

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

WEDNESDAY 30th APRIL 2025, 7.30pm

St Lawrence Church, Barnwood

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024

St Lawrence Church is situated in Church Lane, Barnwood. It is part of the Diocese of Gloucester within the Church of England. The correspondence address is The Parish Office, 32 Church Lane, Barnwood, Gloucester, GL4 3JB.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is registered with the Charity Commission, registration number 1170167.

This report covers the period 1 January to 31 December 2024, which aligns with the church's financial year. However, election of officers and PCC members takes place at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), which normally takes place in April. In 2024 the APCM took place on 24th April.

PCC members who have served from May 2024 until the date this report was approved are:

Incumbent:	Revd Rob Crofton
Associate Priest:	Revd Audrey Hayman
Curate:	Revd Laine Lewis (from 30/6/24)
Readers:	Philip Jaekel, John Webster
Licensed Lay Worker:	Kate Davies
Churchwardens:	Margaret Seyers & Elizabeth Hinton
Deanery Synod Representatives:	Philip Jaekel (2026) & Elizabeth Hinton (2027)
Secretary:	Kate Davies

Elected members (with year of required re-election in brackets):

Belinda Edge	e 2020 r 2023 (2026)
Janet Groves	e 2020 r 2023 (2026)
Doug Pooley	e 2022 (2025)
Frances Mulvey	e 2023 (2026)
Peter Little	e 2024 (2027)
Yousef Shabab	e 2024 (2027)
Paul Black	e 2024 (resigned August 2024)

Non-elected officers, appointed by the PCC on 8-5-24:

Bob Hinton, Treasurer
Bob Moss, Electoral Roll Officer
Malcolm Smith, Gift Aid Officer
Kate Davies, Secretary (*ex officio*)

1. VISION AND GOVERNANCE

Structure

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

Membership and Attendance

2025 is a significant date as far as Church of England electoral rolls are concerned, since a completely new roll is needed this year. This requirement occurs once every 6 years and, since the last list was produced in 2019, the time for a new compilation has now come around.

A total of 22 people who were included on the previous roll do not appear in the new version. These losses are accounted for variously by: death, ill health, leaving the area, no longer attending St Lawrence's or simply not wishing to re-join. On the other hand, 14 people who were not on the previous roll have registered for the new list. This means a net loss of 8, so the final total for the 2025 St Lawrence's Electoral Roll is 86, compared with 94 in 2024.

Anyone who wishes to apply to join the new Electoral Roll is welcome to do so after the APCM on April 30th.

Bob Moss, Electoral Roll Officer

Objectives and Activities for 2025-2026

Our objectives remain the same for the year ahead, to grow in our vision "to know and share the love of Jesus".

To help us achieve this we will continue to:

- Develop our worship services, helping people of all ages and backgrounds to encounter Jesus in worship.
- Reach out with the good news of Jesus, providing ways for people to explore the Christian faith and grow as disciples.
- Show the love of Jesus in action in our community, increasing awareness of the climate and nature crises and helping people to take practical action to care for God's creation.

Employed Staff

This year we welcomed Rev. Laine Lewis to join us as our full-time Curate-in-training, funded by the national Church. Laine has brought a wealth of gifts and experience, and her energetic ministry has been appreciated by people of all ages. Laine has worked closely with Fiona Rawlinson, our Community Family Worker (12 hours per week), and their partnership has included setting up a new weekly Toddler group, Bernie's Chat and Play. Fiona continues to support parents and families, to lead our monthly Community Lunch, and is the Chair of Governors for our C of E Primary School. Angela Sturdy continues her vital role as our Parish Administrator (12 hours per week), Sally Jaekel as our church caretaker and Fred Broady as our groundsman. Robin Jones is our paid Director of Music and his contribution with our choir continues to be much appreciated. I am very grateful to all of our Staff for their hard work and dedication.

Rev. Rob Crofton, Vicar

Parochial Church Council (PCC): A brief survey of the year

The PCC has met 8 times between May 2024 and March 2025, in person and with some members on Zoom. Each meeting included standing items such as team reports (including finance and buildings), safeguarding, reports on Deanery Synod and on Barnwood C of E Primary School. In addition, the PCC discussed matters such as the need for major repairs to the stonework and memorial tablets, the C of E developments around Prayers of Love and Faith, and new plans for apportioning the Parish Share. The

PCC meets the requirements of the new General Data Protection Regulations and continues to be vigilant in assuring proper use of data. Email lists are used to contact various groups within the congregation in accordance with PCC's legitimate purposes and the Parish Office uses a cloud hosted, web-based church management system (ChurchSuite) which helps to streamline communications and to provide a weekly Vicar's Newsletter.

The PCC also owes special thanks to Angela Sturdy, our Parish administrator. Sally Jaekel keeps the Church Centre in excellent condition which is much appreciated by all users. Fred Broady, the church groundsman, keeps the churchyard looking beautiful and tidy. John Holland is currently chairing the Buildings Team and the PCC is grateful for his work particularly around the Stonework and Repair project. Anne Roberts has helped with Grant Applications and is now supporting Bob Hinton as our Deputy Treasurer. There are many other people who get on with things quietly in the background, and the PCC is very grateful to all of them for all that they do to ensure the smooth running of our Parish and the welcome we offer to the community.

Margaret Seyers, Churchwarden, and Kate Davies, PCC Secretary

Safeguarding – Creating a Safe and Caring Community at St. Lawrence Church

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Anyone is welcome to complete the **Basic Awareness** e- learning training. This will help you to understand how safeguarding works at St. Lawrence Church and the part that you can play in keeping others safe. Alternatively, this can be completed as a face-to-face session.

The reason for safeguarding training is to raise awareness of safeguarding issues and to encourage a greater positive awareness and understanding of safeguarding amongst church members.

We aim to increase the number of people feeling confident to talk openly about safeguarding issues. Safeguarding is about creating a healthy culture. It is so much more than a tick box exercise.

Training and practical strategies for supporting others are publicised in the Vicar's Weekly Newsletter.

Look to see what a difference you can make!



National Safeguarding Standards

The five National Safeguarding standards were introduced by the Church of England in 2023.

Year 1 of the introduction of these standards saw us focus on two standards:

Standard 1 – Prevention

Standard 4 - Victims and Survivors

The focus for **Year 2** will be:

Standard 2 – Culture, Leadership and Capacity.

Standard 3 – Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk.

National Safeguarding Standards

Standard 1	PREVENTION Church Bodies have in place a planned range of measures which together are effective in preventing abuse in their context.
Standard 2	CULTURE, LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY Church bodies have the safe and healthy culture, effective leadership, resourcing and scrutiny arrangements necessary to deliver high quality safeguarding practices and outcomes.
Standard 3	RECOGNISING, ASSESSING AND MANAGING RISK Risk assessments, Safeguarding Agreements and associated processes are of a high standard and result in positive outcomes. The assessment and management of risk is underpinned by effective partnership working.
Standard 4	VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS Victims and survivors experience the timeliness and quality of Church bodies' responses to disclosures, and their subsequent support, as positively helping the healing process and meeting their needs.
Standard 5	LEARNING, SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT All those engaged in safeguarding related activity in Church bodies receive the type and level of learning, professional development, support and supervision necessary to respond to safeguarding situations, victims and survivors, and respondents, effectively.

As part of this work, Quality Assurance Frameworks and audits are completed. The purpose of this is to:

- To look at what this is telling us about St. Lawrence Church and our community
- To look at what this means for us in Barnwood
- To clarify the actions that need to take place

Heather Walker – Parish Safeguarding Officer

2. WORSHIP AND PRAYER

Sunday Services

Our Sunday worship continues to be the focal point of our community, enabling us to meet with God in worship, have fellowship with one another, and be strengthened and equipped to live as followers of Jesus in our daily lives. It has been good to welcome a number of new people as regular worshippers, both at our 9.45am Holy Communion Service and 11.15am Morning Worship for All Ages. The second Sunday of the month remains our 9.45am All Together Holy Communion, where we bring together both congregations.

Rev. Rob Crofton, Vicar

Music and Choir

The Choir has truly made a remarkable impact on our services this year! It has been a joy to welcome new members, especially Gareth Palfreyman, who has joined our Tenors. Their enthusiasm and talent have been a wonderful addition to our group.

As always, the dedication and hard work put into our two carol services—the Advent Service of Light and the Christmas Carol Service—were evident, with the latter seeing a fantastic turnout. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to each member of the Choir for their commitment to enriching our worship experience through music. They really are a priceless gem for our Church community here in Barnwood, and I couldn't be prouder of all that they accomplish.

Despite facing several challenges in 2024, a year filled with uncertainty, the Choir has shown incredible resilience. They have continuously gathered for practice and Sunday services, proving their determination and passion. This wouldn't have been possible without the invaluable support of Kate and our talented accompanists, Liz, Alison, and Kathryn, each of whom brings their own unique flair to our music.

As we look ahead to 2025, I am thrilled to enter my twelfth year and continue to expand our repertoire while serving others through the gift of music. The journey ahead promises to be as exciting as ever!

We love to welcome singers into the choir, and if you'd like to give it a go, please contact me. You'll receive a warm welcome and expand your joke library courtesy of Alan!

I am also collating photographs or recordings of the Choir and music in Church over the years to put together a board showing our history. If you have any to contribute, I'd love to see them and take a digital copy to preserve them for the future.

Robin Jones, Director of Music

Bellringing

We have had a good year in the bell ringing chamber, we generally have enough ringers present on a Sunday morning to ring all 8 bells for the morning service and several more on practice nights.

We rang a special quarter peal with the help of some longstanding friends of the tower immediately prior to the Thanksgiving Service for Michael Mulvey, whose presence in the tower has been greatly missed. There was also general ringing before the service to enable other ringers to play tribute to him. We also rang a quarter peal in May to give thanks for the many years Brian McBurnie spent ringing with us.

On March 23rd we rang the bells half muffled in memory of our local Branch Treasurer who sadly passed away a few days before. This was a new experience for some of our ringers and a lovely sound to hear for us all, a ding with a very quiet dong, very atmospheric and solemn.

Two young people from St Lawrence started learning to ring with us in August and have made amazing progress with their bell handling, they spend an hour with us most Monday evenings and continue to improve. Our other learners are also ringing more independently and are becoming valuable integral members of the team.

St Lawrence ringers have taken the lead with keeping the bells at Upton St Leonard's ringing, though the timing of the two churches Sunday services is too close together to enable us to do more than chime the treble at Upton St Leonard's. We also form the core team for many of the ringing events in the Gloucester area which can only help us to continue to improve.

We continue to welcome visitors - ringing and otherwise, to the tower. Our bells are still considered to be some of the best in Gloucester and they are well taken care of by our Steeple Keeper Trevor.

If you would like to try out bell ringing, please get in touch or come and talk to us when we attend events at St Lawrence.

Joanna Morley – Secretary St Lawrence bell ringers

Flower Team

The flower team have enjoyed arranging the flowers in Church for weekly and Festival occasions. Many thanks to all who have given donations towards the cost of flowers, it meant we didn't have to take from church funds. Cate (Warren) and Jess (Palfreyman) are now leading the team, and I am so grateful to them, after over twenty years organising the team. It will be lovely to have some fresh ideas, and I'm sure we can all look forward to seeing the church looking beautifully decorated under their guidance.

June Edwards

Prayer

Prayer – both personal and corporate – undergirds all we are and do in our worship, ministry and mission at St Lawrence. Morning Prayer on Wednesdays is our regular weekly opportunity for reflection on Scripture together and prayer for the world, our local community, the church, and those known to us in particular need. It takes place in the Church at 9.00am, for about 45 minutes. All are welcome – do come and try it out if you haven't been before. The Monthly Prayer Meeting takes place on the Second Monday of the month from 6.45–7.45pm, in the Church Centre. We devote this one hour each month to praying together for the life and ministry of our church, and our reaching out with the good news of Jesus into our community. Again, all are welcome, do come and join in this prayer time as we pray for God's kingdom to come in our Parish.

Rev. Rob Crofton

3. EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

The Start Course

Start is an engaging course helping people to explore God, Jesus and the journey of life in six DVD based interactive small group sessions. This year the group met from Tuesday 7th January to Tuesday 11th February and there were 10 participants. The meetings were led by Rob and Laine, with Liz Dyer and Mike Cummings in supporting roles.

Participants were invited to come along before the meeting for a catch up with others and a cup of tea. This time, along with the small discussion groups during the meeting was a valuable time to get to know and support each other as well as to explore the message of God's love and forgiveness through Jesus, and how this can impact our lives in a very positive way, enriching our lives as we walk with Him.

Each session included short video clips led by Rev. Robin Gamble (Bishop's Advisor for Church Growth in Leeds Diocese) aimed to encourage group members to start thinking about the direction of their lives, to explain what God is like and how He can be known personally.

Following the video clips, participants took part in small groups to explore questions arising from the clip and to take part in interactive exercises. This was a rich time together where people could share life experiences, ask questions and support one another. The sessions end with a short Bible passage and a prayer.

During the six weeks together, many participants expressed a wish to continue to explore the Christian faith and had found the course a valuable and enjoyable time.

Liz Dyer

Lent Studies – The Bible Course

Around 24 people have taken part in our Lent Course this year, the Bible Society's *Bible Course*. This is a comprehensive overview of the whole Bible in 8 sessions. Through engaging video presentations and small group discussions, participants have been enabled to grasp the big storyline of the whole Bible, and to see how well-known characters and events fit into that bigger picture. It has also helped us to understand God's plans and purposes in the Old Testament, and how these are fulfilled and completed in Jesus and the New Testament. Many thanks to Rev. Paul Reynolds for his hard work in producing the handouts for this course, and to Rev. Laine for co-leading this course, and to those who have facilitated the small groups. We look forward to the final two sessions after Easter.

Rev. Rob Crofton

Home Groups

Since the autumn, our homegroup has been meeting fortnightly for Bible study, prayer support and fellowship. We have been studying the Gospel of Luke, and since the beginning of Lent some of us have been joining in with the Lent Course. Following this, we shall be looking at the book of Esther in the Old Testament. There are currently nine people in the group, and in addition to our studies we have had a summer barbecue and a Christmas social evening. Homegroups are a great way to get to know people, support each other through the ups and downs of life and get to grips with the Bible, so if this is something you think you might like to do, then please do talk to Rob about it.

Paul and Alison Reynolds

4. CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND YOUTH

Explore Creation

Explore Creation is an outdoor nature-based session for families, helping them to connect with God by connecting with God's creation. It runs once a month based at the Church Centre, and is aimed at families with children up to age 10/11 (school Year 6). Harriet and Isabel Langley (Y6) have been part of the group since its start, over seven years ago, and are now very able helpers. There are several families who attend most months, as well as others who join in from time to time. We average about ten children plus some parents (with pre-school children), leaders and helpers. The team of leaders

includes Anne Woolnough, Rev. Laine Lewis and Fiona Rawlinson, and we are recruiting additional helpers and co-leaders.

We have been focusing on the 'seven senses' this school year: taste, smell, touch, hearing and sight, as well as 'magnetism' (used e.g. by birds during migration) and 'electricity' (e.g. something that bees and plants emit, and which helps creatures to survive). It has been fun to link these themes to Bible stories, crafts, arboretum trails, games and our own understanding of how God's creation works.

We are looking forward to our Good Friday workshop with outdoor trail, indoor crafts, a service and refreshments.

Petra Crofton

The HUB Youth Group

We have children from school years Y6–Y8 at our monthly meetings (i.e. aged 10-14). We meet mainly on Sunday evenings from 5.30 until 7.00pm. We offer a range of activities from crafts, wood working, outdoor shelter building, cooking, games and making fires, followed by a Bible reflection and prayer. We also share a meal together and are grateful to have had Sue Hall cater for many of these. Sophie completed her Duke of Edinburgh's Award with us and since September we now have Millie and Elspeth as helpers.

We have a group of year 6 children who joined in September from Barnwood School and at our meeting in March we had around 20 attend. We are very grateful to all the adults who volunteer especially, Steve Hutchinson, Petra Crofton, Laine Lewis and a special mention to Brenda for her sewing skills.

Fiona Rawlinson, Community Family Worker

Barnie's Toddler Group

Barnies Chat and Play started in November 2024. The aim was to reach out into the community and also to provide a first introduction to Church for Baptism families. We are grateful for a generous grant from local company Lanes Health to help with set-up costs. We meet every Thursday from 9:15-10:45am and we have around fifteen regular families attending. Many of these are baptism families but some are just from the local area. Some families have started attending the 11:15 service and some Explore Creation. Huge thanks to our amazing team: Fiona, Margaret, Maggie, Sarah and Jess, with particular mention to Alan who helps with set up and clear up, and toy-inspector Ivan who may only be three but has high standards!! We start each week with tea and toast, with blueberries for the children. We then play and chat and finish with a Bible story and our Barnies prayer. At the moment we are working our way through the Bible starting in January with Genesis and we have got as far as Joseph and his many brothers! Barnies has a lovely friendly atmosphere and is a joyful place to be, we look forward to continuing meeting together this year.

Rev. Laine Lewis, Curate

Join Together Service

Join Together is a short service held every three months on the second Sunday at 4pm, led by myself and Kate Davies. The service is specifically aimed at children with additional needs and their families, and also at very young children who enjoy instruments and stories and a more relaxed and informal environment. We use Makaton signs and pecs symbols with our specially written simple liturgy which involves lots of repetition so we can all join in. We love singing and making music with instruments and

making a very joyful noise unto the Lord. We average about twenty people a service and have welcomed families from our own church and from all over Gloucester and even one family all the way from Tredington! At Christmas we enjoyed a very sensory nativity including touching real straw and smelling incense. In March we hunted for lost sheep and we have set dates for the rest of the calendar year with our next service in June being all about kindness, using the story of the Good Samaritan.

Rev. Laine Lewis, Curate

5. SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

Baptisms

Excitingly we have had a busy year of Baptisms, with sixteen since our last report. This included the adult baptism of Bella Harmer in the 11:15 service in September, and Laine's first ever baptism which were lovely twins Florence and Oliver. We are not slowing down, with a further six baptisms in the next five weeks at the time of writing, one of these is of siblings and one will take place in an 11:15 service in May. As always families are visited at home to begin with and then invited to an evening of preparation held at the Church, where we explain the importance of baptism and also do a run through of the service. All families of pre-school children are invited to Barnie's Chat and Play, and all families are invited to Explore Creation and our other services and events. Rob, Phil and Laine take the baptisms with Fiona providing support and making links with the families. We look forward to baptising even more people in 2025.

Rev. Laine Lewis, Curate

Weddings

We conducted weddings at St Lawrence for three couples in 2024, and have three more coming up in 2025. Rev. Laine has enjoyed learning the ropes for preparing couples for marriage and conducting their wedding services, and looks forward to conducting her first wedding after she is ordained priest at the end of June.

Rev. Rob Crofton, Vicar

Funerals

Life Events are the main point of contact the Church now has with the public, at Baptisms, Marriages and Funerals. Therefore it is really important that the minister should be warm and personable, listens to their story, and tells our story. Contemporary funerals are personal, so the person's life matters, as well as building bridges to the story of God's love and our hope in Jesus. Offering spiritual support, prayer and giving a message of faith, hope, and love are also key to this ministry.

It has been another interesting year from January to December 2024 for funeral ministry at St. Lawrence Church, Barnwood. The ministry team were involved in twenty-seven Church-led funeral related services. The patterns of funeral ministry have changed and are continuing to change. There is a lot more choice and this is a short analysis of how it looked for 2024:

- One funeral took place in church followed by burial in the churchyard.
- Two funerals took place in church with committals at the crematorium.
- One graveside funeral service took place in the churchyard including a burial.
- There was one memorial service in church following a direct cremation (no funeral service and unattended at the crematorium) with a double burial of ashes in the churchyard with the second set of ashes following a church led funeral in a crematorium.

- There was one burial in the churchyard following a funeral service in a Baptist Church.
- Thirteen church led funerals for Barnwood took place at a crematorium.
- There were two church led funeral services in a cemetery chapel followed by burial in a cemetery.
- Three lots of ashes were buried in the churchyard by a church minister on a separate occasion following a church led funeral.
- One more lot of ashes were buried by a church minister in the churchyard on a separate occasion following a funeral led by a civil celebrant.
- There was one double burial of ashes buried in a churchyard into an existing grave by a church minister on a separate occasion following one with a church led funeral and the other led by a civil celebrant.
- There was also one burial of ashes in the Doris Warren Garden of Remembrance by a church minister on a separate occasion following a church led funeral.

We also held the annual All Souls Service in Church in November which was well attended, where bereaved families were invited to remember their loved ones, sing hymns, pray, listen to a short address and light candles, followed by refreshments in the church centre.

Nationally, the proportion of funerals led by Church of England ministers has been falling rapidly over the last twenty years or so. Research has shown that these days, funeral directors are looking for a swift response to funeral requests, so that they can confirm the date, time, venue and the officiating minister of funerals to grieving families as soon as possible. Diocese of Gloucester Funerals always aim to do this within twenty-four hours once the funeral director has spoken to one of our friendly administrators.

Since the launch in October 2018 the Diocese of Gloucester Funeral Project (now rebranded as Diocese of Gloucester Funerals) has seen steady growth in the number of churches it serves and the funeral requests it manages with a wide range of Lay and Ordained ministers.

In 2018 the project covered Gloucester City Deanery and managed an average of forty funerals a month and that figure increased with Forest South and Severn Vale Deaneries joining in 2020 just in time for the Pandemic with Cheltenham Deanery joining in 2022. In 2023 we expanded into North Cotswold, Tewkesbury and Winchcombe Deaneries, and have also expanded into Stroud and Cirencester Deaneries during 2023 and 2024 which is still a work in progress with service figures rising to about one thousand four hundred plus a year.

During 2024 we started discussions with Hereford and Worcester Dioceses in order to help set up similar schemes with them. These are due to be launched in 2025.

Diocese of Gloucester Funerals is based at College Green within the Department of Mission and Ministry headed up by the Director, Revd Canon Dr Sandra Millar. The team consists of Nick Partridge Diocese of Gloucester Funerals Lead who is continually working on the expansion of the original project and creating training programmes, Philip Jaekel Diocese of Gloucester Funerals Deputy Lead who spends his time covering funeral services, and at the time of writing, has now covered over eight hundred and fifty services supporting bereaved families and building on the good relationships with churches, crematoriums and cemeteries, funeral directors and gravediggers across the diocese. Also, the two administrators Annette Teschner and Nicholette Flatman who do a really great job. To support the increased number of funerals the diocese has trained a number of specialist licensed funeral ministers to support families to plan their funeral service, lead the service and follow up with bereavement care for as long as it is needed. We will be starting the next course for Funeral Ministry and Bereavement Training in May 2025.

During 2024 we also ran two different training sessions on a Saturday morning for Clergy, Curates, Curates in training, Readers, Funeral Ministers and Bereavement Support teams. The first was in February visiting Goodwins Funeral Directors in Heathville Road before going onto Gloucester Crematorium and the second in November visiting Co-operative Funeralcare Cheltenham before going onto Cheltenham Crematorium with both the funeral directors and the Crematorium Managers attending both venues. This gave the opportunity to have a guided tour behind the scenes, ask questions and this is a valuable part of the training for ministers to understand what happens behind the scenes.

During 2024 we ran two networking evening for church ministers, funeral directors and crematorium and cemetery staff and gravediggers. The first was in May in The Parliament Room at Gloucester Cathedral with Sandra Millar giving a talk on 'The advantages and disadvantages of a Church of England Funeral Service' and the second event was held in November at St. Mary de Crypt Church in Southgate Street in Gloucester with Terry Tennens, Chief Executive, National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF) and Sandra Millar on the theme 'The Day I Nearly Quit' talking about the stresses and strains of working in the funeral industry, in a safe place for storytelling, sharing and reflection.

As a team we also supported the open day in August by having a stand at Gloucester Crematorium along with crematorium and cemetery staff, funeral directors, where the public were invited to have a tour around the crematorium chapel and look behind the scenes and ask questions and experience creating memory crafts, light candles, talk and have refreshments in the hospitality suites at The Arbor.

Philip Jaekel, Reader and Funeral Minister

Barnwood C of E Primary School

The school continues to be an important part of our outreach work in the parish. Rev. Rob and Rev. Laine lead services in the school regularly and there is a weekly 'Open the Book' slot. The school have had a range of services in the Church including a special 'Leavers' service for those in year 6 moving on to other schools. An Ash Wednesday service was held in school recently with many children choosing to have a mark of ash put on their foreheads. The Governors play an active part in managing the strategic running of the school. As Community Family Worker I continue to visit weekly and maintain links between the school and Church. I am still the Chair of Governors.

Fiona Rawlinson, Community Family Worker and Chair of Governors

Refugees and Asylum-seekers

All our Iranian friends have now received refugee status and are beginning to rebuild their lives in this country. Those who left wives and children in Iran have now been reunited. We have been pleased to welcome Naval and Ryan, Yousef's family, and we pray that Naval's father will soon be well enough for her to return to Gloucester. Ryan is settling into life at Barnwood C of E Primary School.

Imazh has almost completed her Beauty course at Gloucester college and has begun to work in a salon. She is also doing some catering. Karen begins his GCSE course in September and hopes to become a vet. Hamid has passed his driving test and now hopes to find a suitable job. He has felt very privileged to become a server in church.

Mehregan is settled in Oxford with his family, and his daughter is attending the local comprehensive school. They have joined a local church, who are supporting them.

Mohsen and his wife are settled in Southampton, and he is working in a restaurant.

The other Mohsen is running a restaurant in Fulham but hoping to start a part time university course in September in Oxford and possibly open a coffee shop.

Mohammed and Sara are happily settled in Swansea and Sara is going to train as a teaching assistant starting in September. She is currently helping out at the twins' school.

Mostafa and his wife are in London. He is still having real problems with his back so is unable to work. His wife is working part time and studying to improve her English.

Amin is still in Swansea, working in a restaurant, and hopes to visit us again before long.

We hold them all in our prayers.

Margaret Seyers, Churchwarden

Gloucester Foodbank

Gloucester Foodbank is greatly appreciative of the continued generous support from the congregation of St. Lawrence. In 2024 the total weight of food and toiletries donated came to 488.45kg, which is equal to around 1,163 meals, so very well done and many thanks.

In 2023-24, Gloucester Foodbank saw an 18.7% increase in the demand for emergency food parcels with 17,037 being issued, 36.8% of them specifically for local children.

The Foodbank aims to give everyone referred to them a balanced and nutritious 3-day supply of food, and it relies on the goodwill and support of local people to enable them to do this. Toiletries and hygiene products are also extremely important.

Over 90% of food distributed by the Foodbank comes from donations, which shows how vital they are in helping them continue to help everyone referred to them.

Sue Russell, Foodbank Coordinator

Coffee Shop and Community Events Team

Coffee Shop continues to thrive on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday mornings and we are very grateful to all our volunteers who give freely of their time in the kitchen and also supplying cakes, milk etc on the day. We ask for monetary donations which helps cover heating and lighting costs etc. With utility costs and baking costs going up, we hope that donations will continue to cover the costs going forward so that we can continue to run. We have very willing but very few volunteers and we could do with extra help. Please contact Angela in the Parish Office if you would be able to help as part of a rota. This is not a very onerous task but just one or two extra helpers would make all the difference. The Walk and Talk group still meet on the same mornings and continue to patronise Coffee Shop after their walk.

The Community Events team consists of eight members from the congregation: Elizabeth Hinton (chairman), Angela Sturdy (secretary), Ann Woolnough, Sylvia Edmunds, June Edwards, Bel Edge, Fiona Rawlinson and Janet Groves who we welcomed onto the Committee this year. Sadly, Jo Paisley stepped down during the year due to health issues, but we would like to thank Jo for her longstanding service running the previous Fundraising Committee and organising events such as our annual Fayre and more recently passing on her valuable knowledge as a committee member.

We aim to organise a series of events, approximately one per month, so that hopefully there will be something to appeal to everyone. Events that we have enjoyed since April 2024 are:

- April 2024 – celebration cake after church to mark St George's Day.
- April 2024 – Quiz Night with Fish and Chips
- May 2024 – celebration cake to mark Pentecost Sunday
- May 2024 - afternoon tea to mark the 30th anniversary of Revd Audrey's ordination
- July 2024 – we welcomed Laine Lewis our new Curate with Church BBQ.
- August 2024 – tea and cake afternoon. An opportunity for people to get-together.
- September 2024 – Parish Cooked Breakfast.
- September 2024 – Music to Delight Concert in Church.
- October 2024 – Harvest Bring and Share Lunch.
- November 2024 – Festive Fayre
- December 2024 – mulled wine and mince pies after the Carol Service
- January 2025 – Quiz Night with Fish and Chips
- February 2025 – Talk and slide presentation by Janet Groves on her family business.
- March 2025 – Continental Breakfast.

In June, members of the community events team, coffee shop and community lunch attended a Food Hygiene Regulations Level 2 course. This was run by Paul Black who was our Health and Safety Officer. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Paul for all the help he provided with this and also for heading up our cooked parish breakfasts.

All our social events have been very well supported and successful, for which we would like to thank everyone. Whether this be by way of coming along, baking, cooking, donating items for sale, helping with setting up and clearing up, or all the other "behind the scenes" jobs that make the events happen. We would like to give a special mention to Robert Phelps who regularly helps with setting up for most of our Church Centre events and who also provides excellent Victoria sponges for coffee shop!

Angela Sturdy

St Lawrence Community Lunch

We have been going for over a year now and have produced a variety of lunches that has been well attended. We run on the 2nd Wednesday of each month between 12 and 2. We make a home-cooked meal with a main and pudding and sometimes there are 'seconds' for our appreciative group of diners. We had a wonderful Christmas meal with all the trimmings, crackers and decorations. We have started an informal raffle to raise money for those not as fortunate as many and have contributed towards the Foodbank.

Fiona Rawlinson, Community Family Worker

6. BUILDINGS, GROUNDS, & CARE FOR CREATION

Buildings & Churchyard Report

The Buildings Team continues to meet regularly to monitor the ongoing routine work and oversee a number of major projects under the chairmanship of John Holland.

Routine work:

Routine work is ongoing for the Church, Church Centre and churchyard. Work ensures that routine safety checks are carried out on items such as fire extinguishers and alarms. The lift, boilers, lawnmowers and other equipment is regularly serviced and trees and hedges are maintained. Unfortunately, despite regular maintenance, the Church Centre boiler failed and had to be replaced in January 2025.

Major projects:

1. The stonework around the door and the window guards. This project was highlighted last year and the team have worked with a surveyor to define the project and obtain tenders from suitable contractors. This process is progressing well, and work is due to commence this summer.
2. The damage to a number of the wall memorials was highlighted by the last quinquennial. A report into their condition was commissioned and there is a clear safety concern. Temporary work has been done to reduce the risk. Work is ongoing to obtain quotations to repair the damage and make the memorials safe.
3. Church boiler. The failure of the Church Centre boiler has highlighted the need to look at sustainable alternatives to replace the elderly Church boiler before it fails. This has become another project for the team.

Fundraising:

These projects require serious funding and the team were delighted to welcome Anne Roberts to take on the onerous task of writing to grant-making bodies to supplement the money that can be raised within the church.

Janet Groves, Secretary to Buildings Team

Eco-Church and Net Zero Carbon

Caring for God's creation is an important part of our mission as a church. Teaching about this is a core part of our work with children and families through our monthly Explore Creation sessions. We support A Rocha UK's Eco-Church programme, and have achieved our Bronze award.

Our Lent book this year was by Jo Swinney, "The Whole Easter Story – Why the Cross is Good News for All Creation". We hosted Jo Swinney for a successful launch event, together with her colleague Jo Herbert James, in February. Around 60 people attended from across churches in Gloucester, for presentation and discussion on the theme of caring for God's creation as followers of Jesus.

When our Church Centre boiler failed before Christmas, we looked hard at sustainable alternatives for replacing it, such as heat-pumps, but the cost and timescale for this project was not feasible and we were obliged to put in a new gas boiler. However, as noted above under the Buildings Team report, this has led us to start planning for a sustainable heating solution for the Church itself, as the Church boiler is old and liable to fail.

Our churchyard and church field, lovingly tended by our groundsman Fred Broady, are a great asset and excellent habitat for wildlife and wildflowers – we are hoping to enhance this in the year ahead.

If you would like to become more involved in the area of Creation Care, please get in touch!

Rev. Rob Crofton, Vicar

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

WEDNESDAY 30th APRIL 2025, 7.30pm

St Lawrence Church, Barnwood

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024

St Lawrence Church is situated in Church Lane, Barnwood. It is part of the Diocese of Gloucester within the Church of England. The correspondence address is The Parish Office, 32 Church Lane, Barnwood, Gloucester, GL4 3JB.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is registered with the Charity Commission, registration number 1170167.

This report covers the period 1 January to 31 December 2024, which aligns with the church's financial year. However, election of officers and PCC members takes place at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), which normally takes place in April. In 2024 the APCM took place on 24th April.

PCC members who have served from May 2024 until the date this report was approved are:

Incumbent:	Revd Rob Crofton
Associate Priest:	Revd Audrey Hayman
Curate:	Revd Laine Lewis (from 30/6/24)
Readers:	Philip Jaekel, John Webster
Licensed Lay Worker:	Kate Davies
Churchwardens:	Margaret Seyers & Elizabeth Hinton
Deanery Synod Representatives:	Philip Jaekel (2026) & Elizabeth Hinton (2027)
Secretary:	Kate Davies

Elected members (with year of required re-election in brackets):

Belinda Edge	e 2020 r 2023 (2026)
Janet Groves	e 2020 r 2023 (2026)
Doug Pooley	e 2022 (2025)
Frances Mulvey	e 2023 (2026)
Peter Little	e 2024 (2027)
Yousef Shabab	e 2024 (2027)
Paul Black	e 2024 (resigned August 2024)

Non-elected officers, appointed by the PCC on 8-5-24:

Bob Hinton, Treasurer
Bob Moss, Electoral Roll Officer
Malcolm Smith, Gift Aid Officer
Kate Davies, Secretary (*ex officio*)

1. VISION AND GOVERNANCE

Structure

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

Membership and Attendance

2025 is a significant date as far as Church of England electoral rolls are concerned, since a completely new roll is needed this year. This requirement occurs once every 6 years and, since the last list was produced in 2019, the time for a new compilation has now come around.

A total of 22 people who were included on the previous roll do not appear in the new version. These losses are accounted for variously by: death, ill health, leaving the area, no longer attending St Lawrence's or simply not wishing to re-join. On the other hand, 14 people who were not on the previous roll have registered for the new list. This means a net loss of 8, so the final total for the 2025 St Lawrence's Electoral Roll is 86, compared with 94 in 2024.

Anyone who wishes to apply to join the new Electoral Roll is welcome to do so after the APCM on April 30th.

Bob Moss, Electoral Roll Officer

Objectives and Activities for 2025-2026

Our objectives remain the same for the year ahead, to grow in our vision "to know and share the love of Jesus".

To help us achieve this we will continue to:

- Develop our worship services, helping people of all ages and backgrounds to encounter Jesus in worship.
- Reach out with the good news of Jesus, providing ways for people to explore the Christian faith and grow as disciples.
- Show the love of Jesus in action in our community, increasing awareness of the climate and nature crises and helping people to take practical action to care for God's creation.

Employed Staff

This year we welcomed Rev. Laine Lewis to join us as our full-time Curate-in-training, funded by the national Church. Laine has brought a wealth of gifts and experience, and her energetic ministry has been appreciated by people of all ages. Laine has worked closely with Fiona Rawlinson, our Community Family Worker (12 hours per week), and their partnership has included setting up a new weekly Toddler group, Bernie's Chat and Play. Fiona continues to support parents and families, to lead our monthly Community Lunch, and is the Chair of Governors for our C of E Primary School. Angela Sturdy continues her vital role as our Parish Administrator (12 hours per week), Sally Jaekel as our church caretaker and Fred Broady as our groundsman. Robin Jones is our paid Director of Music and his contribution with our choir continues to be much appreciated. I am very grateful to all of our Staff for their hard work and dedication.

Rev. Rob Crofton, Vicar

Parochial Church Council (PCC): A brief survey of the year

The PCC has met 8 times between May 2024 and March 2025, in person and with some members on Zoom. Each meeting included standing items such as team reports (including finance and buildings), safeguarding, reports on Deanery Synod and on Barnwood C of E Primary School. In addition, the PCC discussed matters such as the need for major repairs to the stonework and memorial tablets, the C of E developments around Prayers of Love and Faith, and new plans for apportioning the Parish Share. The

PCC meets the requirements of the new General Data Protection Regulations and continues to be vigilant in assuring proper use of data. Email lists are used to contact various groups within the congregation in accordance with PCC's legitimate purposes and the Parish Office uses a cloud hosted, web-based church management system (ChurchSuite) which helps to streamline communications and to provide a weekly Vicar's Newsletter.

The PCC also owes special thanks to Angela Sturdy, our Parish administrator. Sally Jaekel keeps the Church Centre in excellent condition which is much appreciated by all users. Fred Broady, the church groundsman, keeps the churchyard looking beautiful and tidy. John Holland is currently chairing the Buildings Team and the PCC is grateful for his work particularly around the Stonework and Repair project. Anne Roberts has helped with Grant Applications and is now supporting Bob Hinton as our Deputy Treasurer. There are many other people who get on with things quietly in the background, and the PCC is very grateful to all of them for all that they do to ensure the smooth running of our Parish and the welcome we offer to the community.

Margaret Seyers, Churchwarden, and Kate Davies, PCC Secretary

Safeguarding – Creating a Safe and Caring Community at St. Lawrence Church

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Anyone is welcome to complete the **Basic Awareness** e- learning training. This will help you to understand how safeguarding works at St. Lawrence Church and the part that you can play in keeping others safe. Alternatively, this can be completed as a face-to-face session.

The reason for safeguarding training is to raise awareness of safeguarding issues and to encourage a greater positive awareness and understanding of safeguarding amongst church members.

We aim to increase the number of people feeling confident to talk openly about safeguarding issues. Safeguarding is about creating a healthy culture. It is so much more than a tick box exercise.

Training and practical strategies for supporting others are publicised in the Vicar's Weekly Newsletter.

Look to see what a difference you can make!



National Safeguarding Standards

The five National Safeguarding standards were introduced by the Church of England in 2023.

Year 1 of the introduction of these standards saw us focus on two standards:

Standard 1 – Prevention

Standard 4 - Victims and Survivors

The focus for **Year 2** will be:

Standard 2 – Culture, Leadership and Capacity.

Standard 3 – Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk.

National Safeguarding Standards

Standard 1	PREVENTION Church Bodies have in place a planned range of measures which together are effective in preventing abuse in their context.
Standard 2	CULTURE, LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY Church bodies have the safe and healthy culture, effective leadership, resourcing and scrutiny arrangements necessary to deliver high quality safeguarding practices and outcomes.
Standard 3	RECOGNISING, ASSESSING AND MANAGING RISK Risk assessments, Safeguarding Agreements and associated processes are of a high standard and result in positive outcomes. The assessment and management of risk is underpinned by effective partnership working.
Standard 4	VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS Victims and survivors experience the timeliness and quality of Church bodies' responses to disclosures, and their subsequent support, as positively helping the healing process and meeting their needs.
Standard 5	LEARNING, SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT All those engaged in safeguarding related activity in Church bodies receive the type and level of learning, professional development, support and supervision necessary to respond to safeguarding situations, victims and survivors, and respondents, effectively.

As part of this work, Quality Assurance Frameworks and audits are completed. The purpose of this is to:

- To look at what this is telling us about St. Lawrence Church and our community
- To look at what this means for us in Barnwood
- To clarify the actions that need to take place

Heather Walker – Parish Safeguarding Officer

2. WORSHIP AND PRAYER

Sunday Services

Our Sunday worship continues to be the focal point of our community, enabling us to meet with God in worship, have fellowship with one another, and be strengthened and equipped to live as followers of Jesus in our daily lives. It has been good to welcome a number of new people as regular worshippers, both at our 9.45am Holy Communion Service and 11.15am Morning Worship for All Ages. The second Sunday of the month remains our 9.45am All Together Holy Communion, where we bring together both congregations.

Rev. Rob Crofton, Vicar

Music and Choir

The Choir has truly made a remarkable impact on our services this year! It has been a joy to welcome new members, especially Gareth Palfreyman, who has joined our Tenors. Their enthusiasm and talent have been a wonderful addition to our group.

As always, the dedication and hard work put into our two carol services—the Advent Service of Light and the Christmas Carol Service—were evident, with the latter seeing a fantastic turnout. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to each member of the Choir for their commitment to enriching our worship experience through music. They really are a priceless gem for our Church community here in Barnwood, and I couldn't be prouder of all that they accomplish.

Despite facing several challenges in 2024, a year filled with uncertainty, the Choir has shown incredible resilience. They have continuously gathered for practice and Sunday services, proving their determination and passion. This wouldn't have been possible without the invaluable support of Kate and our talented accompanists, Liz, Alison, and Kathryn, each of whom brings their own unique flair to our music.

As we look ahead to 2025, I am thrilled to enter my twelfth year and continue to expand our repertoire while serving others through the gift of music. The journey ahead promises to be as exciting as ever!

We love to welcome singers into the choir, and if you'd like to give it a go, please contact me. You'll receive a warm welcome and expand your joke library courtesy of Alan!

I am also collating photographs or recordings of the Choir and music in Church over the years to put together a board showing our history. If you have any to contribute, I'd love to see them and take a digital copy to preserve them for the future.

Robin Jones, Director of Music

Bellringing

We have had a good year in the bell ringing chamber, we generally have enough ringers present on a Sunday morning to ring all 8 bells for the morning service and several more on practice nights.

We rang a special quarter peal with the help of some longstanding friends of the tower immediately prior to the Thanksgiving Service for Michael Mulvey, whose presence in the tower has been greatly missed. There was also general ringing before the service to enable other ringers to play tribute to him. We also rang a quarter peal in May to give thanks for the many years Brian McBurnie spent ringing with us.

On March 23rd we rang the bells half muffled in memory of our local Branch Treasurer who sadly passed away a few days before. This was a new experience for some of our ringers and a lovely sound to hear for us all, a ding with a very quiet dong, very atmospheric and solemn.

Two young people from St Lawrence started learning to ring with us in August and have made amazing progress with their bell handling, they spend an hour with us most Monday evenings and continue to improve. Our other learners are also ringing more independently and are becoming valuable integral members of the team.

St Lawrence ringers have taken the lead with keeping the bells at Upton St Leonard's ringing, though the timing of the two churches Sunday services is too close together to enable us to do more than chime the treble at Upton St Leonard's. We also form the core team for many of the ringing events in the Gloucester area which can only help us to continue to improve.

We continue to welcome visitors - ringing and otherwise, to the tower. Our bells are still considered to be some of the best in Gloucester and they are well taken care of by our Steeple Keeper Trevor.

If you would like to try out bell ringing, please get in touch or come and talk to us when we attend events at St Lawrence.

Joanna Morley – Secretary St Lawrence bell ringers

Flower Team

The flower team have enjoyed arranging the flowers in Church for weekly and Festival occasions. Many thanks to all who have given donations towards the cost of flowers, it meant we didn't have to take from church funds. Cate (Warren) and Jess (Palfreyman) are now leading the team, and I am so grateful to them, after over twenty years organising the team. It will be lovely to have some fresh ideas, and I'm sure we can all look forward to seeing the church looking beautifully decorated under their guidance.

June Edwards

Prayer

Prayer – both personal and corporate – undergirds all we are and do in our worship, ministry and mission at St Lawrence. Morning Prayer on Wednesdays is our regular weekly opportunity for reflection on Scripture together and prayer for the world, our local community, the church, and those known to us in particular need. It takes place in the Church at 9.00am, for about 45 minutes. All are welcome – do come and try it out if you haven't been before. The Monthly Prayer Meeting takes place on the Second Monday of the month from 6.45–7.45pm, in the Church Centre. We devote this one hour each month to praying together for the life and ministry of our church, and our reaching out with the good news of Jesus into our community. Again, all are welcome, do come and join in this prayer time as we pray for God's kingdom to come in our Parish.

Rev. Rob Crofton

3. EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

The Start Course

Start is an engaging course helping people to explore God, Jesus and the journey of life in six DVD based interactive small group sessions. This year the group met from Tuesday 7th January to Tuesday 11th February and there were 10 participants. The meetings were led by Rob and Laine, with Liz Dyer and Mike Cummings in supporting roles.

Participants were invited to come along before the meeting for a catch up with others and a cup of tea. This time, along with the small discussion groups during the meeting was a valuable time to get to know and support each other as well as to explore the message of God's love and forgiveness through Jesus, and how this can impact our lives in a very positive way, enriching our lives as we walk with Him.

Each session included short video clips led by Rev. Robin Gamble (Bishop's Advisor for Church Growth in Leeds Diocese) aimed to encourage group members to start thinking about the direction of their lives, to explain what God is like and how He can be known personally.

Following the video clips, participants took part in small groups to explore questions arising from the clip and to take part in interactive exercises. This was a rich time together where people could share life experiences, ask questions and support one another. The sessions end with a short Bible passage and a prayer.

During the six weeks together, many participants expressed a wish to continue to explore the Christian faith and had found the course a valuable and enjoyable time.

Liz Dyer

Lent Studies – The Bible Course

Around 24 people have taken part in our Lent Course this year, the Bible Society's *Bible Course*. This is a comprehensive overview of the whole Bible in 8 sessions. Through engaging video presentations and small group discussions, participants have been enabled to grasp the big storyline of the whole Bible, and to see how well-known characters and events fit into that bigger picture. It has also helped us to understand God's plans and purposes in the Old Testament, and how these are fulfilled and completed in Jesus and the New Testament. Many thanks to Rev. Paul Reynolds for his hard work in producing the handouts for this course, and to Rev. Laine for co-leading this course, and to those who have facilitated the small groups. We look forward to the final two sessions after Easter.

Rev. Rob Crofton

Home Groups

Since the autumn, our homegroup has been meeting fortnightly for Bible study, prayer support and fellowship. We have been studying the Gospel of Luke, and since the beginning of Lent some of us have been joining in with the Lent Course. Following this, we shall be looking at the book of Esther in the Old Testament. There are currently nine people in the group, and in addition to our studies we have had a summer barbecue and a Christmas social evening. Homegroups are a great way to get to know people, support each other through the ups and downs of life and get to grips with the Bible, so if this is something you think you might like to do, then please do talk to Rob about it.

Paul and Alison Reynolds

4. CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND YOUTH

Explore Creation

Explore Creation is an outdoor nature-based session for families, helping them to connect with God by connecting with God's creation. It runs once a month based at the Church Centre, and is aimed at families with children up to age 10/11 (school Year 6). Harriet and Isabel Langley (Y6) have been part of the group since its start, over seven years ago, and are now very able helpers. There are several families who attend most months, as well as others who join in from time to time. We average about ten children plus some parents (with pre-school children), leaders and helpers. The team of leaders

includes Anne Woolnough, Rev. Laine Lewis and Fiona Rawlinson, and we are recruiting additional helpers and co-leaders.

We have been focusing on the 'seven senses' this school year: taste, smell, touch, hearing and sight, as well as 'magnetism' (used e.g. by birds during migration) and 'electricity' (e.g. something that bees and plants emit, and which helps creatures to survive). It has been fun to link these themes to Bible stories, crafts, arboretum trails, games and our own understanding of how God's creation works.

We are looking forward to our Good Friday workshop with outdoor trail, indoor crafts, a service and refreshments.

Petra Crofton

The HUB Youth Group

We have children from school years Y6–Y8 at our monthly meetings (i.e. aged 10-14). We meet mainly on Sunday evenings from 5.30 until 7.00pm. We offer a range of activities from crafts, wood working, outdoor shelter building, cooking, games and making fires, followed by a Bible reflection and prayer. We also share a meal together and are grateful to have had Sue Hall cater for many of these. Sophie completed her Duke of Edinburgh's Award with us and since September we now have Millie and Elspeth as helpers.

We have a group of year 6 children who joined in September from Barnwood School and at our meeting in March we had around 20 attend. We are very grateful to all the adults who volunteer especially, Steve Hutchinson, Petra Crofton, Laine Lewis and a special mention to Brenda for her sewing skills.

Fiona Rawlinson, Community Family Worker

Barnie's Toddler Group

Barnies Chat and Play started in November 2024. The aim was to reach out into the community and also to provide a first introduction to Church for Baptism families. We are grateful for a generous grant from local company Lanes Health to help with set-up costs. We meet every Thursday from 9:15-10:45am and we have around fifteen regular families attending. Many of these are baptism families but some are just from the local area. Some families have started attending the 11:15 service and some Explore Creation. Huge thanks to our amazing team: Fiona, Margaret, Maggie, Sarah and Jess, with particular mention to Alan who helps with set up and clear up, and toy-inspector Ivan who may only be three but has high standards!! We start each week with tea and toast, with blueberries for the children. We then play and chat and finish with a Bible story and our Barnies prayer. At the moment we are working our way through the Bible starting in January with Genesis and we have got as far as Joseph and his many brothers! Barnies has a lovely friendly atmosphere and is a joyful place to be, we look forward to continuing meeting together this year.

Rev. Laine Lewis, Curate

Join Together Service

Join Together is a short service held every three months on the second Sunday at 4pm, led by myself and Kate Davies. The service is specifically aimed at children with additional needs and their families, and also at very young children who enjoy instruments and stories and a more relaxed and informal environment. We use Makaton signs and pecs symbols with our specially written simple liturgy which involves lots of repetition so we can all join in. We love singing and making music with instruments and

making a very joyful noise unto the Lord. We average about twenty people a service and have welcomed families from our own church and from all over Gloucester and even one family all the way from Tredington! At Christmas we enjoyed a very sensory nativity including touching real straw and smelling incense. In March we hunted for lost sheep and we have set dates for the rest of the calendar year with our next service in June being all about kindness, using the story of the Good Samaritan.

Rev. Laine Lewis, Curate

5. SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

Baptisms

Excitingly we have had a busy year of Baptisms, with sixteen since our last report. This included the adult baptism of Bella Harmer in the 11:15 service in September, and Laine's first ever baptism which were lovely twins Florence and Oliver. We are not slowing down, with a further six baptisms in the next five weeks at the time of writing, one of these is of siblings and one will take place in an 11:15 service in May. As always families are visited at home to begin with and then invited to an evening of preparation held at the Church, where we explain the importance of baptism and also do a run through of the service. All families of pre-school children are invited to Barnie's Chat and Play, and all families are invited to Explore Creation and our other services and events. Rob, Phil and Laine take the baptisms with Fiona providing support and making links with the families. We look forward to baptising even more people in 2025.

Rev. Laine Lewis, Curate

Weddings

We conducted weddings at St Lawrence for three couples in 2024, and have three more coming up in 2025. Rev. Laine has enjoyed learning the ropes for preparing couples for marriage and conducting their wedding services, and looks forward to conducting her first wedding after she is ordained priest at the end of June.

Rev. Rob Crofton, Vicar

Funerals

Life Events are the main point of contact the Church now has with the public, at Baptisms, Marriages and Funerals. Therefore it is really important that the minister should be warm and personable, listens to their story, and tells our story. Contemporary funerals are personal, so the person's life matters, as well as building bridges to the story of God's love and our hope in Jesus. Offering spiritual support, prayer and giving a message of faith, hope, and love are also key to this ministry.

It has been another interesting year from January to December 2024 for funeral ministry at St. Lawrence Church, Barnwood. The ministry team were involved in twenty-seven Church-led funeral related services. The patterns of funeral ministry have changed and are continuing to change. There is a lot more choice and this is a short analysis of how it looked for 2024:

- One funeral took place in church followed by burial in the churchyard.
- Two funerals took place in church with committals at the crematorium.
- One graveside funeral service took place in the churchyard including a burial.
- There was one memorial service in church following a direct cremation (no funeral service and unattended at the crematorium) with a double burial of ashes in the churchyard with the second set of ashes following a church led funeral in a crematorium.

- There was one burial in the churchyard following a funeral service in a Baptist Church.
- Thirteen church led funerals for Barnwood took place at a crematorium.
- There were two church led funeral services in a cemetery chapel followed by burial in a cemetery.
- Three lots of ashes were buried in the churchyard by a church minister on a separate occasion following a church led funeral.
- One more lot of ashes were buried by a church minister in the churchyard on a separate occasion following a funeral led by a civil celebrant.
- There was one double burial of ashes buried in a churchyard into an existing grave by a church minister on a separate occasion following one with a church led funeral and the other led by a civil celebrant.
- There was also one burial of ashes in the Doris Warren Garden of Remembrance by a church minister on a separate occasion following a church led funeral.

We also held the annual All Souls Service in Church in November which was well attended, where bereaved families were invited to remember their loved ones, sing hymns, pray, listen to a short address and light candles, followed by refreshments in the church centre.

Nationally, the proportion of funerals led by Church of England ministers has been falling rapidly over the last twenty years or so. Research has shown that these days, funeral directors are looking for a swift response to funeral requests, so that they can confirm the date, time, venue and the officiating minister of funerals to grieving families as soon as possible. Diocese of Gloucester Funerals always aim to do this within twenty-four hours once the funeral director has spoken to one of our friendly administrators.

Since the launch in October 2018 the Diocese of Gloucester Funeral Project (now rebranded as Diocese of Gloucester Funerals) has seen steady growth in the number of churches it serves and the funeral requests it manages with a wide range of Lay and Ordained ministers.

In 2018 the project covered Gloucester City Deanery and managed an average of forty funerals a month and that figure increased with Forest South and Severn Vale Deaneries joining in 2020 just in time for the Pandemic with Cheltenham Deanery joining in 2022. In 2023 we expanded into North Cotswold, Tewkesbury and Winchcombe Deaneries, and have also expanded into Stroud and Cirencester Deaneries during 2023 and 2024 which is still a work in progress with service figures rising to about one thousand four hundred plus a year.

During 2024 we started discussions with Hereford and Worcester Dioceses in order to help set up similar schemes with them. These are due to be launched in 2025.

Diocese of Gloucester Funerals is based at College Green within the Department of Mission and Ministry headed up by the Director, Revd Canon Dr Sandra Millar. The team consists of Nick Partridge Diocese of Gloucester Funerals Lead who is continually working on the expansion of the original project and creating training programmes, Philip Jaekel Diocese of Gloucester Funerals Deputy Lead who spends his time covering funeral services, and at the time of writing, has now covered over eight hundred and fifty services supporting bereaved families and building on the good relationships with churches, crematoriums and cemeteries, funeral directors and gravediggers across the diocese. Also, the two administrators Annette Teschner and Nicholette Flatman who do a really great job. To support the increased number of funerals the diocese has trained a number of specialist licensed funeral ministers to support families to plan their funeral service, lead the service and follow up with bereavement care for as long as it is needed. We will be starting the next course for Funeral Ministry and Bereavement Training in May 2025.

During 2024 we also ran two different training sessions on a Saturday morning for Clergy, Curates, Curates in training, Readers, Funeral Ministers and Bereavement Support teams. The first was in February visiting Goodwins Funeral Directors in Heathville Road before going onto Gloucester Crematorium and the second in November visiting Co-operative Funeralcare Cheltenham before going onto Cheltenham Crematorium with both the funeral directors and the Crematorium Managers attending both venues. This gave the opportunity to have a guided tour behind the scenes, ask questions and this is a valuable part of the training for ministers to understand what happens behind the scenes.

During 2024 we ran two networking evening for church ministers, funeral directors and crematorium and cemetery staff and gravediggers. The first was in May in The Parliament Room at Gloucester Cathedral with Sandra Millar giving a talk on 'The advantages and disadvantages of a Church of England Funeral Service' and the second event was held in November at St. Mary de Crypt Church in Southgate Street in Gloucester with Terry Tennens, Chief Executive, National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF) and Sandra Millar on the theme 'The Day I Nearly Quit' talking about the stresses and strains of working in the funeral industry, in a safe place for storytelling, sharing and reflection.

As a team we also supported the open day in August by having a stand at Gloucester Crematorium along with crematorium and cemetery staff, funeral directors, where the public were invited to have a tour around the crematorium chapel and look behind the scenes and ask questions and experience creating memory crafts, light candles, talk and have refreshments in the hospitality suites at The Arbor.

Philip Jaekel, Reader and Funeral Minister

Barnwood C of E Primary School

The school continues to be an important part of our outreach work in the parish. Rev. Rob and Rev. Laine lead services in the school regularly and there is a weekly 'Open the Book' slot. The school have had a range of services in the Church including a special 'Leavers' service for those in year 6 moving on to other schools. An Ash Wednesday service was held in school recently with many children choosing to have a mark of ash put on their foreheads. The Governors play an active part in managing the strategic running of the school. As Community Family Worker I continue to visit weekly and maintain links between the school and Church. I am still the Chair of Governors.

Fiona Rawlinson, Community Family Worker and Chair of Governors

Refugees and Asylum-seekers

All our Iranian friends have now received refugee status and are beginning to rebuild their lives in this country. Those who left wives and children in Iran have now been reunited. We have been pleased to welcome Naval and Ryan, Yousef's family, and we pray that Naval's father will soon be well enough for her to return to Gloucester. Ryan is settling into life at Barnwood C of E Primary School.

Imazh has almost completed her Beauty course at Gloucester college and has begun to work in a salon. She is also doing some catering. Karen begins his GCSE course in September and hopes to become a vet. Hamid has passed his driving test and now hopes to find a suitable job. He has felt very privileged to become a server in church.

Mehregan is settled in Oxford with his family, and his daughter is attending the local comprehensive school. They have joined a local church, who are supporting them.

Mohsen and his wife are settled in Southampton, and he is working in a restaurant.

The other Mohsen is running a restaurant in Fulham but hoping to start a part time university course in September in Oxford and possibly open a coffee shop.

Mohammed and Sara are happily settled in Swansea and Sara is going to train as a teaching assistant starting in September. She is currently helping out at the twins' school.

Mostafa and his wife are in London. He is still having real problems with his back so is unable to work. His wife is working part time and studying to improve her English.

Amin is still in Swansea, working in a restaurant, and hopes to visit us again before long.

We hold them all in our prayers.

Margaret Seyers, Churchwarden

Gloucester Foodbank

Gloucester Foodbank is greatly appreciative of the continued generous support from the congregation of St. Lawrence. In 2024 the total weight of food and toiletries donated came to 488.45kg, which is equal to around 1,163 meals, so very well done and many thanks.

In 2023-24, Gloucester Foodbank saw an 18.7% increase in the demand for emergency food parcels with 17,037 being issued, 36.8% of them specifically for local children.

The Foodbank aims to give everyone referred to them a balanced and nutritious 3-day supply of food, and it relies on the goodwill and support of local people to enable them to do this. Toiletries and hygiene products are also extremely important.

Over 90% of food distributed by the Foodbank comes from donations, which shows how vital they are in helping them continue to help everyone referred to them.

Sue Russell, Foodbank Coordinator

Coffee Shop and Community Events Team

Coffee Shop continues to thrive on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday mornings and we are very grateful to all our volunteers who give freely of their time in the kitchen and also supplying cakes, milk etc on the day. We ask for monetary donations which helps cover heating and lighting costs etc. With utility costs and baking costs going up, we hope that donations will continue to cover the costs going forward so that we can continue to run. We have very willing but very few volunteers and we could do with extra help. Please contact Angela in the Parish Office if you would be able to help as part of a rota. This is not a very onerous task but just one or two extra helpers would make all the difference. The Walk and Talk group still meet on the same mornings and continue to patronise Coffee Shop after their walk.

The Community Events team consists of eight members from the congregation: Elizabeth Hinton (chairman), Angela Sturdy (secretary), Ann Woolnough, Sylvia Edmunds, June Edwards, Bel Edge, Fiona Rawlinson and Janet Groves who we welcomed onto the Committee this year. Sadly, Jo Paisley stepped down during the year due to health issues, but we would like to thank Jo for her longstanding service running the previous Fundraising Committee and organising events such as our annual Fayre and more recently passing on her valuable knowledge as a committee member.

We aim to organise a series of events, approximately one per month, so that hopefully there will be something to appeal to everyone. Events that we have enjoyed since April 2024 are:

- April 2024 – celebration cake after church to mark St George's Day.
- April 2024 – Quiz Night with Fish and Chips
- May 2024 – celebration cake to mark Pentecost Sunday
- May 2024 - afternoon tea to mark the 30th anniversary of Revd Audrey's ordination
- July 2024 – we welcomed Laine Lewis our new Curate with Church BBQ.
- August 2024 – tea and cake afternoon. An opportunity for people to get-together.
- September 2024 – Parish Cooked Breakfast.
- September 2024 – Music to Delight Concert in Church.
- October 2024 – Harvest Bring and Share Lunch.
- November 2024 – Festive Fayre
- December 2024 – mulled wine and mince pies after the Carol Service
- January 2025 – Quiz Night with Fish and Chips
- February 2025 – Talk and slide presentation by Janet Groves on her family business.
- March 2025 – Continental Breakfast.

In June, members of the community events team, coffee shop and community lunch attended a Food Hygiene Regulations Level 2 course. This was run by Paul Black who was our Health and Safety Officer. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Paul for all the help he provided with this and also for heading up our cooked parish breakfasts.

All our social events have been very well supported and successful, for which we would like to thank everyone. Whether this be by way of coming along, baking, cooking, donating items for sale, helping with setting up and clearing up, or all the other "behind the scenes" jobs that make the events happen. We would like to give a special mention to Robert Phelps who regularly helps with setting up for most of our Church Centre events and who also provides excellent Victoria sponges for coffee shop!

Angela Sturdy

St Lawrence Community Lunch

We have been going for over a year now and have produced a variety of lunches that has been well attended. We run on the 2nd Wednesday of each month between 12 and 2. We make a home-cooked meal with a main and pudding and sometimes there are 'seconds' for our appreciative group of diners. We had a wonderful Christmas meal with all the trimmings, crackers and decorations. We have started an informal raffle to raise money for those not as fortunate as many and have contributed towards the Foodbank.

Fiona Rawlinson, Community Family Worker

6. BUILDINGS, GROUNDS, & CARE FOR CREATION

Buildings & Churchyard Report

The Buildings Team continues to meet regularly to monitor the ongoing routine work and oversee a number of major projects under the chairmanship of John Holland.

Routine work:

Routine work is ongoing for the Church, Church Centre and churchyard. Work ensures that routine safety checks are carried out on items such as fire extinguishers and alarms. The lift, boilers, lawnmowers and other equipment is regularly serviced and trees and hedges are maintained. Unfortunately, despite regular maintenance, the Church Centre boiler failed and had to be replaced in January 2025.

Major projects:

1. The stonework around the door and the window guards. This project was highlighted last year and the team have worked with a surveyor to define the project and obtain tenders from suitable contractors. This process is progressing well, and work is due to commence this summer.
2. The damage to a number of the wall memorials was highlighted by the last quinquennial. A report into their condition was commissioned and there is a clear safety concern. Temporary work has been done to reduce the risk. Work is ongoing to obtain quotations to repair the damage and make the memorials safe.
3. Church boiler. The failure of the Church Centre boiler has highlighted the need to look at sustainable alternatives to replace the elderly Church boiler before it fails. This has become another project for the team.

Fundraising:

These projects require serious funding and the team were delighted to welcome Anne Roberts to take on the onerous task of writing to grant-making bodies to supplement the money that can be raised within the church.

Janet Groves, Secretary to Buildings Team

Eco-Church and Net Zero Carbon

Caring for God's creation is an important part of our mission as a church. Teaching about this is a core part of our work with children and families through our monthly Explore Creation sessions. We support A Rocha UK's Eco-Church programme, and have achieved our Bronze award.

Our Lent book this year was by Jo Swinney, "The Whole Easter Story – Why the Cross is Good News for All Creation". We hosted Jo Swinney for a successful launch event, together with her colleague Jo Herbert James, in February. Around 60 people attended from across churches in Gloucester, for presentation and discussion on the theme of caring for God's creation as followers of Jesus.

When our Church Centre boiler failed before Christmas, we looked hard at sustainable alternatives for replacing it, such as heat-pumps, but the cost and timescale for this project was not feasible and we were obliged to put in a new gas boiler. However, as noted above under the Buildings Team report, this has led us to start planning for a sustainable heating solution for the Church itself, as the Church boiler is old and liable to fail.

Our churchyard and church field, lovingly tended by our groundsman Fred Broady, are a great asset and excellent habitat for wildlife and wildflowers – we are hoping to enhance this in the year ahead.

If you would like to become more involved in the area of Creation Care, please get in touch!

Rev. Rob Crofton, Vicar

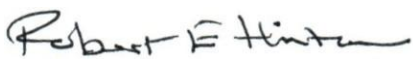
BARNWOOD PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT AND NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2024
Presented to the APCM on Wednesday 30th April 2025

Basis of Accounts

The accounts for the PCC of St Lawrence Church in the parish of Barnwood have been prepared on a "Receipts and Payments" basis using the "Cash Book" accounting program provided by the Gloucester Diocesan Board of Finance for this purpose. The Version Number is V5.2 - 2 issued December 2015.

The final accounts have been independently examined by Mr Andrew Matson.

These accounts and their examination are, to the best of the PCC's knowledge, compliant with the requirements of the Charities Act 1993 and those of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP), 2005 revisions.

Robert Hinton . .  . 09/03/25

(Treasurer)


Andrew Matson  09/03/25

(Independent Examiner)

Approved by members of the Parochial Church Council and signed on their behalf by:

Rob Crofton . . 

(Vicar)

Margaret Seyers . . 

(Church Warden)

DATE: . . 12/03/2025.