

SANDY PARISH CHURCH

ST SWITHUN'S, SANDY, BEDFORDSHIRE

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

Sunday 18th May 2025, 11:30am

Venue: St Swithun's Church

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

Year End 2024



ST SWITHUN'S PARISH CHURCH, SANDY, BEDFORDSHIRE

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Sunday 18th May 2025, 11:30am

Venue: St Swithun's Church

AGENDAS

The Annual Vestry Meeting to elect three Churchwardens

1. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on Sunday 21st January 2024
2. To thank the Churchwardens – Sandra Watson, Colin Osborne & Jennifer Watson
3. To elect the Churchwardens for the coming year:
Nominations received: Colin Osborne, Jennifer Watson & Anthony Lock
4. To transact such business as is incidental to the meeting.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Apologies for absence.
2. To approve the Minutes of the APCM held on Sunday 19th May 2024 and the Special Parochial Church meeting on Tuesday 2nd July 2024.
3. To receive The Annual Report from the Trustees End of Year 2024.
4. To elect members to the Parochial Church Council for 2025.
5. To appoint an Independent Examiner for 2025.
6. Any Other Business (Please notify the Chairman in advance).
7. Close in Prayer.

Minutes of the Vestry Meeting,
Sunday 21st January 2024 10:40am. St Swithun's Church.
Parish of Sandy, Bedfordshire.

47 Electors were present. There were apologies from Elizabeth Gammell, Julia Bickerdike, and Doreen Lawrence.

The meeting began with an Opening Prayer from Rev'd Philip Macaulay. There was a motion to elect Philip as Chair. This motion was carried.

Philip welcomed everybody and thanked all for their attendance. He expressed his special thanks to the very many people who help out at St Swithun's. We are blessed with so many, from informal Volunteers to our Wardens, who carry out duties aiding the smooth running of the Church Building, the Church Rooms and our Services. Whilst much of this help is "behind the scenes" all of it is recognised, valued and essential to our Church.

The Minutes of the Vestry Meeting held on 16th April 2023 (and which had been approved by the PCC on 2nd May 2023) were received by the meeting. A copy of these Minutes is available to anybody who would like to see them.

There were 3 nominations for Church Wardens:

- i. Colin Osborne (Proposed by Elizabeth Adams and Seconded by Barry Groom).
- ii. Sandra Watson (Proposed by Tony Lock and Seconded by Howard Skinner).
- iii. Jennifer Watson (Proposed by Ruth Lock and Seconded by Ron Pillay).

Philip asked if anybody else wished to stand as a Church Warden. Nobody did, so Colin Osborne, Sandra Watson and Jennifer Watson were (re)-elected as our Wardens for the year ahead.

There being no other business, the Vestry Meeting Closed.

St Swithun's Church, Sandy
Minutes of Annual Parochial Church Meeting
Sunday, 19th May 2024 at 4.00pm

The meeting was chaired by Colin Osborne

1. Attendance and Apologies:

Present: Rev'd Philip Macaulay, Colin Osborne (Chair), Elizabeth Gammell, Bob Browning, Valerie Hagarth, David Stewart, Sue & Anthony Bell, Kevin Reynolds, Nick Wilson, Peter Bennett, Julia Bickerdike, David Albone, Doreen Lawrence, Ruth & Anthony Lock, Sandy Stophar, Elizabeth Adams, Sandra Watson, Jennifer Watson, Lynsey & Libby Sheppard, Janet Warr, Philippe Patterson, Jean Peckham, Karen Varley, Stephen Snow, Terry & Marina Rugg, Carole Martin, Jonathan & Abbie Davies.
Absent: Rod Patterson & Luke Howard

Philip Macaulay opened the meeting with a prayer.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th April 2023.

A member of the congregation asked for a couple of amendments to their comments in the open forum last year. These were agreed to be altered and the minutes were approved.

3. The Annual Report from the Trustees and of Year 2023.

Philip Macaulay – Thanked everyone who gives in time and financially. Looking back, we had some fantastic highlights.
Colin Osborne – Thanked Phil for all his hard work during this last year, has made the vacancy easier for everyone with the help of Les, Andrew, Elizabeth & Jane.
Ruth Lock – Thanked everyone for their continued support with reference to financial matters. Explained that there had been lots of issues to resolve. Archdeacon Dase suggested we ask for external help. Gift aid is still to be sorted but we have paid off last year's parish share and have started to make payments on this years. Thanks were also given to the fundraising ladies.
We will hold a special meeting to approve the accounts when this has been audited. Proposed Jennifer Watson, Julia Bickerdike seconded.
All agreed to approve the report.

4. Election of Members of the Parochial Church Council for 2024.

Sandra Watson, Colin Osborne & Jennifer Watson as church wardens
Julia Bickerdike, Anthony & Ruth Lock as Deanery Representatives

The following members were appointed:

Elizabeth Gammell
Carole Martin
Sandy Stophar
Stephen Snow
Lynsey Sheppard

Karen Varley
Abbie Davies
Jonathan Davies
Kevin Reynolds
Terry Rugg

Trustees' Annual Report for the Year End 31st December 2024

REFERENCE & ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION www.sandyparishchurch.org

Rector: Rev'd Jodie Brown
Full Name of Charity: Sandy Parochial Church Council
Registered Charity No: 1130580
Church Address: High Street, Sandy, SG19 1AQ
Correspondence Address: 38 High Street, Sandy, SG19 1AQ
email: office@sandyparishchurch.org

Bank Address: Barclays Bank High Street, Biggleswade, SG18 0JF
Account Name: Sandy Parochial Church Council
Acct No: 5081775 Sort code: 20-74-81
Independent Financial Examiner: Howard Skinner, 8 Powers Close, Sandy, SG19 1JS
End of Year 2024 Accounts Examined and Approved by the PCC: Tuesday 6th May 2025

MEMBERSHIP OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL DURING 2024

Lay Chair: Colin Osborne (to July)
Chair: Rev'd Jodie Brown (From July)
Churchwardens: Sandra Watson, Colin Osborne, Jennifer Watson
Honorary PCC Secretary: Karen Varley
Honorary PCC Treasurer: Ruth Lock
Deanery Representatives: Julia Bickerdike, Anthony Lock, Ruth Lock
Curate: Rev'd Philip Macaulay (to September)
Diocesan Reader: Jane Godley
Lay Leader of Worship: Elizabeth Gammell

PCC Members from APCM 2024

Elizabeth Gammell, Sandy Stophar, Stephen Snow, Lynsey Sheppard, Abigail Davies, Jonathan Davies, Carole Martin, Terry Rugg, Kevin Reynolds

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measures. In respect of Safeguarding, the PCC adopt the Diocese of St Albans Safeguarding Policy, and the Safeguarding Representative is Sandy Stophar.

The PCC operated with two sub-committees in 2024: Standing Committee & Finance Committee.

Safeguarding: Sandy Stophar

The PCC have fulfilled their responsibilities regarding Safeguarding and undertaken the required training. The Rector and Wardens have satisfied the Diocesan Safeguarding Team regarding the fulfilment of their responsibilities and duties.

Statistics: In 2024 Baptisms 10 Weddings 5 Funerals 16
Electoral Roll May 2025: 98 new members

The Chairman then thanked Jean Peckham, Elizabeth Adams & Matt Buckley for all their help on the PCC as they were standing down.

5. Appointment of Independent Examiner for 2024

Howard Skinner was approved by all

6. Any Other Business

- PCC minutes
- A member of the congregation – Would like the PCC minutes to be more visible to all members of the electoral roll.
It was explained that the minutes are shown on the notice board for all to see excluding the sensitive information.
- Church Cleaning Rate
- A member of the congregation – At the present time it is a 10 week rota with only 4 members. Please think about volunteering if you have a couple of hours spare.
Volunteers for various jobs around church are needed.
- Presentation of Gifts
- Chairman – Thanked Jean Peckham for all the work she has done in the Church and was presented with a Thank you gift. Jean has been on the PCC for 30 years and has helped with various gifts around the church.
Stephen Snow was presented with a Thank you gift for being the PCC Secretary and great support to Colin. Stephen is standing on the PCC and taking on the role of Electoral Roll Officer and becoming a member of the Churches Together.

7. Close in prayer

Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting and the Reverend closed the meeting with a prayer.

Rector's Report

I became Rector for St. Swithun's in July 2024, and it has been a real joy to serve God alongside you all in Sandy since then! James, Beatrice, and I have felt so welcomed, and we are incredibly grateful for the support and encouragement that we've received as we settle into our new life here.

I have really enjoyed getting to know the congregation at St. Swithun's and the wider community in Sandy. From the outset, I've been struck by how blessed we are to have such a warm and committed group of people who are eager to get involved and share their many gifts. The sense of community here is truly something special, and I'm excited by the potential we have as a church to make a real difference locally and beyond.

In the last few months, I have enjoyed visiting the local schools and getting involved in civic services such as Remembrance Sunday, Community choir concerts, the Summer Fete, September Open Day, Christmas Bazaar and Christmas Tree Festival all provided great opportunities to welcome the wider community into our wonderful church. And of course, our Christmas celebrations – when the church was alive with carols, worship, and fellowship – were very special. By December, I truly felt myself falling in love with Sandy, and I am thankful for the opportunity to serve such a vibrant community.

In addition to these moments of celebration, the PCC and I took time this year to reflect on the future of St. Swithun's by reviewing and updating our Mission Action Plan. This has resulted in us identifying three key priorities:

1. That St. Swithun's would be a church that looks out to and serves its local and global community.
2. That we will ensure good stewardship in relation to church finances, our building and land, and our wider environmental footprint.
3. That children and young people will stay within the church and grow into leaders of their generation.

These priorities reflect our commitment to not only grow in our faith but also to serve the world around us, to care for the resources God has entrusted to us, and to nurture the next generation of leaders.

As you will see from the accounts, the financial position of St. Swithun's is challenging and in 2024 we did not pay our Parish Share contribution in full. This is an ongoing challenge for us as a church, but I am confident that with God's help, we will rise to meet it. We are blessed with so many generous hearts and hands, and together, I believe we can navigate this difficulty and ensure the continued life and ministry of our church.

I want to express a huge thank you to everyone who gives their time, energy, and resources to make the life of this church possible. From the Church Wardens, Treasurer, and Safeguarding Officer to the PCC secretary and all of the PCC members, and to those who contribute to fundraising events, sign up to roles, volunteer, and help in so many ways – we truly could not do it without you.

Looking ahead to 2025, I am excited to see where God will lead us and how God will continue to work through our church community. Let's continue to trust in God's guidance and remain faithful to the calling God has placed on us as individuals and as a church.

Thank you for all your support, prayers, and encouragement this past year. Here's to the year ahead!

Rev Jodie Brown

Treasurer's Report

This past year of 2024 has continued to be a difficult one, with the Churches Commission awaiting our 2024 accounts one year to their final date. Because of this the two accounts on GR did not get started, but with the help of the Treasury Treasurer, they will be allowed. During this time, there were also issues with Bankers, including the danger of our bank insolvency.

Although we made payments to our bank on these accounts for which we are grateful. Also, thanks to everyone who supports St. Swithun's, the fundraising team and its committee for their work on the accounts book.

Ruth Lock | Treasurer

Warden's Report

The interregnum ended with the appointment of our new Rector, the Rev. Jodie Brown, from July 2024. She has settled into her new post and her leadership is much appreciated by the Churchwardens and the Church in general.

The Wardens wish to thank everyone who helped to "hold the fort" during the latter stages of the interregnum, and then for their continued support for the Church in the many areas where volunteers are needed. This is not to say that we do not need anyone else to volunteer. We do indeed need help. The parous state of the Church's finances mean that the Church cannot afford to pay for cleaners or gardeners or even assistance in other areas. Many of the stalwarts who are currently volunteering, are growing older.

The leaving service for the Rev. Phil Macaulay, who was Curate here for three years, was held on 8th September 2024. He has been appointed to The Coker Ridge benefice in Somerset.

Church Building Exterior

The drains have given no further cause for concern in the year 2024 and so the investigations have been discontinued for the time being although a close eye is being kept on them, particularly on the north side of the Church. It is true that the paths flood in heavy rain and cause puddles, but the soakaways deal with them fairly efficiently.

As to the Quinquennial Inspection report by Architect David Ulewellyn received in December 2023, most of the minor issues raised were dealt with, or are being dealt with. A working group has been set up to deal with gardening issues that are not the responsibility of the Council and the moss on the Church and on the table-top graves. The doors have been oiled; our thanks are due to Mrs. Jean Peckham for her efforts on all this and other matters.

There still remains the question of the two smaller roofs which were listed as likely to need replacement within five years and the larger roof over the nave which is likely to need replacement within ten years. Time has passed since Mr. Ulewellyn's report was written and so those deadlines grow closer. The suggestion was that this work could be done in conjunction with the repointing of the remaining walls which still needs to be done. However, we currently have limited funds.

A Quinquennial Inspection of the Rectory was undertaken during the interregnum and various work was undertaken.

Church Building Interior

The interior of the Church is in fair condition. The Quinquennial report suggests that it would benefit from redecoration and some plaster repairs, although this would have to be considered alongside other priorities.

The sponsorship exercise suggested by the Bell Tower Captain raised sufficient monies to renew the lights in the Bell Chamber, to replace the curtain rail and to have the curtains cleaned. This work has been undertaken, and that achievement must be acknowledged with thanks to the Tower Captain, Mr. Stephen Akhurst.

The boiler caused some concerns during the autumn which have continued into 2023 and replacement parts cost over £2,000. This an another item that will need replacing in the near future.

Churchyard

The general state of the Churchyard is good. We would like to thank the Town Council for keeping the grass and paths in good order. The gravel paths do continue to need attention from time to time since they can become muddy in wet weather.

The north wall of the Churchyard required repairs in places. The Council agreed to undertake this work and following approval by the DAC work started in late March 2025.

The Graves grave and wall material have been cleaned in accordance with the Graves Trust conditions.

Rectory Rooms/Church Rooms

Generally, the Rooms are in good order, although some repair work was required to be undertaken in early 2023.

Safety Inspections

The fire extinguishers were inspected and re-certified by Chubb on 4th October 2024.

The lightning conductor test took place on 8th February 2025.

A Fire Drill of all three services was undertaken on 28th April 2024.

Deanery Inspection

The Archdeacon's annual inspection was undertaken by the Rural Dean, the Rev. Graham Buckle, who visited on 30th August 2024. Amongst other issues, he raised the question of the elsewhere inventory. As a result, arrangements were made for all items to be photographed to provide a complete record. This work was kindly undertaken by Trevor Wain.

Conclusion

The Warden is satisfied that the general condition of the Church Building and its environs are sound and in good order.

Sandy Watson, Colin Osborne & Jennifer Watson | Church Wardens

Deanery Synod Report

There were three Deanery Synod meetings during 2024 in March, July and October.

The March Synod was held at Blunham. John Wood attended as a member of Bishop Alan's group exploring science and faith and spoke about the Light and Life project. He spoke of the Spreading the Light course which showed that science and faith are not incompatible. We were informed that appointments had been made for two vacancies in the Deanery and this means there are no vacancies in the Deanery at present. There was an agreement to wind up the Ivel Group and the necessary process had begun. The Deanery website is now fully functional.

The July Synod was held at Sutton and began with a talk from Malcolm Grant of the Beds and Herts Historic Churches fund. Applications to this fund can be made for maintenance and restoration projects for churches in these two counties. They are aiming to build up their finances and to invest the money to create funds from the income for grants. We were informed that the winding up of the Ivel Group was still under legal consideration. The Diocesan Synod election results for the new triennium were given – Jane Gogarty from St Mary's was re-elected.

The October Synod was held at Biggleswade and opened with a talk from Ruth Dengden the Diocesan Growing Vocations and Ministry Officer. She spoke about 'being called', being called to be involved, to be what God means us to be, being called to particular tasks or roles which may be life-long or just for a season. We need to develop a culture of listening to God and encourage involvement rather than just seeing jobs that need to be filled. £2500 was presented to CHUMS, the Deanery Project for 2023/2024. Presentations for the 2023/2026 Deanery Project were made and Triumph Heart U Ldgade was overwhelmingly voted for, where money raised would be used for the provision of wheelchair. The winding up of the Ivel Group is still ongoing.

Jane Gogarty | Deanery Synod Representative

Reader's Report

One of the most enjoyable aspects of my role as a Reader at St Swithun's Church is visiting in the parish. The people I visit are grateful to have been part of our congregation for many years, some having attended St Swithun's as a child, but less of mobility means they can no longer do so. I find these visits rewarding and enlightening. I currently take Communion to about 10 people in their own homes and continue to assist at church services and processions when given the opportunity. I also enjoy being part of Junior Church and Church Together. I lead a Church service once a month at Allison House a local residential home, where we sing with enthusiasm, share memories and pray together. It would be lovely to have some help with the 'singing and hymn finding'! As Chaplain to the St Mary's Catechists, I lead a 'Prayer' hour once a month, which is challenging, but it are an amazing group of young people. I am also Chaplain to the Northern Chapter of the Mothers' Union in the Diocese.

Jane Godfrey | Lay Reader

Churches Together in Sandy & Beeston

CTSB have maintained an active presence in the town supporting local events and unashamedly bringing the love and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ to the attention of people in Sandy.

Since St Swithun's last APCM, CTSB have played a part in:

- Christian Aid Week,
- Laying a wreath at the Bedford Road War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday
- The Christmas Light Switch-On – With the 'In The Picture' stall in the Market Square.
- Carol singing at Tesco – £185.00 raised for CRISD and Embrace the Middle East.
- Placing a Christmas Crin in Britannia Pharmacy's Window.
- World Day of Prayer

At the time of writing we are running up to Easter. The Easter Story trail, hosted in the Sandy Baptist Church, enjoyed input from Volunteers hauling from all CTSB Churches. All Sandy Schoolchildren from years 3 & 4 were invited to visit the trail and experience the Easter Story for themselves.

Leant Lushes have been hosted by all Churches in Sandy and Beeston.

The Walk of Witness will be held on Good Friday beginning, as usual, at Sandy Methodist Church and finishing at St Swithun's with refreshments afterwards in the Church Rooms.

CTSB will have a stall at the Sandy Carnival on Saturday 14th June. Activities TBC.

In September, Jenny Enderstep stepped down from her position as Secretary and I took this role over. At the same meeting Jenny Vass, from Sandy Baptist Church, took over the position of chair. Phil Vass continues as our Treasurer.

Open The Book goes from strength to strength. Their performances are received by schools with great enjoyment and enthusiasm but there is still room for more Volunteer Acts to help out! Do please speak to Jane Godfrey if you can help.

Stephen Sawo

Secretary's Report – Calendar Year 2024

The PCC met 12 times in 2024, conscious of its responsibilities, need for unity and vision.

January: Archdeacon David Middlebrook joined our PCC meeting and he will support the PCC. Agreed to hold the Wotry meeting on Sunday 21st January.

February: 2 candidates for Rectory will be interviewed on 30th February. Quinquennial Report was circulated, and several notes of actions were discussed.

March: Pleased to announce that Rev'd Jodie Brown will be licensed as the new Rector at St Swithun's Church.

April: Work continued in preparation for Rev'd Jodie Brown arrival.

May: St-Swifung Sunday was held on Sunday 5th May. The Annual Parish Church meeting was held on Sunday 18th May.

June: The Pinnacle Magazine was agreed to be relaunched as a bi-monthly A5 magazine. First issue to be published for July. Elizabeth Gammell completed her Lay Leader of Worship Course.

July: Special Pinnacle Church meeting was held on Tuesday 2nd July to approve the annual accounts. The Licensing service for Rev'd Jodie Brown was held on Wednesday 3rd July with Bishop Alan of St Albans leading the service. Summer fete was a huge success, fun afternoon visited by the community of Sandy.

August: Sandy Town Council agreed to replace the North Churchyard Wall. Arch Deacon inspected sought place on 30th August – very successful, just needed 3 jobs to be completed.

September: Rev'd Philip Matuszay last service at St Swithun's was held on Sunday 8th September with a poetic aftermath. The L2m service has been moved to the South Turret which has been well received. Changes to the Christening (Baptism) policy were agreed.

October: 21 members of St Swithun's congregation journeyed to West Coker to attend Rev'd Philip's licensing service. Different styles of order of services were tried and feedback was given. Discussions were started about the Mission Action Plan.

November: Remembrance Day service was held at a hall house in church. A short service was held on Redoubt Road in the Christmas. Christmas Bazaar was very successful inside the church. Discussions were started about the Mission Action Plan.

December: Christmas Tree festival was held for the 32nd year and 30 trees were exhibited around the church. Rev'd Jodie welcomes several schools into the church for their Christmas services to visit the church and also join some at their assemblies.

Parish Safeguarding Officer Report

It has been a busy year for me in the role of the secondary role of safeguarding in church which is the tedious administration part. I am delighted to say it has been a very quiet year in my more important role as dealing with safeguarding incidents.

In the last year as Parish Safeguarding Officer, I have applied for more DBS checks – for new volunteers for working with junior church, for those involved with Open the Book and for others, such as those leading prayer groups. I have also started to use the update service which enables me to check for any changes on a certificate without a lengthy application process. Needless to say, there are no issues with any at St Swithun's.

Several members of the PCC people have had to renew their Church of England safeguarding training, which must be done every 3 years and as it's online, it's easy for everyone to complete. We have also had several people complete the training for the first time including the new children's workers and the bell ringers. I had a lovely session doing some face-to-face training for those hesitant about it. The Church of England has changed the requirements for training courses and I am pleased that our volunteers have accepted this and worked on new courses as required.

We have reviewed and updated all of our policies and made sure that these are available on the safeguarding notice board and via the church website. Jodie and I have also worked on new documents and procedures for complying with safer recruitment requirements when working to get new volunteers for Junior Church.

Safeguarding Sunday took place on 23rd March and attended at three services. Jodie gave an excellent sermon on this topic; Colin said very appropriate prayers and Kate chose a selection of worship songs for the 11 o'clock service that matched the theme. I had some lovely feedback from all three congregations.

I am delighted that in a year that the national theme for the safeguarding work in church is 'let's talk about it' that people still talk to me and others in church about things they see or hear that worry them. I'm pleased that people still have their concerns. I feel we as a church are really good at listening and helping one another whether the issue is safeguarding or otherwise.

Sandy Stogher | Parish Safeguarding Officer

Diocesan Synod Report

There were three meetings of the Diocesan Synod in March, July and October.

At the March Synod we were informed that Bishop Alan would be back in office at the beginning of May after his treatment for cancer. The address was given by Bishop Richard, the Bishop of Bedford who spoke of a visit to a new church in Bedford with a new stained glass window reflecting a diversity of people, including the disabled. He celebrated what the disabled can bring but also the daily frustrations they face. He also spoke of the diversity of God and the diversity of ecclesiological expressions. An update on the Growing Younger and More Diverse project was given. A financial update was delivered by the DiC. The Synod was informed of a governance review which has been started. A report on Living in Love and Faith was presented and all were reassured that there will be no requirement for clergy to opt into the prayers being developed. An update on Safeguarding was given in the light of the story of the Independent Safeguarding Board. Finally, a talk was given by Barneson Bennett on disability of all types and what churches can do to address the concerns. The DAC has a responsibility to help churches address these.

I was not present at the June Synod so can only give an outline report. Bishop Alan was welcomed back and spoke in his address about the forthcoming Year of Spiritual Renewal and Wellbeing. He asked for prayers for the upcoming general election and then spoke at length about the current mental health crisis. The annual report from the various committees were presented and I am pleased that our volunteers have accepted this and worked on new courses as required. A presentation was given on Clergy Wellbeing, stipends, Pensions and Retirement Housing with the opportunity for discussion. An update on the Growing Younger and More Diverse project was given. As a result of the Governance Review a new Nominations Committee has been set up accepted by the Synod. A presentation was given about Churches with the Diocese.

The October Synod was the first of the new triennium so began with eucharist and new members were welcomed. This was followed by elections for the various Chair and Vice chairs. In his address Bishop Alan spoke of the Year of Spiritual Renewal and Wellbeing which will consist of retreats, Quiet days and Pilgrimages. Resources and information are available on the Diocesan website. He also spoke of his opposition to the Assisted Dying Bill. Under safeguarding the Scotland Report was presented and the Diocese is looking at how to respond to it. There is a move to make the Standing Orders gender neutral. The Diocesan Budget and Stipend levels were presented and passed. There is ongoing work to have the prayers of Living in Love and Faith and how to support those who do not and not want to use them. There was a briefing about the Parish Grants and Welfare Grants and where they were targeted. Updates were given on the Growing Younger and More Diverse project and the Fast Church New Action Plan. Finally Bishop gave the Bishop of Bedford present the Year of Spiritual Renewal and Wellbeing and encouraged all to refer to the Diocesan website for further information.

Jane Gogarty | Diocesan Synod Representative

Junior Church

Junior Church continues to offer a welcoming and engaging space for our younger members during the Sunday morning service. It's scheduled weekly, during 9.30am service, except first Sundays of the month and special occasions/holidays.

We currently have three registered leaders (Michele, Corrine and Jane) and five helpers supporting the ministry. In the first quarter of the year, three helpers were on the rota, but due to changing availability, this reduced to two for the remainder of the year.

There were 23 children on the register, although attendance fluctuated. On average, we saw three to four children each week, with some Sundays when no children were present. The highest attendance in 2024 was six children on 4th of early 2025, the register has been updated to reflect changes, including families moving away and some children have now aged out of the group.

Each session typically begins with a short prayer, followed by discussion based on the lectionary readings for that particular Sunday. Activities often include a short video or song, alongside a craft or hands-on activity that connects with the theme of the day.

We are thankful for the dedication of our leaders and helpers and the enthusiasm of the children who attend. If we continue to welcome new helpers to support this valuable ministry, it would be greatly beneficial as we have more volunteers being able to help us fill our Junior Church rota in advance of the services. We also welcome any feedback and suggestion anyone may have to help us better serve the church and our younger community.

Youth Ministry - Pizza and Chat

In February 2025 a monthly group called "Pizza and Chat" for young people aged 11 – 18 started at St Swithun's. This replaced the Bravers and KWB groups which stopped meeting in 2024. Pizza and Chat is an opportunity for young people to enjoy fellowship and explore their faith together.

Pizza and Chat is run in partnership with St Mary's Potton and is supported by volunteers from both churches.

Rev Jodie Brown

The Church Choir

The church choir has a long history – which is captured in a wonderful series of photographs, normally hung in the Vestry, but brought out, and much admired, when the choir held an open weekend celebrating the varied relationships people have had with St Swithun's.

Of course, the choir has changed considerably over the years, but the deep ethos of existing to lead the music to worship remains the focus of those who serve in it and is celebrated in the opening prayer before each practice on Friday evenings.

In the past year the choir has sung at over 9.30am Eucharist service. It has also contributed anthems for Christmas, Easter, Remembrance Day etc., and was particularly happy to support a new work for the Licensing Service for Rev Jodie in July 2024. On several occasions families have requested that the choir sing at the funeral of their departed members, which is a solemn but very meaningful duty.

The choir has a strong membership making a well-balanced sound, with 6 soprano, 4 alto, 5 tenors and 4 basses – quite an achievement for a parish church. This is very much due to the inspirational leadership of Luke Howarth, for whom it is a absolute joy to sing. Many of the choir wait until he has played an organ postlude after the 9.30 am service – and we've noticed that congregation members join in too with well-deserved applause.

Elizabeth Gammell | Choir Mistress

St Swithun's Singers

Now in their 42nd year, the Singers continue to flourish. Apart from a short break during the Pandemic, they have regularly sung their Summer Concert close to St Swithun's Day, and a Christmas Concert just before Christmas. They raise money to support the church, to which they are affiliated and donated £710.00.

Memberships has grown this year, and the choir now has 39 singers. Members come from Biggleswade, Potton, Bedford, Cope, Ickwell as well as Sandy, the practices on Monday evenings are both great fun and hard work as the music for the next concert takes shape.

Singing in a choir is known to be highly beneficial, both mentally and physically, and the happy buzz of the choir leaders after a rehearsal is testimony to the enjoyment of the past two hours.

At the Christmas concert the start had to be slightly delayed while extra seats were put out to accommodate the fantastic audience!

The Singers are now most looking forward to their next concert on 16 July, maintaining their reputation for an evening of high melody, perfect for a summer's evening.

Elizabeth Gammell | Musical Director

The Children's Society

The Church of England Children's Society is one of the UK's most high-profile charities with a reputation for delivering great services and for its campaigning work, giving young people a voice to express their views to the Government and other authorities. If you would like to know more, the website address is www.childrenssociety.org.uk

The Society relies on volunteers to raise funds. Apart from the box collections, Christmas services are usually held annually to raise money for the Society's work. However, no Christmas service was held in 2024, this was deferred to Canfield in February 2025.

This report relates to the year ended 31st December 2024. I am happy to report that sums collected for the Children's Society were £334.43 at the March box opening, and £11.88 at the October box opening, giving a total of £1,728.29 for the year.

I would wish to thank all the Box holders for their continued generous support. As I have said before, every penny counts towards the work of the Society.

Jennifer Watson | Box Co-ordinator

The Pinnacle Magazine

The Pinnacle was re-launched in July 2024 as a bi-monthly magazine. Whilst the "product" of the magazine was unchanged – a mix of reports and notices for the 4 churches of Sandy and Beeston – the re-launch presented an opportunity for fundamental revisions to its presentation, format and content. We changed from black and white to colour and the printed magazine changed to glossy A5 paper. Trials of the "earlier" Pinnacle as a PDF magazine which was emailed to readers had been a success, so this has continued. We are genuinely grateful for the positive feedback we have had from so many of our readers about The Pinnacle's new look.

I am delighted to report that, since re-launch, our readership has not only increased in number but also expanded across denominations with a growing number of printed magazines being purchased from stalls in the Sandy Baptist Church, Beeston Methodist Church and Sandy Methodist Church.

To my mind, one of the strengths of the new magazine is the What's On and Services guide applying to all of Sandy & Beeston's Churches which appears on the Magazine's first 3 pages. Adeline Marina and I wish to express our thanks to our Christian Families in all 4 Churches for the time, effort (and patience!) they display in helping us to write these guides. We also wish to thank you to our Advertisers, the army of volunteers who hand deliver the Printed magazines around town and everybody who has provided us with regular and/or occasional articles and pictures. Last of all, of course, thank you to our Readers. The enthusiasm, support and honest excitement we encountered at the re-launch was terrific and still motivates us now. THANK YOU!

Stephen Sawo

The Leprosy Mission

The Sandy Branch of The Leprosy Mission – with the wonderful support of so many people both from within the church family and from the surrounding community – enjoyed another successful year of fundraising during 2024 with a fantastic total of £23,799 being raised. This came from a variety of sources – collecting boxes, World Leprosy Day gift envelopes, donations, coffee morning, tea party, quizzes, quiz evenings, fundraising stall, outings, dinners, talks, catalogue sales, gifts for life, etc. in addition, a TLM Tree was on display at the Tree Festival.

For the tenth consecutive year monies raised went to a specific project which in 2024 was based in India, where there is still the highest number of people affected by leprosy. We pledged £20,760 for the Mission's Muzaffarpur Hospital in Bihar State in India. This funding was to build and equip two consultation rooms in the new Outpatients Department planned and fund five of the first reconstructive surgery operations together with the patients' aftercare support. The additional amount raised also provided the annual wages for a labourer working on the building, plus further patient aftercare and physiotherapy support.

Chris Stratta, our new TLM link, visited St Swithun's on World Leprosy Day in January and again in November and updated everyone about the project but also spoke about the devastating landlides during September in Nepal which had caused extensive damage to TLM's Anandaban Hospital and resulting in the loss of life of a member of staff. I had had the privilege of visiting Anandaban again earlier in the year. A special appeal raised £3,600 to help in the rebuilding.

This year we have pledged to raise £22,816 to support TLM's work in Odisha State in India. The 'Revive' project will provide a proper home for eight families affected by leprosy including a clean water supply, toilet, vegetable and fruit garden, chickens and goats.

Colin Osborne.

Christian Aid Week

Christian Aid week took place from 12-18th May 2024. St Swithun's collected a total of £469.27 of which £278.37 was raised by the Youth Group who prepared and cooked delicious veggie soup, which was served between the two morning services.

SANDY PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

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NET ASSETS STATEMENT
31 DECEMBER 2024

	Unrestricted £	Designated £	Restricted £	Endowment £	Total £	2023 £
Bank accounts						
Barclays Bank PLC	18,090	891	520		19,501	18,638
St Albans Diocesan Board of Finance		37,922			37,922	36,134
Bank totals	18,090	38,813	520		57,423	54,772
Cash in hand	0				0	302
Investments at current valuation						
St Albans Diocesan Board of Finance		506			506	481
Church Repairs Savings Fund				0	0	2,438
Grove Baptist	15,115		26,908		42,023	42,845
Sole of Girtford Mission Church Fund			48,023		48,023	42,709
Curate's Fund			12,005		12,005	10,545
Steven Taylor Memorial Fund						
Investments totals	15,115	506	84,936	0	100,557	98,589
Debts						
Interest receivable	15,850	470			16,320	6,550
Total Assets	33,905	39,789	87,456	0	171,150	157,330
Creditors						
Parish Share	31,401				31,401	15,977
General creditors	4,495				4,495	423
Chertsey			520		520	587
Total Net Assets	13,169	39,789	86,936	0	139,994	140,251

The above Net Assets Statement and the Receipts and Payments Accounts on pages 2 to 5 were approved by Sandy Parochial Church Council on 6 May 2025 and signed on its behalf by:

Rev Julie Brown, Rector

Mrs Ruth Lock, Treasurer

SANDY PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
SUMMARY RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

	Unrestricted £	Designated £	Restricted £	Endowment £	Total £	2023 £
Receipts						
Planned giving	41,452				41,452	46,447
Collection and other giving	12,483				12,483	16,112
Other voluntary receipts	4,883	960	5,876		11,719	4,110
GRT Aid recovered	5,599				5,599	10,466
Activities for generating funds	13,070				13,070	11,140
Investment income	366				366	379
Receipts from church activities	14,326	13			14,339	9,228
Total receipts	90,179	973	5,876		97,028	97,319
Payments						
Cost of generating funds	4,040				4,040	6,833
Missionary and charitable giving	319		5,076		5,395	642
Parish Share	55,977				55,977	52,884
Clergy and staffing costs	9,843				9,843	8,380
Church and hall running expenses	19,338				19,338	22,155
Total payments	89,517		5,076		94,593	92,004
Net receipts for the year from ordinary activities	662	973	800		2,435	5,335
Exceptional activities						
Sale of investments		1,020		2,450	3,470	3,000
Parish Clerk's Fund withdrawal		(1,020)			(1,020)	(1,134)
Legal expenses	0				0	(14,500)
Major repairs to church building						(1,134)
Total net receipts/(payments) for the year	662	973	800	2,450	4,885	(6,699)
Balances at Barclays Bank at 1 January 2024					14,616	
Net receipts for the year					4,885	
Balances at Barclays Bank at 31 December 2024					19,501	

SANDY PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
DETAILED RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

Page 2

YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

	Unrestricted £	Designated £	Restricted £	Endowment £	Total £	2023 £
Receipts						
Planned giving						
Planned Standing Order giving	23,028				23,028	26,861
Regular membership GRT Aid payments	2,800				2,800	2,200
Parish Giving Scheme	15,544				15,544	14,276
Planned giving totals	41,452				41,452	46,447
Collection and other giving						
Collection and other giving	12,483				12,483	16,112
GRT Aid yellow investments	5,599				5,599	10,466
Curate's gift donations	3,031				3,031	5,023
Gift Aid and other giving	1,652				1,652	1,652
Gift Aid and other giving totals	22,765				22,765	33,253
Other voluntary receipts						
Other voluntary receipts	13,070				13,070	11,140
Investment income	366				366	379
Receipts from church activities	14,326	13			14,339	9,228
Total receipts	90,179	973	5,876		97,028	97,319
Payments						
Cost of generating funds	4,040				4,040	6,833
Missionary and charitable giving	319		5,076		5,395	642
Parish Share	55,977				55,977	52,884
Clergy and staffing costs	9,843				9,843	8,380
Church and hall running expenses	19,338				19,338	22,155
Total payments	89,517		5,076		94,593	92,004
Net receipts for the year from ordinary activities	662	973	800		2,435	5,335
Exceptional activities						
Sale of investments		1,020		2,450	3,470	3,000
Parish Clerk's Fund withdrawal		(1,020)			(1,020)	(1,134)
Legal expenses	0				0	(14,500)
Major repairs to church building						(1,134)
Total net receipts/(payments) for the year	662	973	800	2,450	4,885	(6,699)
Balances at Barclays Bank at 1 January 2024					14,616	
Net receipts for the year					4,885	
Balances at Barclays Bank at 31 December 2024					19,501	

SANDY PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

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DETAILED RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT (Continued)
YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

	Unrestricted £	Designated £	Restricted £	Endowment £	Total £	2023 £
Payments						
Cost of generating funds						
Diocesan fees	3,616				3,616	5,886
Costs of tree festival and other events	134				134	399
Magazine expenses	290				290	548
Cost of generating funds totals	4,040				4,040	6,833
Missionary and charitable giving						
Charities			5,076		5,076	475
Window books	150				150	0
Bible Reading Fellowship	169				169	167
Missionary and charitable giving totals	319		5,076		5,395	642
Parish Share						
Ministry parish share	2023 15,977				15,977	52,994
	2024 40,000				40,000	0
Parish Share totals	55,977				55,977	52,994
Clergy and staffing costs						
Clergy expenses	484				484	1,654
Rector vacancy advertising etc.	933				933	0
Curate's gift	960				960	0
Organist fees	6,845				6,845	6,365
Visiting clergy	621				621	1,361
Clergy and staffing costs totals	9,843				9,843	9,380
Church and hall running expenses						
Subscriptions	1,644				1,644	1,129
Church running - insurance	4,855				4,855	4,639
Maintenance	1,755				1,755	3,067
Bell fund	2,056				2,056	0
Miscellaneous	312				312	290
Energy costs	8,190				8,190	12,149
Hall rent	526				526	892
Church and hall running expenses totals	19,338				19,338	22,155
Total payments	89,517		5,076		94,593	92,004

SANDY PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

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ANALYSIS OF FUNDS
31 DECEMBER 2024

	Designated £	Restricted £
Sandy Parish Clerk's Land Sale Fund	38,392	
Church repairs savings fund	506	
Rector's and Church Wardens' fund	891	
Sale of Girtford Mission Church Fund		26,908
Curate's Fund		48,023
Steven Taylor Memorial Fund		12,005
Total	39,789	86,936

OF SANDY PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Sandy Parochial Church Council ('the Trust') for the year ended 31 December 2024, which are set out on pages 1 to 5 attached.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As members of Sandy Parochial Church Council and the charity's trustees 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 all 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 in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records

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

Signed:

Howard Skinner FCA
8 Powers Close, Sandy, Beds. SG19 1JS

Date: 07 May 2025