

Ascension

Trustees' Annual Report 2025

**Annual report for the Parochial Church Council of
The Church of the Ascension, Bitterne Park**

Contents

Vision and Values	3
Welcome	4
Encountering Jesus	6
Sunday Services	6
Life Events	6
Prayer	6
The Rising Generation	7
Alpha.....	8
The EDGE Hub, Townhill Park.....	9
Deep community.....	10
Newcomers.....	10
Social Events.....	10
Small Groups	11
Older Persons Ministry.....	11
Men's Ministry	12
Ladies Group.....	12
Loving mission.....	12
GrACE.....	12
Ascension Running Community	13
Community Café and Social Prescribing.....	13
Market Place.....	14
Facilities.....	15
Personnel	15
Structure, governance, and management	16
The Parochial Church Council (PCC).....	16
Attendance and Electoral Roll	16
Safeguarding.....	16
Deanery Synod	17
Administrative information.....	18

Ascension

Vision and Values

Vision

To see God's kingdom come to our communities through making and growing whole life followers of Jesus.

Values

We are a warm and welcoming community, rooted in the good news of Jesus Christ, hungering for the in-filling, presence, and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and seeking to love the world in the name of Jesus. Therefore, we value:

Encountering Jesus

Our highest, greatest privilege and deepest joy is to have a relationship with Jesus. It is this relationship with Him that defines our lives. We are called to be His disciples, follow Him, worship Him, and be shaped by Him. We believe that our lives are changed forever when we encounter Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

Deep community

Church is family where you can find your home. We seek to live generously, practice hospitality, release creativity, and have hearts of compassion. It's a place where we encourage one another to discover and follow God's call on each of our lives.

Loving mission

God is on a mission to reconcile all things to himself. Together we are called to join him in that mission, creatively and prophetically engaging with our local area, and seeing people come to faith and communities thrive.

Welcome

2025 was a year shaped by shared effort, resilience, and God's steady faithfulness across Ascension Church. Rather than being defined by the work of a few individuals, this past year reflected the commitment of the whole church family, people offering time, prayer, generosity, creativity, and care in countless ways. Every ministry, every act of service, every quiet contribution helped hold our community together and move us forward in mission.

This was also a year of transition. We said farewell to Ruth and gave thanks for all she brought to the life of the church and the wider community. In the summer, we welcomed James as our new curate, whose pastoral warmth and thoughtful presence quickly enriched us. We were delighted to see Peter return to ministry after a period of ill health, bringing renewed strength and wisdom. Alongside them, Jackie continued her faithful ministry as Anna Chaplain, supporting older people with compassion and prayer. Our ordinands, Andy, Bev, and Lucy, remained a valued part of our church family, contributing energy and enthusiasm wherever they served.

Throughout the year, many people stepped up, shared responsibilities, and quietly supported one another. Our children's and youth ministry grew under Jo's leadership as Lead Worker, with Luke's work alongside her, supported by volunteers, parents, and young people. Behind the scenes, Lizi helped keep our operations steady, and Tim ensured our administration remained organised, but much of their work was strengthened by volunteers giving time to practical tasks, events, hospitality, and communication. Small groups thrived because leaders and members together created places of belonging, prayer, and discipleship. Our prayer life continued through Jacqui and Ginny's faithful leadership, sustained by those who gathered early in the morning, prayed in groups, or carried others quietly in their hearts.

One of the most significant changes of the year was the end of our formal partnership with the Diocese and Church Army in Townhill Park, a decision outside our control. We remain grateful for all the partnerships achieved over the years. Despite the change, we secured funding for another year of Sandra's role, ensuring continuity and care amid uncertainty. With possible redevelopment of the site where the EDGE Hub is located, we ended the year recognising that this is now an area requiring prayerful discernment, careful planning, and wisdom. The situation is complex and evolving, and will need ongoing thought, conversation, and commitment as we seek to understand what the future of ministry in Townhill Park might look like.

Our work alongside Southampton City Mission, the Marketplace in Townhill Park, and NHS social prescribers continued to be strengthened by the involvement of many who volunteered, prayed, welcomed, and supported neighbours in need. These partnerships mattered because our community committed to them together.

We are grateful for the generous giving of the church family. Strengthening our long-term financial sustainability remained a shared priority throughout the year. Together, we worked to grow regular giving, make wise use of our buildings, and steward our resources carefully. This collective focus is vital as we build a secure foundation for ministry in the years to come.

Looking back, 2025 reminded us again that the life of Ascension Church is held by many hands and hearts. Through every challenge and every change, God has been faithful, and our community has responded with generosity, creativity, and hope. We look back with gratitude and forward with confidence in all that God will continue to do among us.

I warmly commend this report to you.



Revd Simon Robertson, Vicar

Encountering Jesus

Sunday Services

Throughout 2025 we continued to gather, both in person and online, to worship together. We believe we are changed through these opportunities — whether in praise and sung worship, preaching, prayer, or the Eucharist. At home or at Ascension, God is at work.

2025 saw the introduction of our 7pm service, allowing us to offer three distinct services each Sunday:

- a quieter, more formal **9:00am Eucharistic service**
- a **10:45am informal and contemporary service** with specific provision for children and young people
- a **7pm evening service**, offering time for Bible study and worship

Our **Edge+ service** in Townhill Park continues to meet fortnightly. The church family continues to grow steadily across all services, both in depth and in numbers.

Life Events

There were **11 baptisms** held at Ascension during 2025 and **two weddings**. There was **one funeral** service held in our church, and a further six conducted by our team at local crematoria. There were seven interments of ashes in Ascension's **Garden of Remembrance**.

Prayer

It has been wonderful to see the Prayer Ministry flourish in the life of our church in 2025. **Prayer ministry is now an intrinsic part of our 10:45 service**, and we are delighted to see more individuals coming forward for prayer on a regular basis. Ginny and Jacqui held a **Prayer Ministry meeting in October** to review how things were going, and feedback from the team was very positive. There is a clear excitement about what God is doing and will do through us at Ascension. We are planning to run training and add three new members to the team in February 2026. It is wonderful to have such prayerful people involved.

Many of us from the Prayer Ministry team attended the **Wildfires** Festival in July 2025. There, we were challenged not to go a week without someone placing a hand on our shoulder and asking the Holy Spirit to fill us. As a result, the team has been trying to put this into practice before praying for others.

On **Wednesday mornings at 6:30am**, we continue to gather with brothers and sisters from across the city to intercede for our city, churches, and nation. It is encouraging to see a visible demonstration of church unity, brought together by a love for Jesus and a desire to see the Holy Spirit move and God's kingdom come in Southampton.

In March, we gathered home groups for **an evening of creative prayer specifically for our church's missional activities**, mindful of Psalm 127:1 — "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain." It was inspiring to showcase the breadth of our missional work and to lift it all to God in prayer. We also introduced the concept of **"Pop-Up Prayer,"** gathering at the end of the 10:45 service to pray for a particular aspect of church life. We trialled this in November to pray over our Christmas events and services, and we plan to continue this in 2026.

On 6 September 2025, we joined 24/7 Prayer's global week of prayer and created a 24/7-style prayer room, holding **12 hours of prayer** in the youth space at Ascension. We prayed for ourselves, our friends

and families, our city, nation, and world. It was moving to see the aftermath of our prayers — written on post-its, stones, chalked on the wall, hung on the prayer tree, and pinned to the world map. A small team with a passion for prayer has begun exploring further ways to encourage corporate prayer across the church.

Given the positive reception of the prayer room, we created another in the Grace Hall across the first week of January 2026, encouraging our congregation to meet with Jesus at the start of the new year. It has been encouraging to see people of all ages engage with the space and encounter God. The team has plans for further prayer days throughout 2026, and we are excited to see the return of prayer walks on the last Sunday evening of every month.

Ginny & Jacqui – Prayer Ministry Leads

The Rising Generation

We continue to have around a third of our worshipping community involved in our **Sunday children's and youth work**. During these sessions, we emphasise the importance of children having a personal encounter with Jesus, as well as learning how He speaks to us through the Bible. As in previous years, the children follow a full programme involving worship, Bible stories reinforced through drama, games, object lessons, and reflection — encouraging them to seek and hear God for themselves through creativity and Scripture.

Our heart is to see children and young people grow in their relationship with Jesus, walking in the fullness of His plan for their lives, knowing who He says they are, and sharing their faith with those around them.

This year, we started a new group, **Calm Club**, recognising that several children with additional needs required a different environment to grow in their faith. This was an act of faith, as we already had four groups for under-18s and did not have enough team members at the time. We are pleased to see our number of **volunteer helpers** increase, with specialist SEND volunteers filling this much-needed gap. We held a training day this year, equipping the team with autism awareness training from qualified SEND specialists, as well as reinforcing safeguarding and behaviour management.

My heart has always been to **build family** — for children and young people to know they are unconditionally loved, accepted, and important to the body of Christ. One way we do this is by acknowledging each child's birthday with a small gift and card. At Christmas, each young person receives a gift and a card with a **prophetic word** from the Prophetic Community. Parents and young people regularly share how meaningful this is.

It has been lovely to see our relationship with **local schools** grow. We currently see around 900 children three times a year, and some of these children now attend church independently of their parents.

'**Scooch**', our drop-in for Bitterne Park Secondary School, continues to grow in both numbers and depth of relationship. Each week we see around 100 students and have been excited to develop opportunities for them to hear God through pop-up prophetic stations and Scripture tombola. This connects with our work in the school's **Christian Union**, which has been growing rapidly, with pupils bringing their non-Christian friends. It has also been a privilege to be invited into the school to speak on various panels alongside other religious leaders, enabling young people to ask questions about our faith. We have also welcomed classes from the school into the church for talks about the building and Easter.

As one of the three founding churches of **Youthfest**, we have continued to work with a growing number of churches across the city to host a winter event and a summer camp for young people. These have been well received and continue to grow.

All youth groups have grown this year, both on Sunday mornings and weekday evenings, to the point that we have had to move groups around as we outgrew our spaces. We now have around 56 children and young people on a Sunday. Our Thursday evening youth group has also grown, with 35–40 young people attending. At least half of these are unchurched but show real engagement with the spiritual aspects, many attending our Youth Weekend Away and monthly worship evenings.

We initiated **Youth Worship evenings** this year, recognising neurodiversity and the different ways young people worship. We felt led to encourage creativity in these sessions, which have been well received, with 40 young people at our most recent event. We held prophetic art sessions, psalm drumming, and open creativity (canvases, writing, dance), alongside worship led by our **Youth Worship Band**.

It has been exciting to see young people grow in worship and prayer, engaging both in the main service and in their own groups. We are excited to develop our Youth Worship Band further, with the aim of seeing young people more actively involved in wider church ministry.

Our Youth Worship Band also led worship for our **Youth Weekend Away**, attended by 36 young people — many from our Thursday youth club as well as our worshipping community. We explored Matthew 7:7–8, Jesus' invitation to Ask, Seek, and Knock, and were blessed with prophetic input from Joy Chalke and Josh Heather from Emmaus Road Church. The young people responded well, facing challenges such as abseiling, and it was lovely to see relationships deepen and faith grow. We were able to offer a discount for the weekend thanks to proceeds from our Wreath-Making events, which raised over £2,000 to subsidise the weekend and provide branded hoodies for each young person.

Our **Youth Alpha course** was a success, with over 20 young people attending, and we have seen increased involvement in church life as a result. Our youth also hosted a quiz night for their nominated charity, Safe Families, raising £575.

Our annual **Light Party** was a great success, with around 300 people from the local community attending, and many of our youth helping to run it. This year's theme was Asian Fantasy, with ten craft stations and ten activities, including an enchanted forest and a mirror maze.

The **Wreath-Making** events were well attended, with 180 people over two nights from the local community. These evenings are a wonderful witness to our church family, bringing together parents from local schools, the running community, neighbours, and others. They also offer a moment to pause before the busyness of Christmas. We set a very low price to ensure financial barriers are minimal.

Over **Christmas**, we held three services as a children's work team: Christingle, Nativity, and the Crib Service — the latter being more outward-facing and drawing many families from the local community. It was also lovely to be present at **Christmas in the Triangle**, running a craft table and chatting with parents and children. It is encouraging to see inter-church relationships deepen through events like this.

Jo Szedlak, Children & Youth Worker

Alpha

In 2025 we had the joy of running an **Alpha** course again, with 21 people signing up to attend. This was a wonderful opportunity for people to meet, build community and relationships, and ask questions about faith. We welcomed people from a broad range of backgrounds and enjoyed rich discussions. We plan to continue this ministry into 2026, with an Alpha course already booked for January. We also ran a **Youth Alpha**, with 18 young people signing up to explore faith together over pizza.

The EDGE Hub, Townhill Park

2025 was a busy year for EDGE, bringing many changes, including the opening of our temporary premises in Townhill Park — **The EDGE Hub**. Lead Evangelist Ruth Hills left the role in the spring to move to Wales to be closer to family, and Sandra Philip took over from her. This brought many challenges and resulted in the loss of some whose relationships with Ruth had been central to their involvement in both the Hub and Edge+. We also said goodbye to several volunteers who felt it was time to move on.

Emily, one of our original volunteers, has become an important part of the work we do, as both her faith and confidence have blossomed, filling the space created by these staff changes. Emily's walk with God has been a beautiful testimony to how He changes lives and rewrites stories. We are excited to see where her journey takes her.

The **Saturday Breakfast Club** had a small but regular following. After reviewing how best to use our available hours to maximise impact, we decided to end this initiative and adjust our weekly timetable accordingly.

The Tuesday morning group became **Wellspring** — a group for women of all ages to meet, encourage one another, study the Bible, and grow in faith. We began with just a few, and now have a vibrant, committed group of women, each at a different stage of faith, but together becoming a supportive community.

We celebrated **Easter** with a week of activities, with over 150 visitors taking part. The week culminated in an Easter Brunch, where more than 20 people shared a meal and listened to the Easter story, followed by an Easter-themed game of pass-the-parcel, which was enjoyed by all.

We were delighted to collaborate with the council, local artists, schools, and THRILL to create the **Townhill Park Community Art Gallery** — an installation of artworks created by residents, many of which were produced at workshops hosted by the Hub. This project represented an act of social reclamation, transforming the hoardings surrounding demolition sites with colourful creativity. The event was attended by local councillors, press, artists, and residents. We have worked hard to build strong relationships with other stakeholders in the community this year, and events like this are vital in that endeavour. It was also wonderful to celebrate the creativity of the people of Townhill Park.

In August, we held a **Big Summer Hoe-Down**, which saw over 250 people enjoying an afternoon of attractions such as horseshoe tossing, Tin Can Alley, line dancing, and numerous other games and activities. The event filled the green on Meggeson Avenue, with marquees displaying artwork, refreshments, and candy floss. Everyone received a free cowboy lunchbox, and we were entertained with acoustic country music. A great time was had by all, and many new families began attending other Hub events as a result. As well as being a fantastic family event, it served as effective outreach, and due to popular demand, we intend to run it again next summer.

Attendance at **EDGE+**, our Sunday gathering, had fallen significantly. Although we attempted to continue in the same format, we decided to take a break over the summer and relaunch with a new name — **Edge Crew**. We now meet from 3–5pm on alternate Sundays. We have replaced the hot meal with a traditional Sunday tea and are now explicit in calling this event “church” — with a small c. Our intention is to grow this Sunday offering through the use of drama and music. Although Edge Crew has only recently launched, we feel excited and positive that God is with us as we build what is essentially a new church community.

Our **after-school drop-in sessions** are regularly attended by around 20 families, and we have come to know them well. We have a pool table, PlayStation, darts, board games, a daily craft activity, and a whole rail of dressing-up clothes that the children (and adults!) adore. We recently began offering hot snacks such as beans on toast and hot dogs, allowing parents to enjoy conversation while the children have tea. This is working well, and numbers remain consistent.

Our **Youth Café** is a new initiative for those aged 13 and over. Numbers vary, but we generally have five regular attendees, with many more having visited. We are confident that word of mouth will increase attendance, and we are actively promoting the café on social media. We anticipate an influx of young people once the new housing development begins, and we want to be ready to welcome them and provide a safe place to meet new friends and build positive relationships.

We ended the year with a **Christmas Party and Nativity Grotto**, attended by around 150 people — many of them children eager to take part in a performance of the nativity story. We transformed one of the Hub spaces with two dozen pink Christmas trees, fabric drapes, and magical icicle lights. In the weeks leading up to the event, children created small scenes that were displayed among the trees, with stars shining overhead. Our Mary, Joseph, and pantomime donkey (with our vicar performing the back end!) were hidden among the trees, and children could choose gold, frankincense, or myrrh to present to the baby Jesus, receiving a Christmas gift in return.

It was a lovely way to end a great year, and we look forward to 2026 with anticipation — ready for more opportunities to share the gospel, serve the people of Townhill Park, and reflect Jesus in creative ways

Sandra Philip, Evangelist

Deep community

Newcomers

We have had the pleasure of welcoming 34 new people this year who have joined us here at Ascension. This growth has been spread across the whole breadth of our community — from the 9:00am service from within our youth and children's groups, and among our 10:45am congregation.

To celebrate this, we held a Welcome Lunch — a wonderful opportunity to share a meal and get to know new members of our community. We are delighted with how Jesus is bringing people to us, and we would love to see this continue.

Social Events

We have enjoyed running social events again this year, creating opportunities for the whole church family to unite socially or worship together creatively. We held our annual *Thank You BBQ* for all those who serve in teams at Ascension, hosted monthly church lunches, and of course celebrated with our Christmas Party, which saw 100 of us eating, dancing, and bouncing together.

Alongside socialising, we also worshipped together at special services. A particular highlight was our stripped-back Maundy Thursday service and meal, where 69 of us reflected on Jesus' Last Supper as we worshipped and ate together.

Small Groups

Small groups are a deeply valued part of our ministry here at Ascension, and it has been a joy to see them grow and to hear how meaningful they are for those who attend. This year has been a time of transition, as Steve Waterton stepped down from his role as Small Group Coordinator. I want to express my gratitude to Steve for all he has invested in our small groups, and for the kindness he showed in supporting me through the handover.

Back in September, we estimated that around 36% of our adult church community were part of a small group. While this was encouraging, we long to see everyone have the opportunity to join a group and benefit from this ministry. At our small group leaders' meeting, I shared a vision of what it might look like to grow that number to 60% — not for the sake of statistics, but so that more people can flourish in their faith through all that small groups offer.

To work towards this, we focused on communicating the value of small groups, encouraging people to join, and launching new groups — especially additional daytime groups.

I'm delighted to say that we've already seen real progress. Since September, we have grown from 36% (79 people) to 45% (99 people) by February, with two new groups launched — one of which is a new daytime group that filled before it even began — and another group we hope to launch in 2026.

I am excited for the year ahead and for all that God is going to do. My prayer is that our small groups continue to grow in number and remain communities where people support, encourage, and build one another up in their faith in Jesus.

Rev. James Allen – Small Group Co-ordinator

Older Persons Ministry

Our congregation includes a vibrant and dedicated group of older members. While many regularly attend the 9:00am Parish Communion, a number also join us for the 10:45am service, reflecting the diverse preferences and spiritual traditions within this community. Their presence enriches our church life, and throughout 2025 we have been reminded of the invaluable role they play at the heart of Ascension. As our church continues to grow, especially among families and younger members, we remain committed to ensuring that older people feel included and valued as an integral part of our all-age fellowship.

To respond to the unique needs of older people, we explored several initiatives this year. In the spring and summer, we trialled a dedicated social group; however, attendance was lower than expected, likely due to the range of other opportunities available locally. After careful reflection, we decided not to continue this group, choosing instead to focus our efforts elsewhere.

One particular highlight was the **Omega Course**, which ran for six weeks during the autumn term. This programme provided a supportive space for both recent and long-term retirees to reflect on how to approach the later stages of life. Feedback from the twelve regular participants was overwhelmingly positive.

We also hosted two **Quiet Days** — one during Lent and another in Advent — which were especially well received by those who attend the 9:00am service.

In addition, our daytime small groups have continued to flourish, offering older members regular opportunities for prayer and Bible study at times that suit them best.

Pastoral care remains a cornerstone of our ministry, with the Anna Chaplain, clergy, and pastoral team working together to offer support and visits to those who are unwell, bereaved, or housebound. Through these combined efforts, we strive to ensure that every older member feels connected, supported, and cherished within our church family.

Jackie Cooper, Anna Chaplain

Men's Ministry

Throughout 2025 we continued to hold regular **Men's Breakfasts**. These have been a wonderful opportunity for the men within our church and community to enjoy breakfast together and hear from a guest speaker.

We have also hosted monthly **Dad's Lego Breakfasts** for primary-aged children and their male carers, giving them space to spend quality time together over Lego and breakfast.

If you would like to know more about our Men's Ministry or how to get involved, please contact the office

Ladies Group

Ascension Ladies Group continued in 2025 with a varied programme of speakers, including The Love of Wood, Inspirations of a Local Author, and Malcolm's Pilgrimage to Canterbury. There were food events, a summer afternoon in Anne's garden, Christmas craft sessions, two gentle exercise sessions to music, quizzes, games, and many friendly conversations.

Across our programme — and through a very successful summer coffee morning — we were able to raise a further £300 towards the church's work at Townhill Park.

We continue to meet on most first and third Fridays of the month from 2:00pm to about 3:30pm in the café area at Ascension, and we always welcome new ladies to join us. Further information is available from the office or from Frances Samphire.

Frances Samphire

Loving mission

GrACE

GrACE (Greening Ascension's Community and Environment Group) continues to provide information, encouragement and tips to Church members to reduce their carbon footprint (i.e. use less fossil fuels), appreciate God's creation, and live more simply so that others (people and nature) may simply live.

During 2025, we ran a series through Lent with weekly posters, both on GrACE's Facebook page and displayed in the Worship Space, on topics that related to the environment and that were useful, money-saving or just plain fun.

We were delighted to see self-sown flowers growing in the front flower bed, and continued to keep on top of the marestails.

Ascension Gardeners worked in tandem with the contract gardeners; in the 'wild' area along the hedge behind the car park we planted two areas with wildflower seeds, but nothing came up probably due to the very dry period we had after sowing them; we have since sown more and hope for more success in 2026; and weaving more green waste into the small dry hedge units that mark the edge of the wild area.

We continue to have a **litter pick** around the church grounds on the 1st Sunday of the month and have also organised occasional litter picks around Townhill Park Green.

We again supported those who did the sponsored **Ride and Stride** in September by asking for Ascension to be registered as a participating church, and our cyclists raised funds for Ascension and Hampshire Historic Churches Trust. The following week was Creation Sunday, focused on caring for God's world; Sam Scott, Diocesan Environment Officer giving an inspiring talk at both services.

In December we encouraged Church members to pin a Christmas card to the dedicated display board, wishing everyone a happy Christmas; this was to ensure all members were included and to save people using lots of individual cards, thus saving trees.

In 2026 we will continue encouraging care for God's world to become part of our Church's 'DNA', and seek to work towards a gold Eco-Church Award.

Helen Pain, GrACE Group Co-ordinator

Ascension Running Community

Ascension Running Community continues to offer free community runs, with our aim of promoting good health and wellbeing through running together remaining at the heart of our activities.

Our weekly 5km community social **#RunAndTalk** continues, as does our fortnightly, term-time Friday morning '**School Run**' run — a gentle run in Riverside Park followed by coffee at Woodmill Café. Some runners join us for a season and then move on, but we are confident that everyone is warmly welcomed in our friendly groups. We have met people who are new to the area, enjoyed occasional return visits from those who used to run with us regularly, and established firm friendships with those who join us in all weathers.

We have been able to train another run leader to support our activities, and they were heavily involved in our summer Beginners Course, which saw 15 people come initially to have a go, culminating in a fun Parkrun at Netley for those who completed the course. Encouraging newer runners has been a joy, and we look forward to continuing this work in the year ahead. As ever, we continue to extend our invitation to newcomers who are always warmly welcomed in our friendly groups.

Anna Gordon, Run Leader

Community Café and Social Prescribing

In 2025 we have continued to host a drop in café each Tuesday afternoon, in partnership with the NHS Social Prescribers from Living Well Practice – "My Time to Chat". This is a wonderful opportunity to meet people, build community and access other healthcare services for wider needs. We'd love to see more people getting involved, attending, and considering serving as part of the team at this amazing outreach opportunity!

Market Place

We continue to partner with Southampton City Mission and others to run the **Market Place** initiative from the community centre in Townhill Park. The aim of the Market Place is to offer “choice and dignity through a personal selection of discounted, quality, fresh, refrigerated, and frozen food products to supplement people’s weekly shopping.” They are also intended to be small, welcoming communities offering all the health and wellbeing benefits of regular contact with a supportive network of peers and friends. Additional support is offered by having regular visits and workshops by other charities and agencies such as Social Prescribers, Debt Advice and Mental Health nurses.

We continue to collect food donations to pass on as well.

Financial Review

2025 brought encouraging growth in regular giving, and we are truly grateful for the generosity of our church family. While this progress is heartening, it is not yet enough to cover all our ongoing costs, which means we have continued to draw on our financial reserves.

Using reserves for essential building work and staff costs has been appropriate, but it’s not a sustainable long-term approach. Strengthening our financial stability remains an important priority.

The PCC is actively working on plans to reduce pressure on our reserves, reviewing expenditure, exploring new income opportunities, and encouraging continued growth in regular giving. We are committed to stewarding our resources wisely and supporting the long-term health of our ministry.

We remain hopeful and trust in God’s provision, and we are deeply thankful for everyone who gives so faithfully. We encourage the whole church family to keep praying and consider how we can each play a part in securing a stable future for Ascension.

Despite the challenges, expenditure remained within budget, and we met all routine commitments, including salaries and the Diocesan Common Mission Fund.

I would also like to thank the staff team for their careful and prudent stewardship throughout the year.

Reserves policy

It is PCC policy to maintain reserves equivalent to three months’ running costs at £27,000.

It is our policy to invest the short-term investment fund balances with the CCLA Church of England Deposit Fund, and the remainder in the CCLA Church of England Investment Fund. Our financial policies and procedures have been updated and approved by the PCC.

Tim Nutt, Treasurer

Facilities

Our buildings continue to be a blessing to both our church family and the wider community. Throughout 2025, we have worked to steward our facilities well, ensuring they remain safe, welcoming, and fit for purpose. In 2025 we completed extensive repairs to our sacristy caused by damp and installed ventilation. We are grateful to the Hampshire and the Islands Historic Churches Trust and The Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme for providing grants to cover the costs of these works. We have also secured faculty permissions and funding to carry out essential repairs to the tower and louvres, which will commence in the new year. Regular maintenance, careful planning, and the dedication of volunteers have enabled us to host a wide range of ministries, events, and community activities. We remain committed to using our buildings creatively and responsibly as part of our long-term mission. The PCC would like to extend our thanks to our Architect Tim Sage for his ongoing advice and support.

Personnel

2025 saw some changes to the staff team. In April we said goodbye to Ruth Hills who moved to Wales to be closer to family. We are grateful to Ruth for her dedicated service during her time with us here at Ascension and in Townhill Park. In July, we welcomed James Allen to the Ascension Staff Team as our new curate.

Simon continues to lead us as the vicar alongside his shared role of Joint Area Dean. Revd Peter Goodall continues to serve as our Associate Minister with us part-time, Andy Milligan, Bev Price and Lucy Hoyes continue to serve as second year Ordinands and Jackie Cooper continues to serve as our Anna Chaplain. Jo Szedlack continues to lead our Kids and Youth Ministry alongside Luke Shutler and Lizi Fewtrell and Tim Nutt continue in their roles as Operations and Administration support for the church.

As ever, our staff here at Ascension are supported by those who serve on teams, without which we would be unable to carry out even a fraction of what we do. We would like to take this opportunity to thank every member of our congregation who serves, gives and prays over our ministry here at Ascension.

Structure, governance, and management

The Parochial Church Council (PCC)

The **Parochial Church Council (PCC)** is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure and is a Registered Charity. 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. The full PCC met in person 7 times during 2025 with the Standing Committee meeting a further 2 times.

At the 2025 APCM, Loz Foskett stepped down from her role as Church Warden. Andy Gordon agreed to continue in his roles as Church Wardens and was duly appointed. Mary Dickson was nominated as Church Warden and was duly appointed. Tim Nutt agreed to continue in his role as treasurer and was duly appointed. Sunke Trace-Kleeberg stepped down from the PCC after completing her term of service.

The election for this PCC vacancy was conducted as set out in the Church Representation Rules and Hannah Baynes-Knight was appointed to the PCC.

We would like to thank all who served on the PCC during 2025. For full details of the current PCC members please see back page.

Attendance and Electoral Roll

The average **weekly attendance**, at Ascension, counted during October 2025, was 140 adults and 75 children at our Ascension Services, and 10 adults and 10 children at our EDGE+ service. We continue to offer a live YouTube broadcast of our 10:45 service, with an average of 35 views per week during the same period.

All those who attend our services are encouraged to register on the **Electoral Roll** to enable them to vote for the PCC membership and to stand for election themselves. In 2025, in accordance of Church of England rules, a new electoral roll was taken. The new electoral roll has been prepared in accordance of Church of England rules. At the APCM on 18th May 2025 the number on the electoral roll was declared at 112. Tim Nutt continued as the Electoral Roll Officer within his role as Parish Administrator.

Safeguarding

The **Safeguarding** of children and vulnerable adults continues to be a priority at Ascension. We have continued to comply with section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Disciplinary Measure 2016 (duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

Over 2025 we have continued to work through the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard to ensure that we are compliant with all safeguarding regulations and best practice.

Andy Gordon has continued in the role of Safeguarding Officer.

Any Safeguarding concerns can be reported to safeguarding@ascensionsouthampton.co.uk

Deanery Synod

At the March meeting of Deanery Synod, and then again more informally in April, Synod welcomed Bishop Rhiannon to explore the bid for central Church of England funding to enhance the reach and impact of our mission within Southampton, under the banner “Serving Southampton”. It was great to have many non-Synod members also join those sessions and share the enthusiasm there already is across our Parishes to bring the light of God’s love in to the lives of those we live alongside in the City.

The June meeting had a focus on finance, with the Diocesan team sharing what goes into the Diocesan budget and how our Common Mission Fund contributions are used to fund clergy in our Parishes.

During the October meeting Archdeacon Richard shared the importance of looking after clergy wellbeing and some of the steps that have been taken to improve support to the clergy, as well as opening up a discussion about how PCCs can play a vital role in caring for their clergy so that their clergy are fit and well and able to lead.

The Synod also received regular updates on clergy movements, and feedback from Deanery Representatives on Diocesan Synod.

The Deanery Standing Committee also spent time during the year looking at how as a Deanery, we work more collaboratively together (whether the Serving Southampton bid is successful or not) and during 2026 the Standing Committee that we move Synod on from primarily being a place of information exchange to a gathering that is focused on empowering mission across the City. The Standing Committee hope that as APCMs across the City elect their Deanery Synod reps for the next period, they will have in mind who would be the best voices from their Parish to play a part in shaping and delivering our shared mission in Southampton. Support for Church Buildings, which was then forwarded to Diocesan Synod. The Synod received regular updates on clergy movements and feedback from Deanery Representatives on Diocesan Synod.

Administrative information

The Church of the Ascension is on Thorold Road, Bitterne Park, Southampton SO18 1HZ. It is part of the Diocese of Winchester within the Church of England.

The correspondence address is

The Parish Office, Ascension Centre, 1 Thorold Road, Bitterne Park, Southampton SO18 1HZ.

We continue to Bank with National Westminster Bank, and our Independent Examiner is Jonathan Marchant.

Registered charity number 1128861

PCC members for April 2024 – April 2025:

Chair	Revd. Simon Robertson
Church Wardens	Andy Gordon and Mary Dickson
Secretary	Lizi Fewtrell
Treasurer	Tim Nutt
Clergy	Revd. Peter Goodall, Revd. James Allen
Deanery Synod	Sam Nichols, Steve Alexander and Craig Gallen
Other Members	Becca Bartlett, Nneka Igiri, Kevin Reynolds, Hannah Bayes-Knight, John Finney, Christopher Allcock and Susan Lancashire

Annual Report approved by the PCC on 23rd March 2025

Signed on their behalf by Simon Robertson

Bitterne Park Parish
Statement of Assets and Liabilities
As at: 31 December 2025

	As at 31/12/2025	As at 31/12/2024
	£	£
Current assets		
Cash at bank and in hand	40,292.44	35,446.98
CBF Church of England Deposit Fund	3,052.40	2,920.24
CBF Church of England Investment Fund at valuation	771,111.28	874,150.73
Net current assets less current liabilities	814,456.12	912,517.95
Unrestricted		
Unrestricted - General fund	766,972.68	862,357.95
Represented by		
Designated		
Designated - Garden of Remembrance	35,972.96	38,339.70
Designated - Tithe	7,350.53	7,350.53
Restricted		
Restricted - Running Club	1,167.00	1,321.85
Restricted - Lift Maintenance	1,500.00	1,500.00
Restricted - Hardship Fund	722.24	1,647.92
Restricted - The Christmas Presence Fund	770.71	-
Total Designated and Restricted Funds	47,483.44	50,160.00
Funds of the church	814,456.12	912,517.95
 Total Income	 £175,990	 £167,728
Total Expenditure	£239,097	£281,172

Approved:

March 2026

Bitterne Park Parish
Receipts and payments
Selected period: 01 January 2025 to 31 December 2025

	From To	1-Jan-25 31-Dec-25	1-Jan-24 31-Dec-24
General fund (Unrestricted)			
Income			
Donations and Gift Aid			
Alms		2,271	3,092
Freewill Offerings		83,049	69,147
Gift Aid		18,239	16,072
<i>Total Donations and Gift Aid</i>		<u>103,560</u>	<u>88,311</u>
Other trading activities			
Hirings		14563	15066
Lacon Rent		16200	15000
<i>Total Other trading activities</i>		<u>30,763</u>	<u>30,066</u>
Investments			
Dividends		22,709	24,550
<i>Total Investments</i>		<u>22,709</u>	<u>24,550</u>
Other income			
Events		2,477	2,737
Church Army Funding		800	2,985
Fees		4,969	2,214
Wreath Making		3,034	2,500
The Christmas Presence (TCP)	a	100	1,699
Youth & kids subs		1,726	1,835
Youth Weekend		2,255	3,280
Townhill Hub donations		985	4,789
Refunds	b	800	30.68
Staff Leaving Gift		276	669
<i>Total Other income</i>		<u>17,422</u>	<u>22,739</u>
Total income		174,453	165,665
Expenditure			
Building			
Cleaning		7,998	8,033
Electricity		5,948	5,941
Fire Protection		1,475	849
Gas		7,702	8,901
Insurance		6,013	5,856
Maintenance, fixtures and fittings		17,805	82,534
Parish Phone/Broadband		903	925
Refuse		1,802	1,328
Water		1,494	845
General			
Marketing		611	271
Bank Charges		398	388
Children and Youth		7,431	7,103
Community Engagement		909	790
Deanery Synod Fees		125	125
Equipment		6,465	1,807
Events Social		2,454	2,058
Events Outreach		2,307	1,969
Gift to Charities		1,750	0
GRACE Group		104	54
Hospitality		1,705	1,115
IT Operations		1,541	1,334
Licences		1,246	1,212
Music		170	170

Office expenses	2,140	1,960
Sanctuary	523	544
Stripe Charges	680	672
Students	0	42
The Christmas Presence (TCP)	0	1,546
Townhill Hub	610	2,447
Worship Team Expenses	785	1,035
Youth Weekend	2,642	2,063
Staffing		
Administrator Costs	13,217	10,544
Assistant Youth Worker Costs	25,416	22,158
Children & Youth Worker Costs	30,664	29,607
Curates' expenses	27	1,387
Discretionary fund	214	168
Ops Co-ordinator costs	17,475	17,129
Ordinands' expenses	59	50
Outreach worker's expenses	628	2,116
Payroll Costs	350	414
Staff Leaving Gift	345	681
Staff Training	1,668	1,230
Vicar's expenses	497	474
Diocese		
Common Mission Fund (CMF)	58,128	46,620
Fees	1,325	1,498
Total expenditure	235,747	277,992
Excess of Income over Expenditure	-61,293	-112,327
Brought forward balance	27,409	19,735
Transfers from investment	c 65,000	120,000
Transfers to TCP Fund	-619	
Total carried forward balance	30,496	27,409

Garden of Remembrance (Designated) Fund

Income		
Dividends	1,024	1,062
Total income	1,024	1,062
Expenditure		
Gardening	1,910	2,650
Total expenditure	1,910	2,650
Excess of Income over Expenditure	-886	-1,588
Brought forward balance	-807	781
Transfers from investment	3,000	
Total carried forward balance	1,308	-807

Hardship Fund (Restricted)

Income		
Freewill Offerings	450	1000
New Wine Support	-	0
Total income	450	1000
Expenditure		
General Support	1376	510
New Wine Support	-	0
Total expenditure	1,376	510
Excess of Income over Expenditure	-926	490
Brought forward balance	1648	1158
Transfers to/(from)	-	0
Total carried forward balance	722	1648

Tithe (Designated) Fund

Expenditure

Charities

-

-

Total expenditure

0

0

Excess of Income over Expenditure

-

-

Brought forward balance

7,350

7,350

Total carried forward balance

7,350

7,350

Lift-Fund - Lift Maintenance (Restricted) Fund

Income

Donations and legacies

Freewill Offerings

—

-

Total income

0

0

Excess of Income over Expenditure

—

-

Brought forward balance

1,500

1,500

Total carried forward balance

1,500

1,500

Ascension Running Club (Restricted) Fund

Income

Takings

63

-

Total income

63

0

Expenditure

Courses and training

110

20

Equipment

107

0

Total expenditure

217

20

Excess of Income over Expenditure

-154

-20

Brought forward balance

1,321

1,341

Total carried forward balance

1,167

1,321

The Christmas Presence (TCP) (Restricted) Fund

Income

Freewill offering

-

Total income

0

Expenditure

Refunds

-151

Total expenditure

-151

Excess of Income over Expenditure

151

Brought forward balance

0

Transfers from General Fund

619

Total carried forward balance

771

There may be minor discrepancies in the totals as the pence are not being shown

Notes

- Late income received after the event, so allocated to 2025. remaining funds moved to
- a separate TCP Restricted fund
 - b Grant refunds from Winchester Diocese for building work
 - c Transfer from CCLA Investments for new boiler, building work, salaries and Tithe giving to charities in 2025/26



**CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**

**Independent examiner's
report on the accounts**

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF BITTERNE PARK, SOUTHAMPTON

**On accounts for the year
ended**

31 December 2025

**Charity no
(if any)**

1128861

Set out on pages

1-2

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above
charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31 / 12 / 2025**.

**Responsibilities and
basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation
of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act
2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out
under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I
have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission
under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have
come to my attention (~~other than that disclosed below~~*) in connection with
the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material
respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of
the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection
with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a
proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:

Date:

25 March 2026

Name:

Jonathan Marchant

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):**

Address:

53 Wood End Way

Chandler's Ford

Eastleigh SO53 4LN