



The Parish Church of
St Peter Great Berkhamsted

Annual Report 2025

**Agenda, Reports and Financial
Statement for the
Meeting of Parishioners
and the
Annual Parochial
Church Meeting
Sunday 19 April 2026 at 11.00am**

From the Rector Fr Stuart Owen

Dear Members of the Electoral Roll,

I have pleasure in introducing these Agendas, Reports and Financial Report in readiness for our Annual Meetings which take place this year at 11:00 am on Sunday 19 April 2026 at St Peter's Church.

Do please make every effort to be present at these meetings when they happen. They are a significant occasion in our communal parish life.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart', with a large, stylized flourish above the name.

Fr Stuart Owen



BACH
Magnificat

HAYDN
Missa in tempore belli

Directed by Calum Zedden
With the Chiltern Players

Venues: Berkhamsted, Aylesford
Clara Hall, Aylesford
Matthew James, conductor
Jordan Beckett, organ
Maximilian Cabbage, harp

Tuesday 23 December
7.30 pm
St Peter's Church
Berkhamsted




Saturday 3 May

St Peter's
Berkhamsted

Arts & Crafts Fair

The Court House, Berkhamsted
10am-4pm

Browse the free exhibition of artworks & crafts

- Meet local artists & makers
- Purchase unique works of art
- Tea, coffee & cakes

A % of every sale goes to the St Peter's Resonance Appeal, helping us to save our historic parish church



80

VE DAY

80TH ANNIVERSARY

A SHARED MOMENT OF CELEBRATION





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Annual Meeting of Parishioners for the Election of Churchwardens

11.00am Sunday 6th April 2025

St Peters, Berkhamsted

MINUTES

1. The Rector, Revd Stuart Owen, opened the meeting with prayer.
2. Apologies for Absence.
Apologies for absence were received from Clive Freestone, Christopher Green, Michael Anderson and Oliver Fradgley.
3. To receive the minutes of the previous Meeting of Parishioners held on 28th April 2024.
Specific minutes for this meeting were not available. Dr Barbara Groet proposed that minutes be prepared for this and future meetings, and this was agreed by the meeting.
4. Election of Churchwardens for 2025 – 2026.
Mrs Carolynne Charman, retiring Churchwarden for 2024 – 2025, offered herself for re-election and this was unanimously approved by the meeting.
5. The meeting closed at 11.05.

Richard Hackworth, Acting secretary



Annual Parochial Church Meeting

11.00am Sunday 6th April 2025

in St Peters, Berkhamsted

MINUTES

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

11.00 am, 6th April 2025 in St Peter's church

Acting secretary's note. The following written reports had been available for review within St Peter's church for 10 days prior to the meeting.

- a) Rector's report
- b) Churchwardens' report
- c) Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Parochial Church Council
- d) Churchwardens' report
- e) Treasurer's report
- f) Bellringers' report
- g) Buildings Committee
- h) Castle Federation Schools
- i) Deanery Synod
- j) The Electoral Roll
- k) Mothers' Union
- l) Music
- m) Pastoral Care
- n) Safeguarding
- o) Sunday School
- p) Sundays Together report
- q) Technology & online

Apologies for absence were received from Clive Freestone, Christopher Green, Michael Anderson and Oliver Fradgley.

1. To receive the minutes of the previous Meeting of Parishioners held on 28th April 2024.

As has been the custom in the past, specific minutes for the 2024 APCM were not available. The meeting agreed that minutes would be prepared for this and future meetings.

2. To receive a report on the Electoral Roll

The Electoral Roll, that has been fully revised in 2025, was accepted unanimously. No questions were raised. Revd Stuart thanked the Electoral Roll officer, Oliver Fradgley, for his work.

ELECTIONS

3. Affirmation of two representatives of the Parochial Church Council

Sarah Elder and Chris Chatterton stood for election to the PCC. Since there were three vacancies there was no need for an election.

OTHER BUSINESS

4. To receive the Annual Report and Financial Statement of the Parochial Church Council (PCC).

Mike Below, Treasurer for the year 2024 – 2025, gave a summary of the Report published before the meeting. No questions were raised. The report was proposed by Mike Below and seconded by Julian Dawson, and accepted unanimously by the meeting.

5. To reappoint Hillier Hopkins LLP, or another firm if advantageous to the PCC, as independent examiner of PCC accounts.

Mike Below proposed, seconded by Richard Hackworth, and unanimously approved.

6. To receive the Churchwardens' report.

Mark Grego asked for information about fundraising for repairs and renovation to church buildings. Carolynne Charman reported that, in summary, a preliminary application had been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funds to cover work on St Peter's church and the Court House. Further work by the fundraising committee is required better to define the scope and objectives of proposed work, and this is in hand. Susan Holmes noted that two successful applications for funding have been made to the Town Council and our County Councillor, each for £500. The grants are for the Court House - a new fridge has been installed, and three radiators are being upgraded. It was noted that submissions for funds from external sources are likely to take some time, and a meeting with a representative of the HLF has been arranged for 1st May. Hilary Armstrong asked how much in total is likely to be required to carry out all the work we would like. Susan Holmes said that the architects estimate gives a range of £1m to £2.6m including contingencies, depending

on our aspirations. Susan Holmes reported that groups that make regular use of the church and Court House, such as by schools and for concerts, and the Town Council, have been invited to share suggestions for how facilities could be improved. These are being considered in formulating plans.

Mike Below reported that the PCC has currently raised approximately £60,000. Quotes in the region of £40,000 - £50,000 have been received to repair the roof over the Lady Chapel and the North Transept.

Revd Stuart thanked all those involved in fundraising for their hard work, and particularly our Churchwarden Carolynne Charman for her tireless efforts.

7. To receive other written reports as circulated

These were unanimously accepted.

8. Questions and discussion on any matters of church activities, including Safeguarding.

The following points were raised:

- **Bell ringing:** In answer to a question, Mike Below reported that the number of ringers has been increasing, and that training was going well. The Bell Tower is in good health with many visitors. Mike was thanked by the Rector for his work.
- **Pastoral Care:** Hilary Eliot reported that the Pastoral Care team visits parishioners in hospital and at home, and she asked any members of the church who know of people who would appreciate a visit to let her know. She noted that more drivers are required and invited anyone who could help to contact her.
- **Sunday School:** Revd Stuart noted that the Sunday School team had done excellent work over Christmas and particularly thanked Sarah Elder for her work.

9. Rector's Report

Revd Stuart thanked all volunteer who contribute so much of their time and energy to make St Peter's a successful church and parish. He particularly thanked those who had taken on additional responsibilities to run the church while he was on sabbatical. He said he has returned refreshed and renewed and promised, as always, to serve St Peter's to the very best of his abilities. He said that he is always open and willing to discuss and consider suggestions for improving and extending the life and mission of the church and of our community at St Peter's.

He was asked a question about Confirmations, and he said that the Bishop of Bedford would visit St Peter's in October 2025 to conduct confirmations.

Revd Stuart especially thanked the Churchwardens, Carolynne Charman and Tim Hennessey, for their support to him and their contributions to the life of the church. Tim Hennessey retired as Churchwarden at this meeting, and as a token of his thanks Stuart presented him with a bottle of the finest Scotch Whisky.

10. To note the date of the next PCC meeting.

This will be held on **Tuesday 20th May at 8.00pm** in the Court House.

The meeting closed at approximately 11.45.

Richard Hackworth, acting secretary.



Annual Meeting of Parishioners for the Election of Churchwardens

**11.00am Sunday 12th April 2026
in St Peters, Berkhamsted**

AGENDA

1. Prayers
2. Apologies for Absence
3. To Receive the Minutes of the previous Meeting of Parishioners
 - i. (6th April 2025)
4. Election of Churchwardens for 2026-2027
5. Closure of Meeting



Annual Parochial Church Meeting

11.00am Sunday 12th April 2026

in St Peters, Berkhamsted

AGENDA

1. To receive the Minutes of the last Annual Parochial Church Meeting (6th April 2025).
2. To receive a Report on the Electoral Roll.

ELECTIONS

3. Affirmation of TWO representatives to the Parochial Church Council for 2025-26

OTHER BUSINESS

4. To receive the Annual Report and Financial Statement of the Parochial Church Council.
5. To re-appoint Hillier Hopkins LLP, Chartered Accountants, or another qualified firm if advantageous to the PCC, as the auditor or independent examiner, dependent on the requirements of charity law.
6. To receive a report from the Churchwardens on the Fabric, Goods & Ornaments of the Churches.
7. To receive the other written reports of Parish Activities as circulated herewith.
8. Questions and discussions on any matters of Parochial or general Church interest – including Safeguarding.
9. Rector's report.
10. To note the date of the next PCC Meeting



Reports from the Parish

This section presents reports about activities and groups who have met, worked and contributed regularly or in part throughout the year within the parish community.

Rector's Report

FR STUART OWEN, RECTOR

Last autumn we produced our Mission Action Plan for the next three years. Beginning with a congregational survey in September, which had a really good response, the ideas produced were gradually distilled into sixteen objectives. What I found especially inspiring was how many of the responses focused on developing our links with the wider community; there is a really outward-focused vision at the heart of the MAP, which is not something that all church communities would share.

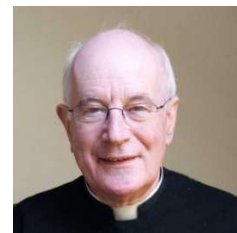


It was heartening too that the process of preparing the Mission Action Plan showed that there is a widespread awareness of our need to continue to seek to develop our work with children, young people and families. It wasn't so very long ago that the numbers attending Sunday School were startlingly low; sometimes just a Sunday School leader and their own children. I'm very glad that that's not the situation anymore, but we need to remain diligent in making St Peter's a place where people can feel welcome and relaxed with their children: children who sit quietly drawing and children who bang things around noisily, children who read peacefully and children who cry out regularly. The churches where you don't hear children are the churches which don't have children, and they probably don't have much of a future either. It's great too, that we have so many different ways in which children and young people are part of the church, through the choir, bellringers, serving team and more; thank you to everyone who enables this important work to happen, not least through going through DBS checks and Safeguarding training and all that goes with it. Thank you too to our Parish Safeguarding Officers, Rachel Below and Hilary Elliott.

Hayley Khazaneh took on the role of coordinating our contribution to the Festival of Light and once again the event was a great success. We were well supported by Berkhamsted

School and had the privilege of hosting some Christmas elves in the Court House! On the back of that event, Hayley is now working with a team to revive the Petertide Fair, which I'm sure will be a welcome addition to our church calendar.

Just a few months apart, our former Graduate Pastoral Assistant Olivia Davies was ordained at St Albans Cathedral and Fr Anthony Lathe decided that it was time for him to step back from the important contribution he's made as part of the clergy team at St Peter's. Fr Anthony was one of the first people to speak to me about Olivia when I first arrived in Berkhamsted, and he was effusive in his praise of her preaching, so for me there's a certain sense of continuity with those two events happening in close succession. I'm grateful to Fr Anthony for the contribution he has made to the St Peter's team, and will no doubt continue to make in different ways. It was also a pleasure to welcome Rob Jenkins as our new graduate pastoral assistant in September, and Helen Rowland, who is training for the priesthood at St Mellitus College.



Thank you to all those of you who month in, month out, contribute in so many ways to keeping the St Peter's 'show on the road'. I recognise and value the quiet faithfulness of service which makes our community such a special one to be part of. And lastly, thank you to Carolynne Charman who has served a year of serving as our sole Churchwarden, although very ably assisted by her Deputies, Susan Holmes and Hilary Elliott. Carolynne is doing a great job and is an absolute pleasure to work alongside, and it's great to see her hard and persistent fundraising work coming to some fruition with the roof and ceiling repairs that are now being done.



Rob Jenkins



Helen Rowland



Carolynne Charman

Churchwardens' Report

CAROLYNNE CHARMAN, CHURCHWARDEN

2025 has been my first year only being the only church warden. I felt challenged in one sense, along with the sense of achievement lasting the year out! With help and support of my deputy church wardens, which made my work load a lot easier.

Our normal busy cycle of worship continues with morning, weekly Rosary. Wednesday morning Eucharist plus two Sunday Eucharist and a monthly choral evensong. We also include Walsingham cell masses and services for our church schools, Thomas Coram and Victoria schools, along with baptisms, weddings and also funerals.

St Peter's reaches out to the wider community, with all these and other activities going on.

We are now offering the Food Hub at the back of the church, after The Open Door closed last year. We now open our doors to this project, which seems a great success.

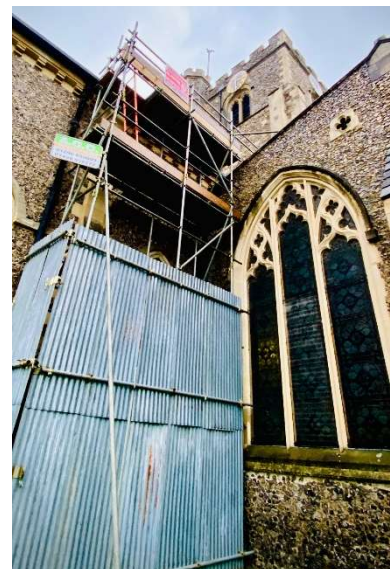
This year we can proudly announce two great achievements, one being the Festival of Light. We smashed our fundraising and we achieved record donations of over £6880, which was so rewarding. This was thanks to the guidance of the co-ordinator Hayley and also all the hard work from everyone who was involved in this wonderful afternoon/evening.



The second, and also very rewarding thing came at the end of the year, when we collected enough donations to be able to fix all the leaks on the lead roof, above the north door and over the vestry. This was long time coming – the leaks have gradually got worse over the years, while we have been trying to gather enough money together for this roof. Work started on the roof at the beginning of the new year! The first phase of roof repairs is costing £52,000 from the Renovation Appeal fund, plus a contingency of £8000.

We think about Fr Antony retiring for the second time this year, leaving his mark behind after 19 years with us at St Peter's. He has certainly made a profound impact on all our lives. We are immensely grateful for his leadership along with spiritual growth that he filled in our church and the wider community.

Finally, we are now going to move on to the 2nd phase of the roof repairs. This will mean fundraising to fix the leaks over the choir area. This roof is copper, which means a lot more money needs to be raised. The Building Committee have drawn up 10-year plan on how we might achieve this project, along with installing solar panels – it is immensely important in this day and age to be environmentally conscious.



Hopefully by a lot of enthusiasm and determination we will get there – God willing!

Bellringers

MIKE BELOW, BELLRINGING CAPTAIN

The band has managed to get together every Sunday morning except two this year to welcome people to the morning service. Whilst we continue to absorb the new ringers into the band and to build their experience, some of our ringing has been more simple than in previous years.

On the 80th anniversary of VE Day we were able to get together for a ring and to go up on the tower to obtain a similar photograph of ringers to those taken on VE Day itself and the 50th anniversary. This year we were able to welcome one ringer who was also in the photograph from 30 years ago.

During September, 5 of the band (plus another two ex-members) went on a ringing weekend to Cumbria and enjoyed many different rings there including the interesting tower in Cartmel Priory. It is possible that there will be another tour this Autumn, but we have yet to see how that will develop.

We started the year with just 3 student ringers and were wondering whether this would continue to be a viable exercise. However numbers picked up steadily through the year and by the end of December we had six students again. Three of these students have rung 5 quarter peals between them.

In total there were 11 quarter peals rung during the year. One of these was to mark the confirmation of two of the band.



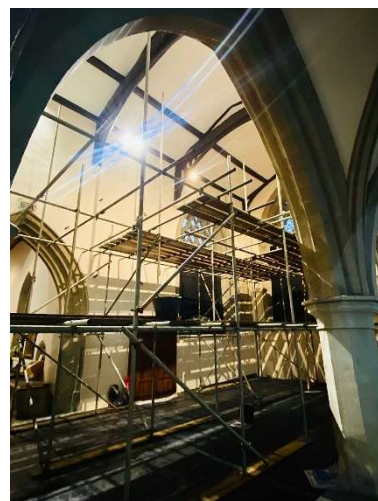
www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk/music/bells

Buildings Committee

CHRIS CLEGG

CHURCH ROOF

A contract was let to replace the lead on the east slope of the North Transept roof, to repair the box gutter between the Lady Chancel roof and the Old Chancel (Vestry) roof, and to refix the slipped lead panel on the north slope of the Old Chancel (Vestry) roof. The roof work is now finished, with repairs and redecoration of the North Transept ceiling underway. The contractor has also repaired the seating of the cross on the tower roof, to fix the long-standing water leak there, and will be refixing a fallen gutter on the High Street side of the Old Chancel.



QUINQUENNIAL INSPECTION REPORT

To be undertaken on completion of the roof work above.

VESTRY WASHBASIN LEAK

A plumber has replaced the tap and basin.

CHURCH WI-FI

The proposal to amalgamate the separate systems in the Church and Court House is being progressed.

COURT HOUSE TOILET CEILING LEAK

Repairs have been made to the defective flashings on the chimney at the rear of the property, identified as the cause of the leak in the toilets ceiling. A subsequent new, different, leak has occurred that is being investigated.

COURT HOUSE KITCHEN

A replacement fridge has been purchased using the grant from the Town Council.

COURT HOUSE HEATING

Options for replacing the central heating controllers are being investigated, including providing remote access via the internet.

COURT HOUSE ELECTRICS

The circuit board has been replaced following circuit tripping problems.

COURT HOUSE SAFETY

Signage and a grab handle have been installed adjacent to the step to the toilets.

COURT HOUSE COTTAGE PORCH

The damaged roof covering has been replaced.

Various maintenance jobs have been tackled by Buildings Committee members, saving hundreds of pounds by avoiding the use of contractors. These jobs have included repairs to doors and locks, clearing drains and gutters, clearing vegetation, sealing water leaks, filling external gaps between brickwork and timber (Court House), repairing the cupboard below the washbasin in the vestry, brickwork and cobblestone repairs, gutter repairs, and floorboard repairs.

Castle Federation Schools

REBECCA ROBERTS, EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER

Castle Federation Vision and Values

“Flourishing in learning and love.”
‘Do everything in love.’ (1 Corinthians 16:14)

Our Federation values:
Kindness Resilience Respect Thankfulness

It has been another very busy year at the Federation with so much to celebrate and be grateful for. I am so proud of the pupil outcomes across the Federation in July, they were cause for much celebration, with pupils at the end of Reception, Y1 and Y6 achieving exceptional standards of attainment in national assessments. The vast majority of indicators were above Hertfordshire and national. This is a fantastic achievement and is a direct reflection of the quality first teaching our children receive and targeted interventions to narrow gaps in learning, when they occur. Thomas Coram and Victoria continue to work in partnership to ensure seamless progression from Nursery to Year six for the pupils. The excellent partnerships at all levels ensure the best possible educational experiences and educational enrichments for all the children across the Federation. Leaders and governors have begun to implement year one of our five year strategic plan.



The Eco Team at TC have mounted a campaign to reduce the unnecessary use of lights. Turning off lights reduces electricity demand, cutting greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel power plants, and reduces light pollution that disrupts wildlife. This simple, immediate action saves energy, extends bulb life, and lowers costs, with significant benefits. At Victoria we have recruited our Eco team; it was so hard to choose as we had so many powerful applications.



The Spiritual Ambassadors in both schools presented the story of the prodigal son in collective worship, in February. They did such a great job conveying the key messages and presenting the bible story, linked to our values of kindness, respect, resilience and thankfulness. The spiritual ambassadors from both schools also attended a session with Fr Stuart thinking about our mustard seed parable and creating some modern-day parables. In our Easter services at the Church the Spiritual ambassadors did a fantastic job when they undertook the readings sharing the Easter story.



 www.castlefederation.org

Deanery Synod

CAROLE DELL & SUSAN HOLMES

Carole Dell and Susan Holmes are the Berkhamsted deanery synod representatives.

3 synod meetings were held during the year

- 8 July 2025: St Peter's, Berkhamsted - presentation about the Church Urban Fund toolkit to measure parish deprivation profiles
- Thursday, 27 November 2025: St Peter's Berkhamsted – presentation and discussion about a Mothers' Union initiative for churches
- 3rd February 2026: St Michael's, Sunnyside – Discussion about corporate spiritual discernment



www.stalbansdiocese.org/about-us/governance/synods-boards-and-committees/deanery-synods

Electoral Roll

OLIVER FRADGLEY, ELECTORAL ROLL OFFICER

A total of 156 people are on this year's revised electoral roll. As part of this 2026 revision, 7 new people were added and none was removed.

Additionally, 6 people have moved house, but those records are updated behind the scenes and are not displayed publicly on the list of names.

This revised roll is on display until the APCM on Sunday 19th April.

Mothers' Union

MARGARET BURBIDGE, GROUP CONTACT



Mothers' Union in Great Berkhamsted draws its members from St Peter's, All Saints' and St Mary's. However, membership has decline in recent years, so at the Annual Meeting in January members took the decision to close the branch and become a Group of Diocesan Members in St Albans Diocese.

The regular monthly meetings continue with prayer and worship, with members supporting projects in the diocese as well as overseas. Members joined with Tring Group for the Lady Day service followed by a soup lunch, while the Mary Sumner Day celebration included tea and cake. Members also joined in the Wave of Prayer Service in June and the international Campaign Against Gender-Based Violence in November.

During Advent the Travelling Crib was hosted by families at St Peter's as Victoria and Thomas Coram Schools. Members have also attended diocesan and national MU events.

Looking ahead to 2026 members are celebrating 150 years of Mothers' Union and here in Berkhamsted we look forward to sharing the vision and aims of the organisation with the wider community.



www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk/groups/mothers-union

Music

ADRIAN DAVIS & CHRISTOPHER BEAUCHAMP

Last year saw some significant 'outings' with the church choir to sing Evensongs in in Salisbury and Southwark Cathedrals, but we have been unable to repeat this experience this current year, with a number of choristers leaving for university, moving abroad, or being unable to commit to the demands required of choristers.

However, happily we have recruited some new choristers, who are showing much promise and commitment - and parental support, which is very heartening. The ranks of the adult members of the choir has been swelled by the arrival of two excellent tenors.

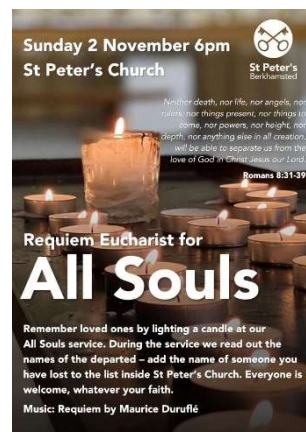
The musical repertoire of the choir has been modestly extended over the year to include some new and challenging motets and anthems - and parts of a Latin Mass by Palestrina. The Sing Sunday event in the summer was observed appropriately, with some revival of past favourites and the Patronal Mass included Haydn's Little Organ Mass. The All Souls Service gave the choir an opportunity to render Duruflé's magnificent and evocative 'Requiem' masterpiece; a most sublime and technically demanding work. Christopher Beauchamp, accompanying the choir and soloists, demonstrated yet again, what a magnificent organist we are so fortunate to have with us.

The Festival of Light at the end of November gave the choir an opportunity to air some appropriate seasonal music, prior the Advent Carol Service a week later. "The best ever", was the judgment of several congregants! Then Christmas saw the choir in action again with a varied selection of familiar and not-so - familiar carols and motets in the numerous services in which they were involved.

The New Year saw business' as usual - though working in the very cold church occasionally took its toll at practices.

I would like to express my gratitude to Hilary Armstrong and Barbara Groet for overseeing the Choir Music Library - a thankless task - but essential -MUCH appreciated. Also, thanks to the chorister PARENTS who regularly assist in safeguarding duties at the chorister's practices- and providing teas for the choir on Choral Evensong days.

Lastly, my enormous thanks to Christopher Beauchamp for the tremendous support and advice he offers me. His work with the RSCM Training scheme is invaluable and much appreciated by the choristers. His recessional voluntaries are always superb and the congregations stay to listen!



Pastoral Care Team

HILARY ELLIOTT, PASTORAL CARE TEAM CO-ORDINATOR

The Pastoral Care Team has met with each other and with Father Stuart, sometimes in person and sometimes on zoom to support and encourage each other in this role and share information. These meetings are confidential.

The members of the pastoral team have attended the appropriate training and had DBS checks.

Once a month a group ladies meet for lunch at the White Horse in Bourne End for friendship and support. There is a rota for lifts to the lunch. This is a joint venture with All Saints church.

Some of the gentlemen in the parish meet at the Crown and Sceptre for a pub lunch which gives another opportunity for mutual support.

On All Souls' Day in November, we held a Requiem Eucharist to which everyone is invited. Those who have been bereaved in the last 2 years were personally invited. There was an opportunity to light a candle as the names of the departed are read out and the choir sang beautifully. It was a very peaceful service which brought comfort to many people. All the Pastoral Care Team were on hand to support with the service.

As a group we continue to visit our parishioners both in their homes or in care homes. We offer friendship, lifts and support with shopping or appointments. We also offer lifts to hospital appointments when needed.

Many others in the congregation befriend people. Please let us know if you are concerned about anyone and feel they need extra support.

Safeguarding Report

HILARY ELLIOTT & RACHEL BELOW, SAFEGUARDING OFFICERS

Here at St Peter's, we are very aware of our responsibility to safeguard children and vulnerable adults in our church community. We endeavour to comply with the diocesan advice on policies and procedures and work hard to ensure that our policies are up to date. We have the expert support of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team when we need advice on parish issues.

We complete appropriate DBS checks for anyone whose role requires it and ensure they are aware of their training obligations. Training is offered online via the Church of England Safeguarding training portal, and we have also held face to face sessions as required.

As a Parish we choose to mark Safeguarding Sunday in February so we can give it more prominence than at a busier time of the church year. Once again, we had a Question and Answer session at the end of the service to highlight awareness of safeguarding and what to do if anyone has a concern. We also wrote the Friday Thought in the Parish newsletter on a safeguarding theme.



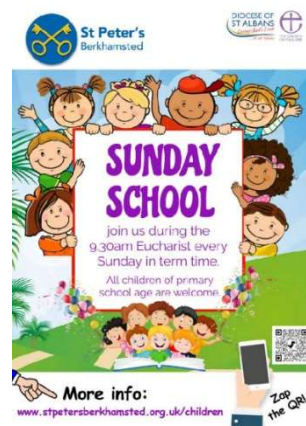
At each PCC meeting a report is given on behalf of the safeguarding officers.

As a congregation we continue to do our best to keep the more vulnerable members of our church community safe.

Sunday School

SARAH ELDER

The Sunday School at St. Peter's is open to all children of primary school age who attend the 9.30am Sunday service, during school term time. We also welcome siblings and younger children, who are accompanied by an adult. Sessions involve reflection on the Gospel reading, a specific festival/season or Christian teaching, alongside a related craft. The craft allows time for the children to discuss the topic of the week, ask questions and share observations. These sessions are led by a team of three volunteers, our parish intern and Fr Stuart. Additionally, we have an older child who assists the younger children during the sessions and, for several weeks of this year, we had the assistance of a young volunteer as part of his Duke of Edinburgh award. We are grateful for their contributions.



We have continued to highlight particular Sundays to the local schools and wider community via social media, email and our Children and Families Whatsapp group. We are conscious that family life is busy and we want families to feel a warm welcome awaits them regardless of how often they can attend. Attendance week by week fluctuates considerably. In 2025 we welcomed children from 25 different families for Sunday school, with an average weekly attendance of 7 children. However, it is worth noting that the average weekly attendance increased each term: Hilary 2025 = 5.5, Trinity 2025 = 7, Michaelmas 2025 = 8.

We have strengthened our safeguarding procedures with more detailed risk assessments and record keeping regarding allergies and use of photographs for our most regular attendees.

On two occasions this year, volunteers from the Sunday School children have led the intercessions in the 9.30am service.

SUNDAY SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS OF 2025:

- Epiphany – Children dressed as magi, making use of left over Christmas gift wrap and trimmings to make their outfits. They each brought a favourite Christmas present to be blessed.
- Lent – Each family was given a copy of 'Living Hope – A Lent Journey for Children' to support keeping Lent at home. Some of the Lent Sunday School sessions linked to reflections in this resource.
- Lent 'Pens For Kids UK' collection
- During Lent the Sunday School collected pens and pencils in order to support the work of 'Pens For Kids UK', a charity based in Berkhamsted. They collected each Sunday after the service and were much encouraged by the amount of support they received from the congregation. In June, they were pleased to welcome Chris from the charity to collect the pens ready to be shipped to a children's hospital in Ukraine.

- Good Friday Craft, Prayer & Reflection – we welcomed around 20 participants to this family centred interactive reflection on the themes of Good Friday. The children made wool weave crosses, used playdough to reflect on key moments of Christ's journey to the cross, completed wordsearches, colouring and stickers. All were invited to write prayers to lay at the foot of the cross, at the conclusion of a reflection led by Fr Stuart. We received positive feedback from parents feeling able to bring their young children to a reflection on Good Friday.



- Easter Sunday – this is always a busy week for Sunday school, with many visitors attending the Easter service. We welcomed around 30 children. We reflected on the events of Holy Week and the Resurrection of Jesus. Older children were offered a choice of two crafts and younger children had playdough mats on an Easter theme. There was an Easter egg hunt after the service and each child was given a booklet with poster about the Easter story.

- Family Film Night– in April we enjoyed a family social event with a film, hot dogs and popcorn in the Courthouse.



- Great Big Green Week – Sunday School participated in the town's Great Big Green Week by spending some time in the churchyard. Susan Holmes led us in knowing what trees are in the churchyard and how to identify them. We enjoyed some bark rubbing, games and prayer while in the beauty of God's creation.

- Blessing of the Backpacks – Children brought their school bags to church to be blessed as they began a new school year. 14 children attended. They received a keyring to place on their bags as a reminder throughout the year. We enjoyed a family picnic in the Rectory garden.

- Harvest Festival Cake Sale – the Sunday School sold cakes in the Courthouse after the 9.30am service as their contribution to the Bishop's Harvest Appeal. They were delighted to raise £134.

- Mission Action Plan – children from the Sunday School were invited to contribute their ideas to the process of drawing up our MAP. A meeting took place after the service on a Sunday morning and other contributions were invited by email. We were grateful for their candid responses.



- Advent – Sunday School sessions focused on aspects of preparation alongside the themes of the Sundays in Advent. All children received an advent calendar. We made

Christmas cards for residents of a local care homes who may feel lonely this Christmas. The cards were delivered with some chocolates on behalf of the children.

- Christmas Bedtime Story – After a successful introduction last year, we repeated the informal reflection on the Christmas story aimed at families with young children. We were better prepared for the number of people attending this year and were pleased to welcome around 45 children and their families. Fr Stuart penned another engaging story, guiding the children through important themes of Christmas while they enjoyed hot chocolate and cookies.



We continue to seek opportunities to help the children participate in our common life and worship. We would love to hear from anyone who feels they could contribute to the nurturing of faith amongst our youngest congregants.

 www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk/youth

Sundays Together Report

CAROLYNNE CHARMAN, CHURCHWARDEN



This will be our 9th year of running this luncheon for people on their own.

Every 1st Sunday of every month we lay on a two-course meal along with wine and sherry. We had to put our prices up from £5 to £6 to meet our costs, with prices going all the time. Everyone gave their thumbs-up to this raise.

Sadly, we lost a few members last year, but gained two more this year, so we still have 32 members on our books.

Most of our desserts are donated from our congregation. We are truly grateful for their contributions, and also for all the drivers who help to bring members and take them home again. If we didn't have this team of volunteers, then we would struggle to keep the luncheon going.

Carole and I feel that it's a very successful luncheon, and everyone seems enjoy themselves while they are there, and enjoy one another's company. Bringing people together through food is a great way to bring the community together.

We hope we can keep this going for many more years yet!



www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk/groups/sundays-together

Parish Office

ROBIN MCMORRAN, PARISH ADMINISTRATOR

It's maybe not always obvious what goes on in the Parish Office, this secretive operation hidden in the Court House attic. It's been likened to an eyrie, an eagle's nest built high in a tree or on a cliff. The office certainly has got a wonderful view, looking out over the north side of St Peter's and the churchyard!



Like any other office, it's got desks, files, a computer, and a rather temperamental printer. It's busy, and rarely tidy (but I always maintain that a messy desk is a sign of creative genius).

So what goes on in the Parish Office? In the day-to-day, I look after the parish calendar, organising events in the church and Court House. There is plenty to do, and some days it feels more like running a small cathedral than a parish church. The office is staffed part-time and is always oversubscribed: issuing invoices; booking weddings, funerals, concerts; taking online bookings for the Court House; collating information and liturgy for pew sheets; compiling the weekly Parish News email; printing service sheets; maintaining website and social media information; gathering copyright information for PRS; dealing with an unrelenting deluge of emails; keeping publicity and noticeboards up to date; managing rotas; dealing with visiting trades; publishing the Annual Report... to quote the old Jack Lane song, "...if there's no more work to do, The rest of the Day's your own!"

At any point in any day, I may have to unexpectedly drop everything; I may receive a phone call from someone who's just been bereaved; there may be a wild goose chase for a DPD parcel that's been misdelivered to a random address; someone locked in the Court House; a complaint about a leak; or someone wants to organise a search and rescue for a lost umbrella.

One of the challenges of the Parish Office is managing expectations. It is really a "back office" operation, but many people have an expectation of a fully staffed shop or an information centre, and like to "pop in" for a chat. Some days there can be six or seven people coming through the door all at once! There are systems in place to mitigate this, such as the Court House online booking system and website forms.

I am of course grateful to those that share the workload. In particular, Hilary Armstrong is now doing sterling work as our bookkeeper, chasing me for missing invoices and keeping our accounts in good order. Richard Hackworth has been heroic in his tortuous dealings with Microsoft and EE Telecoms. Fr Stuart also drops in each week to ensure everything's running smoothly. Work on some rotas is shared out – Fr Stuart looks after the clergy, Sarah Hyde the 8am readers, Christine Cowie the welcomers, and Richard Currie the servers. All this serves to remind us that it takes teamwork to keep the parish machinery working!

Please bear with your Parish Office, especially at busy seasons such as Holy Week, September and Advent/Christmas. Everything does get done in the end!



St Peter's
Berkhamsted

www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk