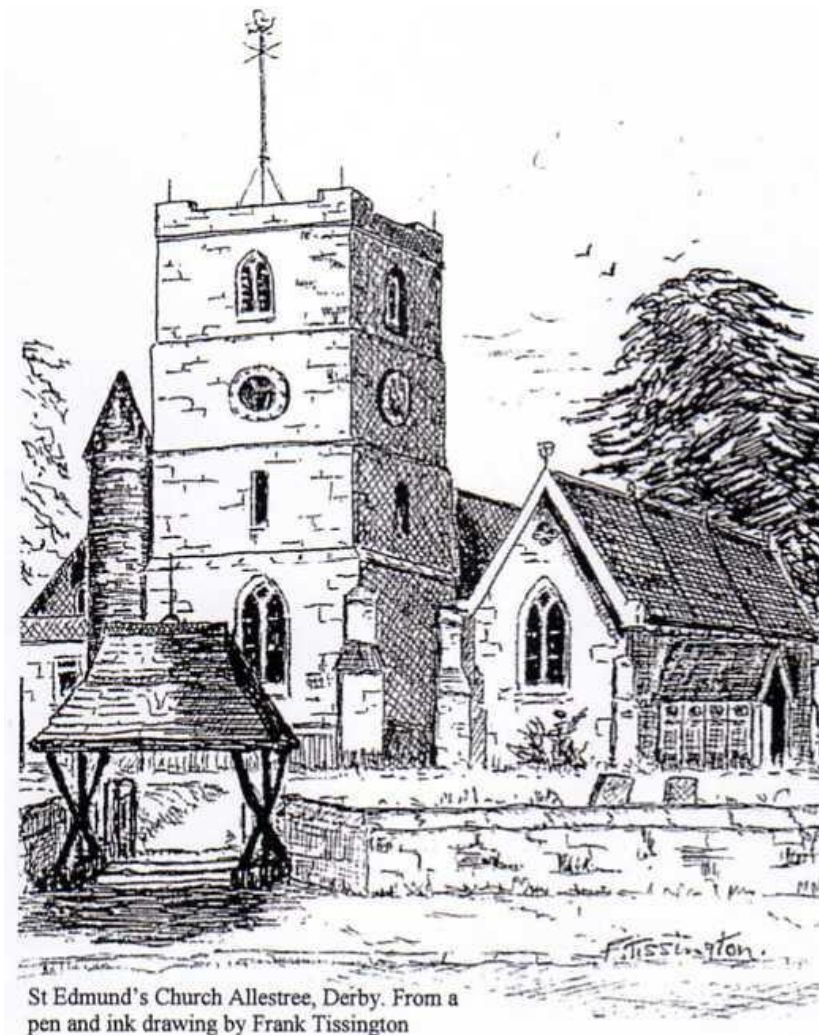


The Parish of St Edmund, Allestree



Trustees' Report for 2025

Election of Churchwardens

and

Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2026

Sunday 19th April 2026

After the 10am service in the Church

Contents

	Page
Agenda	3
Minutes of Churchwardens' Meeting 2025	4
Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2025	5
Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council	8
Treasurer's Report for the year 2025	10
Independent Examiner's Report	15
PCC Committee and Other Group/Activity Reports	16
Safeguarding Report	21
Churchwardens' Report	23
Parish Priest Report	24

Agenda

Meeting of Parishioners

1. Prayers
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the Churchwardens' Meeting 2025 (see page 4)
4. Election of Churchwardens

Followed by:

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the 2025 APCM (see page 5)
3. Presentation of the Electoral Roll
4. Election of Laity Representatives and DS Reps
5. Annual Report of the PCC (see page 8)
7. Financial Report (see page 10)
8. Appointment of Auditor
9. Presentation of other Reports (see page 16)
10. Churchwardens' Report (see page 23)
11. Parish Priest Report (see page 24)
12. Opportunity for questions

Minutes of the Annual Churchwardens' Meeting

6th April 2025

Present: the Revd Rachael Brooks, Chair.

Parishioners: 31

1. Welcome

Revd Rachael Brooks welcomed everyone to the meeting and opened with prayer, giving thanks for the witness of this church.

2. Apologies

Richard Wood, Ann Miller, Dennis & Maureen Caughey, David Redfern, Madeleine Fullerton, Louise Whittaker, Dave & Claire Pegg, Colin & Margaret Pearson, Chris Bainbridge, the Revd John Rice.

3. Minutes of the Churchwardens' Meeting on 28th April 2024

The minutes were read and accepted as a true record (proposed Kate Smith, seconded Michèle Aspinall). A copy was signed by the chair.

4. Election of Churchwardens

Paul Smith and Ann Miller had both stated they were willing to stand for a further year.

Both nominations were made on the correct form, duly completed with details of proposers and seconders.

There being no other nominations, no vote was held and Paul & Ann were elected.

5. Other

Revd Rachael warmly thanked Paul and Ann for their work as wardens and for their support.

Jane Burton pointed out that the meeting pack should be labelled "2025" not "2024".

This concluded the Churchwardens' meeting.

Paul Smith

Acting PCC Secretary

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

6th April 2025

Present: The Revd Rachael Brooks (chair) and 31 parishioners.

1. Apologies

Richard Wood, Ann Miller, Dennis & Maureen Caughey, David Redfern, Madeleine Fullerton, Louise Whittaker, Dave & Claire Pegg, Colin & Margaret Pearson, Chris Bainbridge, the Revd John Rice.

2. Minutes of 2024 APCM

The minutes were reviewed and accepted as a true and fair record: proposed Chris Jack, seconded Jill Potts. Copy signed by the chair.

3. Presentation of the Electoral Roll

Matt Cooper reported that the roll now has 72 (2024: 111) names in total. The ratio of in parish: out of parish was 39:33. He pointed out that the roll had been completely revised and that some of the significant fall in numbers was due to people no longer able to come to church because of age or infirmity. The last complete revision was in 2019 (pre-COVID) and COVID must also be seen as a key factor within the decline noted.

Revd Rachael thanked Matt for updating the roll.

4. Election of Lay PCC Members

Richard Wood, Thelma Thompson stood down at this meeting; David Halliwell had stood down in the course of the year.

John Aspinall had put himself forward for PCC membership and had been nominated/seconded by Elizabeth Jack and Mary Pollett respectively. There being no other nominees, he was duly elected. Revd Rachael welcomed him to the PCC.

PCC membership for 2025/2026 will therefore be:

Associate Minister	the Revd Rachael Brooks (ex officio)
Churchwardens	Paul Smith (ex officio) Ann Miller (ex officio)
Parish Safeguarding Officers	Louise Whittaker Madeleine Fullerton
Treasurer	Chris Jack
Secretary	Vacant

Other Lay representatives

Geoff Bailey
Matthew Cooper
Richard Flatman
Elizabeth Jack
John Aspinall

Deanery Synod Representatives

Mark Halliwell (ex officio)

David Redfern (ex officio)

Retiring members at APCM 2026

Geoff Bailey, Chris Jack, Elizabeth Jack, Louise Whittaker.

5. Annual Report of the PCC

The report is contained within the APCM booklet; it was not discussed in detail.

Michèle Aspinall noted that “recent events” were no longer included as a standard PCC agenda item. Paul Smith explained that this was to keep the meetings as short as possible. He agreed with Michèle that it was important to review events and take account of “lessons learned”.

Mark Halliwell pointed out that Richard Wood had been a Deanery Synod member. He would check whether we were still entitled to three Deanery Synod Reps and if so, whether an election should now be held to appoint a replacement for Richard.

6. Financial Report

The full report is contained within the APCM booklet.

Chris Jack commented that in 2024, income minus expenditure showed a loss for the year of £4,585. However, our investments had performed well and had grown by £16,475. He explained that £90,000 was held in restricted funds meaning it could only be used for a specified purpose, typically the maintenance/repair of the church fabric. This was important as consideration was now being given to replacing the heating systems both in the church and the hall. The work in church could be covered from restricted funds but that in the hall could not be.

In closing, he thanked the finance committee (Richard Flatman, Mark Halliwell, Robert Carnell and Paul Smith) for their support.

Rachael thanked Chris for all his hard work in preparing the accounts and continuing to provide leadership on financial matters. He then took questions.

Andrew Brooks asked about the policy on giving to **external charities**. Chris explained that each year the PCC set aside an amount to be donated to good causes nominated by the congregation. In addition, collections were made on behalf of e.g. the Children’s Society and Christian Aid. Jane Burton queried how charities were selected. Mark stated that in recent years, it has been possible to make all the requested donations from within the budget the PCC had agreed. Generally, though, the PCC aimed to strike a balance between local, national and international good causes.

Steve Burton asked about the difference between *charity* and *mission* giving. Chris clarified that the former was donations to charities, the latter was money donated to support children’s work/outreach e.g. by St Nick’s, which we co-funded.

7. Appointment of Auditor/Independent Financial Examiner

Peter Hilton was willing to act as the independent financial examiner again next year. His appointment was proposed by Chris Jack and seconded by Richard Flatman. Chris commented that Peter was able to give advice as well as find errors; he greatly appreciated Peter's oversight of the accounts. A formal vote of thanks to Peter was unanimously agreed.

8. Presentation of Committee Reports

Committee reports are printed in full in the APCM booklet. Extra comments are recorded below.

Parish Magazine: Revd Rachael gave a special thank you to Fiona Fraser for her work to publish the magazine regularly. All our thoughts were with Fiona following the recent death of her mother, Joane, also a much-loved member of the congregation.

Hall report: Revd Rachael pointed out that some hall uses were incompatible with the covenant to use the hall for "ecclesiastical purposes". Existing bookings would be honoured but the policy on hall letting would be reviewed. Reiki and yoga were two specifics discussed. Revd Rachael to discuss further with Caroline, and Paul Smith to add to next PCC agenda. Feedback welcome from congregation members.

Tony Delaney: Chris Jack proposed a special vote of thanks to Tony for his work as caretaker and suggested he be offered a gift by way of appreciation. He also confirmed that pay/benefits for the PCC's two employees, Caroline Audley and Tony Delaney, had recently been reviewed and significantly increased.

Groundforce: In relation to the report from Jane and Steve Burton, Revd Rachael commented that St Matthew's had recently won a silver Eco award. The work of the Groundforce volunteers to actively create wildlife habitat in the churchyard could be used as evidence should St Edmund's opt to apply for a similar award. She thanked the volunteers for their stewardship of this church land. Paul Smith added that it was a significant green asset (which could never be used for housing or other building) lying within just one mile of the city centre, and also containing what was generally agreed to be the oldest tree in Derby.

Allestree Churches Together (ACT): Revd Rachael clarified that ACT is in the process of being dismantled as a formally constituted body. Michèle Aspinall mentioned the support the parish had given in the past to Lent Lunches and Holidays at Home. She offered help with these going forward. She also pointed out a couple of typos in the reports (now corrected!).

Safeguarding: Revd Rachael underlined the need to continue to take this seriously and highlighted that safeguarding controls are very active at local level, notwithstanding the publicity given to failings at national level.

She updated attendees on proposed changes to the administration of DBS checks. There was a new external provider, and the plan was for less involvement by the Diocese. However, this would be mirrored by more work at parish level, which parish safeguarding officers (PSOs) might not be willing or able to undertake. Discussions were ongoing. She asked all to pray that the right solution be found.

Mark Halliwell reported back on the General Synod decision that the Church of England should implement independent scrutiny of safeguarding, to be executed over the next 3-5 years. Widespread shame was felt over past failures.

9. Churchwarden's Report

The report was printed in full in the APCM booklet. Paul Smith commented on some highlights of 2024, both in terms of services/events and work done to maintain the church and hall. He underlined that it was easy to take for granted our electrical services, plumbing etc, but these required regular maintenance and attention to ensure they worked whenever needed. He thanked all those who contributed to this.

10. Associate Minister's Report

This was printed in full in the APCM booklet. Revd Rachael mentioned her comment "I'm very glad to report that one of our congregations has joined the youthwork team running an after-school club at St Nick's for pupils at Woodlands School", making clear that she had meant "a member of our congregation has joined..."

Paul Smith thanked Revd Rachael for her ministry, and especially for respecting our traditions while developing new forms of outreach to our local community.

Looking forward, Revd Rachael mentioned plans to make the church welcome area more attractive and to allow more space. She also explained the prayer initiative which starts in May, and which will see every street in our area prayed for in a systematic way over the next four years. She reminded everyone that we are called to pray for those around us.

Andrew Brooks updated parishioners on the after-school youth work at St Nick's. Sessions were held every Tuesday in term time with the young people coming mainly from Woodlands and St Benedict's. The aim was to befriend people and provide an opportunity to talk to an adult outside the immediate family. It was church with a small "c"! Further volunteers would be most welcome to join the team.

Revd Rachael also mentioned that she had launched Messy Church. The pilot had been very well supported, and the next one will be run in the summer. There will be All Age family services at both churches. The home groups are now up and running. She urged everyone to continue to pray for the new ventures' success.

The annual meeting closed with prayer.

Paul Smith

Acting PCC Secretary

PCC REPORT 2025

In 2025, the full PCC met every other month (January, March, May, July, September and November) with each meeting being preceded by a Standing Committee meeting. The normal agenda is:

- Open with prayer
- Apologies for absence
- Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising
- Reports on Safeguarding, Finance, Fabric and from the clergy
- Other business items
- Looking forward/back
- Any other business (AOB)

- Date of next meeting
- A short reflection on how the meeting has furthered God's work
- Close in prayer

Papers for consideration at each meeting are circulated on the Friday before the Tuesday on which the meeting takes places. This is to give members the weekend, plus a couple of days, to read and prepare for the meeting, and in particular for any decisions that need to be made.

In 2025, PCC members were as follows: (Standing committee members shown in **bold**.)

Revd Rachael Brooks (chair), **Paul Smith** (warden and acting secretary), **Ann Miller** (warden), **Chris Jack** (treasurer), Elizabeth Jack, Louise Whittaker (Parish Safeguarding Officer), **Matt Cooper**, Geoff Bailey, Richard Wood (Deanery Synod rep), David Redfern (Deanery Synod rep), Thelma Thompson, Madeleine Fullerton (Safeguarding), Mark Halliwell (Deanery Synod rep), John Aspinall and **Richard Flatman**. The Revd Sarah Watson is also a member and trustee but, with many other responsibilities, does not normally attend our meetings.

Richard Wood and Thelma Thompson stood down in the course of the year for personal reasons. John Aspinall joined the PCC with effect from the 2025 APCM.

PCC members are the trustees of the registered charity. As such they share responsibility for all aspects of its finances, management and operation.

The PCC has what are effectively sub-committees which focus on particular aspects of church life. The main ones are finance, fabric and events. In addition, the PCC has set up project groups to look at church heating and potential vestry refurbishment (to include installation of a wheel-chair accessible toilet).

Some of the key issues which came before the PCC in the course of 2025 were:

- Launching a new website (joint with our sister church of St Matthew's).
- Working towards installing Wi-Fi in the church.
- Deciding on the church's annual parish share and setting a budget for supporting selected charities.
- Staying up-to-date with all safeguarding requirements, especially those relating to recruitment and training.
- Deciding whether a heat pump or a gas boiler would best meet the need to heat the hall.
- The maintenance of church and hall buildings.
- Supporting the community prayer initiative covering the four parishes of St Edmund's, St Matthew's, St Nicholas and St Paul, Quarndon.
- Working with Derby City Council regarding memorial safety and tree safety in the churchyard.
- Launching Messy Church and regular All Age Worship.
- Approving Paul Smith's training towards appointment as a Licensed Lay Minister (Reader) and allocating a modest budget towards his costs (books, materials etc).
- Reviewing the pay of our two employees.
- Clarifying that we will not take hall bookings from any group, and for any event, which we view as contrary to our Christian beliefs and values
- Setting a clear rule about photography in church (*"With the exception of weddings, it is our policy that no filming or other photography should take place during church services. The service leader will invite people to take photos at the end."*)

- Making a formal report to the Information Commissioner following a major data breach associated with contractors used by the Diocese for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks (this involved the personal data of two members of our church family).

Projects to maintain/improve the two church buildings included:

- Moving Primrose's shed to the hall car park.
- Using workers from the Department of Justice Community Payback scheme to redecorate the hall.
- Gaining funding towards the cost of renewing the noticeboards around the churchyard and in the hall area
- Installing a new boiler in the hall, replacing two existing boilers which had come to the end of their working life.
- Renewing the vinyl floor in the church toilet.
- Setting up the periodic monitoring of the hall car park retaining wall by external engineers.
- Putting new furniture and toys in the tower area, to make church more welcoming to young families with children.
- Appointing architects Smith & Roper to manage the considerable amount of lime mortar repointing work recommended by their 2024 Quinquennial Inspection report.
- Installing a new noticeboard on the inside western wall of the church tower.

In closing, may I offer thanks to all PCC members for their active support of, and commitment to, our mission of bringing the good news of Christ to our community.

Paul Smith, **Warden and acting PCC Secretary**

2025 Accounts and Treasurer's Report for 2026 APCM

As before the accounts have been prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis. The accounts and the examination certificate from Peter Hilton are attached.

Receipts and Payments

The comments below are intended to summarise and explain some of the numbers in the accounts.

Summary

The Receipts and Payments summary show that in 2025 we had a cash surplus of £2,482.

The value of our investments fell by almost £10,000.

Giving

Our giving increased by £1,394 compared with 2024. This represents a 2% increase, mostly provided by new donors. Clearly this does not match the effects of inflation.

Legacies

We were very grateful to receive substantial legacies in 2025, without which our end of year balance would have been a loss of around £18,000.

Fund Raising

Our income from fund raising has increased substantially. These result from social events, book sales and donations made for refreshments served in the hall after morning services. Often the organisers will ask for the proceeds to go to specific purposes so, for example, refreshment money was used towards the cost of the new hall boiler.

Bank Interest

About one third of our interest comes from the Churchwardens' Endowment fund and is therefore Restricted to expenditure on church fabric.

Other income

This is mainly recovery of office costs, including a proportion of Caroline's pay, from St Matthew's. As we now have an incumbent, we are no longer able to claim costs of visiting clergy from the diocese.

Cost of Trading

Overall, the hall income from the hall roughly equalled the outgoings. The latter included the cost of a new gas boiler replacing two aged units. This will reduce our gas costs in the future as the new boiler is more efficient.

A new smart meter was installed at the end of April. Since then, our bills for electricity have dropped to about one tenth of the amount we paid prior to the new meter. The issue was raised with the supplier in September and each subsequent month until January 2026 when they conceded they ought to examine the meter. At time of writing, we are still awaiting an appointment for a technician to do this.

Outward giving

We were able to maintain our level of outward giving, both that made from PCC funds and donations to specific charities given at services, at just below last year's totals. The details are as follows:

Christian Aid	£ 405
Children's Society	£ 262
Derby City Mission	£ 600
Railway Mission	£ 550
Malawi Students	£ 605
Acorns Children's Hospice	£ 600
MIND	£ 550
Derby Hope Centre	£ 550
WaterAid	£ 550
TOTAL	£ 4,672

Common Fund - Parish Share

As in previous years we were able to meet the request from the diocese in full. Across the diocese as a whole, payments into the fund fell short of the 2025 requests by about 30%.

Church Running expenses

These increased due to a number of maintenance tasks including work on the flat roofs and electrical repairs. The initial costs of the quinquennial recommendation are also included. The biggest single item was the commissioning and installation of new noticeboards around the churchyard for which we received a small grant contribution.

Church Utilities

The cost of heating and lighting the church fell quite significantly thanks to the reduced tariff negotiated in mid-2024 and to a 20% lower consumption.

Assets

As in previous years, the market value of the hall had been frozen at £114,000, as the use of the building and the land is limited due to the terms of the endowment under which it was given to the parish. The insurance value is over one million pounds and is index linked.

Looking forward

The PCC is considering a number of capital projects in the church including a complete renovation of the heating system and the installation of a disabled toilet. The costs of these are not yet known, but they will have a significant effect on our capital holdings and will need to be carefully budgeted.

A small group continues to meet monthly to design a new heating system for church. Our current view is that a hybrid system employing radiant heaters and heat pumps might be the best solution. We have commissioned a preliminary design study to see if this is feasible.

A similar group meets to discuss the installation of a disabled toilet in part of the choir vestry, again with a view to producing a preliminary design which can be used to obtain quotations etc.

At present we do not have an indication whether either or both of these projects is affordable. Whilst we do have capital resources, these expenses will reduce the amount we receive in interest from our deposit accounts. This will further worsen our balance of income and expenses which, without legacies, would have been more than £18,000 in 2025. Our giving to the church has not matched inflation for a number of years and we need to encourage members of the congregation to review their donations. The capital projects will, we hope, provide an incentive.

Our Parish Share request has risen substantially in 2026. The calculation is based on a congregation of 50 people each week and that each contributes £13.85 per week into the fund.

Thanks

I would like to record my thanks to members of the Finance Committee, who do a lot of the work of administering our finances. Special thanks to Mark Halliwell, who looks after many aspects of the treasurer's job list for me. Without the help of him and the whole team the Treasurer's job would be almost impossible.

I would also like to acknowledge the help of our examiner Peter Hilton, who not only checks the annual accounts but also provides expert advice when needed throughout the year, without any charge. Peter has agreed to continue as our examiner in 2026.

St Edmund's, Allestree 2025 Accounts

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS	Unrestricted	Designated	Restricted	Totals 2025	Totals 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
RECEIPTS					
1 & 2 Planned Giving	35,422			35,422	35,863
3 Collections at services Other voluntary giving and	5,032			5,032	4,283
4 donations	9,299			9,299	7,766
6 Tax recovered	10,103			10,103	10,549
Total from donors	59,856	0	0	59,856	58,461
7 Legacies	21,000			21,000	
8 Grants	0		997	997	812
9 Fund raising	1,273		1,595	2,868	683
10 Bank Interest	6,967		4,814	11,781	12,881
11 Service Fees	6,900			6,900	10,054
12 Trading Income: Hall	25,014			25,014	26,026
12 Trading Income: Magazine	1,637			1,637	1,563
13 Other income	8,881			8,881	10,716
13c Agency income	4,846			4,846	10,581
				0	
Total Other income	76,518	0	7,406	83,924	73,316
TOTAL RECEIPTS	136,374	0	7,406	143,780	131,777
PAYMENTS					
17 Fund raising	366			366	225
18 Outward giving	667	4,005		4,672	4,933
19 Common Fund - Parish	44,796			44,796	43,496
20 Salaries and Honoraria	29,584		1,295	30,879	29,094
21 Clergy expenses	999			999	2,509
22 Mission giving	0			0	880
Church Running					
23 Expenditure	18,321		6,403	24,724	16,741
24 Church utilities	4,818			4,818	8,586
25 Cost of Trading	18,156		6,061	24,217	20,244
26 Governance	362			362	458
99 Other costs	522			522	759
Agency Payments	4,944			4,944	8,437
TOTAL PAYMENTS	123,535	4,005	13,759	141,299	136,362
Excess of Receipts over Payments	12,839	-4,005	-6,353	2,481	-4,585
OPENING CASH BALANCES	122,426	0	111,051	233,477	238,062
TRANSFER BETWEEN FUNDS	-4,005	4,005			
CLOSING CASH BALANCES	131,260	0	104,698	235,958	233,477

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

	Unrestricted	Designated	Restricted	Totals 2025	Totals 2024
	£	£	£		£
CASH FUNDS					
Cash and cheques on hand	0			0	
CAF current	2,945			2,945	6,408
CAF deposit	27,324		104,698	132,022	130,450
CCLA deposit	100,991			100,991	96,619
TOTAL	131,260	0	104,698	235,958	233,477
INVESTMENT FUNDS VALUATION					
CCLA CBF account				256,361	259,389
CCLA CBF account (Endowment from Churchwarden's Land charity)				166,320	173,246
CHURCH HALL				114,000	114,000
CREDITORS Agency					2,144

fid V2

Chris Jack - **Treasurer**

ST EDMUND'S CHURCH ALLESTREE PCC

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE PCC OF
ST EDMUND'S CHURCH ALLESTREE

I report on the accounts of the PCC for the year ended 31st December 2025, which comprise the Receipts and Payments Account and Statement of Assets and Liabilities.

This report is made solely to the trustees in accordance with Section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 and the Church Accounting Regulations 2016. My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the members of the PCC those matters I am required to state to them in an Independent Examiner's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity trustees for my examination work.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The Charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year (under Section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Act)) and that an independent examination is needed. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts (under Section 145 of the Act, to follow procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners (under Section 145 of the Act and Church Guidance, 2016 edition and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

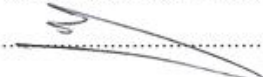
Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- 1 which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 130 of the Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Acthave not been met; or
- 2 to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Name P B Hilton FCA
.....
Address 5 Wharfedale Close, Allestree, Derby
.....
Date 23/2/26
.....
Signed 
.....

PCC Committee and other Group/Activity Reports

Children's Work – Please see Rev. Rachael Brooks report.

Church Magazine – Fiona Fraser (Manager of the process), Chris Willis (distribution & proof reading) & Claire Pegg (proof reading)

The Parish Magazine continues to be produced throughout the year, there being 11 publications in a 12-month period, with a double issue for December/January. The number of copies printed by John E Wright in Derby is 170, a slight reduction on previous years because demand has fallen slightly. Of these, 108 are hand delivered to subscribers by a team of 14 devoted helpers, 11 are posted, 20 placed for sale at CTD News at Blenheim Parade, 5 at the Pharmacy there, and 1 free copy goes to the Community Library at Park Farm Centre. The remaining copies are placed in the Church. The price of the magazine is £1 per copy, but the people who have their copy delivered pay £10 for the year provided they pay in advance. The magazine 'year' runs from the 1st July - the 31st June in any one year, so requests for annual subscriptions usually appear in the May and June issues - with reminders later as needed.

Many thanks are due to Fiona, who does the lion's share of the work needed to produce the Magazine.

Church Hall Report – Caroline Audley

St Edmund's Preschool continue to use the hall Monday-Friday during term time and School's Out hire the hall during most holidays, mainly the longer ones at Easter and over the summer. We also welcome Ballet on a Monday (term time) as well The Tuneless Choir. Studio 86 (a dance class, term time) and Derventio choir hire the hall on a Tuesday. Rainbows, Brownies and Guides are in on a Wednesday (term time). Studio 86 also hire the hall on a Thursday (term time). Fridays tend to be free. Ann Miller's choirs hire the hall regularly, but this tends to be at the weekend when we also have parties. We are grateful to them all for this invaluable income.

Regular church bookings are Luncheon Club on a Tuesday every other week and Baby & Toddler Group on a Thursday although with the start of Nature Tots (normally the 2nd Thursday of the month) the group meets in Allestree Park rather than the hall. Thank you to St Edmund's Pre-school for reducing their number to allow Luncheon Club & the Baby & Toddler Group to run.

Thank you as also to Tony for helping with many aspects of the hall from moving chairs and tables, cleaning the windows and dusting the high corners to sweeping the outside play area for the pre-school. We are incredibly grateful.

Baby & Toddler Group – Caroline Audley

The group continues to meet on a Thursday during term time from 10-11.30am. We have a number of regulars but often have new faces too. I don't ask people to book as this can be stressful for parents and plans also change so some weeks are quieter than others, but some weeks are very busy. I welcome childminders who tend to bring multiple children. I don't think it's right to exclude them like some groups do.

The group offers fruit and biscuits, squash, tea and coffee. This is kindly donated from Morrison's in Belper and their Community Champion Lucy.

Thank you as ever to Tony for helping week after week to get all of the toys in and out of the cupboard, as well as moving the tables and chairs, I couldn't do it without him. I definitely notice when he's on holiday! Huge thanks also to Michèle who does a wonderful job helping to make teas and coffees, wash up at the end (so there is now nothing for me to take home) and chatting to the parents and grandparents, making them feel welcome.

Nature Tots – Caroline Audley

This group started in September 2025 and runs once a month, normally on the 2nd Thursday of the month from 10-11.30am. This group replaces the normal Baby & Toddler Group in St Edmund's Church Hall. It's essentially a pre-school playgroup with a difference, connecting children with nature; encouraging them to learn, play and have fun outdoors. We meet in Allestree Park, not too far from the main carpark off the A6.

It's run in partnership with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust who gave us over £1,000 to buy items/toys and facilitated 2 days training for myself and Rev. Rachael Brooks. They also funded 2 days of outdoor specific First Aid Training for myself, Rev. Rachael, Andrew Brooks and Michele Aspinall. Rev. Rachael, Andrew, Michele and Alwyn Young (Rainbows and Brownies leader) help every month at Nature Tots, from Andrew loading up his car with toys, Michele and Alwyn making teas and coffees and Rachael reading the story. I am incredibly grateful to them all for their help.

Andy and sometimes Matt from Wildlife Trust come to help put up our parachute canopy and direct people from the main carpark. They have put in a planning application for a permanent outdoor classroom and pond dipping pond not far from where we currently meet, similar to the one at Carsington Reservoir. This application also includes storage which we don't currently have.

A number of the regular attendees of the Baby and Toddler Group come but we've also seen some new faces.

Flower Group - Michèle Aspinall

In normal circumstances, the church flower group ensures that fresh flowers are always on display for services apart from Lent and Advent. A special effort is made for festivals such as Easter and Christmas. Appropriate flowers and colours are also in place for Remembrance Sunday, Whitsun etc. We always try to follow the wishes of families for funeral flowers and also provide arrangements to celebrate anniversaries or memorials.

Some of our funding comes from wedding flowers, when we make a small profit whilst still providing flowers at a more competitive price than most florists. Unfortunately, in 2025 there were no weddings celebrated in the church. For the second year running, this had a serious impact on our funds. Nonetheless, thanks to a generous legacy, the congregation's response to appeals and the skills of the group, the floral arrangements at Easter, Harvest and Christmas continue to impress. Mothering Sunday flowers are also provided from this funding.

In September, as part of our work in the community, Baby and Toddler Group provided the inspiration for our 'Bill and Ben' display for Allestree Scarecrow Festival. Many thanks to Caroline for taking a creative and practical lead!

The church flower group gladly welcomes new recruits. Many of our team are also members of Allestree Flower Group. No special skills are required as full training is offered by our expert, talented team.

Volunteers to help with all aspects of church flower arranging are most welcome. We see working with flowers as an enjoyable, sociable and creative way of serving the church and helping to make it a welcoming and comforting place at the heart of our community.

Choir - Elizabeth Jack

The choir continues to sing regularly at 2 morning and 2 Evensongs a month plus several joint services with St. Matthew's choir. Evensong congregation numbers are increasing, and people are most appreciative of our efforts. An afternoon Epiphany celebration was led by the choir with enthusiastic audience participation. The men of the choir plus friends sang Compline on three Friday evenings during Lent – a calm, peaceful way to end the week.

We sang at a RSCM Diocesan Festival Evensong at Derby Cathedral along with 120 others, expertly conducted, as ever, by Alex Binns. We've forgiven him for announcing St. Edmund's as being in Darley Abbey!

The Advent Procession with both choirs was at St. Edmund's this year with a high standard of singing. Our traditional carol service with an augmented choir took place the Sunday before Christmas to a packed church.

It was Mary Pollett's turn to celebrate 50 years of singing with St. Edmund's choir in November. A loyal member of the choir and a true friend to us all, we surprised her with a certificate and flowers, and her family arranged post-service refreshments.

I am, as ever, indebted to my wonderful group of singers and thank them most sincerely for their loyalty and hard work. As a small choir of 7 regular singers, there are inevitably Sundays when too many of us are unavailable to make the choir viable. We hope you will forgive us and appreciate us when we are there!

Thanks too to David Redfern for his regular, week in, week out organ playing, to Tom Corfield and Andy Storer for their choral Evensong accompaniments and to the extra singers who help us out from time to time.

Bookworms - Cyra Buxton, Jane Burton and Anne Madge

Bookworms have continued to meet on the second Monday of each month throughout the year in St Edmund's choir vestry. Membership from both St Edmund's and St Matthew's parishes has remained fairly constant, though we have had one new member join the group and unfortunately one long-standing member has had to opt out.

The books selected by the group are listed both on the church website and in the parish magazines. These cover a variety of titles of different genres, geographical and historical settings and publication dates and they have continued to provoke wide-ranging and thought-provoking discussion both within group meetings and in a wider social context.

Events Committee – Elizabeth Jack

The committee consisting of Michele Aspinall, Mary Pollett, Gill Flatman and Diane Bakhda were joined this year by Ann Miller whose contributions have been invaluable. As stated in last year's report, our aim was to broaden the scope of events, and we certainly achieved this in 2025!

The pancake evening was a great success with the raffle, organised by Mary Pollett, raising a great deal of money. We reinstated a plant sale, held in the choir vestry which proved very successful and the few plants left over were snapped up at coffee after the 10 am service the next day. The Harvest lunch was well received but, again, numbers were disappointing. Having put out a questionnaire as to what people want, results remained inconclusive.

Now that the shed is in the church hall car park, this makes it easier to transfer books, so we have revived this popular event. Many thanks to Diane for all her hard work both behind the scenes and on the day.

Our two other big events were an Afternoon with Miss Austen to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Jane Austen's birth. Tea and scones were on offer, (served on china of course) and we were treated to musical treats - songs from Victoria Wilde and trios by Haydn played by Jane Johnston, Gareth Stevens and myself plus readings from Diane Bakhda. In November Michele and John Aspinall organised a most successful Germanic Christmas evening with slides, talks and, of course, food and drink.

Food Bank – Paul Smith

In 2025 we continued to support the Hope Centre food bank in Curzon St, Derby. Each month, on the first Sunday, we receive generous donations of groceries from church members and other supporters. These are combined with similar goods from our sister church of St Matthew's, Darley Abbey. A volunteer then loads these into their car (often with help from our caretaker, Tony Delaney) and drives them to Curzon St. Here, volunteers are almost always available to assist with unloading. We are always thanked most warmly for our contributions, which typically number 20-30 bags of groceries and toiletries per month. These are sorted at the Centre to create 3-day emergency parcels for those in need.

I'd like to thank all the volunteers who take care of these deliveries, with a different person helping each month. New volunteers are always welcome (contact me to discuss further). Just a reminder of the goods we collect.:

- Tins (meat, vegetables, rice pudding, fruit, beans, spaghetti)
- Dry goods such as rice and pasta
- Pasta sauce jars
- Biscuits and breakfast cereals
- Toiletries — shampoo, shower gel, toothbrushes, deodorants (men's & women's) are also much appreciated, as are period supplies such as tampons and pads

(All food should be within its use-by or best-before date and preferably still have a long shelf-life.)

Lastly, can I point out that variety is not essential as the exact food pack contents are organized by the Centre. So, it's fine to just donate multiple tins of beans or some other item as suits you best. Thanks again for supporting this very worthy local project which really makes a difference to people in our city.

Luncheon Club – Anne Madge

We have had a successful year with a lovely team of volunteers to enable the club to continue to run smoothly.

Unfortunately, Derby City Council withdrew the community bus this year with very little notice and although we used Erewash Community Transport for a short time and they were very good, it proved too expensive, so in spite of a lot of research, we are no longer able to offer transport to the members who need it. It is a shame because these are often the people who are more isolated.

Guests now come by taxi, if they share a lift, it remains affordable and we have managed to keep our numbers and maintain our bargain price of £5 for a 3-course meal. We also offer 2 free meals a year, one near our birthday and one at Christmas, and have managed to keep a healthy bank balance.

We were honoured to host a visit from the Bishop last summer and thank Rachael for inviting her and coming too.

Environmental Health have visited us recently and awarded us the top rating of 5 stars.

Thank you for all the support, from the volunteers who help on the day and the ladies on the pudding rota. You all provide valuable contributions, and I know our guests really appreciate all your time and effort.

We do have some capacity at present, if you know anyone who would like to join us as a guest, they would be very welcome. I can be contacted on 07971 680377.

Allestree Churches Together (ACT) – Rev'd Rachael Brooks

ACT as a formally continued body has been dissolved. However, Holiday At Home happened successfully in summer 2025.

Handbell Group – Gill Flatman

A happy year, practising weekly in the choir vestry! After our extended Christmas break, we resumed weekly practices at the beginning of February. During our Easter break the bells were taken to the Bell Foundry in Loughborough and were given a clean bill of health - no expenses incurred this year! Our Spring lunch at the Red Cow and regular Saturday coffee mornings at Hudson's are now permanent fixtures.

Prior to Christmas we were pleased once again to support Blood Bikes at Park Farm. As Park Farm Management are now charging, we are unlikely to be playing at Park Farm again. The year ended when we played before the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols. We have enjoyed ringing under Bryan Clarke's leadership and some of us extend our time together afterwards, in The Red Cow.

Groundforce – Steve & Jane Burton

The St Edmund's Groundforce team has continued to meet on Saturday mornings once a month to maintain both the churchyard and church hall grounds. It consists of a loyal team of about 10 members from both within St Edmund's congregation and the wider community.

Dead flowers have been regularly cleared from graves and lots of dead leaves cleared to keep graves exposed. The flower border adjacent to the church entrance has been tended, and the curtilage of the church building has been kept clear of vegetation. Debris from trees resulting from storm damage has been cleared and either been disposed of or added to the habitat piles at the bottom of the churchyard. Leylandii branches overhanging graves at the eastern boundary have been cut back.

Some of the areas most badly damaged by badgers have been re-sown with grass seed. Trail camera evidence (provided by The Mid Derbyshire Badger Group) established that badgers had been entering the churchyard via the gateway to Church Walk. This gate has now been repaired so it can be closed at night to discourage them. There have been no recent signs of activity, but it might be a different story once the new cubs have been born.

In the church hall grounds, we have continued to tidy the borders and to coppice the hazel between the car park and the road. Some of this coppiced hazel has been used to create a dead hedge to reinforce the boundary with Church Walk at the northeast end of the churchyard where the iron railings are broken or missing.

Our aim is to strike a satisfactory balance between facilitating access to and caring for the gravestones and providing valuable habitat for wildlife. In June when we walked round the churchyard with a couple of officers from Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, they seemed to be very happy with what we were doing to encourage wildlife but also gave us a few suggestions for a few further things we could do and also gave some advice on suitable wildflowers to sow or plant.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the Groundforce team for their willingness to turn out in all sorts of weather and the valuable contribution they make to keeping the church grounds in good order.

Safeguarding - Louise Whittaker & Madeleine Fullerton (PSO's for St Edmund's Church, Allestree)

As the Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSO's) for Saint Edmund's Church, Madeleine Fullerton and Louise Whittaker are continuing to comply with our duties in relation to safeguarding as set down by the Church of England. We remain dedicated to maintaining 'Best Practice' in parish safeguarding. Although there is often something that will crop up for us to sort and keep on top of and in spite of a significant amount of change in the Church's approach to safeguarding, we are confident that everything is up to date or in the process of becoming so.

This year our DBS Service provider was changed, and we have successfully started working with them in order to provide several volunteers with DBS Certificates required for their new roles as either leaders or children's workers for our recently reinstated All Age Services and our Messy Church gatherings.

All of St. Edmund's lead role holders have up to date DBS certification in place and the online Updating Service that everyone has now subscribed to has continued to ensure that many of our DBS certificates have been renewed once again with relative ease.

We continue to ensure that the relevant groups who provide services to the parish receive up to date safeguarding training and all training for role holders within Saint Edmund's Church is currently up to date.

We continue to fulfil all of the requirements of the 'Parish Safeguarding Dashboard' (the online tool to manage safeguarding requirements). The Church of England is strengthening its safeguarding practices and policies, and the Dashboard is gradually being updated so that we can be fully compliant with National Standards of Safeguarding. Our safeguarding training results and DBS Certification information are now all found on and are part of the secure online Parish Safeguarding Hub.

As PSO's we very much appreciate that despite the concerns of many within our congregation regarding safeguarding in the wider church, the majority of our volunteers understand that we must continue nevertheless to show ourselves to be open to all scrutiny and checks. The safety, trust and support of all of our church members and of the wider community wishing to belong to official groups within our churches is of paramount importance to us.

As a result of what has been recently brought to light within the Church of England, further changes and extra support in parish safeguarding through cross-learning and sharing best practice is expected to continue to be gradually introduced and we are now working more closely with our sister churches.

The Diocese of Derby has been involved in additional training opportunities within the Church of England and this year we have had access to training modules which were offered as support for PSOs in their parish roles. Madeleine and Louise have each taken advantage of one of these models to help us in our safeguarding awareness concerning potential change and future help to improve Safeguarding competency within St. Edmund's church.

Since the last Annual Safeguarding report, one potential safeguarding issue arose within our parish which was swiftly brought to a satisfactory conclusion with the help of the Derby diocese.

On 22nd August our former DBS Service provider, APCS, reported that a significant data breach had taken place which also affected many churches across the country. At St. Edmund's church, two individuals had their data compromised. They were notified straight away and helped to take the actions required to minimise the impact. As a result, our Churchwarden Paul agreed to write an article for the Parish Magazine about guarding against fraud and breaches of data which are becoming ever greater causes for concern for each one of us, not only in our church but also in our home lives.

We remain standing by to support any members of our parish and would just like to reiterate that if anybody has any safeguarding concerns at all, then please do not hesitate to contact us. Our details are on the back page of the Parish Magazine and on the posters on the church noticeboards and if you would like to find out more about safeguarding in the Diocese then you can go online to safeguarding@derby.anglican.org.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with Rachael and Sarah on our Safeguarding responsibilities in the months ahead and we will continue to report back to the PCC at each meeting.

We have many reasons to be thankful and feel inspired. Highlights of our year, and points worth reflection include:

- Paul Smith's decision to train as a Licensed Lay Minister. Initial steps of his training began in the Autumn
- Superb music and floral decorations throughout the year, enhancing all our services and celebrations.
- All Age Worship and Messy Church becoming regular features, encouraging families with young children to explore our church life.
- An increase in the number of retired clergy attached to St Edmund's - both new and returning faces.
- Baptism services - a chance to celebrate with families.
- Special services - all remarkable in their different ways - including Good Friday and Easter, through to All Souls', Remembrance Day, Advent and Christingle. The Christmas Celebrations ranged from the 'purrfect' (!) Carols in the Churchyard - washed down with delicious mulled wine - to the moving Midnight Communion. We rounded off the year with a joint service, welcoming our friends from our other three churches.
- Special events and concerts in both the Hall and the Church, many supporting various charities, some supporting church funds, and all on offer to our local community at no or low cost.
- Bishop's Badge awards to Anne Cogley, Chris Willis, Jane Burton and Steve Burton to mark and give thanks for their long and special service to St Edmund's.
- A 'Thank You' party in August in the vicarage garden for volunteers of St Edmund's and St Matthew's.
- Our thriving groups - not only for young children, but also Bookworms and Handbells.
- The success of Homegroups in conjunction with St Matthew's
- An increasing feeling of closeness, cooperation and mutual care across our four churches as we meet more often together, sharing ideas and problems.
- Our flourishing 'Parish Mag' under the leadership of Fiona Fraser assisted by Chris Willis, Claire Pegg and the distribution team.
- The valuable work of our Administrator Caroline Audley and our Caretaker Tony Delaney.

Fabric:

Huge thanks go to all those who have given so much time and expertise to work towards these projects.

Completed

- Primrose's shed moved to a much more user-friendly position close to the hall; and a very successful book sale followed!
- Hall boiler replaced
- Hall redecorated
- New notice board under the tower for children's All Age Worship work

Almost there

- Wi-Fi in church
- New outside noticeboards

Ongoing

- Church heating and lighting. The heating group meets regularly - looking into replacing the system, and meanwhile evaluating and measuring the old one.
- Groundforce - this wonderful group continues to maintain churchyard and gardens with great effect. The success of this group leads us to look to setting up a parallel Building force early in 2026 to spread the workload of buildings maintenance beyond the usual handful of volunteers.
- All the scheduled safety and insurance-related checks (e.g. PAT testing, gas safety checks, fire equipment servicing etc.) were carried out on time. Regular inspections were carried out to ensure that all gutters, downpipes and gullies were clear so as to prevent water ingress into the building. Endless numbers of running repairs were also covered by volunteers.
- Recommendations from the 2024 Quinquennial Report are being addressed. One of these - a long outstanding matter - is the provision of an accessible toilet and baby change facility for the church building. At the end of 2025 we began to look seriously into this, by means of re-arranging the vestry. Accordingly, a vestry group was set up in December.

Parish Priest's Report – Rev'd Rachael Brooks

2025 saw me finally complete my 'firsts'. The final one was taking our Christmas Day service, a good one to finish on. It's one of my favourite services as we welcome Jesus and remind ourselves what Christmas is actually all about.

A first that will hopefully become a regular fixture was an open garden at the vicarage in August, when I was able to welcome and thank everyone who makes all the services and activities at St Matthew's and St Edmund's happen. There are so many who contribute to the life and maintenance of the church and parish, mostly in the background. It was wonderful to be able to honour their outworking of their discipleship.

We welcomed Colette Desborough in 2025, initially as she discerned whether ordination was for her and then as an ordinand as she began her training in September. She spends a day in Sheffield in college classes, two days at home studying, and three days with us applying what she's learning and growing her leadership skills. Colette is based with Sarah at St Nick's in the week and with me for our Sunday services, so she gets a broad experience.

We said hello and goodbye to Rev'd Cathie Watson who was based primarily with Sarah to complete her final months of curacy. We also welcomed two retired clergy who have been granted Permission to Officiate: Rev'd Adrian Thorp in April, who is taking our fourth Sunday Holy Communion services, and Rev'd Phyllis Bainbridge in July, who is taking services across our group of four churches. Another retired priest, Rev'd David Anderson, and I developed a working agreement but his Permission to Officiate hadn't come through by the end of the year.

It was sad to say goodbye to two women who have contributed enormously to the life of the church: Joane Fraser and Marion Carnell; may they and the other precious loved ones who died in 2025 rest in peace and rise in glory.

We launched a new website in September 2025, changing the name so it is easier to find if people put our church's name into a search engine and making it as easy and appealing to navigate as possible. My thanks to Andrew Brooks for making this happen in consultation with Caroline.

December saw the beginning of a trial to see if shifting the Wednesday 10am Holy communion service to 10.30am would make it more accessible to some of our older congregants. This will be reviewed in March 2026.

2025 was a year of beginning to put our PCC priorities, developed in 2024, into action.

1. Less formality in worship to make church more accessible to new members.

Our cross-benefice team put on three Messy Church services:

- Messy Mother's Day in St Edmund's Church Hall
- Messy goes Wild in the summer holiday in Darley Park
- Messy Advent, again in St Edmund's Church Hall

The first and last were very well attended by a mix of baptism, wedding, school and congregation families. We had a smaller number in the park but have learned lessons and have a clearer idea of how we can change things for 2026.

In May we began our regular pattern of All Age Services which broadens the mix of service styles we offer across our benefice. The cross-benefice team meet to plan together; we then deliver the service twice, on the 4th Sunday of the month at St Matthew's and then the 1st Sunday of the month at St Edmund's.

Our overall theme is to tell God's story of salvation; the story the Bible tells us from its beginnings in the Garden of Eden right through to the garden in the book of Revelation. We're doing this through looking at the different people in those stories. We started with Adam and Eve in June and got to Esau and Jacob in November before taking a break to be seasonal and tell the story of Mary and Elizabeth and their miraculous pregnancies. Each story has thrown up quite challenging themes because their lives were messy, just as our lives can be today.

Our aim is to be truly All Age, so that there is something for everyone in each service. So, we have action songs AND hymns. We have games or challenges AND intercessions. We have dramatized Bible stories AND a short homily. We don't expect that everyone will like everything, but I have been so blessed to see that so many regular congregants have supported these services so that those young families who have come have had a church family welcome. And that so many of you have found you've enjoyed aspects of these services too. It's also been a joy to discover hidden talents as several people have joined in with dramatized readings and preparation of materials.

Overall, we have approximately 20 children across both churches who have come along during the year. There are a couple of families at both churches who only go to that church, and the rest of the families go to either depending on which Sunday they can attend. Some come to most of the services, others come more sporadically. But they're coming!

Flourish, the Church of England pilot programme to test the hypothesis that if we give our children more responsibility for planning and delivering faith activity, they're more likely to stick with their faith in Jesus into adulthood, began with Walter Evans School in January. We had two large well-attended events whose format was akin to Messy Church, but the following events were cancelled for various reasons out of our control. This meant that we had to resign from the pilot, but it has been a valuable learning opportunity, and the enthusiasm of the children was wonderful to see. I hope to build on what we've learned in 2026.

2. Pastoral outreach to Allestree families, starting with contacts from occasional offices.

There were fewer baptisms in 2025 than 2024, but contacts were made. They and existing contacts were strengthened through our baby and toddler group. We were also able to invite those families to our Nature Tots session in Allestree Park which began in September. This new venture is a joint one with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, who paid for Caroline's and my training, gave us a grant to share with our preschool to pay for equipment for our sessions and are paying for us and for Andrew Brooks and Michèle Aspinall to do the Outdoor First Aid course. It's wonderful to see young children engaging with the natural world, we want to see their spirituality grow as they experience the awe and wonder of the world God created for us.

There have been a number of funerals through the year. The joint parishes All Souls' service and refreshments afterwards were well attended again.

We also saw a few weddings and a wedding blessing, all people with some family link to the church. Connections go deep here.

3. Growing our own faith and discipleship through study and prayer.

Lent saw a further three home groups set up, in addition to the one that had started in 2024, though one of them only met a few times. The three remaining used the Church of England 'Living Hope' Lent materials. At the end of Lent one group stopped, due to various regular commitments while the other two continued: one weekly, the other monthly. Both are fulfilling their purpose which is a joy to see. Please get in touch if you'd like to grow in your faith alongside others.

I have also been encouraging daily prayer through books or apps. The Church of England app, Everyday Faith, is short and thought-provoking, but there are others to try such as Pray as you go, Lectio 365 and Common Worship Daily Prayer. Try one for a week, if it doesn't quite fit then try another. Regular Bible reading and prayer are key to building our relationship with God.

The four parishes

Our most exciting venture as a group has been the launch of our Prayer Initiative, which was set up for us by Godfrey and Margaret Smallman who felt God was inviting them to support prayer for every area of our city a few years ago. Having worked with one group of four parishes nearby they invited us to take part in what is a two-year project. Sarah and I have been very heartened by the way our churches have grasped this opportunity to work together and bless our parishes by systematically praying for every household on every road in turn. Make sure you keep up to date by getting the new prayer calendars as they come out.

We have continued our pattern as a group of four churches for worship together on 5th Sundays and special seasonal services, apart from Mothering Sunday. So many of you have taken the opportunity of worshipping together in a different building, thank you.

In November the four PCCs met together to explore ideas for working more closely together whether in mission or governance. There was a strong desire to work together, sharing the load rather than reinventing the wheel and a real heart for mutual encouragement and support.

We again produced joint publicity for our summer offerings for families and our Advent and Christmas services. It was good to see people from different parishes making the most of these opportunities whether at the St Nick's family fun day or one or other of the various crib services.

Uniformed groups

Our Rainbows and Brownies joined us for Carols in the Churchyard and prepared our Christingle kits and led prayers in the service. It was wonderful to see such enthusiasm. Several families came to our crib services, one of whom decided they were going to come to our All-Age services too. It was so good to have the next thing to invite them to. We hope to resume links with our Beavers groups in 2026.

Local schools

Portway Infants came for a session learning about what happens in church in July. We looked at the different things around the church and what they were for and what they told us about what Christians believe. It was a delight to welcome some of these children to our Christmas services too.

Thank you

It has been a joy to serve with my wonderful wardens from both churches in our benefice. In 2025 we began meeting together regularly and this has been so encouraging, to all of us as we've benefitted from one another's wisdom as we lead our churches.

Paul is not standing for election this coming year, he has served his time and needs to focus on his Licensed Lay Minister (Reader) training. I am so pleased for him, and for us, that God has placed this calling on him - but it's a wrench because he has been such a support as I took up the mantle as your parish priest. I am heartened and grateful, however, that Ann has agreed to serve another year as warden. Please continue to pray for them as they continue to serve us.

So many of you contribute towards making 'church' in all its facets happen, in different ways that may only be noticed if you don't do them. Thank you for your faithful quiet service. As last year, there are several

groups/ people I must thank in particular for sharing with me my primary task of leading worship and cure of souls:

- My fellow service leaders, including the All-Age team, the choir and our organist for their roles in leading worship with me.
- the pastoral care team who share my pastoral responsibilities and do so much behind the scenes to support vulnerable members of our congregation.
- The various members of PCC, who take the lead on finance, the building, safeguarding, Deanery Synod and other organisational stuff, using the gifts God has given you to serve us here.
- Without Caroline putting her skills at our disposal, the admin work behind the scenes through 2025 would have defeated me. She is a joy to work with.

And finally, in true BAFTAs style, I am so thankful for Andrew, who is my constant support.