



## **Annual Report, Accounts, and Papers for the Annual Meetings**

**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2026, 11.15 a.m.**

Church Road, Earley, RG6 1EY

Earley Saint Peter's

[www.earleystpeters.org.uk](http://www.earleystpeters.org.uk)

Registered Charity Number 1128997

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### Appendix – Financial Statements

The financial statements are available online at

[www.earleystpeters.org.uk/governance/annual-reports-and-review/](http://www.earleystpeters.org.uk/governance/annual-reports-and-review/)

or by asking the Parish Office for a paper copy

## Vicar's Report

2025 was a year of both joy and challenge, for the parish and for me personally. The various contributions to this report reflect the many different teams and individuals who contribute to the life of the parish, and demonstrate the many gifts and skills that people bring. I encourage everyone to read this report carefully but also prayerfully, as I believe that we have much to be grateful for and the report highlights aspects of church life for which we can thank God, as well as pray for continued growth and flourishing.

I want to express my sincere thanks to all who are a part of Earley St Peter's, both those who have specific roles and also all who attend any of our services or groups, as well as those who pray regularly for the church. I also want to acknowledge and thank those who have contributed to church life in the past and whose commitment and skill have laid foundations for what we have today. It is important that I express this genuine gratitude as I will not be able to name every person and group in my report.

Our Ministry Team grew in 2025 with the arrival of our curate, Kajsa, who has been a great asset to the parish and quickly immersed herself in church life. Many have already benefited from her genuine pastoral care for people and her new initiatives, such as Sunshine Social. Madhuri, who was on placement with us in 2024, also joined us officially in September 2025 for her final year of theological training and it has been a joy to welcome her and to watch her flourish as she prepares for ordination in 2026. Her curacy is in Caversham so Madhuri will still be part of our Deanery. Libby continues to minister as Associate Priest and I am grateful for her supportive presence, and Clive Tillin also continues to thrive in his own ministry as preacher and sacristan. The ministry team would not be able to minister effectively without the hard work of our vergers, servers, sound team and welcomers, who are an integral part of the worshipping life of our church, as well as intercessors and readers.

Last year, I introduced the Mission Action Plan and I am delighted to present a summary with this report, which will also be available on the website. There has been development in all four of the main areas throughout the past year – 'Worship and Prayer', 'Pastoral Care', 'Mission (local and worldwide)', and 'Children and Youth' – as well as growth in the key threads that run through all four categories, namely Safeguarding, Hospitality and Eco. Various teams continue to meet and work hard in their roles, and I am working hard to bring together a bigger picture of how different groups fit together, particularly in Mission and Pastoral Care. This not only gives better structure and accountability but also identifies where teams can work together and where we need to explore new ideas where needs are not being met, for example reintroducing a pastoral visiting team which will be part of the wider Pastoral Care alongside existing teams. There are various small, committed teams that are involved in our church hospitality, often behind the scenes, and their work is much appreciated by people at various services and groups.

Last year saw some challenging pastoral situations, during which I was thankful for the wider ministry team, administrative support and our Safeguarding Officer, Sue. The nature of parish ministry is unpredictable and we regularly meet people at the saddest or most worrying times in their lives. This is where collaborative ministry, strong accountability and communication are vital so that we can support people in the most effective way possible.

A highlight of the year for me was the launch of 'Life in all its fullness' which gave people the opportunity to attend various training sessions, such as First Aid, Neurodiversity Awareness and Fire Safety. It was encouraging to see a range of people attend these sessions and I hope to continue this programme in the future. There were also a number of study courses including Confirmation classes, and the Confirmation service was a wonderful highlight of the year where eight candidates were confirmed by the new Bishop of Reading, Mary Gregory.

Liturgically, 2025 saw the introduction of Creationtide in September and I was pleased with how this was welcomed by the congregation. We were fortunate that Kajsa shared some of her beautiful art with us for an exhibition during this season, including the new sculpture which she made for St Peter's. In the church office, we are trying to make choices which are more environmentally friendly and I know there are a number of

people who have great ideas for the Eco strand of our Mission Action Plan, which is exciting. Sarah Godwin and Children's Church developed an eco area in the churchyard and there will be more developments in this area in the near future.

In our music department, we had some significant changes and events. Our Director of Music, Ben, worked very hard to earn a grant from the Cathedral Music Trust which has enabled us to employ a singing teacher, predominantly to work with the Song School, and to host more special events, including the 'Be a Chorister' workshop in the Autumn. I would like to thank the entire music department, choir and Song School for their commitment as we are fortunate to enjoy such wonderful music which is an asset to our worship at St Peter's. I was also delighted to join them, along with my son, to sing at Chichester Cathedral in the summer. 2025 also saw the announcement that our much-loved organist David would be retiring, and towards the end of the year, we began planning to advertise for a new organist.

John, our youth and children's worker, and the various teams for Children's Church, Inspiration, 'Questions and Cake', also all worked incredibly hard in 2025. It is a genuine joy to see so many children and young people at St Peter's, whether at services, groups or special events. It has been encouraging to see numbers of university students increase and their involvement with the youth group is appreciated by the leaders and young people. Tots and Teddies continues to thrive with their committed and enthusiastic team, reaching out to many in the community. Links with the school remain strong with Kajsa being appointed as a Governor and weekly collective worship led by one of our ministry team.

One challenge of 2025 was finances and we held a Generous Giving Campaign in the summer months, with guidance and input from the Diocese. Helen, our treasurer, and I worked very hard on this, and we did see an increase in regular giving, although due to other unexpected circumstances we did not notice an overall increase in income. With another large predicted deficit, and the knowledge that we will need new heating in church in the near future, trying to increase regular giving remains a priority. We have some brilliant fundraising events which help, and of course the generosity of bequests, but it is the regular giving that needs to increase significantly. As our congregations and church life grow and develop, we need financial resources to sustain this and to reflect that growth.

I want to offer special thanks to our Churchwardens, Sheila and Clive, and to express my particular gratitude to Clive, who ends his term as Warden in 2026. I will miss working with Clive and I have enjoyed our meetings, which have involved creativity and lots of laughs, which are much needed at times. I also want to thank each member of the PCC and Standing Committee who work hard, often behind the scenes, and particularly Diana, our PCC secretary. Ann Morbey will be stepping down from the PCC at the end of her term and I want to thank her for the contributions she made during her tenure.

Huge thanks, of course, also to go Mary, our Parish Administrator, whose competence and experience underpin many aspects of parish life. Sonja, our new Hall Manager, is also a great asset to the parish and I look forward to working with her more in the future. I do want to also give a special mention to some of the hidden teams, such as our fabulous flower team and our committed monthly cleaning team, who work behind the scenes to make our church look welcoming,

Finally, I want to acknowledge the numerous cards, flowers and well wishes that I received when my mum died in October at the age of 69. She developed sepsis just 4 months after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, and prior to this we had no idea she was seriously unwell. To say my life was upended would be an understatement, but the love from our church community helped me immensely. My mum visited St Peter's many times and found it to be a friendly and welcoming place, and she knew, more than most people, how happy I am being the vicar of this parish. She would have been so reassured to see the care I have been shown by so many people. I also want to add, as ever, thanks to Lawrence, my boys and my other closest family and friends for their ongoing support and love, without which I would find ministry - and life in general - a lot harder.

*Kate*

## Curate's Report

I have had a busy existence here in Earley since starting 9 months ago. We've settled in very well at Clevedon Drive and at Earley St Peters, and I am turning the garden into a loved space. I hope to bring that love elsewhere too, and I have been keeping busy getting to know the parish and parishioners (a work in progress), pastoral visiting, calls and home communions, setting up Sunshine Social, co-arranging the Foods of the World evening during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, organising an art exhibition (and another one is under way), developing the Advent Service that centred on the Jesus Prayer, occasionally leading Morning Prayer and Communion by extension, taking baptisms and funerals, developing sermons and preaching, and trying to support many other activities. I also had a lovely time on a retreat in September which was combined with a Byzantine Icon Writing Techniques Course at Southwark Cathedral. I am doing my best to keep up the icon writing, which is central to my spiritual wellbeing and prayer life. So far, I think I've managed to fulfil my role as a deacon well and I live a very Christ-centred life with a strong focus on pastoral care.

In the lead up to my ordination as priest, I will start to focus more on preparing for my priestly ministry, which will probably take some of my time away from other activities. I just hope it will not have a negative effect on any part of my diaconal duties and that I can continue to listen carefully to discern the needs of the congregation and parish.

My plans for this year include setting up a walking group, for which I have developed 5 parish prayer walk maps that will be made available for download. The walks are between 1 and 10 km long and take place in different parts of the parish. I've also made a playlist on Spotify (ESPRunPrayLove) that I will advertise alongside the walks. We will meet for a walk on the third Saturday of the month at 10 a.m.

I want to organise a pilgrimage, using the route for St Frideswide's Walk (part of the English Camino) from Oxford to Reading after my ordination. It is a 4-day walk and will be open to anyone wanting to attend. The only caveat is that my leg needs to be in better shape before attempting the walk, so it may have to be a way to mark my first anniversary as a priest instead!

I am running a Start! course which is a course for new or potential Christians and explores different aspects of life. It is quite a laid-back course and will take place in my house on Monday evenings and Wednesdays in the daytime in June and July. It offers a chance for fellowship and joint discussions, and you don't actually have to be new to Christianity to attend. I am hoping to attract 2-3 people from the congregation to help me with this.

An art exhibition will be installed both at St Peter's and at St Nix for Pentecost, and I hope it will give many people a chance to engage with the message of Pentecost. More information on this is to follow. And I want to use art as a way to engage more generally, especially as it has been proven to support mental health and wellbeing (watch this space!).

As a curate, I am obliged to do more training through the IME2 programme. I am currently writing up an article on deafness in the hearing church, and I do hope to make the Pentecost exhibition a 'deliverable' for my Self Directed Study Pathway. I also hope to write an article on solutions for deaf worshippers in hearing worship, but it is likely that I will do this towards the end of my curacy. That piece of work, assuming that it will come off, will come with a hearing audit at our church that I hope will inform the article. I would like to do a hearing audit anyway and look at good solutions that will make our church as inclusive as possible.

Thank you so much to all of you for making Earley St Peter's such a lovely and welcoming place for my family, we thrive here.

With love,

*Kajsa*

**Parish Church of Earley St Peter, Reading**

**Annual Meeting of Parishioners**

**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2026, 11.15 a.m.**

**Earley St Peter's Church Hall, Church Road, Earley, RG6 1EY**

**AGENDA**

1. Appointment of Tellers
2. Annual Meeting of Parishioners on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2025
  - (a) Approval of Minutes page 6
  - (b) Matters Arising *not covered elsewhere in the Agenda*

3. Churchwardens' Report page 7

4. Election of TWO Churchwardens

*Churchwardens are elected annually and may normally serve for up to six years. Candidates must be proposed and seconded by persons entitled to attend the Annual Meeting of Parishioners and forms are available from the Parish Administrator. Nomination forms must be submitted to the Parish Administrator before the Meeting.*

5. To note the date of the Archdeacon's Visitation
6. Any Other Business
7. Date of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners 2027 – Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2027, 11.15 a.m.

*Note: those entitled to vote at this meeting must be either*

*(a) persons whose names are entered on the church electoral roll of the parish; or*

*(b) persons resident in the parish whose names are entered on a register of local government electors by reason of such residence*

**Parish Church of Earley St Peter, Reading**  
**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners**  
**held on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2025 in the Church Hall at 11.15 a.m.**

The meeting opened with prayers led by the Revd Kate Wakeman-Toogood

Present: 46

Apologies: 6

**1. Appointment of Tellers**

No tellers were required.

**2. Annual Meeting of Parishioners Minutes Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

- a. Minutes proposed by Elizabeth Netherwood and seconded by Sarah Godwin.
- b. Matters arising: under Any Other Business – Kate Wakeman-Toogood and Clive Tillin have cleared the vestry of clutter.

**3. Churchwardens' Report**

The report was tabled and accepted. Clive Nunn added that one of the Churchwardens' responsibilities is to complete the annual Inventory of Movable Objects, which anyone has the right to consult. This year's inventory has been completed but is not yet fully written up, but it will be available soon.

The meeting expressed heartfelt thanks to Ann Sheen, who is stepping down as Churchwarden, for her dedicated service over the last eight years and more. Ann was presented with a card and gift.

**4. Election of two Churchwardens**

Two candidates put their names forward for Churchwarden and were duly appointed:

Clive Nunn, proposed by Elizabeth Netherwood and seconded by Sheila Jordan

Sheila Jordan, proposed by Ann Sheen and seconded by John Peacock

The meeting congratulated Sheila on her appointment and thanked Clive for his continuing service.

- 5.** The date of the **Archdeacon's Visitation** (where new churchwardens are sworn in their office) is 4<sup>th</sup> June.

**6. Any Other Business**

None

- 7.** The date of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners 2026 is Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May at 11.15 a.m. in the Church Hall.

## **2025 Report from the Churchwardens**

During 2025 Ann Sheen's tenure as churchwarden came to an end. The congregation thanked her for her time and commitment to the role, which she discharged with energy and enthusiasm. At the visitation service on 4<sup>th</sup> June Sheila Jordan was sworn in as her replacement.

2025 was Kate's second full year as our vicar. It was a very successful and productive one, but we were extremely sorry that it was marred for Kate by the sad and untimely loss of her cherished mother. Your wardens were at pains to ensure that she received adequate support during this difficult time.

We are fortunate in having a strong ministry team, one that was able to step up and take on extra responsibilities when needed. We are immensely grateful to Libby and Clive for their regular and valuable contributions, and also to Madhuri, who joined us officially for her final year of training. In particular, though, we were delighted to welcome Kajsa as our new curate. Kajsa brought with her a wealth of new ideas, boundless energy and infectious enthusiasm. She 'hit the ground running' and has already made a significant contribution to church life.

Children's church and 'Inspiration' have been thriving under a dedicated team which has been ably led by John Collins. We were very relieved to see John back with us after a serious health scare.

A particular highlight of the year was the confirmation service on May 18<sup>th</sup>, when we welcomed the new Bishop of Reading, Bishop Mary, to our church for the first time.

We were however saddened to learn that our organist of 25 years, David Price, was planning to retire. Not that his retirement isn't richly deserved – David has done more than his fair share on behalf of St Peter's. Nevertheless, he will be greatly missed and we wish him a long and happy retirement.

A major responsibility of the churchwardens is for the fabric and contents of the church and related properties. For more information about this please see the separate report.

A key new initiative during the year resulted in the church being open for casual visitors even when unoccupied. While keeping the church open all day, every day, would be problematic, the fact that the church is now normally open to visitors four times a week is most welcome. Furthermore, the creation of a hospitality area at the back of the north aisle has added to the welcoming feel of the church. Subject initially to a 'Temporary Reordering Licence', at the year-end a formal authorisation to make this arrangement permanent in the form of a 'faculty' was still awaited (and which, thanks to the dogged perseverance of our hard-working Office Manager, Mary Frank, did finally arrive early in 2026). Without Mary in the parish office, our work as churchwardens would be far more onerous!

Also making our lives easier is the excellent job that our new Hall Manager, Sonja Maher, has been doing. Thanks to her talents and determination, room hire receipts are up and there have been many significant improvements to the fabric of the hall.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere thanks to all the volunteers and helpers who devote so much time and energy to facilitate the smooth running of the church and church services. It is risky to try to list them all, since inevitably someone will be inadvertently left off the list, so to all of you, whatever you do, we say a huge 'Thank You'! We can always use more volunteers, though, so if you think there is something that you could do to help, please let us know. Many roles – particularly those of the stewards – don't involve any additional time commitments, and are not onerous, so if you are already a regular attendee at services, please think about volunteering. Or if you are free during the week, the cleaning and flower teams (to name but two) would love some extra help. And they are very sociable people!

*Clive Nunn and Sheila Jordan, April 2026*

**Parish Church of Earley St Peter, Reading**  
**Annual Parochial Church Meeting**  
**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2026**  
**immediately following the Annual Meeting of Parishioners**  
**Earley St Peter's Church Hall, Church Road, Earley, RG6 1EY**

**AGENDA**

1. Appointment of Tellers
2. Annual Parochial Church Meeting on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2025
  - (a) Approval of Minutes page 11
  - (b) Matters arising *not covered elsewhere in the Agenda*
3. Statutory Reports & Accounts\*  
*To receive and discuss the following reports*
  - (a) Safeguarding Report page 13
  - (b) Report on the Electoral Roll 14
  - (c) Proceedings of the Parochial Church Council and Activities of the Parish 14
  - (d) Reports from Different Church Groups 17
  - (e) Annual Property Report 22
  - (f) Reports on the Proceedings of the Deanery Synod and Diocesan Synod 23
4. Annual Financial Statements and Accounts\* *see Appendix*  
*The Annual Parochial Church Meeting is invited to:*
  - (a) adopt the Annual Financial Statements & Accounts
  - (b) approve the appointment of an Independent Financial Examiner
5. Elections & Appointments\*
  - (a) Deanery Synod Member  
*To elect lay representatives to the Deanery Synod:*  
  
*THREE to serve until APCM 2029*
  - (b) PCC members  
*To elect lay representatives to the Parochial Church Council:*  
  
*FOUR to serve until APCM 2029*  
*TWO to serve until APCM 2028*  
*ONE to serve until APCM 2027*

6. Matters of Parochial or General Church Interest\*  
*Anyone entitled to attend the meeting may ask any question about parochial church matters, or discuss matters of parochial or general church interest.*
7. Date of next Annual Parochial Church Meeting – Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2027, immediately following the Annual Meeting of Parishioners
8. Date of first meeting of the new Parochial Church Council – Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2026, 7.30 p.m. in the Church Hall
9. Closing Prayer

*Note: to vote at this meeting, lay persons must be on the electoral roll*

*Items marked \* are statutory business regulated by Part 9 of the Church Representation Rules 2020*

**Parish Church of Earley St Peter, Reading**  
**Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting**  
**held on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2025 in the Church Hall at 11.40 a.m.**

Present: 46

Apologies: 6

**1. Appointment of Tellers**

No tellers were required

**2. Annual Parochial Church Meeting on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

- a. The minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2024, having been made available online, were approved as a correct record. These were proposed by Clive Tillin and seconded by Jenny Carr.
- b. Matters arising – under item 6, Matters of Parochial or General Church Interest, a question had been asked about arranging lifts to church. Kate Wakeman-Toogood said that she continues to encourage people to arrange lifts among themselves and this is working well for many people, although the issue is not completely solved. There are insurance and safeguarding reasons why the church cannot formally take responsibility for arranging lifts, but these reasons do not apply to informal arrangements. There are also details of a local lift service on the church noticeboard.

**3. STAUTORY REPORT AND ACCOUNTS**

- a. Safeguarding Report – A report was tabled and accepted. It has been a challenging year in this area and the meeting expressed its thanks to Sue Manser for the professionalism with which she undertakes the role of Safeguarding Officer.
- b. Report on the Electoral Roll – A report was tabled and accepted. After the complete revision of the roll this year, there are fewer names on the roll, even though the congregation as a whole has grown. It is expected that some late forms will be received and the number will increase slightly during the year.
- c. Proceedings of the Parochial Church Council and Activities of the Parish – A report was tabled and accepted.
- d. Reports from Different Church Groups – Reports were tabled and accepted. Kate Wakeman-Toogood said she was really pleased that provision for young people has increased, with the Inspiration group now meeting on two Sundays a month – thanks to John Collins and Catherine Rawcliffe for this. Mary Brooke, on behalf of the Pastoral Group, said that anyone with pastoral concerns should contact her and they would follow it up. Kate Wakeman-Toogood also requested that she be told about pastoral needs – don't just assume that she knows.
- e. Annual Property Report – A report was tabled and accepted. Kate Wakeman-Toogood expressed her thanks to Clive Nunn and the property group for keeping on top of this.
- f. Report of the Proceedings of the Deanery Synod – A report was tabled and accepted.

4. **Annual Financial Statement and Accounts**

- a. The Annual Financial Statement and Accounts were adopted. Proposed by Sheila Jordan and seconded by Maggie Nunn and approved *nem:con*
- b. The appointment of the Independent Financial Examiner - Vernon Gosling Friday Ltd was proposed by Jenny Carr, seconded by Rosie Rogers and approved *nem:con*

Helen Price expressed her thanks to all who support her in her role as Treasurer. Kate Wakeman-Toogood and the whole meeting expressed thanks to Helen for her hard work and dedication and the meticulous presentation of the accounts.

5. **Elections and Appointments**

- a. Deanery Synod members: no nominations received. There remains one vacancy.
- b. PCC Members (*Until APCM 2028*)

Michael Chow, proposed by Ann Sheen and seconded by Clive Nunn  
Sarah Godwin, proposed by Diana Lea and seconded by Brian Wynn

Both these appointments were made *nem:con*

There are two vacancies on the PCC until APCM 2028 and a further vacancy until APCM 2027.

The meeting recorded its thanks to Anne Richardson and Brian Wynn, who are stepping down from the PCC, and each was presented with a card and gift.

6. **Matters of Parochial or General Church Interest**

Trotter Hatch said that he had not received a copy of the Annual Report in advance of the meeting. Kate Wakeman-Toogood undertook to investigate how this had happened.

Jenny Carr asked about the cherry tree in the churchyard which died and was due to be replaced. It is still on the agenda to replace it. Exciting things are planned for the churchyard this summer, looking at ways to attract more wildlife. This could be tied in with the Church of England's Creation Season in September.

- 7. **Date of next Annual Parochial Church Meeting** – Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2026 in the Church Hall, immediately following the Annual Meeting of Parishioners

- 8. **Date of first Meeting of the new Parochial Church Council** – 14<sup>th</sup> July 2025 at 7.30 p.m. in the Church Hall. Kate Wakeman-Toogood said the PCC would be moving forward with the new Mission Action Plan and there will soon be a nice, short version of the MAP for everyone to see. It is based on the community we have, moving from the past and present into the future. Everyone is valued as part of this – thank you to everyone.

9. **Closing Prayer**

The meeting ended with the Grace at 12.10 p.m.

## **Safeguarding Report**

Safeguarding remains a high priority within Earley St Peter's and systems are now well embedded. It has been agreed that the Parish Administrator will take over the completion of all DBS paperwork and checks and the Parish Safeguarding Officer will monitor the training and deal with any safeguarding issues that occur. The three-year cycle introduced by the Church of England is now fully operational within ESP with all volunteers on this new pathway.

The annual review of the Safeguarding Policy has taken into account the updated guidance from the diocese and the wider bodies and has been approved by the PCC.

During the past twelve months we have dealt with a small number of safeguarding issues and have offered support where needed and referred to other agencies if required.

We have been dealing with a data breach over the past six months. Five of our volunteers had their data stolen from our DBS provider APCS. This created a need to make immediate contact with them and for each individual to undertake a number of steps to protect themselves. They all received a letter from the PSO detailing what they needed to do. The diocese then agreed to move all parishes onto a new provider - Thirtyone:Eight - and agreed to pay the increased charge - an additional £25 per application, with the application system going through the diocese rather than directly from the individual parish. As the PSO needed to renew her DBS, it was agreed to trial the new system on her. It was considerably more complicated than the original provider and took several weeks for the DBS to come through. The diocese have now decided to move us all again and we now have Verifile as the provider. This requires training and both the Parish Administrator and the PSO will receive this over the next few weeks. At this point we do not have a cost for this service or a full understanding of the paperwork they will require for each application.

Currently we have eight volunteers without a DBS clearance. These are the priority once training has been completed.

Safeguarding meetings are held every three months, with minutes taken by the Parish Administrator. Actions are recorded and monitored for progress. The meeting involves the vicar and the Safeguarding Officer. There is now a rigorous recruitment process for all volunteers and each person has their own personal file with a cover sheet indicating the date of each action and member of the team involved in the recruitment process. These are kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office. Safeguarding is a standard item on every PCC agenda.

Training continues to be online but the diocese are more in tune to those volunteers who prefer face-to-face training. The PSO is currently planning a safeguarding course for the young people who are supporting the youth/children's work within the church.

As a church if we have an issue we refer it to the diocese. Where there are concerns, the process is strictly followed as laid down in our policy as well as discussions with other agencies. Regrettably it often takes some time to get a response from the diocese - it is not easy to speak to anyone directly - when a discussion would resolve issues in a much reduced timeframe.

*S M Manser*

*Safeguarding Officer*

*March 2026*

APCM Agenda Item 3(b)

## **Report on the Electoral Roll**

The Electoral Roll has now been revised and anyone else wishing to be added to the Roll will need to submit a form after the Annual Meetings. There are 127 names on the Roll. The total in 2025 was 130, since when there have been 3 deletions and no additions.

*Niran Perera*

*Electoral Roll Officer*

APCM Agenda item 3(c)

Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council

**Parish of Earley St Peter, Reading**

## **Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council 2025**

### **Background**

The Parish of Earley St Peter is a Church of England parish within the Diocese of Oxford. It is part of the Reading Deanery within the Archdeaconry of Berkshire, which is overseen on a day-to-day basis by the Bishop of Reading (The Right Reverend Mary Gregory).

The Parochial Church Council (Council) is in charity law the church's trustee body (Registered Charity No: 1128997). Its membership, powers, and operation are regulated by the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure 1956 and the Church Representation Rules 2020. Its principal function is to co-operate with the clergy 'in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical' (s2(a) of the Measure).

The Council also has trustee responsibilities for (i) St Peter's Church Hall, Church Road, Earley RG6 1EY and (ii) 33 Clevedon Drive, Earley RG6 5XF. The Vicar and Churchwardens are trustees for (i) the site of Earley St Peter's CE Primary School Earley RG6 1EY and (ii) 77 St Peter's Road, Reading RG6 1PD.

This Annual Report and the attachments have been approved by the PCC to fulfil the reporting requirements of Rule M5(1) of the Church Representation Rules 2020.

### **Membership**

PCC Membership is regulated by Rule M15 of the Church Representation Rules and in 2025 was:

*Ex-officio*

*(a) All Clergy licensed to the benefice (Rule M15(1)(a))*

The Revd Kate Wakeman-Toogood  
The Revd Dr Kajsa-Stina Longuère

*(b) TWO Churchwardens elected by the Annual Meeting of Parishioners for one year (Rule M15(1)(e))*

Mr Clive Nunn (Vice-Chair)  
Mrs Sheila Jordan

### *Elected members*

- (c) *FOUR representatives on the Deanery Synod, elected for three years (Rule M15(1)(i))*

Mrs Sheila Jordan

Mrs Catherine Rawcliffe

Mr Clive Tillin

All three elected in 2023 until APCM 2026. There was one casual vacancy for a Deanery Synod member.

- (d) *TWELVE lay members elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting for a period of three years, with one third standing down every year (Rule M15(10)(j))*

2023-2026

Mr Richard Miller

Mrs Ann Morbey

Mrs Elizabeth Netherwood

Mr Neil Whitehouse

2023-2026

Mrs Jenny Carr

Mrs Sue Manser

Mrs Rosie Rogers

2024-2027

Mr Michael Chow

Mrs Sarah Godwin

### *Co-opted members*

- (e) *Not more than FIVE members co-opted by the Council for one year (Rule M15(1)(k))*

Mrs Helen Price (PCC Treasurer)

Mr John Collins

### *Attending*

- (f) *The following persons are invited to attend all PCC Meetings (Rule M24(4)):*

Mrs Diana Lea (PCC Secretary)

## Appointments

*Local Governing Body of Earley St Peter's CE Primary School:* Nine Foundation Governors are nominated by the Trustees of the Keys Academy Trust to the Local Governing Body, in consultation with the Diocesan Board of Education and the PCC. The Revd Dr Kajsa-Stina Longuère is one of these governors.

*Deanery Synod:* All licensed clergy serve *ex-officio* on the Deanery Synod. Mrs Sheila Jordan, Mrs Catherine Rawcliffe and Mr Clive Tillin are our lay representatives.

## Meetings & Notable Business

The Council held six meetings in 2024 to discharge its statutory responsibilities. Work is ongoing on the Mission Action Plan, focusing on worship and prayer, pastoral care, children and young people, and mission (local and worldwide). Safeguarding, hospitality and caring for the environment are strands that run through all these areas. The Council continues to review and update all church policies on an annual basis. It has started to consider options for upgrading or replacing the heating system in church.

The Annual Meetings took place on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2025. Ann Sheen stood down as Churchwarden after eight years of valuable service and the PCC and congregation expressed their heartfelt appreciation. Clive Nunn was re-elected as Churchwarden and Sheila Jordan was elected as the new Churchwarden.

In July, Council welcomed the Revd Dr Kajsa-Stina Longuère, both in her role as curate, and as a PCC member.

Council made grants in support of three charities. RE-Inspired (working locally to deliver RE in schools) and CMS (towards Anna Sims, the missionary in Peru supported by the parish) each received an annual grant of £250, in accordance with the commitment made by the PCC at the end of 2024, to support them at this rate for three years (until 2027). The Anglican Diocese of Shinyanga in Tanzania received their three-year grant in a lump sum of £750 but St Peter’s also continues to support them through fundraising events, notably those organised by the Inspiration group.

Helen Price, PCC Treasurer, writes:

For the purposes of these comments I am outlining the distinction between day-to-day church activities over which we have some control, and extraordinary items over which we have no control. The 2025 Financial Statements relating to day-to-day activities (including the church hall) show a 2% reduction in income and a 8% increase in expenditure. This left us with a deficit on day-to-day activities of almost £60,000. The addition of extraordinary income from investments, property rental and legacies resulted in a small overall surplus of just over £7,000. In other words we are very reliant on extraordinary income. The 2026 budget, which takes account of anticipated income and expenditure for the current year, shows a projected deficit on day-to-day activities of just over £73,000 (£54,000 deficit including extraordinary items). We do have historic reserves which currently fund these deficits, but obviously that cannot continue for ever. We are enormously grateful to the many people who contribute to the running of the church, whether through donations or giving their time. This is the lifeblood which enables us to do all that we do in a busy parish. But it is increasingly important that we examine carefully all aspects of expenditure to ensure that it is relevant and necessary.

## Committees

### (a) Standing Committee

The Standing Committee is established under Rule M31 and ‘transact[s] the PCC’s business between meetings of the PCC.’ The Standing Committee met roughly every other month in 2025 to review upcoming Council business, plan Council agendas, and deal with any urgent or delegated business.

#### Membership

*Ex-officio:* The Revd Kate Wakeman-Toogood; Mr Clive Nunn (Churchwarden, PCC Vice-Chair); Mrs Sheila Jordan (Churchwarden)

*At least TWO PCC members:* Mrs Helen Price (PCC Treasurer), Mrs Elizabeth Netherwood

Mrs Diana Lea (PCC Secretary) attends all meetings.

### (b) Other committees

Under Rule M32, the Council may appoint Committees. These may include persons who are not PCC Members, and the minister is entitled to be an ex-officio member. No such committees are currently appointed.

## Signature

Signed .....

The Revd Kate Wakeman-Toogood (Chair)

Date.....

## **Reports from Different Church Groups**

### **Sacristan/Servers Report**

During the past year, as near as possible, all services were covered, as is the tradition of St Peter's. Easter and Christmas 2025 liturgies were held to the standard we have become accustomed to. We now regularly have a deacon and subdeacon for the main morning 10 a.m. service. This has raised the beauty of the service and aids the smooth running. Morning Prayer every weekday continues to benefit the prayer life here at St Peter's, giving a structure and a quiet and prayerful start to the day. This is now live streamed most days and is benefiting more people. The mid-week Communion service continues to add that much needed point to come together mid-week to receive the sacrament. Numbers attending are very encouraging and the service is appreciated.

This Passiontide we veiled the crosses in church. This tradition has not been practised in St Peter's for some time. This practice moves our focus onto the great suffering of Christ, also preparing us for the Easter Triduum. On the serving front we have covered most of the Communion services to support worship. A big thank you to Eileen, Trevor and Neil for all their help and dedication.

*Clive Tillin*

### **Earley St Peter's Music Department**

The musical life of the church continued to go from strength to strength in 2025 with the choir, Song Schools and band all playing key roles in the worship.

2025 saw us open the musical doors of St Peter's and welcome choirs from Christ Church Reading, Reading Bluecoat School (twice), and Reading School for joint evensong services. Edward Nesbit, senior composition lecturer at King's College London and a local resident, wrote a new St Peter's Day anthem for the choir, and followed it up with a Christmas carol for the Song School, which featured in the service of 9 Lessons and Carols. Lizzy Cullen was engaged informally as Song School singing teacher towards the beginning of the year, and her post was made official in September after the church was awarded £3000 for 2025/26 through a Cathedral Music Trust Church Choir Award grant. This grant is specifically for the growth and development of the Song School. As well as funding our singing teacher, the grant was used to purchase Song School resources such as music and whiteboards, as well as running a 'Be a chorister' day in November 2025. This day was attended by eight of our own Song School members, as well as four visiting children. Further events were planned for 2026 using the grant funding. My thanks to David and Helen Price for their help in putting the successful grant application together.

The band for Bread n Wine services sadly diminished in number and we could do with recruiting new instrumentalists. There is, however, a loyal group who continued to play once a month.

The choir's annual cathedral residency in 2025 was to Chichester Cathedral over the weekend of 2-3 August. Music included Preces and Responses by our Director of Music, as well as the new St Peter's Day anthem by Edward Nesbit. Future visits include Christ Church Oxford (August 2026) and Salisbury (October 2027).

In the summer organist David Price informed the Director of Music and vicar of his intention to step down and retire from his post at the end of 2025. It was decided to give him an appropriate send-off and celebratory service at the end of January 2026. Many, many thanks to David for his years of service to the church and support of all things musical.

A record of thanks must also be made to Jonathan Bowler for playing the organ for services in David's absence, Maggie Nunn for her occasional deputising when the Director of Music is engaged elsewhere, Lizzy Cullen for her work with the Song School, and Ann Munday for her pastoral work with the Song School. Of course, thanks to all members of the Song School and choir for their hard work and support.

*Ben de Souza, Director of Music, Earley St Peter's*

### Home Communion

Home Communion is offered to any member of the parish who is too unwell or too frail to attend a church service of Holy Communion. The service is a very abbreviated version of a full Communion service, including confession, a Bible reading, intercessions, Eucharistic prayer and a blessing. Home Communion is celebrated with individuals in their own homes, or in hospital and with groups in two residential homes, usually on a monthly basis. Feedback suggests that recipients find it spiritually rewarding and value it greatly. Currently Clergy take these services but if numbers wanting to receive it increase, it's a ministry that could be opened to lay people.

*Libby Newman*

### Pastoral Group

The Pastoral Group has as in previous years supported members of the congregation chiefly by phone calls. The parishioners concerned have been very grateful for the ongoing contact and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the group.

*Mary Brooke*

### Sunshine Social

We started a Dementia Café, named Sunshine Social, that runs once a month, on the first Monday of the month (unless it happens to be Easter Monday in which case it will run the second Monday of the month), in the Church Hall between 2 and 3.30 p.m. The idea is to provide a positive and inclusive space for people living with dementia and their carers, friends or family to come to socialise over dementia-friendly activities, cake and a hot drink. We have a SOP, risk assessment, volunteer job descriptions, and a training module on how to Be a Dementia Friend, which was adapted using the module delivered through the Alzheimers Society (AS). All volunteers are asked to complete either our or the AS module, and take the Church of England Safeguarding Training.

So far, 14 volunteers are engaged, including the vicar and curate. We usually gather between 3 and 6 users, and it is likely that the number will continue to grow as we become more established. Sunshine Social is included in the newsletter sent out quarterly by the Dementia Support Advisors at Wokingham Council, and we are also known of and recommended by Age UK and the Friendship Alliance. We have tried to spread the word through local GP surgeries and other churches in the area as well. We have had lovely feedback from customers and volunteers so far, and I feel that our work is meeting a real need in the community, while we also offer volunteers a chance to exercise their ministry.

*Kajsa*

### Tots and Teddies

Tots and teddies is a thriving group for preschool children and their care givers held on a Wednesday morning. Most weeks we have around 8 families in church for a small service of singing, prayers and a Bible story. More families join us in the hall, totalling 14 families on average, for toys, snacks, hot drinks and crafts. Tots and teddies relies on 4 regular volunteers with guest talks from Kate and Kajsa. We have built up a group of regular attendees made up of parents, grandparents, childminders and foster carers. Most of the attendees are Christian but we have 2 regular families who are Muslim. We ask for a donation of £1.50 per family, which covers everything we need; snacks, hot drinks, crafts and new equipment and new toys. Over the next year, we'd like to build up our volunteer numbers and continue growing the group

*Ellie Parr-Bell*

## Children's Church

Children's Church offers worship and fun activities for children, up to school year 6, and their families, during the 10 a.m. service, and meets every Sunday during school term-time, except on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month when the Bread and Wine service takes place. I have been ably supported by a team of 8 enthusiastic volunteers during the year. We have said goodbye to a few and gained Victoria Edwards. We could still do with a few more. The team share the leading of the sessions each week, and all the volunteers have played an important role. We use Energize material from Urban Saints as a starting point and adapt it to make it our own.

During 2025 we welcomed several new families; it has been lovely getting to know the children and see them settle and feel part of the group. With the start of the new school year in September several children moved up to Inspiration Group, as they had begun secondary school. The numbers of children coming has remained stable during the year, with generally 8 - 12 attending each week and over 30 different children attending throughout the year. The volunteers have put huge effort into making sessions engaging and fun. Sarah Godwin has continued to produce the Children's Church newsletter each term which is shared with the congregation; this is a great way for everyone to learn more about what we do.

Sarah has also led some great sessions helping us to look at God's world and creating a nature space in the graveyard. It has included placing cameras overnight, thanks to Ellie Parr-Bell, to view the success of our efforts. We have made bug hotels and other animal helping additions.

In addition to the Sunday morning sessions, the Children's Church team also ran two very successful activities for families and children in the wider community - the Easter crafts and service on Good Friday, and the Christmas crafts and Christingle service in December. These were very well attended, with much fun and fellowship being enjoyed by everyone who came. Finally, with the support of the Children's Church team, we organised the Crib Service Nativity on Christmas Eve. Many of the children and young people in the congregation took part, and it was a lovely start to Christmas for all who came. Looking ahead to 2026, we hope the children's and young people's activities continue to grow, and that we can welcome more families to join us in worshipping here at Earley St. Peter's.

*John Collins*

## Inspiration Group

Inspiration - For School years 7+

Inspiration meets on the 2nd and 3rd Sundays of each month during the 10 a.m. service. We join the congregation for Communion.

It is led by Catherine Rawcliffe and John Collins, supported by Jenny Carr and Ann Morbey.

The aim of this group is to help the young people grow a deeper faith and a safe place to ask difficult questions. The young also put their faith into action in various ways.

During the last year Inspiration had about 15 young people on the register and average 5-10 attended each meeting.

At most meetings we use one of the lectionary texts as our theme, focusing on just one point as we have a relatively short time. At others we respond to ideas or questions from the young people for our themes. Leaders use the Energize application in planning and storing our meetings.

Members of Inspiration run the Lent jars appeal to raise money for Shinyanga diocese, and help on every first Sunday with the toast after the Bread and Wine service.

*Catherine Rawcliffe and John Collins*

## Questions and Cake

Questions and Cake has been running two years now. It is a social safe space for our young people to invite friends to of secondary school age. It meets first and third Sundays in the evenings. We have over 30 young people on the books and get between 15 to 20 young people at each session. The sessions are supported by John Collins, Rev Kate Wakeman - Toogood, Kasja-Stina Longuère and a whole host of students who turn out every time. It is an enjoyable time for both leaders and young people. We have games, talks, cake and hot chocolate.

*John*

## ESP connect

Meets around once a month for all those 18 to 30 to chat and support each other. We meet in various locations and on different days to accommodate schedules. We have a core group of around 6 with others adding to our numbers on a more irregular basis.

*John*

## Mission Report

The Mission group, Sheila Jordan, Catherine Rawcliffe and Sue Taylor, is the main point of contact for our 2 overseas Mission partners: Anna Sims with the Church Mission Society in Peru and the Diocese of Shinyanga in Tanzania.

We continued to support both with fundraising activities last year as Anna transitions from her work in Prisons and Shinyanga diocese raise funds for bicycles for evangelists.

We have 2 windows set up on the south side of the church with details of current activities by both Mission partners.

*Catherine Rawcliffe*

## Cleaning Team

The cleaning team consists of 8 people at the present time. We meet every second Friday of each month, starting at 9.30 a.m. and finishing approx. 10.45 a.m. to clean the whole of the church. Understandably, not everyone is available for each session, but whoever comes we always manage to carry out all the tasks, leaving Church looking clean and tidy. All cleaning materials are provided.

We did have a Spring Clean this February and we were grateful that three extra people came to help the usual team, which in itself was slightly depleted due to illness. We were able to clean extra areas of Church, thank you to everyone.

*Margaret Thomas*

## Sunday Hospitality Team

I took over from Mary Brooke as coordinator of the hospitality team a couple of years ago, after Mary had been 'in charge' for 10 years. It was an easy transition because I just followed what Mary had done so well. Our team consists of 5 church members plus me - Tania Major, Julia Eversham, Margaret Thomas, Mary Ellaby and Brenda, who work in pairs to serve tea, coffee and biscuits. All I have to do is to ensure that we don't run out of supplies, and cover one Sunday a month. Thanks to the generosity of our 'customers' we are able to donate regularly to charities, as well as being completely self-funding. We are glad to be of service, particularly to some of our congregation who live alone and enjoy a chat over a coffee after service. I am very grateful to our team for making my role so enjoyable.

*Gillian Gatehouse*

## Flower Team

We meet on Thursday afternoons at 2 p.m., though not in Advent and Lent when there are no flowers in church. Most weeks we will arrange 2 pedestals, the font, Paschal candle and back table, mostly in silk with

fresh greenery. We try to keep to the church year. For Christmas, Easter, St Peter's Day and Remembrance Sunday we arrange 2 extra pedestals at the main altar, with silk and fresh flowers in the windows, and for the North Aisle altar, Remembrance Book and back table. We also offer a silk pedestal and pew end in white and cream for weddings for a fee. We also offer a fresh flower arrangement on the back table in memory of loved ones for a small fee. If you would like to come and see what we do and maybe join us you are very welcome.

*Janet, Carol, Sheila and Eileen*

### Thursday @ 10 Group

Members continue to meet twice a month on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays for coffee and chat and an occasional speaker. We don't meet in January or August, new members are always welcome, just come along and we'll be pleased to see you, we start at 10 am and usually finish around 11.30 - 11.45. Our programme is on the notice board in the hall entrance and at the back of church. We do ask for a donation of £1 towards coffee and biscuits and the cost of speakers

*Rosemary Germany*

### St Peter's Play Reading Group

St Peter's Play Reading group meets once a month currently on the second Wednesdays at 2.30pm taking it in turns to meet in each others' houses. Brian Wynn kindly selects one act plays for us from the Library. It's free to join.

*Barbara Bass*

## **Property Group Report**

This report is presented on behalf of the Churchwardens; it is the report of the PCC Property Group in respect of calendar year 2025. The group's terms of reference are to act for the PCC in maintaining the church, churchyard and the church hall, as well as the two residential properties owned by the parish (one of which is managed on a day-to-day basis by a letting agent). In 2025 the group consisted of Clive Nunn (Chairman) and Richard Rogers.

Our church, first consecrated in 1844 and extended some forty years later with the two side aisles, is a Grade II listed building. What we can and can't do to modify or maintain the layout and fabric of the building is governed by national regulations as well as by the Church of England. Even minor alterations require authorisation from the CoE in the form of a faculty. Thus the creation of a hospitality area at the back of the north aisle was subject to such approval. To facilitate a quick implementation of this, we applied initially for a 'Temporary Reordering Licence', which is easier to come by, and which is valid for nine months. Shortly afterwards we applied for a full faculty in order to make the change permanent, and this was finally forthcoming earlier this year.

At the beginning of 2025 we received the written report resulting from the Quinquennial Inspection (QI) which was carried out during 2024. There are, as always, significant maintenance and repair jobs that have been documented, ranked according to their importance or urgency. These will continue to consume our time and resources for as long as we have time and resources available!

The cost and scale of such repairs and maintenance do however pale into insignificance compared with a necessary upgrade to the church heating. Although our gas boilers are still just about serviceable, they are ancient and very much on borrowed time. The Diocese does not permit us to replace them with another fossil-fuelled heating system unless there is no realistic alternative (which, in our case, doesn't apply). For various reasons this project has not been progressing as quickly as we had hoped. However, discussions with our Church Architect, Peter Preston, took place to gain a better understanding of how best to proceed. We intend to make significant progress with this complex project during 2026, at the very least in terms of drawing up plans and securing the necessary faculty so that work can commence as soon as possible.

The churchyard continues to be well-maintained thanks to a useful income stream from a restricted fund (an old but very generous legacy that was left to us for this specific purpose only).

We were without a working church clock for a few weeks in the autumn while a major repair was carried out. The age of the clock means that we can expect to see increased maintenance costs over the coming years.

The church hall has seen a number of significant improvements, thanks to the dedication of our Hall Manager, Sonja Maher. These are part of an ongoing programme of improvements, designed to make the premises more appealing to potential hirers. It is fair to say that this strategy is paying off. Some limitations concerning potential simultaneous bookings result from poor sound-proofing, but this is a difficult and costly problem to solve, so for now it remains on the back-burner.

No major maintenance or repair costs were incurred during the year for 77 St Peter's Road, and our tenants tell us that they are very happy living there and that they have no intention of moving out in the foreseeable future. 33 Clevedon Drive, meanwhile, was recovered from a rent-paying tenant in order to provide accommodation for our new curate, Kajsa, and her family. Some much-needed maintenance was carried out while the property was empty.

I am most grateful to Richard Rogers for his hard work and dedication in dealing with various maintenance issues around the church and church hall. His impressive DIY skills and attention to detail have been invaluable while also minimising the costs of necessary repairs and maintenance.

*Clive Nunn, April 2025*

## **Report on the Proceedings of the Deanery Synod April Meeting at Trinity Church Earley**

Presentations about the principles of volunteering. The draft Children and Young People (CYP) Deanery Plan: 2025-2029, was presented and approved.

Revd Rachel Bedford was inducted as vicar of Greyfriars.

### **July Meeting at St Barnabas Emmer Green & Caversham Park Church**

Visible and hidden deprivation across the deanery was discussed and Synod agreed to encourage parishes to map their parishes for areas of deprivation, and pool and share findings across the Deanery. Reading Deanery always pays its full share allocation. The proposed 2026 Parish Share Scheme demonstrates an average 4% increase allocation with a 2% minimum and 6% maximum, and was approved at this stage subject to a re-visit before final approval in November.

### **September Meeting at Greyfriars Church**

Revd Paul Cowan was introduced as the new Associate Archdeacon of Berkshire. Further discussion of progress of children and young people's work, and deprivation.

Revd Mark Laynesmith (formerly the University Chaplain) was inducted as vicar of St Nicolas Earley and Revd Rudy Tan was inducted as vicar of St Matthew Southcote.

### **November Meeting at St Mary Magdalen Church, Tilehurst**

The revised 2026 Parish Share Scheme, with a few minor reductions from the figures presented at the July meeting, was approved. The 2026 Reading Deanery Budget was approved. Further discussions on children and young people work.

Revd Dr Kajsa-Stina Longuère, curate at Earley St Peter has filled the clergy vacancy on Oxford Diocesan Synod for the 2024-2027 triennium.

### **February meeting at Southlake St James' Church, Woodley**

Environmental issues, net zero targets, grants etc discussed. Bishop Mary attended and introduced herself as episcopal lead on environment. Bishop Mary also introduced herself as the Safeguarding lead, and a discussion about Safeguarding guidance and training. Bishop Mary answered questions from attendees. Lay chair announced he is standing down.

*Catherine Rawcliffe*

## **Diocesan Synod**

I have been elected as a representative for the Reading Deanery Chapter to the Diocesan Synod, as clergy. Unfortunately, I have only made one meeting thus far, but it was a very interesting one, and it is useful to engage with the other representatives in our diocese. It is a chance to bring matters that affect our deanery to the attention of the diocese, and to engage with the topics that come up within the diocese that I otherwise probably wouldn't know of.

Meetings are usually online (in which case making them isn't an issue), but once or twice a year they take place in person. I usually write a note after meetings and here is one from the meeting I attended:

Kajsa's report from the Diocesan Synod meeting 15 November 2025

- Appeal for the Diocese of Jamaica & Cayman Islands after Storm Melissa. Asked for special collections.
- Budget, the Diocese is doing OK. Slightly more of the parish share was paid this year compared to last year, and Oxford's parish shares will not rise by 7% despite the increase in clergy stipends but will remain at 3% alongside general inflation. The Deanery's will increase by 4%. The reason for this being that the national church resources are covering the difference, for this 5-year period. However, we will be challenged after that period is up and when the national church resource is depleted.
- Interesting presentation about how the diocese works on the Environmental side, especially with regards to retrofitting the current housing stock, and working with churches and schools. There is a limited budget however, so electric vehicles are not rolled out everywhere yet, for instance.
- There was a motion from Woodstock deanery about more admin help for multi parish benefices, and though the motion that requested funding from the diocese (which would affect other parishes negatively) was voted down and changed and an amendment was voted through, I don't think the last word has been spoken yet as this is a serious problem. There seems to be more appetite for training and sharing resources though, than outright contributions for admin support. (Let's all thank God for Mary!)
- Bishop Steven gave a very interesting talk about God: the science, the evidence a book that has recently gotten quite a bad review in Church Times: <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2025/14-november/books-arts/book-reviews/book-review-god-the-science-the-evidence-by-michel-yves-bollore-and-olivier-bonnassies>

Despite the bad review, there are interesting points made in the book though, such as the point that while scepticism to scientific evidence for God's existence was frowned upon for part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which gave rise to a number of dictatorships, the trend changed and we now see a larger demand for religion, and evidence for God's existence. Particularly within Physics – where there was a start point, an end point is expected, and the universes' expansion has been proven. It gives something to consider as a church of course. We are uneasy with the currently lived reality and new refreshing things are happening. The interest in Christianity may be fed by the aversion to materialism, so we do need to be more confident, and also humble. If we get too overconfident, we are likely to turn people off.

We are a teaching church, that should be revealing reality through Christ.

I would be interested in hearing more about what format you would like my reports to take going forward.

*Kajsa*