteries.

In His love,

Alastair



# Worship

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I have now been in post as Worship Pastor for six months, and I can honestly say I am thoroughly enjoying the role. I feel deeply blessed by God in this new season and grateful for the opportunity to serve the church family in this way. It has been a joy to get to know the congregation, musicians, tech team, and volunteers, and to begin developing the creative worship life of the church together.

## Sound & AV Upgrades

A significant focus over the past few months has been the installation of the new sound and AV system. This major upgrade will greatly improve sound quality during services, making spoken word and music clearer and more engaging for the congregation. The new system is also much more user-friendly for volunteers, which will help us broaden and support the team serving on Sundays. Importantly, the installation has been designed to be scalable and future-proof as our congregation continues to grow and as additional ministry needs arise.

As part of these upgrades, we have installed a new high-quality projector, improving visibility for worship lyrics, readings, and visual content. We now also have a livestream feed into the creche room, enabling parents with babies and toddlers to remain engaged with the service while caring for their children — an important step in making church more accessible and inclusive for young families.

Over the coming weeks, we will be adding an additional screen in the café area. This will allow children's and youth volunteers downstairs to follow what is happening in the service upstairs. During the week, the screen will be used to display notices, upcoming church events, and appropriate community or secular events, helping us communicate more effectively with both church members and visitors using the building.

A number of volunteers have already received initial training on the new sound desk, and further training will take place in small workshop sessions over the coming weeks. This will ensure that a wider group of people feel confident and supported in operating the new system, strengthening the sustainability of our volunteer teams.

## Worship Team Developments

Within the worship team, we have made several positive changes. We are now operating in a more environmentally friendly way by no longer printing sheet music, instead using iPads for all music.

As part of the sound upgrade, we now also have in-ear monitoring for musicians. This has significantly improved the overall sound quality in the main worship space and makes it much easier for the team to lead confidently and cohesively.

We have been very grateful for the support of Fiona Poulson, a freelance worship pastor working across the South West. Fiona has provided invaluable mentoring to me as I settle into this new role and has also led worship on Sunday mornings while our own team continues to grow.

My prayer for additional musicians continues. I remain hopeful and patiently expectant to see what God has planned for us as we develop a sustainable, Spirit-led worship ministry for the future.

### Christmas Services & Volunteer Appreciation

Christmas was a particularly successful and joyful season, with well-attended services and events. I would like to express sincere thanks to our musicians, sound technicians, projection operators, and all volunteers who worked so hard behind the scenes to support the creative and worship life of the church. Their faithfulness and generosity of time make a tremendous difference week by week.

### Worship Evenings & Partnership

Last year we held three dedicated worship evenings, providing additional opportunities for prayer, extended worship, and seeking God together outside of Sunday services.

Building on this, we are excited to be partnering with Holy Trinity Combe Down this year to host monthly joint worship nights. Our first gathering will take place on 6th March, and we hope these evenings will foster unity across churches and create space for deeper encounter with God.

### Communications

The church website has recently had a small refresh to improve clarity and accessibility, and I have taken on responsibility for the church's social media accounts to help us communicate more consistently with both the congregation and the wider community.

### Playgroup Relaunch

Looking ahead, I will be relaunching the church playgroup to the local community on 5th March, while Suzi is on maternity leave. This will initially be a lower-key offering, meeting in the crypt, with the aim of rebuilding connections with young families and creating a welcoming space for parents and carers.

### Prayer Requests for the Year Ahead

As we look ahead, I would greatly value prayer for the worship ministry: that we would continue to deepen our relationship with Jesus through worship, that God would grow the team both spiritually and numerically, and that He would raise up new musicians and volunteers with a shared heart for serving Him. My prayer is that everything we do would honour God, build up the church, and create space for people to encounter His presence.

Esthea



## Children and Youth

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Our children and youth worker Suzi is currently on maternity leave, and whilst we miss her greatly in the groups, we're blessed when she's able to join now and again and our children and youth activities continue to be run by a wonderful team of volunteers.

Here's a message from Suzi:

*This year has been great for our kids and youth! One of the highlights was taking a group of our young people to Spree Christian Youth Festival, it was absolutely brilliant! The worship, teaching, funfair rides and entertainment was absolutely fantastic, and it was so wonderful to see the kids engaging and being inspired.*

*Since then, in September, we've had some of our children go up into our youth group. It's been amazing to see them joining in, making friends, and growing in faith, we really love having them with us!*

*It's also been a challenging year for me personally. During my pregnancy, I was very unwell with Hyperemesis gravidarum, including two hospital stays, which meant we couldn't do as many events as I had hoped and the youth often missed out on their Friday nights. This was so disappointing, as these nights are so key to moving things forward in the youth's fellowship and faith. However, I'm so thankful to everyone who stepped in - your support has been incredible.*

*I went on maternity leave in October, and I want to say a huge thank you to everyone who has stepped up in so many different ways to support the kids and youth. Your help, energy, and commitment has been incredible, and I am so grateful to all of you!!*

### Bubbles (ages 2 to Reception)

The Bubbles group isn't currently active, but parents of children under two are able to use the little room during the service, where the livestream is available on the TV.

### Splash (Reception to Year 3)

In Splash we have been covering the life of Jesus and the parables that he told his disciples and those around him. It has been so encouraging to see the young children

take such an interest in each parable, really being able to pick apart the message behind each one. They are always so full of life and bring so much joy to us all downstairs. It is such a blessing to see them creating beautiful crafts with a lovely message of God's goodness and grace at the centre.

*Prayer: That the children's hearts and minds would keep being filled with God's word and message, and that their hearts would be full of the Holy Spirit throughout the week and not just at church.*

### Lightsharers (Year 3 to Year 6)

Lightsharers is a lovely group of around 8 to 10 children who meet on a Sunday morning. The group spans quite a wide age range, from those who join aged 7 to those getting ready to move up to secondary school, so we try to cater for those different needs and stages.

Over the last year the group has studied some of the New Testament letters and Old Testament characters, and this term we are looking at the 'I am' statements of Jesus and what they mean for us.

*Prayer: That as the children grow in understanding, they would not only learn about Jesus but get to know him, and understand what it means to have a personal faith and relationship with God.*

### Ignite (Year 7 to Year 11)

In the run-up to Christmas, Ignite explored the theme of advent: what it means to wait, what it means when it doesn't seem that our prayers are being answered straight away, and how we hold on to faith when we have questions. We've also welcomed a group of new Year 7s and are really grateful for two new leaders who've joined the team, George and Becca.

Since Christmas, attendance has been a little lower, and our focus has been on building community, making the group engaging and fun, and growing faith through the different seasons of growing up. The older members have been taking on more of a leadership role, both within the group and with the younger groups. Key priorities this term include prayer, developing familiarity with the big narrative of the Bible, and making space for questions.

*Prayer: For more leaders; for the young people as they navigate the teenage years; and with thanks for the way they have responded to changes and stayed close as a group.*

## Activities together

Once a month we aim to do something different as a combined group, from the littlest Bubbles members to the youth helpers. This might be 'Brick Church', using the wonderful videos produced by Go Chatter Studios which bring Bible stories to life in a creative way, or 'Wild Church' in the spring and summer, led by Keith, which makes use of the garden to explore faith through the beauty of creation while having fun and getting muddy!

As well as a group of children and young people going to Spree in June, others also joined with their families as part of the St Swithins group who went to New Wine last summer, and others attended Christian camps and events such as Satellites and Limitless. We are so grateful for the way God has met with our young people through all of these experiences. Please pray that he would continue to build them up in their faith and equip them to live as followers of Jesus, knowing the life in all its fulness that he offers.

## Prayer requests

Please do remember our children, young people, parents, leaders and helpers in your prayers, thanking God for them and asking Him to pour blessing into their lives.

Please pray for our leaders, children and youth to walk closely with Jesus this coming year:

Children and young people to know church as a fun, safe and supportive foundation for their lives

Personal and growing relationships with God

Community among the children and young people, and with the wider church

Leaders, as they prepare and lead, that God would speak to and through them

More volunteers, both leaders and helpers to join our lovely groups!

*Thank God that "He is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments." (Deuteronomy 7:9)*

Becs Armstrong

# Operations Committee

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As I've said before, there's a lot that goes on 'behind the scenes' to keep a church like St Swithin's operating. The PCC has overall responsibility but, a few years ago, we set up an Operations Committee, which reports to the PCC, to deal with the 'nitty gritty' aspects of church life, such as finance, building management and policies. It is also intended to provide support to Bryony Waterman, as Operations Manager. Its members comprise the Rector, Churchwardens, Treasurer and Operations Manager.

The last year has, again, been very busy! Here's a snapshot of some aspects:

Keeping track of actions required under updated church policies, and the introduction of a Volunteer Policy (thanks to Becs Armstrong for overseeing this)

Undertaking alteration and improvement works to the building following a Fire Risk Assessment by an independent assessor and carrying out a Fire Drill (which I managed to be away for!)

Plaster repairs and redecoration of South stairwell.

External painting of the windows on the North side of the church. Some additional stone repairs revealed by high level inspection off scaffolding.

Continued programme of work required by the 2024 Quinquennial Inspection by the Church Architect.

Obtaining a further Faculty Order to enable moving some pews from the side gallery to the rear – now the best seats in the house!

Agreeing a contract for the new servery (which will hopefully be in place by the time you read this). Thanks to Bry and Matthew Judd for project managing this.

Five yearly electrical inspection and implementing required remedial work.

Agreeing a programme of internal redecoration to the main body of the church to be carried out this year.

Replacing the sound desk and projector, with additional upgrades. Thanks to Esthea, Tom Natt & Andy Waterman for overseeing this.

We were blessed to have a 'seamless transfer' of the role of Treasurer from David Chambers to Ben Kelsey. My thanks go to David for his dedication and competence in the role and to Ben for the way in which he has picked it up. We are truly blessed with competence in this crucial area of church life. It is very gratifying that the three-year plan to achieve a balanced operational budget has been achieved a year early. Thanks to everyone for responding to this challenge and for giving generously to the servery and rear gallery projects.

We are also blessed to have Bryony as Operations Manager, whose quiet competence is the glue that holds the everyday activities of the church together. She is especially to be commended for the growth in the ministry of events, that not only opens the church to a wide range of people but also provides a financial contribution that underpins our other ministries.

My thanks to the members of the committee for their hard work in ensuring that we responsibly steward the resources that we have been entrusted with, both in terms of the church building and the giving of church members.

Please contact me if you would like further detail on any aspect.

Alastair Gibson

Churchwarden and Chair of the Operations Committee



“Praying is not one of the many things the [Christian] community does. Rather, it is its very being.”(Henri Nouwen)

Many of us are sensing a greater urgency to pray in these days of dizzying turmoil. We yearn for rest and peace in God’s presence and we long to see His kingdom come, transforming the world around us. And we know that transformation begins in prayer and that transformation begins in us!

As part of our church life this year, we have held four events of 24-hour prayer. The first was in September, when we joined in with 24-7 Prayer’s first ever Global Week of Prayer; it was awe-inspiring to know that there were prayer rooms running in 132 nations. We held another 24-hour prayer event in October, and then again at the beginning of Advent, when we focused on waiting for hope, love, peace and joy. As I write, we’re making preparations to open the church for prayer daily during Holy Week, culminating in 24 hours of continuous prayer from Maundy Thursday to Good Friday.

Each time, we have provided creative prayer spaces in church to help draw us into God’s presence - spaces of encounter, rest, listening, worship and intercession. Some people have signed up for hour-long slots in church, whilst others have joined in by praying at home. We haven’t yet managed to keep the chain going throughout the night, but we hope to in the future! Everyone is invited to join in; we are all learners in prayer as we journey together on this wonderfully rich adventure.

Talk of the ‘quiet revival’ is very exciting, but we long for much more and we press on in prayer. For as D.L. Moody wrote, “Every great movement of God can be traced to a kneeling figure.”

Margaret Warne

# St Swithin's Clock Winders

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There are two clock faces on the tower, one facing West, the other facing North; both are driven from the same clockwork mechanism on the first floor. There is also a single bell in the spire which strikes on the hour during daytime.

The clock dates from 1873 and needs to be wound once a week. The 'clockwinders' is a group of 4 who take it in turn to wind up the clock every Sunday. It takes about 5-10 minutes and is great physical exercise!

If you are interested in having a look at the clock mechanism or if you have a desire to join the winding team please get in touch, we'd love to hear from you!

Matthew Judd

## Global Partners

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St Swithin's continues to pray for and give and regular financial support to our 4 key Global Partners:

Paul & Alison Guinness.in Burundi – providing training for leadership and outreach in the church in East Africa

Katia Rocks with CMS in Brazil - Church planting and evangelism among the marginalised.

Children's Home.in India Trust (CHIT) – offering Christ centred residential care, education and support for the some of the most disadvantaged

The Warehouse. South Africa. Serving the Church in its response to poverty, injustice & division.

In February, we were delighted to host a tea party at St Swithin's as part of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations for CHIT.

Howard Mathers came to speak to us at this event and to outline the plans for new initiatives in outreach to the local Yanadi people. This will be largely funded by the money the PCC agreed we should donate from a legacy left by Sylvia Little, which she had requested be used for overseas mission. Howard has given us a detailed prospectus for this exciting project. If you would like a copy, do speak to Rosemary Bird.

A huge thank-you must go to Brenda Carter for all her work as a key member and co-leader of the Global Partners team over many years. Brenda has decided to step down from the role (but not, I am sure, from her passion for the world-wide work of the church). We will miss Brenda very much and are keen to find a new member for the team. We need someone who can bring fresh ideas, experience of/connections with the church in other cultures or simply the enthusiasm to help us at St Swithin's to explore our place in God's Global Mission.

For any further information do contact Nicola Stuffins or me.

Rosemary Bird

## Parochial Church Council

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Anne Cameron

PCC Membership 2025/2026

Ex Officio members: Tim Gleghorn (Rector), Alastair Gibson (Churchwarden)

Elected members: Dan Darwin, Matthew Judd, Andy Waterman, Fay Breed, Charlie Tull, Margaret Warne, Lorri Newton

Co-opted member: Ben Kelsey (Treasurer)

Secretary: Anne Cameron

The role of PCC is to provide leadership and direction in every of church life, and to ensure St. Swithin's is well-governed in areas relating to the Church of England and the Charity Commission, particularly overseeing all matters relating to finance, estate, safeguarding, health and safety and human resource management. PCC receives regular reports on various areas of church life.

PCC is now an expanded group as several new members were elected at the 2025 APCM. PCC meets every other month; discussions this year have continued to focus significantly on ongoing renovations to the church building. The current focus is on renovating our upstairs space including moving pews to the rear gallery, installing a new servery and installing a new sound desk and livestream camera. Many thanks to all who have supported this work.

The PCC have received regular financial reports from Ben Kelsey (Treasurer) and operations updates from the Operations Committee. We are grateful to all of them for their hard work and clear information.

The PCC met for an Away Morning in June where the focus was on how we can encourage growth in discipleship and community. An output of this was the 'Harvest at Home' lunch in early November. The PCC would like to thank everyone involved in giving their time to help the community of St Swithin's grow and thrive in the past year.

Prayer would be welcomed for any new members elected at the APCM and for the year ahead that we can continue the good work of St Swithin's.

## Open Door

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Open Door is a group that meets roughly once a month on a Monday afternoon and is open to all who are free to join us at that time of the day. We cover a range of topics and activities but there's always tea and cake! Over the last year our gatherings have included the following:

Holy Week Creative Reflection

Trip to Bowood House and Gardens

Talk from Stephen Bird about the church architect, John Palmer

Afternoon tea in Penny and Alastair Gibson's garden

Christmas Tea with carol singing and musical interludes from some of our younger members of the church family

CHIT (Children's Homes in India Trust) 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration and update with Howard Mathers

We also had a mini - series covering various aspects of moving towards our more mature years! The first Passing on the Blessing looked at ways of sharing our faith with younger generations, then Planting for the Future where we put some of this into practice and along with some of our younger families, we planted bulbs and shared various fun activities together. We then moved to more challenging subjects under the title of Planning for the Future and looked at things like making wills, Powers of Attorney and Funeral plans. Finally, we shared thoughts on Living a Hopeful Old Age looking at both the challenging realities of getting older whilst also recognising the blessings.

We have been delighted over the year that the name of our group 'Open Door' really has been taken literally in the way people seeing the door at the front of church open,

have popped in and been welcomed to join us. If you'd like to find out more about this group do speak to Melanie, Sandy or Janet

## Come to the Table

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*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. [Pro 1:1-7]*

On the first Wednesday of the month, at Midday, we gather to celebrate communion around God's table. We continue our fellowship together as we share a simple meal around the lunch table.

In 2025, our preaching was based on the book of Proverbs. Using the theme "Real wisdom for real life", we've reflected on practical advice for Godly living on a variety of subjects, including trust, friendship, generosity, the power of words and humility. In 2026, we began a teaching series from the Minor Prophets, which will continue into early 2027. Prophets bring uncomfortable messages and deep truths about God's faithful and compassionate character and the flawed and faithless nature of humans. We are being reminded that at their heart is a call to return to God, who is "gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love".

As well as being well fed by God's word, we are blessed with a delicious meal of soup, bread and a sweet treat. With many thanks to Janet Cornish who faithfully cooks for us every month and to Jenny Griffiths for her practical help setting up, serving and clearing away.

All are welcome to join us around the table once a month to share fellowship, community and God's good and precious wisdom.

Nicola Stuffins

Headlines We ended the year with an operating surplus of £26k, which was £33k above the budgeted deficit of nearly £7k, continuing the strong financial performance through from 2024. In addition, we have invested £60k over the course of 2025 on various building upkeep and improvement projects, including further exterior renovations, some internal rearrangement of the church, and a number of items identified during the quinquennial inspection.

	2025 Budget	Budget YTD	Actuals YTD	Variance YTD
Income	222,267	222,267	232,790*	10,523
Expenditure	229,116	229,116	206,723	-22,393
Operating Surplus / Deficit	-6,849	-6,849	26,067	
Received Vision Giving -	13,000	13,000	10,075	-2,925
Planned Capital Investment	50,000	50,000	59,476	9,476
Total Surplus / Deficit	-43,849	-43,849	-23,334	

\*Omitting one-off legacy received in September

## Income

Income in the year to-date has very close to budget, with a strong performance in Church events and room hire the principal reason for the positive variance, bringing in £28k in line with performance through 2024. Continued letting of the café has contributed £15k, partly offset by the increased utilities costs associated with its running. Planned donations were on budget and in line with 2024's level at £154k. We also received a generous legacy in late 2025 given for the purpose of church building maintenance, which will support the works ongoing through 2026.

## Expenditure

Expenditure over the year was considerably below budget, almost entirely driven by lower staffing costs related to the gapped worship pastor post. This offset additional costs in building maintenance related to electrical and boiler works. The renegotiation of electricity and gas rates towards the end of the year will positively impact spend on utilities through 2026 thanks to the securing of much lower rates.

## Investment

The ongoing maintenance and update works started during 2025 will continue through 2026, with work well underway on the server, and the new AV system and projector now installed and in use. The PCC has approved further works through the coming year, including internal redecoration and repairs, further external repair works, and the final items from the quinquennial inspection.

Ben Kelsey

## A Prayer for the Ephesians

*<sup>14</sup> For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

*<sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

