



## **ANNUAL REPORT**

**For year ending 31st December 2025**

**(As required by Church Accounting Regulations 2006)**

Registered Charity Number 1129833

**Website:** <https://www.abingdonparish.org.uk/>



**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES  
ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025**

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## **ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames is a registered charity, Charity Registration Number 1129833.

The Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames is situated in the town of Abingdon, Oxfordshire. It is part of the Diocese of Oxford within the Church of England. The correspondence address is:

The Hon Secretary, Abingdon-on-Thames PCC  
c/o The Parish Centre, St Helen's Court, Abingdon OX14 5BS

The Parish comprises the churches and congregations of St Helen, St Michael & All Angels and St Nicolas.

### **PCC members**

PCC members are the Trustees of the Charity. PCC members who have served from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025 until the date that this report and the financial statements were approved are:

#### **Stipendiary Team clergy:**

The Revd Dr J Brown (from Oct 2025)  
The Revd P A Smith (to Oct 2025)

#### **Non-stipendiary clergy:**

The Revd Dr J Brown (to Oct 2025)  
The Revd A K M Adam

#### **Licensed Lay Minister Representative**

Mrs G Bevington  
Mrs L Hobbs (from November 2025)

#### **Churchwardens:**

Mrs E Hallas  
Mrs L Heffernan  
Miss M Horton  
Miss J Kelly  
Mr D Pope

#### **Ex-Officio**

##### **– representatives on Diocesan Synod:**

Miss A Scott  
Mrs S Scott (Bishop's Council Member)

#### **Officers (from April 2025):**

Chairman       The Revd Dr J Brown  
                    (from Oct 2025)  
Vice Chairman Mrs S Scott  
                    Acting Chair to Oct 2025  
Secretary       Mrs E Hallas

#### **– representatives on Deanery Synod:**

The Revd R Rutherford

#### **Elected representatives - Deanery Synod:**

Miss A E Green  
Mrs E Hallas  
Miss A Scott  
Mrs S Scott  
Dr H Glennie

#### **Elected PCC members:**

Mrs M Anderson (to September 2025)  
Mrs K Burland  
Mrs H Clare  
Mr J Clare  
Dr R Cox (from May 2025)  
Dr H Glennie  
Mrs J Fishpool  
Dr G Lewis (to May 2025)  
Mrs J Smith

#### **Auditors**

Mercer Lewin Ltd, Chartered Accountants  
6-7 Citibase, New Barclay House  
234 Botley Rd  
Oxford, OX2 0HP

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## **AIMS AND PURPOSES**

Under the PCC (Powers) Measure 1956, the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent in promoting, in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. Each DCC is similarly required to co-operate with the minister in charge of the district church. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the Parish Centre (in St Helen's Court) and Enock House (2 Musson Close).

## **1 ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

### **1a Rector's Report**

It was with great joy that I took up the post of Rector in October 2025. My induction/installation service was a joyful event and it was lovely to be so warmly welcomed to my new role. The autumn proved to be quite a time of transition within the ministry team, as we bid farewell to Fr Paul Smith at his final service before retirement. At the start of November, it was my privilege to accompany Linda Hobbs to her licensing as a Lay Minister. It was wonderful to see many from the parish, representing all three churches, at the service to support Linda, and it has been wonderful to welcome her to the ministry team. I was delighted to be able to accompany Sue Pemberton, who leads St Helen's Junior Church and toddler group, to Dorchester Abbey in September, as she was made a member of the Fellowship of St Birinus in honour of the service she has given to the parish over many years.

#### **Services**

In the period of vacancy leading up to my installation as Rector, regular provision of Sunday services continued across all three churches. St Helen's and St Nicolas' continued to live-stream services on Zoom for those unable to attend in person.

The Revd Paul Smith, the Revd Dr A.K.M. Adam (Fr AKMA), and I led services regularly in all three churches of the parish throughout the year (with Fr Paul finishing in October), supported by the honorary assistant clergy and lay ministers. I am grateful to all our honorary assistant clergy and lay ministers for all that they do, and for their willingness to take on additional services, both during the vacancy period leading up to my installation as Rector, and in the subsequent vacancy following Fr Paul's retirement.

In August, we celebrated the restoration of the Blacknall memorial in St Nicolas' Church with a special service, followed by a reception in the Roysse room. This was a lovely occasion, which also provided an opportunity to celebrate the work of the composer Orlando Gibbons, as 2025 marked 400 years since his death.

St Michael's hosted the parish and visitors for a special service on 9th October, followed by refreshments, to celebrate 25 years of Fr Paul Smith's ordained ministry and to bid him farewell as he moved into retirement. This was a bittersweet event, as we were sad to say goodbye to Fr Paul, but at the same time joyfully celebrating his years in ministry and giving thanks for all he has given to the parish.

November saw the introduction of a new parish-wide service for All Souls' Day, held at St Helen's. This was an opportunity to reach out to those for whom we had conducted funerals during the year, and to local funeral directors, as well as to provide an opportunity for members of our

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congregations to gather and give thanks for loved ones who, in the words of the service, “are hidden from us by the shadow of death.” I also led the Remembrance Sunday service in Abingdon for the first time. This was an extremely well-attended service, and it was an honour to be invited to stand with members of the town council while the Mayor received the salute from the parade following the service. I was also honoured to be invited to the reception in the Roysse Room after the parade, and this was a wonderful opportunity for me to meet and talk to members of the council and others, and to start making connections.

St Nicolas’ Church hosted the parish to Evensong on 7th December for St Nicolas’ day, and it was a joy to join the congregation of St Nicolas’ as well as those from our other churches at the St Nicolas’ Day lunch at Cosener’s House earlier in the day. Advent and Christmas carol services across the parish were well-attended. For practical reasons relating to the Team Vicar vacancy, St Nicolas’ moved their carol service from the evening to the morning on the last Sunday before Christmas, and this proved to be a great success. The Christingle service at St Helen’s was also very well attended.

### **Ministry team**

As noted above, Fr Paul Smith retired as Team Vicar in October, and Linda Hobbs joined the team as an LLM in November. Linda is already contributing significantly to the parish, especially in the area of pastoral care, and I am grateful for her ministry.

I am particularly grateful to Fr AKMA for all that he does for the parish, not only in leading and preaching on Sundays and at the Wednesday Communion service at St Helen’s, but also for his role in providing pastoral care across the parish, and his contributions to adult education and marriage preparation.

### **Outreach**

Outreach to the wider parish continued in various forms in 2025.

St Helen’s Easter Garden and Christmas crib in the west porch provided an opportunity to engage with passers-by, particularly families with children. The parish centre hosted Agnostics Anonymous, a talk followed by Q&A and discussion on a range of topics, which is open to all. St Nicolas’ Church again made use of their south porch to put up displays highlighting an explaining liturgical seasons and festivals. In the run-up to Christmas, members of our congregations set up a table outside St Nicolas to greet people and hand out information about Christmas services, along with mince pies.

St Michael’s hosted cream teas in the summer months. All three churches hosted concerts. Thanks to all who organised and supported these various activities, which really do help to raise the profile of our churches in the community and let people know that they are welcome.

### **Finally**

As we go forward into 2026, I am grateful to the wardens and DCCs at each of the churches for their support and hard work, to our staff, Robin Day, Jackie Cunningham, and Kinga, and to the members of the PCC. I am also grateful to Peter Foster, Andrew Shouler, Graham Howell, Glynne Butt, and all who provide the music and otherwise support services in our churches, to all those who organise and host our social and outreach events, and to the congregations of St Helen’s, St Michael’s, and St Nicolas’ for their prayers and faithful witness in this place.

*The Revd Dr Jen Brown, Team Rector*

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**1b Church Electoral Roll [Kate Burland, PERO]**

The Electoral Roll is the formal list of church members who are eligible to participate in the governance of the parish, including voting at the APCM and standing for election.

Every six years there is a full renewal of the Electoral Roll; every name is removed from the old Roll and only those who submit a new application form are added to the new Roll. This renewal process ensures that the Roll accurately reflects the current active membership of the parish.

2025 was a full renewal year and the results are displayed in the table below:

**Electoral Roll Numbers 2022 to 2025**

	2022	2023	2024	2025	Change	% Change
St Helen	214	214	229	146	-83	-36.24%
St Michael	68	69	67	53	-14	-20.90%
St Nicolas	64	63	62	54	-8	-12.90%
Abingdon on Thames	346	346	358	253	-105	-29.33%

As expected, the numbers on the Roll fell significantly compared with the 2024 revised Roll. This reflects typical patterns seen across the Parishes of England in renewal years, as inactive members do not reapply.

There is, however, cautious optimism for an increase in the 2026 Roll as, we have seen an increase in attendance across the parish and hope that will be reflected in the numbers.

Sincere thanks are offered to my fellow Electoral Roll Officers, Eluned Hallas (St Nic's) and Keith Bowman (St Michael's) for their hard work and support. Keith's extensive knowledge of church rules helps tremendously with planning.

Finally, a special thanks to Richard Kirby must also be recorded. Richard resigned as PERO during last year and we would like to thank him for all his work over the years.

*Kate Burland*

*Parish Electoral Roll Officer & St Helens ERO*

*April 2026*

**1c PCC [Eluned Hallas, PCC Secretary]**

The business of the PCC includes statutory governance – finance, Safeguarding, Health & Safety etc - and those issues best approached on a Parish, rather than Church, basis. It is also a forum for communications throughout the Parish, including details of Parish and Church sponsored events, and feedback on Deanery and Diocesan issues.

The PCC of the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames met eight times during 2025, with the Standing Committee / Clergy & Wardens Group meeting regularly between full PCC meetings.

Perhaps the most important work of the PCC during 2025 concerned the appointment of a new Team Rector. Throughout the process congregation members were asked to hold the process in prayer, and to feed in their comments via PCC members. Work started with an open meeting of parishioners in January, at which those able to attend identified the type of qualities and person sought. A small team, of PCC members and others, and representative of the three churches, was tasked with drawing up a Parish Profile – showcasing the town and Parish, and the activities of our

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three congregations. The PCC were active participants commenting on and amending all the documents required for the application pack. All six wardens were on the interview panel, along with the Team Vicar, Bishop, Archdeacon and Area Dean; members of the clergy team and of all three congregations were invited to meet all three candidates interviewed.

At the conclusion of six months prayerful consideration, on the part of both the Parish and the candidates, we were delighted to be able to invite Rev Jen to the post, and have our invitation accepted.

In the absence of a Team Rector, until October 2025 the PCC was guided by Sue Scott as Lay Chair and Fr Paul. Discussions focussed on

- Safeguarding: the PSO worked with wardens and others to get safeguarding training up to date, and embed safer working procedures into the activities of the Parish. Our grateful thanks to Pat Hudson, and the District Safeguarding Officers for all their work on this. As part of our wider safeguarding responsibility the PCC opened discussions on how best to respond to visitors to our churches seeking support, both practical and spiritual.
- Finance including regular monitoring and budget setting. The PCC continued to receive and review quarterly reports and budget proposals. That these are submitted as one per church (rather than consolidated) makes understanding each church's position easier.
- Health & Safety Governance – continuing the work to establish, consolidate and standardise H&S practices across the Parish.
- Clergy welfare.
- Publicity for Christmas & Easter Services, and other church organised events, aiming to reduce date conflict and improve awareness within the church community and beyond.

The PCC continues to review and approve faculty applications and other fabric matters across the Parish- which this year included a new external light at St Michael's, restoration and repair of the Blacknall Aisle and Monument at St Nicolas', new energy efficient lighting at St Nicolas, and the start of the new Lighting Project at St Helen's. New noticeboards at all three churches are under consideration – with the same 'look & feel' to be adopted across the parish.

GDPR and Parish Policies remain regular items on the PCC agendas

#### **1d Safeguarding [Patricia Hudson, PSO]**

We have made significant progress over the past year from the early 2025 starting point of 41% compliant on the parish dashboard to now 84% so sincere thanks to everyone concerned but we are aiming at 99% so we persist. I think the overall level of awareness has risen and that we are all safer.

The overlap with both health and safety and pastoral work is important.

I'm very grateful for Catherine Kimber as DBS verifier, Jenny Fishpool on the ground at St Nicolas, Emmanuel Chukwuma at St Helens and Douglas Aitken at St Michaels.

Eight concerns have emerged across the parish this past year (one an anonymous request for prayer) but there is only one current active safeguarding case which social care are addressing with much support from church members as volunteers. Support is available for known survivors of domestic abuse.

There is an ongoing situation which is potentially disruptive to worship and could place people in an unsafe position in that one lady with mental health issues comes into our church buildings at random times and can be quite threatening. We have a procedure in place.

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Not quite everyone who needs to have a DBS has one nor has everyone completed the level of training required although numbers are small now. There was a data breach with the provider we were using and on Diocesan advice we have switched to Verifile. Inevitably it has not been a totally smooth process but teething troubles should resolve.

Our next main priorities are

- Applying the recruitment process for volunteers. We have established role descriptions and risk assessments for nearly all roles this year.
- Ensuring our use of social media meets national guidelines.
- Ensuring that non church groups hiring the parish hall are compliant with our safeguarding policy.
- Clarifying what housegroups exist.
- Discussions on promoting a healthy and safe culture. It is our culture that matters. This is about caring for each other and respecting every human being as precious to God.

The Diocese has been given some funding to support Parish Safeguarding Officers and after some focus groups, I have volunteered to co-ordinate a deanery support group which will help keep our practice fresh

*Patricia Hudson, PSO*

### **1e Abingdon Deanery Synod [Sue Scott]**

Abingdon Deanery Synod is part of the Diocese of Oxford and is one of 11 deaneries within the Archdeaconry of Dorchester whose membership represents 26 churches in 10 benefices.

The Synod is a vehicle to discuss key issues and to look at the church's ministry and mission in a geographical area. The Deanery Synod sits between the Parishes with their PCCs and the Diocese with the Diocesan Synod. It is a key channel of communication.

The Synod is a place to support each other in difficult times and a place to celebrate the good things happening in our churches. It is also a place where the views of the Parishes can be brought together. Proposals can be made to Diocesan Synod for discussion if the Deanery feels this is necessary/appropriate. Clergy and Laity have equal status in the Synod.

The Parish currently has 5 elected members from the House of Laity:

- Alexandra Green (St Helen's)
- Hazel Glennie (St Helen's)
- Alexandra Scott (St Michael and All Angels) ex officio Diocesan Synod
- Sue Scott (St Michael and All Angels) Lay Chair and ex officio Diocesan Synod, Bishop's Council and Deputy Chair of the House of Laity Oxford Diocese
- Eluned Hallas (St Nicolas)

This has been a challenging year for many of our churches and things continue to be difficult for many. The aim has been to create a balance between providing information, giving time for discussion and also responding to common concerns. The Synod met 4 times in 2025 (January, April, September and November). In response to feedback some of the meetings now take place on zoom and some in person. Some of the business covered has included:

- Finance issues including the Budget, Parish Share, The Deanery Parish Support Fund and Mission Grants. All Parishes receive at least the amount of rebate given as a result of timely payment of Parish share but have also benefitted from a top up of that rebate being given from funds held by the Deanery.

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- Opportunities to share good practice and expertise to develop Parish Mission Action Plans – with a particular focus on work with Children, Young people and Families which is part of a 5 year focus for all parishes and deaneries in the Diocese.
- Outside speakers – including Rev Asa Humphreys, a Parish Development officer from the Diocese and an experienced planning officer. He gave an informative presentation about the issue of church engaging effectively with new housing developments and things for us to consider.
- Raising awareness of Diocese resources and how to access services eg Churchwarden Training, use of Safeguarding Dashboards and Church Energy Audits.
- New Congregations / New initiatives / Eco church /Children and families.

The Deanery also now holds an online zoom Prayer meeting on the first and third Tuesday of each month 7.30-8.00am led by Sue Scott Lay Chair. Materials are distributed to all Deanery clergy, Church Wardens and Deanery Synod Reps. Each meeting begins with prayers for one of our churches/benefices and each church/benefice is prayed for in rotation.

A key role of the Deanery Synod is to represent the views of the Parishes and to seek ways to support the work of the Church in this place. Please speak to your Parish representatives so that they can raise issues questions or concerns on your behalf. Churchwardens are also very welcome to attend.

Minutes of all Synod meetings and Standing Committee meetings can be found on the website at [abingdondeanery.org.uk](http://abingdondeanery.org.uk) together with other news and information about the work of the Deanery Synod.

Please could you pray for the work of the Deanery Synod as it strives to seek God's guidance to support the work of the Church in this place.

*Sue Scott,*

*St Michael and All Angels representative and Lay Chair Abingdon Deanery Synod*

## **1f Abingdon Diocesan Synod [Sue Scott]**

The Diocesan Synod is the governing body of the Church of England in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. The bishop has a duty to consult the Diocesan Synod on matters of general importance and concern to the diocese and, in turn, Diocesan Synod provides a connection to Deanery Synods and PCCs.

We currently have full representation for the House of Laity (3) and no representatives from the House of Clergy in the Dorchester Archdeaconry. Two of the House of Laity representatives are from within our Parish. An election took place in 2024 and so the current membership will cover the period 2024 to 2027. Members of Diocesan Synod are ex Officio members of Deanery Synod and PCC for the duration of the term of office to Diocesan Synod.

The Synod meets 3 times a year usually on a Saturday to consider issues facing the church in the Diocese, to share experience from across the diocese and to consider issues which face the national church. Members can also be elected to boards and committees including Bishop's Council which is the executive committee of the Diocesan Synod. The Parish currently has representation at this level.

Synod met in March, June and November 2025. Two of these meetings were online and one in person.

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The Church is facing a time of great challenge. Some of the issues which have been discussed are:

- Safeguarding
- Children and Young people strategy
- Financial matters inc Parish Share
- Diocesan Board of Education
- Living in Love and Faith
- Eco church and Environmental issues

Further information about the work of the Synod can be found at [www.oxford.anglican.org](http://www.oxford.anglican.org)

The pathway to follow is – homepage>who we are>How we are governed>Diocesan Synod>documents

The Synod does not always speak as one voice. But the aim is that together we can work towards being a more Compassionate, Courageous and Contemplative Church.

*Sue Scott*

*Diocesan Synod Representative /Bishop's Council / Deputy Chair House of Laity Oxford Diocese*

### **1g St Nicolas School and Education Trust Abingdon [Eluned Hallas]**

The St Nicolas School and Education Trust Abingdon is a CIO incorporated, in 2022, to take over the assets and activities of an existing exempt charity: Abingdon St Nicholas Church of England Primary School charity.

The objects of the CIO are for the public benefit within the parish of Abingdon-on-Thames in the County and Diocese of Oxford:

- To advance education in such ways as the trustees shall from time to time think fit.
- To advance the Christian faith in accordance with the beliefs and practices of the Church of England.
- To further the objects and work of the Church of England in the said Parish in such ways as the trustees shall from time to time think fit.

The four ex-officio Trustees are: the Team Rector of the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames, and the Team Vicar and Churchwardens of St Nicolas Church, Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames. Following the retirement one St Nicolas Warden and of the Team Vicar, the Diocese approved the appointment of Mr Paul Rast-Lindsell and Mr Rob Bough as interim Trustees.

With the retirement of the Team Rector in late 2024 momentum slowed, and was further affected by the unavailability through ill health of one Trustee early in 2025, followed by the retirement of the Team Vicar. It is hoped that 2026 will see

- The completion of negotiations with the Charity Commission
- The transfer of assets to the chosen Investment Company
- Adoption of appropriate policies

so that the Trust can start work in direct furtherance of its charitable objectives during the year.

The provision of Bibles to St Nicolas School (established by tradition by the existing Trust) continued.

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## **2     *STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MEMBERSHIP***

The Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames is served by a Team Rector and a Team Vicar (currently in Vacancy).

The Parochial Church Council of Abingdon-on-Thames is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure, and was formally registered with the Charity Commission on 27 May 2009.

Lay members of the PCC are appointed in accordance with the provisions of the Church Representation Rules, as originally authorized as Schedule 3 to the Synodical Government Measure 1969 and subsequently amended by the General Synod. All eligible church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC. PCC members (and DCC members) are encouraged to attend training sessions as appropriate. Most often these are courses organised by the Diocese of Oxford.

In addition to the Parochial Church Council (PCC) for the parish of Abingdon-on-Thames, there are three District Church Councils (DCCs). The PCC has delegated to the DCCs responsibility for detailed implementation of most of its functions, in a continuation of a Scheme approved by the Bishop.

The PCC is therefore able to concentrate on those matters which cannot be delegated, or are of common concern. Responsibility for finance, health and safety and safeguarding rests with the PCC. Health and Safety, Safeguarding of Children & Vulnerable adults and other pertinent legislation is adhered to, and there are policies in place to this effect.

DCCs operate within a budget and financial envelope determined by their annual income and reserves and approved by the PCC. Each church Treasurer produces their own budgets and quarterly reports, which are reviewed and approved by the relevant DCC before presentation to the PCC for discussion and final approval. Special appeals are launched for special projects (typically capital projects) as appropriate.

Buildings are insured and regularly inspected. The maintenance of ancient buildings is a heavy responsibility for the PCC, but this is not unusual in the Church of England.

The PCC is exposed to risks associated with buildings, finances and availability of volunteer effort. To say 'The Lord will provide' may not be an acceptable approach to financial risk management in the secular world; but seeking the Will of God through constant prayer and responding to His Will moment by moment are key instruments by which the PCC manages risk in labour and financial matters.

The PCC has sub groups:

The *Standing Committee* (comprising the Team Rector & Team Vicar, church wardens, the secretary, the treasurer, and the vice-chairman) has power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the PCC. This meets regularly between full PCC meetings.

The *Finance Working Group* (comprising the Parish Treasurer, the Treasurers of the DCCs and a limited number of co-opted members from all three churches) meets as required to discuss topics of parish interest. The immediate aims of the Group are, firstly, to provide a forum at which the Treasurers can discuss common problems and learn from each other. Secondly, to consider financial issues affecting the parish and propose appropriate solutions. The Group met twice in 2025, but more frequent meetings are planned for 2026.

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### **3 PROPERTY**

#### **3a Enock House, Musson Close [Linda Hobbs]**

The House for Duty Parish property, 2 Musson Close purchased in 2015, is a 4 bedroom Town House is within walking distance of the three Parish churches. It continues to be occupied by Revd Dr. AKMA Adam and his wife Dr. Margaret Adam. The current License to occupy will continue until the end of Fr AKMA's current appointment with the Diocese.

Since last reported no repairs have been required, the Gas Safety certificate, a legal requirement, was renewed in February, all repair and maintenance costs for repairs being met from Parish funds, as agreed under the License to Occupy.

Since occupation by Revd Dr. Adam repairs have been minimal, but it is anticipated expenditure will be required when vacated, with necessary redecoration and maintenance.

The property continues to be managed by Linda Hobbs, Licensed Lay Minister.

#### **3b Fairacres Road [Rob Bough]**

Pursuant to a bequest from Mr Derek Enock in 2009, each church in the parish has an interest in a residential property in Fairacres Road, Oxford, which is held on a trust. The current occupant of the property has the right to reside there for as long as she wishes. If the property is sold, she will be entitled to the income from the invested sale proceeds. Upon her death the property or proceeds from the sale will pass to the five beneficiaries of Mr Enock's estate. The trust is administered for the beneficiaries by Freeths Solicitors. The position remains the same as last year, with the occupant continuing to reside at the premises.

## **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

The following Vision Statement was agreed by the PCC on 22nd November 2000 and continues to apply to the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames:

“A single unified parish with a Team Ministry in which clergy and laity work together to serve interdependent congregations, within an active ecumenical organisation where:

- The Gospel of Christ is celebrated through worship and fellowship, with individual congregations providing a spectrum of traditions
- The life of the Church is built up through teaching, preaching, evangelism, pastoral care and ecumenical co-operation
- God's love is made known in mission and service to the community and society as a whole.”

The activities undertaken to enable the PCC to achieve these objectives are described in the Achievements & Performance section, and in the reports from the constituent churches.

The PCC is heavily dependent upon the contribution of volunteers to drive forward the mission of the church and the Kingdom of God.

### **Public Benefit**

The PCC is aware of the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in "The Advancement of Religion for the Public Benefit" and have regard to it in their administration of the Parish. The PCC believes that, by fulfilling its responsibility to work together with the incumbent in the Parish and co-operate in all matters of concern and importance for the promotion of the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical, it provides a benefit to the public by:

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
**FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025**

- providing resources and facilities for public worship, pastoral care and spiritual, moral and intellectual development, both for its members and for anyone who wishes to benefit from what the Church offers;
- promoting Christian values, and service by members of the churches in the Parish to their communities, to the benefit of individuals and society as a whole.

*Reports from individual churches, and from groups closely related to the activities of the Parish, are attached as Appendices to this report.*

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
**FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025**

**TREASURERS' REPORT ON**  
**THE YEAR ENDED 31 DEC 2025**

The Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames consists of three churches (St Helen's, St Michael's and St Nicolas') which have separate treasurers and accounts. The Parish accounts are produced by consolidating the accounts of the three churches.

**Income and Expenditure**

The "bottom line" for the Parish in the year 2025 was a deficit of £26k (2024: surplus £48k). This consisted of a surplus of £9k on the unrestricted funds and a deficit on the restricted funds of £35k.

The most significant influences on the Parish accounts in 2025 were

- The vacancies at all three churches, reducing the parish share overall by £9k
- Fundraising contributed £20k (2024: £22k) to the outcome.
- Voluntary income reduced to £274k in 2025 from £289k in 2024.
- Church costs in 2025 included £27k on energy, £19k on building insurance and £40k repairing the Blacknall tomb.
- The value of our investments dropped £17k in 2025 (2024: £18k gains).

**Balance Sheet**

The Balance Sheet shows our funds held at the end of the year, £1,275k (£1,318k in 2024).

The largest component of our funds is investments. They were valued at £537k, (2024: £541k). Our investments were held by CCLA, who have proved excellent managers of our reserves in previous years. We are expecting a recovery in 2026, as far as is possible in uncertain times.

The Parish owns two freehold properties, the Parish Centre and the House for Duty property purchased in 2015. Legal title of both is held by the Diocesan Trustees (Oxford) Ltd as custodian trustees on behalf of the Parish. Both are held for the mission of the church. The two properties appear in the balance sheet as Tangible Fixed Assets.

Short term deposits decreased by £27k during the year, partly because St Nicolas' withdrew previous savings to pay for the work on the Blacknall Tomb, and partly through St Helen's investing some of their endowment deposits.

PCC policy is that unused fund balances should be invested with CCLA CBF Church of England funds.

**Restricted Funds**

Restricted funds are often for long term projects, so may be built up over several years and spent over a short period of time, such as occurred in 2025 when the Blacknall tomb was repaired. Surpluses and deficits on these funds are not necessarily unexpected or worrying.

Grants received in 2025 included £13k (2024: £3.5k) of VAT refunded on church repairs under the Listed Places of Worship Scheme.

St Nicolas' Church is the beneficiary of the Blacknall Trust, administered by Christ's Hospital. Every year the church receives a proportion of the dividends received from the substantial investments of the Trust. The income may only be spent on the fabric of St Nicolas' Church. In 2025 St Nicolas received £10k from the Blacknall Trust (2024: £11.5k).

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
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**Going Concern**

The PCC is required to operate on a going concern basis. The Parish has a policy to hold at least two months of average expenditure in liquid form. All three churches had sufficient liquidity at the year-end, averaging 6.2 months (2024: 5.0 months)

The Parish also aims to have reserves, appropriate to each church, to cover the future demands of building maintenance. This is not easy to evaluate and needs further consideration. I do not consider there to be risk of any of the churches being unable to pay for their building maintenance in the next three years, but we need to keep this under review.

*Susan Read & Jenny Smith*

*Treasurers, St Helen's Church, Abingdon, St Michael & All Angels & St Nicolas' Churches,  
Abingdon*

*18 March 2026*

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
**FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025**

**Appendix 1**  
**St Helen's Church**  
**Churchwardens' & Fabric Reports**

2025 was the year of vacancy number 1 segueing into vacancy number 2. It was with great joy and relief that David and I heard that Jen had accepted the offer of the post of Rector of Abingdon-on-Thames and we were delighted to see her inducted and installed in October. Shortly afterwards, Father Paul announced his retirement and we knew that we would be back into a vacancy! At least we had the Parish Profile ready and prepared.... (At the time of writing, things are well under way for the Team Vicar post to be advertised, interviews to follow in June.)

Looking back at 2025, I'd like to say a big thank you to all those who helped to make the Rector vacancy go so smoothly - to our clergy both regular and honorary, to Geoff Meen for chairing the DCC and Gwen Bevington for her continued work as DCC secretary, to our Administrator Jackie who held the fort in the office and to caretaker Robin both of whom had to adapt to 'the boss' not being so readily to hand.

Despite being in vacancy we managed to press ahead with improving our safeguarding thanks to the gentle and encouraging work of Pat Hudson. We continued to feed the body through hospitality and the mind with Faith Forum, Agnostics Anonymous and AKMA's Lenten talks. The Events group fed our coffers by running quite a few concerts and other events like the Heritage weekend. These occasions not only made money for the church but brought people into the building. Congregation numbers remained good throughout 2025 and by Christmas we had welcomed quite a few newcomers to our church and town.

Another area of growth over 2025 has been the number of Church and Centre bookings. We now have 2 regular Centre bookings with Yellow Submarine (a charity which helps young people with autism) meeting on Tuesday evenings and a Life Drawing class on Thursday evenings. We also hosted services or visits from Caldecott, Abingdon, the Manor, Abingdon Prep and St Helens and St Katherine schools, along with the Abingdon concert band, ADMS, the Abingdon Music Centre, the British Legion, the Knights' Templars and the Mayor-making. Our own Events group ran a Barn Dance, and three other concerts as well as organising activities for the Heritage weekend and assisting with the Christmas market. Groups from St. Edmund's Church, the Kennington History Society and the Oxford branch of the U3A all enjoyed guided tours of the church.

The wardens of the three churches have continued to meet regularly to share thoughts and concerns and we hope that as we move forward as a Team Ministry our congregations, too, will welcome the opportunity to get to know our sister churches better.

Much of what we do depends on the willingness and commitment of volunteers. A number of people who have served in various roles for many years stepped down in 2025 and I would like to record a vote of thanks to Susan Scott for her work with hospitality, Mary Anderson for chairing the Friends of St Helens (FoSH), Liz Norman for running the flower arrangers. We also saw Linda Hobbs who had already served the church so well as warden, move into new pathways with her licensing as a Lay Minister last November. We look forward to her ministry among us. There are areas of church life where more help is needed, acting as sidesmen, running and helping with FoSH, helping with events to name but a few. If you could offer some time and assistance, please let David and myself know.

There is a plethora of activities going on across the church, of which we can be proud. A big thank you is owed to so many people who help in so many ways, both on Sundays and throughout the week, in maintaining a worshipping and welcoming community, serving the people of Abingdon. Two

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
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people I feel bound to mention whose contribution is not seen by many: Steve Thomas who keeps a constant eye on the fabric and maintenance of both the church and the Centre building (not to mention stewarding when he has a spare hour!) Thanks are also due to Jeanette, his very patient wife, who may not see as much of him as she would like!!

Susan Read has been our Church Treasurer now for many years, and she and her team of helpers put in many hours of work checking our accounts and alerting us to how we are doing in breaking even or not. They have recently made their base in the small, upstairs room in the Centre. We couldn't do without them!

*Margaret Horton & David Pope, Churchwardens*

## **FABRIC REPORT**

The 5-yearly periodic inspection of the electrical installations in the church and Parish Centre went ahead in 2025. The main issue is degradation of some of the Mineral Insulated Copper Clad lighting cables in the church. There is a long history of roof leaks in several locations in the church. This has caused corrosion of the copper where the cables have been in contact with damp lime plaster. This has allowed water to penetrate the cables, resulting in low insulation resistance and consequent failure of the electrical tests. Regular cleaning of the church roof and gutters has reduced the occurrences of leaks, but the risk can never be eliminated completely, given the complexity of the roof structure. The MICC cables will all be replaced as part of the installation of a new lighting system. The new cables will be polymer-sheathed and resistant to damp.

There had been a problem with the reliability of the Parish Centre fire alarm system, with regular false alarms and high maintenance costs. A new alarm system has been installed, along with new smoke and heat sensors.

The fluorescent light fittings in the Bell Ringing Chamber have been replaced with new LED battens. There was the complication of access to the Chamber as the spiral staircase is very narrow. The contractor was able to find a scaffolding tower in a narrow format with short vertical sections which fitted up the staircase.

There was a repetition of the church roof leak near the organ, as reported last year. There had been a temporary repair at the time with acrylic sealant, but subsequent movement of the lead had opened up a crack in the sealant and the leak returned. The sealant has been replaced with a permanent lead repair patch.

*Stephen Thomas, Fabric Officer*

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
**FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025**

**Appendix 2**  
**St Michael and All Angels' Church**  
**Churchwardens' & Fabric Reports**

**Introduction:**

In 2025 we said goodbye to our Vicar, the Revd Paul Smith, who retired in October after 15 years of faithful ministry in the parish and 25 years ministry as a priest. To bid him farewell we had a wonderful afternoon tea with accompanying musical entertainment.

His last Mass at St Michael's was in October with family, friends, and the congregations of all three churches. It was an uplifting service with hymns and anthems chosen by Fr Paul.

As we look back on another year, we must be thankful for the faithfulness of God amidst both our times of celebration as well as challenge.

**Worship and Services:**

During 2025 we held our regular pattern of services with a Sung Mass on Sunday at 09.30 and a Said Mass on Thursday (although during the winter months we moved into the church room for reasons of energy economy). In addition, we celebrated certain Holy Days, such as Ash Wednesday, Dedication Festival, All Souls Day. The average attendance on Sundays is 39 and the average attendance for the midweek Mass is 10.

**Lent and Easter:** During Lent, each Tuesday evening there was an opportunity to walk the Stations of the Cross. In Holy Week, Mass was celebrated on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday led by our Vicar. On Maundy Thursday we celebrated the Mass of the Lord's Supper with the Washing of the Feet as a Parish. On Good Friday morning Carol Bowman led a short interactive children's service which 38 adults and 18 children attended. The children then did a variety of craft activities whilst refreshments were served. The Easter Sunday service had 45 attendees.

**Christmas:** Our Christmas celebrations began with our popular Crib Service led by Carol Bowman 51 adults and 21 children attended. The Service of Nine Lessons and Carols took place on Christmas Eve with an attendance of 122 plus 1 child. Many thanks to Glynne Butt and the choir for their superb contribution to this beautiful service. Christmas Morning Mass had 34 adults and 5 children in attendance.

We had 4 baptisms and 2 services of Thanksgiving in 2025. Two couple celebrated their weddings at St Michael's. Additionally, there were 3 funerals. We had 1 interment of ashes.

We are gifted with the preaching of both Beryl Clements from our own congregation, and Gwen Bevington, Licensed Lay Minister (PTO). Preaching is of a high standard, a blessing to be cherished. We are very aware of how fortunate we are in this respect.

We are incredibly grateful to our honorary clergy and to our clergy for their continued dedication and commitment to service which enables us to worship at St Michael's. Especial thanks go to Revd Pauline Seaman and Revd Rosalind Rutherford for their faithful ministry in the leading of the Thursday lunchtime Said Mass.

We thank Glynne Butt, Graham Howell (our organist), and the choir for adding their significant gifts to our worship.

Carol Bowman has re-started Children's Church. We want to thank her and team of helpers in getting this initiative off the ground and hope to build on the foundations in the future.

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
**FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025**

**Community:**

Abingdon School held 3 services during 2025. A Leavers' service, in June, with 272 in attendance; and Lower School and Parents and Boarders' Carol Services in December with a total of 560 in attendance.

The Oxford Diocese Ride and Stride was held as usual. We opened the church to meet and greet the cyclists and offered refreshments as part of our cream teas series. Two keen cyclists rode to and from Oxford to support the causes of Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust and St Michael's.

The Albert Parks Singers continue to use the church for their rehearsals and held two concerts during the year; both were splendid, joyful occasions.

During the year, the church was hired out to various organizations to hold concerts: The Abingdon Chorale Choir, Bella's Family Choir, and a group of musicians also recorded a CD in aid of churches in Abingdon.

The church room is used by one group on a regular basis. It has also been hired on an ad hoc basis during the year.

We have continued to support various charities throughout the year: TAB, Tariro, Abingdon Foodbank, The Porch, Homeless Oxfordshire.

**Volunteers:**

Jenny, our treasurer, has worked extremely hard on our accounts, and presenting a financial report in such a prompt way that DCC members are able to understand the position in advance of each DCC meeting. Her presentations have been clear, accessible, and helpful and we should like to offer her our grateful thanks for her conscientiousness and time.

One of the strong characteristics of St Michael's is the way that members of the congregation come together to help in so many ways. We should like to thank all our volunteers who contribute to keep things running smoothly. We could not manage without those who clean the church and church room; those who arrange the flowers; those who do vital odd jobs – small repairs, cleaning and repairing the linen or sorting out the heating or sound; those who make the coffee; the vergers at weddings and funerals; our side-persons; those who manage publicity on the website. Nor should we forget to express our gratitude to our fund-raising team whose efforts have improved our financial situation and brought more music and people into the church. And we should not forget our DCC whose members meet regularly for the benefit of St Michael's. We thank them for their commitment. We thank you all.

We would like to thank those who help in our worship: those who serve at the altar, our sacristans, our organists, readers and intercessors, our dedicated choir members, our bell ringers. Much work goes on behind the scenes; we must thank David Duce who prepares our service booklets for all our worship, and faithfully creates the pew leaflet each week so keeping us all informed. We are also blessed to have members of the congregation who are happy to lead worship, for instance in Silent Reflections, walking the Stations of the Cross, Advent walks.

We would like to thank the Revd Dr Jen Brown for her support during the vacancy and wish her well in the coming years in her ministry to the parish.

Finally, a big thank you to Fr Paul for his leadership, support, kindness, and love. Let us continue to pray for the Lord's blessing on him in his retirement.

*Louise Heffernan and Joyce Kelly, March 2026*

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
**FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025**

**FABRIC REPORT**

Routine Maintenance was conducted as usual in 2025. The boilers were serviced, PAT testing carried out, the organ tuned, meters read, fire extinguishers and alarms maintained.

In May, the Park Keeper of Albert Park kindly came to remove the invasive, self-seeded Tree of Heaven at the West Door. Our thanks to Laurie for organising this. Also, in November our immediate neighbours in St Michael's Avenue arranged for the felling of a Leyland Cypress and another tree, both of which were shedding leaves and debris onto the roof of the church room. We are incredibly grateful to Mr and Mrs Sloane for their help in this matter.

PJD Construction improved the guttering between the south aisle and transept in September. since when we have had no further ingress of water. (£1,424.40)

In August Cord Electricals came to fit new LED lights above the South Transept and the Chancel. (£2016.00)

On 24<sup>th</sup> December Cords replaced the two faulty lights by the South Door and porch (£192.00).

During the entirety of 2025 communications between the DAC, the fabric committee and our contractors were exchanged about the fitting of a safety light above the North Door. Eventually the plans were amended to fit DAC criteria and permission was granted in early January 2026.

Many thanks are due to Ming who single-handedly repaired the green railings outside the church room, having sourced the parts needed. Also, Ming has marked the settings on the sound system controls so that some of the gremlins we were experiencing are improved.

*Louise Heffernan March 2026*

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
**FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025**

**Appendix 3**  
**St Nicolas' Church**  
**Churchwarden's & Fabric Reports**

*Comings & Goings*

In the summer of 2025 Fr Paul announced his intention to retire, after 25 years ministry – 15 in Abingdon. It was a great sadness for us, but obviously the right decision for him. St Nicolas is, unfortunately, a bit small to host large Parish events, but we were pleased to be able to join in a lovely farewell tea at St Michael's. Fr Paul's final service at St Nic's was, perhaps appropriately, Morning Prayer when it was good to see so many well wishers come to say good-bye (God be with you). At this service he presented us with a water colour of the St Nicolas window which is currently in the clergy vestry. His final Service in the Parish was a joint Mass at St Michael's on 9 October. We wish him well in his retirement.

Also in October was the institution by the Bishop of Dorchester Rt Revd Gavin Collins and the induction and installation by the Archdeacon of Dorchester the Venerable David Tyler of Revd Dr Jen Brown as Rector of Abingdon on Thames which took place in St Helen's. In November Linda Hobbs was licenced as a Licensed Lay Minister at Christ Church Cathedral.

And in December we heard that Revd Kevin Beer had been granted Permission to Officiate (PTO) in the Parish – we look forward to his new ministry among us.

In the spring we were pleased to have Sophie with us as part of her Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme volunteering. Sophie helped with a number of tasks around church (particularly the new notice board layouts and tidying the children's activities) and also joined us at Services.

*Services:*

Our Sunday Services followed the normal pattern in 2025, with the 8.00am Parish Holy Communion (1662), alternating monthly with St Helen's, and our main morning service at 11.15am. We aim to zoom all 11:15am (and celebration) services, and also to make the sermons available on line.

St Nicolas also hosted the Parish Ascension Day evening Communion and St Nicolas Evensong – both with the support of musicians from our sister churches and wider afield.

A special delight this year was the Evensong, at which Bishop Gavin officiated and preached, to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the death of John and Mary Blacknall, and to celebrate the completion of the restoration of the Blacknall Memorial. The evening aimed to be close to that which would have been familiar to the Blacknalls. So we had 1662 Evensong, with readings from the King James Bible, settings by Orlando Gibbons, and hymns with 17<sup>th</sup> Century words and / or music. The refreshments provided after the service were refreshments that John Blacknall would have recognised – bread, English butter, local cheeses, local ham, and fresh plums. The drinks – elderflower, apple juice, wine, cider and small beer - were common in John Blacknall's days. Our thanks to all involved in the planning of, and with helping on, the day.

Our monthly Services of Communion by Extension for residents of Bridge House and Old Station House continued, and it has been good to welcome some residents to our morning services.

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
**FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025**

We again provided the venue for the Church in Abingdon week of lunch time prayers for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This year the services were based around local community groups – covering their activities and links with the Church in Abingdon, and including shared witnesses from their users and volunteers. The after service refreshments offered further time to explore the topics. Many thanks to all who helped by stewarding and providing lunch.

It was a privilege to host the funerals of Revd Christopher Seaman and Pauline Burren who had given many years of Service to the church.

***Activities:***

For several years we have used the south porch as a gentle outreach to passers-by by displaying a Nativity Scene in the run up to Christmas, and a Lent Display. In 2025 we expanded this to include displays for Ascension Day, Pentecost and Trinity Sunday, and Advent. Thanks to all who helped with these displays.

Throughout the year the church was open Church to visitors – primarily on Monday mornings, but also for the OHCT Ride & Stride Day, Heritage Open Days, and to coincide with Saturday events in the Market Place. We often have other visits from various groups, both local and from further afield. Thank you to all who have assisted in Stewarding at these events. During Heritage Open Days the ‘Picture in a Day’ art exhibition was repeated, and drew a greater number of entries than the first year.

After-service coffee on Third Sundays offers the opportunity for the congregation to talk and get to know each other more. The traditional St Nicolas Day Lunch at Coseners House in December was well attended by members from all three churches in the Parish.

We hosted the usual Sunday afternoon concerts by Abbey Chamber Concerts, other concerts, and charity events, two art sales by Abbey Artists and a couple of evening events by Mostly Books. In the run up to Christmas we welcomed back Cards for Good Causes. Many thanks to all who stewarded and supported these events.

Thanks too to the Revd Richard Pyke who gave us permission to use one of his pictures of St Nicolas in the snow as a basis for a St Nicolas Christmas Card.

***Thanks:***

On behalf of the congregation, I’d like to give thanks to all those (ordained and lay) who have led services at St Nic’s over the year. Also, to Jenny for all her work as Treasurer, and Sue Cox for her work maintaining and enhancing the garden. Thank you too, to those who have led our prayers and our music, who acts as Stewards on Sundays and other occasions and to those who assist as Sacristans and Communion Assistants.

Finally, my thanks to everyone who has supported St Nicolas throughout the year - through prayer, donations, or practical work week by week - doing those small tasks which we would only notice if they were not done. Your support is what enables St Nic’s to be St Nic’s.

**FABRIC REPORT 2025**

The major project of 2025 was work on the refurbishment of the Blacknall Memorial which was completed in July. The monument was carefully cleaned, the top section paint meticulously restored and the bottom stone effect repainted.

In the Blacknall Aisle the lower paintwork (badly affected by damp) was carefully cleaned and stabilised. The north east corner will be monitored for moisture content for a year, after

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
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which decisions will be made about a long term plan for the area – which could be to repaint in the original Victorian scheme, install light-weight panelling or some combination.

External work to try to protect the Blacknall Aisle from further damp included the replacement of the guttering around the aisle, and changes to the external drainage along the north wall.

While in church the plaster specialists did some remedial work to tidy up the sites where the old gas heaters had been removed; rawl plugs and unneeded fittings were removed and the holes made good with appropriate materials. After this the soot-stained areas were washed and repainted using the same paint as originally applied.

Also during the year the church lighting was renewed, with new energy efficient lighting installed throughout the church. We also took the opportunity to install motion sensitive lighting in those areas where lights were unintentionally left on – behind the organ, in the vestries and staircase. New emergency lighting was also fitted. We believe we are already benefitting from reduced electricity bills. We are grateful for a Diocesan energy efficiency grant towards this work.

Plans for new external noticeboards were put forward. As all three churches in the Parish are looking to replace their noticeboards it was agreed to adopt a co-ordinated parish style. We hope these will be in place in 2026.

Dr Cox and Professor Holligan continued to keep a watching eye on developments in net zero technology which may be applicable in St Nic's.

Routine testing of the lightening conductor, central heating, automatic doors and fire extinguishers was carried out during the year. The organ and piano were retuned regularly.

*Eluned Hallas*

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
**FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025**

**Appendix 4**  
**Adult Education**

Adult education within the parish is largely provided through Faith Forum and Agnostics Anonymous, with other initiatives appearing on a more ad hoc basis as needed.

Faith Forum provides an opportunity for members of the congregations and others in the parish to hear talks on aspects of the Christian faith and how Christian faith relates to other areas of life and culture. A buffet lunch is provided from 12.20pm, and the talks run from 12.45pm to 1.30pm (including Q&A time). Thanks are due to Linda Hobbs, who with assistance from Hazel Glennie and Elizabeth Simpson, provides hospitality for Faith Forum. Faith Forum talks continue to be streamed on Zoom and, with the permission of the speaker, are recorded. Recordings are then made available on the parish website.

The Faith Forum planning group continues to meet at the end of each Faith Forum ‘season’, to review the most recent programme and plan for future talks. The topic of the spring series, was ‘Big Topics’ in Theology, which included Creation, Incarnation, Redemption, and Salvation. In the autumn, we considered Personal Spirituality, including Prayer, Lectio Divina & Meditation on the Scriptures, and Putting Faith into Action. The spring 2026 series will look at aspects of the liturgy. Other topics being considered for future series include Environmental Theology, and Denominational Identities. I would like to express my thanks to the members of the planning group: Norman Gee, Eluned Hallas, Linda Hobbs, Margaret Hoskins, David Pope, Rob Rutherford and Roderick Smith. I would also like to thank Nick Hallas for Zoom hosting, and Steve Thomas for ensuring recordings of Faith Forum make it onto the parish website. Thanks are also due to the speakers who provided talks in 2025.

Agnostics Anonymous meets monthly in the parish centre, with breaks for Easter, summer holidays, and Christmas, and is advertised to the wider community, attracting a mix of people from our own congregations, other churches in Abingdon, and those who are not regular church attenders. Topics in 2025 covered a range of subjects, including Prayer for Agnostics, Is Christian Language Too Male, Does Being Religious Make You a Better Person, Believing-Behaving-Belonging, Can Christianity Help Combat the Extinction Crisis, Why Would a Good God Create through Evolution’s Violence and Waste, Why Do Christians Bother with the Old Testament, and Can You Believe in Both Science and the Bible. Agnostics Anonymous saw a change in personnel in 2025, as John Kerr stepped down from the panel, and we welcomed a guest speaker, Dr Bethany Solereder, for the first time. Thanks are due to John Kerr and John Barton for their commitment to Agnostics Anonymous and for the thoughtful talks both have given. Thanks also to Margaret Horton for arranging all the publicity for Agnostics Anonymous and acting as host at the talks.

In Lent 2025, Fr AKMA led a series of ‘Spiritual Snacks’, brief talks about the history and contemporary observance of Lent, which received appreciative attendance. This year he has offered talks on the topic, ‘Inside the Liturgy: Actions and Meaning’, at which attendance has been even larger. He sends thanks to all for their patience and interest.’

The Desiring Life reading group and house groups continued to meet through 2025, providing another source of adult education and enrichment within the parish.

Revd Dr Jennifer Brown

Rector

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
**FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025**

**Appendix 5**  
**A Candle in the Window**

You will remember that this online version of the Parish Magazine was started in April 2020 as one means by which members of the Parish could keep in touch during the pandemic. We are still going.

Our guiding principles for the Parish magazine remain the same:

To represent the whole Parish by encouraging as many as possible to contribute

To encourage a wide readership

To inform, educate and entertain.

Is it fulfilling those purposes? It is still hard to answer that – what would you say? We don't get much feedback! The only statistic we have is to look at the number of downloads. Last year I reported it to be about 100 and printed copies are also available at St Nicolas and at the Parish Office for those who need them. This year it might have dropped off – we're unsure. However, this raw statistic doesn't tell us if the magazine is being enjoyed or even read! It is quite a lot of work and we ought to know. We think that the magazine provides a rich mixture. Please tell us if you are happy with it or how to improve it! Email [candle@abingdonparish.org.uk](mailto:candle@abingdonparish.org.uk)

*Rob Rutherford, Louise Heffernan and Eluned Hallas*  
*April 2026*

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
**FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025**

**Appendix 6**  
**Abingdon Society of Bellringers**

**Tower Bell Ringers**

The bells are rung every Sunday morning at St Helen's and St Nicolas', while Tuesday evening practices alternate at the two towers. On Friday afternoons we welcome boys from Abingdon School for their practice. This is followed by our own session, mainly for teaching youngsters.

As part of the Oxon Ringing School (along with Dorchester-on-Thames and Kirtlington), adults are taught basic bell handling on Saturday mornings. This is possible with the generous help of volunteer experienced teachers from a wide area of Oxfordshire.

In 2025 we organised two Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) day courses to train new teachers of bell ringing. Quite a few new teachers attend the Ringing School to be mentored and gain experience in order to achieve accreditation.

Last year we rang for the occasional wedding and tolled for some funerals.

Visitors are very welcome to come up the tower to see the bells and ringing. We are happy to teach girls and boys (from age 10) who may be interested in learning to handle a bell and join in.

*Brian Read, Tower Captain*

*March 2026*

**Report of Handbell Group Activities in 2025**

In 2025 our team had twelve members, enough for all the events at which we were asked to perform.

We held ten weekly practices starting on 13<sup>th</sup> October. We again met in the Parish Centre each Sunday evening.

We provide background music at church Christmas fairs and entertain at clubs, carol services and care homes.

I'd like to thank all the handbell ringers again this year for their helpfulness and for the fun we have had.

*Susan Read, Handbell Group Leader*

*March 2026*

Abingdon Society of Bell Ringers  
[www.abingdonbells.org.uk](http://www.abingdonbells.org.uk)

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
**FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025**

**Appendix 7**

**Report on the activities of the Church in Abingdon**

The Parish is a member of the Church in Abingdon, represented by Team Clergy and elected representatives from each Church:

St H: Alexandra Green

St M: John Clare

St N: Sue Holligan

**GOVERNANCE CHANGES**

At a CiA Governing Body meeting in September 2025, it was agreed that:

- The Governing Body (comprising all staff members and one lay representative from each church, plus officials) would meet twice a year, in the first and third quarter.
- The activities of the CiA would be streamlined to those that work collectively with a focus on mission to the people of Abingdon.
- The Administrator hours to be reduced from 7 hours a week to 3.5 hours, given the streamlining as described.
- All task groups would function independently but were open to ask for support and submit notices via the monthly CiA News.
- Community funding to cease after the current 3-year period ends in December 2026.

**ACTIVITIES**

During the year:

- The Christian Aid group held the Christian Aid Week.
- The Christian Forum column continued to appear in the Abingdon Round & About monthly magazine under the direction of the CiA Administrator Debra Mcknight.
- Several exchange visits of the Church Twinning group took place.
- The work of Desire continued.
- Two Alpha launch nights took place at Christ Church and St Edmund as a prelim to their Alpha courses.
- The work of Prayer Spaces continued in Abingdon schools with Ellie Ball in charge of schools in south Abingdon and Heather Hughes leading those in schools in north Abingdon.
- 35 Ock Street continued as a hospitality centre for the community offering a café and a listening ear, and meeting rooms for local groups and agencies.
- Abingdon Street Pastors continued operations.

***January***

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, whose theme was Serving Others in Our Local Community, the usual events took place: the Inter-church quiz, which took place at Abingdon Baptist Church, and was again won by Abingdon Baptist Church, and raised £123.60 for the charity Helen and Douglas House. Midday prayers took place at St Nic's Church.

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
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***February***

A Connect youth event took place.

***March***

The World Day of Prayer service took place at St Helen's Church organised by the CiA Administrator and volunteers from the previous WDP committee. The service for 2025 was prepared by the women of The Cook Islands with the theme 'I made you wonderful'. Revds Ruth and Richard Pyke led the service. £350.85 was raised for the work of the WDP charity.

Trinity Learning's Easter Experience took place at Trinity Church offering both live and online workshops to KS2 school children to access the Easter story.

The procession of witness took place on Good Friday from Abingdon Library to the lawn of the Roysse Room on Bridge Street for a short outdoor service led by Helen Cameron and the Salvation Army Band. An Easter Tract was given out.

***April***

A Connect youth event took place.

***May***

Christian Aid week took place and raised £3,178 from its market place sale and its street/online collections.

***June***

Church Twinning welcomed visitors from Sint Niklaas, Argentan and Schongau to mark 25 years of church twinning.

***July***

The South Abingdon Play & Activity Day event took place in south Abingdon.

***September***

Christ Church and St Edmund both held Alpha launch nights, prior to the start of their Alpha courses.

A Connect youth event took place.

***October***

The Michaelmas fair service took place led by Revd Georgina Bondzi-Simpson.

A Church Twinning visit took place to Sint Niklaas.

***December***

People from all the churches gathered in the Market Place to sing carols and give out leaflets detailing all the Christmas services taking place across Abingdon. Children's crafts were also on offer as well as hot pasties and mulled wine from Abingdon Street Pastors.

*Extracted from the CiA 2025 Annual Report*

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
**FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025**

**Appendix 8**  
**Report on St Nicolas School**

Over the past year, the School’s Governing Body has continued to work closely with staff, families, and the wider community to ensure our school remains a place where every child can “live life to the full.”

**School Development Priorities 2024–25**

Last academic year, our focus was on three key priorities:

1. Raising writing standards, with particular emphasis on handwriting and spelling.
2. Strengthening our universal offer so that pupils’ academic, social, and emotional needs are met in all areas of school life, especially in literacy and maths.
3. Improving attendance, with proactive support for families where persistent absence has been a concern.

These priorities have been supported by the continued use of the NICS Approach—Navigate, Inspire, Challenge, Succeed—which helps pupils and staff to be intentional in their learning and teaching respectively, ensure that pupils feel supported and celebrated, and develop the skills and knowledge they will need in order to thrive when they move on to secondary school.

At the end of last year, we were delighted to celebrate the following:

- **Academic Achievement:** KS2 SATs results were excellent again this year—Reading 90%, Writing 71%, Maths 87%—reflecting the hard work of pupils and staff.
- **Attendance:** Our focus on attendance has had a clear impact, with whole-school attendance rising to 94.9% this year.
- **SIAMS Inspection (27 September 2024):** The inspection affirmed that the school’s Christian vision shapes an inclusive, supportive, and aspirational community where all pupils can flourish.
- **Sports and Partnerships:** Through the Abingdon Partnership of Schools, pupils enjoyed opportunities to represent the school in cricket, cross-country, rugby, athletics, football, netball, tennis, and boccia—experiences that also strengthen links with neighbouring schools.
- **Performances and the Arts:** The middle-years production *Mystery at Magpie Manor* and our summer concert, involving over 100 pupils, highlighted the talent and creativity within our school community.
- **Support from the SNSA:** The SNSA continues to be a cornerstone of school life. Events such as the fireworks night, Summer Fair, and the second-hand uniform shop not only fundraise but also help bring the village community together.
- **Enrichment and Belonging:** From a rich programme of after-school clubs to the much-loved Abingdon Week and the Year 6–Reception buddy programme, pupils benefit from experiences that promote confidence, friendships, and community spirit.

Much of what we celebrate as a school is possible because of the strong partnership between pupils, staff, families, and our wider community – together we really can live life to the full.

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
**FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025**

**Priorities for 2025–26**

Since the start of the 2025/26 academic year, our priorities have been focused on::

- Building on improvements in writing across the school.
- Ensuring all pupils continue to receive high-quality, inclusive provision tailored to individual needs.
- Developing our support for pupils with special needs in Y1-5 through our programme of Enhanced Provision.
- Creating further opportunities for “wonder and awe” in line with SIAMS recommendations.
- Supporting good attendance and strong engagement from all pupils and families.
- Maintaining a focus on staff development and wellbeing.
- Preparing for the exciting introduction of Nursery provision, welcoming 3-year-olds into our school community.

We are grateful for the continued support of our whole community – it is one of the school’s assets, and we look forward to building on this in the year ahead.

*Gemma Wilson,*  
*Vice Chair of Governors, St Niclas CE School, Abingdon*

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES**  
**Annual Report (continued)**  
**FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025**

**Appendix 9**  
**Report on the Abingdon Foodbank**

Abingdon Food Bank - managed by Trussel Trust, a UK based anti-poverty charity - provides emergency food, and practical help and advice. Our two local Food Banks provide an important lifeline for many families within our community, allowing access to emergency food throughout the week.

Since the pandemic, there has been an ever-increasing demand for support, benefit payment changes and rising food costs have resulted in increased food poverty within the area.

At Christmas, Food Bank users received parcels of Christmas foods in addition to regular food parcels. In school holidays our Food Banks provide additional food to those families with children, to assist when school dinners are unavailable.

The Parish of Abingdon actively supports the work of our local Food banks, with regular donations each month, contributing additional donations at Harvest Festival and Christmas. Many of our parishioners donate and support the work through personal monthly Direct Debits.

As a “Church Family” we must aim to continue to support this important outreach in our community, giving thanks to all who contribute in any way.

*Linda Hobbs*  
*Licensed Lay Minister*