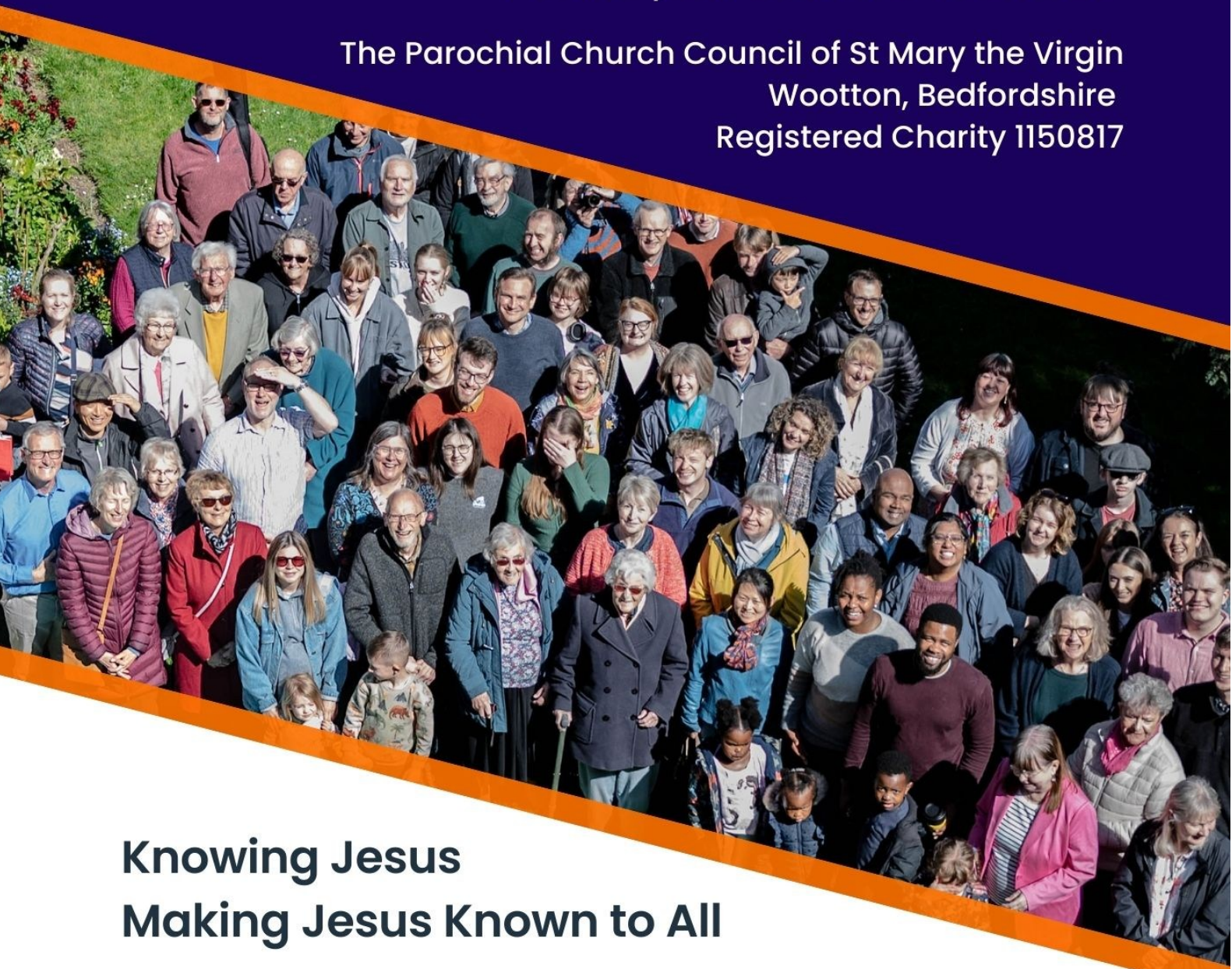


stmary's  
wootton

# Annual Report & Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 Dec 2025

The Parochial Church Council of St Mary the Virgin  
Wootton, Bedfordshire  
Registered Charity 1150817



**Knowing Jesus  
Making Jesus Known to All**

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

 01234 765375/768391

 [office@stmaryswootton.org.uk](mailto:office@stmaryswootton.org.uk)

 The Vicarage, Church Rd, Wootton, Bedford, MK43 9HF

## Who we are

St Mary's is a family of ordinary people brought together by the extraordinary, life-changing good news of Jesus Christ. We come from a range of backgrounds and places. None of us has it all sorted. Everyone is welcome. We try to sum up who we are and where we are going in the following statements:

## Our Mission

**Knowing Jesus; making Jesus known to all**

## Our Vision

**For St. Mary's to be: a united body of worshipping disciples, rooted in the Bible and prayer, growing together in holiness and every-member ministry to become a family of:**



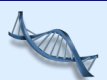
- **loving care**, welcoming and caring for one another with the love of Jesus Christ.
- **passionate proclamation**, reaching the people of Wootton, Stewartby and beyond, with the good news of Jesus Christ.
- **glad service**, dedicated to being salt and light in the world for Jesus Christ.
- **global heart**, supporting the worldwide mission of making Jesus known, including sending men and women into gospel ministry.
- **sacrificial change**, giving generously of ourselves to realise this vision

## Our Values

**We believe that we are reconciled to God the Father through faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, and therefore we value:**

- The Bible** as the written word of God and our supreme authority in following Jesus in the whole of life.
- Prayer** as the prime expression of faith in Jesus and of our dependence on God's loving grace and sovereign power in all things.
- Church** as a family of wholehearted worshippers and disciples of Jesus Christ committed to mutual encouragement, care, and accountability.
- Evangelism** as the proclamation of the good news of God's salvation in Christ for all people
- Service** as a family of God's people caring for people in Wootton and Stewartby and beyond with the love of Christ.

## Our Identity



**We are...**

- Christ's church:** the church is the bride and body of Jesus Christ; it is through him alone, revealed to us by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, that we know God; it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we worship and serve Christ; and it is Christ's future return which is our hope and motivation for life.
- A local church:** a full and authentic expression of the universal church, called into being and sustained by God's word. We have a specific responsibility to proclaim and demonstrate the love of God in Christ among the people of the parish of Wootton. We are also called to involvement with the world-wide mission of the whole church.
- An Anglican church:** while we welcome Christians of all backgrounds, our permanent and most visible connection is with the Church of England. We accept and uphold its founding documents (The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal) as authentic expressions of orthodox Christian belief. We are committed to supporting and encouraging biblical faith and practice in the Anglican Communion, both within and beyond the diocese of St Albans.
- An evangelical church:** we recognise the convictions of historic evangelicalism as crystallising and expressing the kernel of orthodox Christianity, including: the supreme authority of Scripture; the universal nature of human sin; the grace of God, seen above all in the substitutionary atoning death of Jesus Christ; and the gift of justification and new life in Christ, received and enjoyed only through repentance and faith. We value the examples, among others, of the sixteenth-century reformers, the eighteenth-century evangelists, and the nineteenth-century social reformers. We are committed to gospel partnership with evangelical mission agencies, as well as with our patron, the Martyrs' Memorial and Church of England Trust, and the Church Pastoral Aid Society.

## Aims and Purposes

St Mary's Church, Wootton exists to glorify Almighty God through the proclamation of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to all people, and through the pastoral care of members of the congregation and the local community. This is our mission, which we sum up as 'Knowing Jesus and making Jesus known to all', and which is our privilege and joy.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent in promoting this mission - pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical - in the ecclesiastical parish of Wootton, which comprises the two civil parishes of Wootton and Stewartby.

On 1st September 2025 St. Mary's went into vacancy after the previous incumbent, Revd Canon Peter Ackroyd secured a post as Associate Minister at St. James' Church, Gerrards Cross.

## Objectives and Activities

The primary objective of the Parochial Church Council is the promotion of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrine of the Church of England. The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship in the parish church, to providing opportunities for adults and young people to hear the gospel and grow in discipleship, to caring pastorally and practically for people in need, and to supporting Christian mission within and beyond the parish. The PCC regularly reviews the effectiveness of the church's ministry in the light of its own Mission Action Plan, and the three themes of the Living God's Love vision of the Diocese of St Albans: Going Deeper into God, Transforming Communities, and Making New Disciples. In planning and overseeing the mission of the church, the incumbent and PCC consider the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the supplementary guidance on charities for the advancement of religion.

## St. Mary's Vision Statement

This can be found on the inside cover of this booklet.

In fulfilment of this vision the PCC identified three strategic priorities: Deeper Discipleship, Loving Evangelism, and Generous Space. Deeper Discipleship relates to the need to foster confidence in the gospel and in gospel-centred life and service. Loving Evangelism expresses our intention to reach out to those beyond the church community with the life-transforming good news of Jesus Christ. Generous Space which recognised that the facilities in the church building are ill-suited in many ways to the achievement of the church's mission and vision, was put on hold for the time being.

Achievement of this vision depends, under God, on the willing service of many church members, led and served by the vicar and the staff team. The staff team consisted of the vicar (Peter Ackroyd - until September 2025), part-time administrator (Diane Murray), and part-time youth and children's worker (Emma Hearn). Jim Hignett continued to serve at St. Mary's, in his capacity as a licensed Reader, until September 2025 when he moved away, however he still supports the ministry at St. Mary's and Stewartby United Church when he is able. The council considers that the continued employment of a part-time youth and children's worker should take precedence over offering to train a curate. The council also employs the staff of St Marys Preschool.

To facilitate the ministry of the church the PCC maintains the fabric of both the church building and the church hall, which is on a separate site. Maintenance of the churchyards, which are closed, is the responsibility of Wootton Parish Council. The PCC also owns a residential two-bedroomed house, originally purchased to accommodate a curate and family; the property is currently let.

PCC agreed a revised 2025 to 2027 Mission Action Plan in September 2025, which were identified at two 'Thrive' church family meetings held in the Spring, with the aim of enabling St. Mary's to thrive rather than simply survive the vacancy period.

- To encourage an active prayer life that is the prime expression of faith in Jesus and of our dependence on God's loving grace and sovereign power in all things.
- Making Jesus known to all through evangelistic opportunities/ initiatives
- A new midweek youth group with regular attendees and a core team of leaders
- Active mission partnerships including building a relationship with a new core mission partner
- All congregation members, especially newcomers, are integrated well into St Mary's by intentional discipling & care. An increase in Growth Group membership of new and current congregation members.

# Ministry and Mission in 2025

## Worship and Prayer

Public worship was offered at 10am in the church building every Sunday morning, and at Stewartby United Church twice a month. Towards the end of the year, attendance in person at St Mary's averaged around sixty five adults and fifteen children under sixteen on Sunday mornings. The service continued to be livestreamed on the church's YouTube channel.

Ministry at St Mary's is founded on expository preaching of the Bible. Sermons series during the year included series covering 1 and 2 Samuel, 'The Lord's Anointed'; Romans 12-15 'Good News Church'; Luke 'Stories Jesus Told'; Matthew 'The Sermon on the Mount' and 'The Coming King.' Leading up to Easter we spent some time in John 9 - 10 'Shepherd and Son' and concluded in the Passion accounts in John's Gospel. During the course of the year we welcomed as visiting preachers Barry Funnell (The Word for the World bible translators), Canon Vaughan Roberts (St Ebbe's Oxford), Peter Cashman (Tearfund), our mission partners Bishop Alf & Hilary Cooper (CMS, Chile), Rose Kemp (Open Doors), Revd Isaac Pain (Sts Peter & Paul, Cranfield), Revd Stephen Liley (Clapham Parish Church), Rob Miles CPAS, Tom Roberts (Wootton Baptist Church), Bedford Archdeacon Dave Middlebrook, Revd Ray Porter (St. Mary's Eaton Socon). We are very grateful to all who have supported us and preached at St. Mary's over the year, and especially during the Vacancy.

During the year the following church members, commissioned as Lay Leaders of Worship, have continued their ministry and support in the leading of services. This has been particularly significant and appreciated by the whole church during the Vacancy. Our Lay Leaders of Worship are: Martin & Hazel Sanders, Allyson Cable, Tim Dillistone and Emma Hearn. Amanda Newton also leads occasional services. We are also enormously grateful to Revd Peter Stephens (a retired minister attending St. Mary's) who has presided over The Lord's Supper at our communion service each month and at a Christmas Communion service on Christmas Eve. Peter Stephens has also preached several times during the vacancy.

The Lord's Supper was celebrated monthly. Three children and two adults were baptised during the year. On Sunday 11 May eight adults were confirmed by the Right Reverend Alf Cooper, Santiago Chile from the Church Mission Society. Four weddings were celebrated in church. The Vicar, the Reader and local ministers (during the vacancy) officiated at eleven funeral services held for present or former parish residents at St Marys, Stewartby United Church, or Bedford Crematorium.

The midweek day of prayer 'Hallowed be Your Name' continued every other month until April 2025. In July 2025 this was replaced by a lunchtime half hour prayer meeting, held every Wednesday in a church member's summer house. We are very grateful to Ivy Peacock for hosting these each week. A monthly prayer sheet has also been produced since August 2025 which is made available to church members on the fortnightly bulletin email or in church. Both of these new initiatives have fostered a greater sense of a common prayer life among many church members, and enabled us to pray together during the Vacancy period.

Services in Holy Week and Easter included All-Age and Hour at the Cross services on Good Friday, and Easter Communion on Easter Day.

Services held at Christmas were: Christingle, Nativity and Carols by Candlelight during Advent. Family Carols and Christmas Communion were held on Christmas Eve and a Family Service on Christmas Day morning. All services were well attended. A joint Wootton and Stewartby Churches carol singing event led by Allyson Cable and Elaine Sullivan brought Christmas cheer to village streets in the week before Christmas.

The parish council Act of Remembrance on Sunday 9 November at the War Memorial in Church Road, was led by licenced Reader, Jim Hignett, and preceded by an all-age service in church.

St. Mary's Preschool assemblies were held in church at Easter and Christmas.

Regular worship as well as occasional services at St Mary's was enabled by many volunteer helpers, and especially by musicians and singers.

In July we held a Service of Thanksgiving as we said goodbye to our vicar of twenty three years, Revd Canon Peter Ackroyd. Peter and his wife JoJo, very kindly hosted a garden party for church members and other guests as they said farewell to St. Mary's and Wootton. Speeches and gifts were given to Peter and to JoJo after their many years of faithful service, ministry and friendship. It was a very happy occasion and they were sent on their way to Gerrards Cross with many memories and well wishes. Peter's new role as Associate Minister at Gerrards Cross began on 1 Sept 2025. A few people from St. Mary's attended his licensing service and a week later, his welcome service.

## Families, children and young people

We have 3 groups for children during the Sunday service; Climbers-age 2-Yr 1, Explorers-Yr2-Yr 5 and Pathfinders-Yr 6-Yr 9. We have contact with approximately 20 children and between 10-15 children attend each week. The groups are led by a team of 18 leaders and assistant leaders using material produced by Mustard Seeds and Faith in Kids. The Youth & Children's Ministry Team met termly to train and pray for each other and the children and young people at St Mary's.

We also run a fortnightly group for ages 13-18 on alternate Sunday evenings with a team of 3 leaders. In November 5 young people attended the Sorted conference in London with talks delivered by Nate Morgan Locke from the book of John and a range of seminars that young people could attend.

We continued to deliver All Age slots within the Sunday services at least twice a month using the image of a Church cat as we worked through the New City Catechism.

We led a residential trip alongside St Peter and Paul's Church (Cranfield) to The Chellington Centre with 20 children and 10 leaders. We had various activities including a trip to a local country park and employed a local company to deliver an afternoon activity of nerf gun battles. We delivered 4 gospel based talks covering the incarnation and the death and resurrection of Christ which linked to our theme of 'Chellington in a Year' moving from Bonfire Night to Easter Sunday.

We paused our annual Holiday Club due to reduced capacity in the vacancy period and intend to resume it in the summer of 2026.

Activities during 2025 include:

- Weekly Sunday Children's groups
- Fortnightly JAM sessions
- Regular All Age slots
- Monthly All Age Services
- Open the Book assemblies at Wootton Primary School
- Chellington residential trip
- JAM trip to Sorted (5 young people & 2 Youth and Children's Ministry leaders)
- Christingle Service
- Preschool Christmas service
- Nativity service with congregational involvement
- Family Carol Service



## Discipleship, Pastoral Care and Training

Christians grow in their discipleship as they engage with one another and with the Bible's teaching in a number of settings. The PCC accordingly aims to support a range of pathways accessible as widely as possible to support, teach and encourage this lifelong process of 'spiritual formation'.

Midweek growth groups are central to our aim to support one another in following Jesus. Five Growth Groups met during the year, weekly in the evening or daytime, to study the Bible, pray, and support one another; around half of regular church attenders are growth group members. Leaders met termly to receive training and support, and to pray together.

In September our monthly Men's Breakfast came to a natural end due to a drop in attendance and as Jim Hignett, who led and organised meetings, moved away.

During the first weekend in May, church members once again attended the Bible by the Beach conference in Eastbourne.

During the Vacancy a Pastoral Coordination Team was appointed by PCC and began meeting in the summer. A monthly meeting is held to coordinate support for church members, chaired by Diane Murray with excellent and invaluable support from Ivy Peacock, Peter Stephens, Elaine Sullivan and Kate Wilson.

Social events were held during the year enabling church members and their guests to build relationships and to foster mutual support. These included a Christ in the Passover meal during Lent 2025, a farewell summer garden party at the vicarage, and a Harvest Lunch in the church hall.

A bookstall was maintained in church. At Lent and Advent, church members and families were able to purchase and study daily devotional readings.

The PCC encourages church members, especially those with leadership responsibility, to attend relevant training events, in line with its Training Policy. During the year, staff and ministry leaders attended conferences run by Growing Young Disciples and Biblical Counselling UK.

## Mission and outreach

PCC continued to pursue St Mary's mission - 'Knowing Jesus; making Jesus known to all' - through a range of activities.

Enquiry courses for people exploring the Christian faith were offered in January, using the Christianity Explored course. Confirmation candidates were prepared at three meetings before their Confirmation service.

Our annual summer holiday club was paused for a year in 2025, with the aim to resume again in summer of 2026.

The Lunch Club for the over 50's met monthly, preceded by a short 'thought for the day' and prayer led by team members.

## Mission & Mission Partnerships

The PCC tithes its income from regular giving to support Christian mission beyond the parish, in line with its Global Mission Policy. In 2025 the PCC completed its review of our Mission Partners, particularly as our long term Mission Partners Alf and Hilary Cooper (Church Mission Society) retired at the end of the year.

In 2025 the following mission agencies or partners continue to receive financial and prayer support:

- Faith in Kids – resources and training for church youth and children's work
- Jude and YP Gayet - youth ministry in Belgium.
- Adam and Nomfundo Tomalin, South Africa
- The Church Pastoral Aid Society
- Festive – UK agency supporting discipleship and evangelism in sixth form and FE colleges
- Tearfund

Throughout the year church members supported the work of Bedford Foodbank through a collection point in the church, and contributed to periodic 'red bucket' appeals for the relief of countries hit by natural disasters. Church members participated in the annual Operation Christmas Child (Samaritan's Purse) appeal, and at Christmas supported the Prebend Centre SMART appeal for the homeless in Bedford.



## Church buildings

The PCC is responsible for the upkeep of the Church building, Church Hall, grounds, and a residential house rented to a member of the congregation throughout 2025.

Although discussed at PCC meetings, due to current resources the PCC were unable to make progress on the North Porch and overdue roof repairs recommended in the Quinquennial report remain outstanding.

The Premises and Facilities Committee completed various projects on behalf of the PCC, including installing new smoke and heat detectors, a new fence and new boiler room doors at the hall. A new cooker, hob and complete new central heating system were installed in the house. The Church benefited from new safety glass in the South porch doors, a Quinquennial priority, and significant damage to the Church yard wall was repaired. Additionally Electrical repairs and fixing of louvres in the Tower was taken care of, plus cleaning of the Church roof, clearing of gutters and maintenance of lead flashing has been conducted, alongside ongoing routine maintenance.

## Ecumenical Relationships

The PCC aims to strengthen Christian witness and service in the community through membership of Wootton and Stewartby Churches. Though there was no joint activity during the year, healthy relationships were maintained, particularly as the WSC committee has reconvened, welcoming incoming minister of New Life Wootton Methodist Church, Sydney Sichilima to its meeting.

The vicar attended regular prayer meetings, until he left his post, for leaders of Bedford Churches in sympathy with the doctrinal basis of the Evangelical Alliance, of which St Mary's is a corporate member.

## St Mary's Preschool

The PCC (as Registered Person) operates the St Mary's Preschool which serves local families five days a week during term time from the Church Hall under the experienced leadership of the Managers, Allyson Cable and Caroline Kavanagh. The Preschool roll in the autumn term comprised thirty children. There were eight members of staff. Staff are regularly appraised, supported to complete all required training, and encouraged to undertake professional development and progress as Preschool practitioners.

During the year, the Manager Tracey Kerins retired after thirty year's service to the Preschool and its predecessor, St Mary's Play Group, and was presented with gifts at a farewell reception. Allyson Cable and Caroline Kavanagh were appointed as Acting Managers from 1 April and, then, as permanent Managers from 1 September.

Emilia Gill was employed, initially as Bank Staff, but, then, as a contracted member of staff. Sophie Leving was employed as the Preschool Administrator.

Oversight of the Preschool is undertaken on behalf of the PCC by a management group comprising the Preschool Managers and PCC appointed individuals: Pauline Kendall (Nominated Individual), Kate Wilson, Jenny Yang and Nina Rodrigues. The Preschool Administrator, Sophie Leving, is in attendance to take minutes. The management group reviews all Preschool policies annually. Members visit the Preschool during its operating hours to observe practice and support the staff, and complete relevant Educare training modules as recommended by Bedford Borough Council.

At Christmas and Easter, a Preschool Church Service is held for children, staff and parents, currently led by Allyson Cable and Emma Hearn.



## Holywell Church of England School, Cranfield

The PCC nominates a number of governors at Holywell School, a school serving years 5-8. Continuing Wootton PCC Foundation Governors were: Pauline Kendall (Chair of Governors), Martin Sanders, Fiona Frossell and Isabel Turner. The Vicar met with the Head, Mike Simpson, periodically and in partnership with Cranfield Parish Church provided support for Key Stage assemblies.

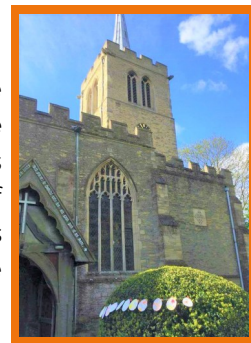
Three-tier education is being phased out across the Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire local authorities. During the year, the Holywell board and senior leadership team, with the support of the diocese, continued to prepare for Holywell to become a Church of England Secondary School, serving years 7-11 predominantly from Cranfield and Marston.

## Deanery Synod

St Mary's was represented on Bedford Deanery Synod by its licensed clergy and three representatives of the laity. During the year the Synod met four times. The vicar and Pauline Kendall were among the Deanery's representatives on Diocesan Synod. Regular reports of the proceedings of Deanery Synod were made to PCC.

## Structure, governance and management

The PCC met nine times in the year. Some of the work of the PCC is carried out through the following sub-committees: Standing, Finance, Youth Council, Preschool Management, and the Premises and Facilities Team. The Standing Committee met between PCC meetings, and is made up of the vicar (prior to the vacancy), wardens, treasurer and PCC secretary. The role of the Standing Committee is to prioritise items for the PCC meeting, discuss and make decisions on items of a confidential nature or look in more detail on matters that have been brought to the PCC. The Youth Council met twice.



Following the election of new members to PCC at the Annual Meeting, PCC reviewed its committee memberships and PCC officer appointments.

The safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults was a standing item on the agenda of every meeting. At the beginning of the year the PCC conducted an annual review of our safeguarding practice and approved updated Safeguarding and related policies. The Parish Safeguarding Officer is Kate Wilson. She was supported by Emma Hearn, Pauline Kendall and Martin Sanders as deputy safeguarding officers. Training on safeguarding arranged by the Diocese has been attended by members of the PCC, as well as by leaders of young people's groups and others as required under the church's safeguarding policy and by the Church of England.

Issues discussed during the year by the church council included: evangelism and pastoral care; renewal of the church Mission Action Plan; the Church of England's proposed Prayers of Love and Faith; church staff contracts and salaries; St Marys Preschool including the hiring of new Managers and appointment of a new nominated individual; PCC finances including the combining of the Preschool and PCC accounts; the care maintenance and development of the church and church hall, youth and children's ministry, including the appointment of leaders and helpers; health and safety; Deanery and Diocesan Synods proceedings; arrangements for Christmas and other special services; mission partnerships review; preparing for the vacancy including drafting and agreeing a Parish profile.

In 2024, following growing concern among evangelicals and others in the Church of England over the House of Bishops proposals for Prayers of Love and Faith, and in line with the PCC's 2017 Resolution on Human Sexuality, the PCC recognized that St Marys was in a state of impaired communion with the bishops serving St Albans diocese. The PCC accordingly requested alternative spiritual oversight from the Church of England Evangelical Council, and support is now being provided by Revd Canon Vaughan Roberts, Rector of St Ebbe's Church Oxford. This is a temporary and informal arrangement, pending the agreement of suitable provision for parishes maintaining the church's historic position on human sexuality. Relations with St Albans diocese remain strong.

The PCC employs a part-time administrator, part-time Youth and Families Worker, the staff of the Preschool, and a church hall cleaner. Jim Hignett served as a licensed Reader until September 2025 and attended regular diocesan events. The PCC and staff work in partnership with teams of volunteer helpers, appointed by the PCC and the vicar.

The PCC and Administrator comply with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) regarding the privacy of church member's information.

## Vacancy

We were very grateful to the following PCC appointed teams for keeping ministry at St. Mary's healthy and moving during the vacancy:

Preparing Services - Allyson Cable, Emma Hearn; Pastoral Care - Diane Murray, Ivy Peacock, Kate Wilson, Elaine Sullivan, Peter Stephens; Prayer Meeting preparations - Ivy Peacock, church office; Baptism enquiries & preparations - Emma Hearn, Hazel Sanders; The Lord's Supper - Peter Stephens; Funerals & Weddings - enquiries and processing handled by the church office. The position of Vicar was advertised in November with a closing date and shortlisting taking place in early December. Interviews were scheduled for 8 January 2026.

## Electoral Roll

A complete revision and renewal of the Electoral Roll took place in March 2025. Following the renewal the roll numbered 89. At the end of the year, the total was 85.

## Partnership with Stewartby United Church

Ministry at Stewartby United Church, a local ecumenical project, is provided under the terms of a Sharing Agreement in which the Church of England and the Methodist Church are the remaining active partners. Licensed ministers and congregation members from St Mary's continued to support Stewartby, leading the monthly Sunday afternoon service, speaking at the monthly T@3 event, serving on the church council and participating in other events. Under an agreement the MarThoma church also offer public worship every week.

## Financial Review

Total receipts of unrestricted and designated giving and income amounted to £144,656 whilst restricted giving totalled £20,074, giving our church a total income of £164,729, which included £20,950 from Gift Aid eligible donations. This was an increase on the previous year - in spite of a number of donors leaving St. Marys. We are, due to Charity Commission rules, now including the St. Mary's Pre-School in our overall numbers, which had an income of £208,019 - giving us an overall combined total of £372,748.

For 2025 our church (excluding Pre-school) set a budget of £171,521 for income and expenditure. The total expenditure for the year was £165,931 - an overspend of £1,202. Total expenditure was £307,831, including £141,900 for the Pre-School. We made our £78,305 Diocesan Quota in full (something we were not able to do in 2024).

Overall, the level of giving rose slightly year-on-year between 2024 and 2025. Given the small decrease in the number of members, and the cost-of-living impact upon the congregation at this time this is encouraging.

We have, during the 2026 budgeting process, communicated the need for increased giving to the congregation. This message is key as several more key donors have left the Church leaving us with a potential shortfall for 2026.

## Reserves Policy

Throughout the year the Church (excluding the Pre-school) maintained its reserve fund at £10,000, which allows us to meet our obligation in terms of staff salaries and church running costs for a period of two months. Our cash reserves, excluding endowments, remain strong with a total of £332,753 including Pre-school on deposit at the end of the year, with £315,560 of this being funds restricted to specific expenditure. During the year we continued to operate two current accounts for the church with our Metro Bank account as the main account while we maintain the NatWest Bank account to ensure no account has funds exceeding £85,000, the limit set under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. In terms of a deposit account, we continue to invest in the CBF Church of England Funds through CCLA. A separate, third account is maintained for the Pre-school.

## Safeguarding

St Mary's is committed to safeguarding all whom God has placed in its care. The PCC has complied with its duty to have 'due regard' to the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance.

Ultimately, the PCC has overall responsibility to ensure all safeguarding requirements are fulfilled, and related policies are reviewed annually by the PCC. Safeguarding is a standing item on all PCC agendas and the Parish Safeguarding Officer reports any matters arising. Where necessary safeguarding matters are reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer and the Charity Commission. The Parish Safeguarding dashboard supports us to have due regard to the House of Bishops' safeguarding requirements. St Mary's uses this to good effect. We are also looking to adopt the safeguarding hub, a bolt on to the dashboard which assists us with safer recruitment processes.

The PCC have appointed a Safeguarding Team, Kate Wilson (Parish Safeguarding Officer and Lead recruiter), Emma Hearn, Pauline Kendall and Martin Sanders. Contact details for the safeguarding team are prominently placed around church and on the parish website. Within our fortnightly bulletin, there is also a statement which highlights St Mary's commitment to safeguarding. The lead recruiter for the parish ensures all volunteers are safely recruited and have completed the relevant safeguarding training. A central record of DBS checks and training is held by the lead recruiter. DBS checks and training are renewed every three years.

This year we took part in Safeguarding Sunday, raising awareness that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility in making St Mary's safe. New posters, which include an easy read version, were also introduced around church to enable people, particularly victims of abuse to gain timely support. The posters are also displayed at the end of service on the projector screen. Safeguarding matters and good practice are regularly highlighted at all church activities and meetings.

**Independent Examiner's report to the Parochial Church Council  
of St Mary the Virgin, Wootton, Bedford  
Charity Commission no. 1150817**

This report on the accounts of the PCC for the year ended 31 December 2025, which are set out on pages 1 to 4 is in respect of an examination carried out in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 ('the Regulations') and s.145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

**Respective responsibilities of the PCC and the examiner**

As members of the PCC you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts; you consider that the audit requirement of the Regulations and s.144(2) of the Act does not apply. It is my responsibility to issue this report on those accounts in accordance with the terms of the Regulations.

**Basis of this report**

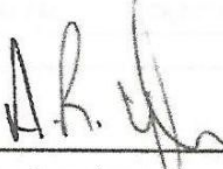
My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under s.145(5)(b) of the Act and to be found in the Church guidance, 2006 edition. That examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the PCC and a comparison of the accounts with those records. It also includes considering any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

**Independent examiner's statement**

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- i. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
  - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Act; and
  - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the requirements of the Act and the Regulations have not been met; or
- ii. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed



Independent Examiner - A.R.Upton FCCA

Date

23/03/26

Signed on behalf of PCC



Date

23/03/26

TIM DILLISTONE, PCC VICE CHAIR  
& CHURCH WARDEN

# St. Mary the Virgin Parochial Church Council Independent Examiner's Report of accounts for January to December 2025

## St Mary's Church, Wootton

### Balance Sheet to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025

	As at 31/12/2025	As at 31/12/2024
<b>Endowment assets</b>		
1509: Wootton Armstrong Fund	1,642.67	1,711.08
1510: Wootton Church Cottages	26,415.98	27,516.01
<b>Total Fixed assets</b>	<b>28,058.65</b>	<b>29,227.09</b>
<b>Current assets</b>		
1501: NatWest Current	83,230.39	83,623.01
1503: CBF Capital Fund	131,463.85	125,771.97
1504: CBF Studley Road	1.96	1.88
1508: Cash Book	—	—
1511: Metro Current	51,937.77	58,494.78
70: Pre-School Account	66,119.05	46,997.79
70: Pre-School Account – Cash	14.05	14.05
<b>Total Current assets</b>	<b>332,767.07</b>	<b>314,903.48</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
1650: Loans for Stonework	—	—
6699: Agency collections	86.80	142.59
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>86.80</b>	<b>142.59</b>
<b>Net Asset surplus (deficit)</b>	<b>360,738.92</b>	<b>343,987.98</b>
<b>Reserves</b>		
Excess / (deficit) to date	17,919.38	24,948.41
Z01: Starting balances	343,987.98	318,385.58
Z02: Other gains/(losses)	(1,168.44)	653.99
<b>Total Reserves</b>	<b>360,738.92</b>	<b>343,987.98</b>

<b>Represented by Funds</b>		
Unrestricted	17,105.95	22,471.16
Restricted	315,560.27	245,277.89
Endowment	28,058.65	29,227.09
<b>Total</b>	<b>360,738.92</b>	<b>343,987.98</b>

## Statement of Financial Activities

For the period from 01 January 2025 to 31 December 2025

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Prior year total funds
<b>Incoming resources</b>					
Donations, Legacies and similar incoming resources	119,577.03	6,760.00	—	126,337.03	120,417.95
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects	25,078.57	—	—	25,078.57	23,098.73
Activities for generating funds	—	—	—	—	—
Investment income	—	6,504.09	—	6,504.09	7,132.55
Pre school income	—	159,947.12	—	159,947.12	153,875.58
Other incoming resources	—	6,809.50	—	6,809.50	7,029.00
<b>Total income</b>	<b>144,655.60</b>	<b>180,020.71</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>324,676.31</b>	<b>311,553.81</b>
<b>Resources used</b>					
Grants payable in furtherance of charity's objects	8,659.80	—	—	8,659.80	8,840.00
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects	131,168.33	15,188.49	—	146,356.82	131,279.87
Support costs	5,512.53	721.77	—	6,234.30	6,451.27
Pre school support costs	—	140,825.86	—	140,825.86	136,757.60
Expenditure on managing-administering the charity	4,680.15	—	—	4,680.15	3,276.66
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>150,020.81</b>	<b>156,736.12</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>306,756.93</b>	<b>286,605.40</b>
Gains / losses on investment assets	—	—	(1,168.44)	(1,168.44)	653.99
<b>Net income / (expenditure) resources before transfer</b>	<b>(5,365.21)</b>	<b>23,284.59</b>	<b>(1,168.44)</b>	<b>16,750.94</b>	<b>25,602.40</b>
<b>Transfers</b>					
Gross transfers between funds - in	1,909.00	355.00	—	2,264.00	3,670.00
Gross transfers between funds - out	(1,909.00)	(355.00)	—	(2,264.00)	(3,670.00)
Other recognised gains / losses	—	—	—	—	—
Gain on revaluation, fixed assets, charity's own use	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	<b>(5,365.21)</b>	<b>23,284.59</b>	<b>(1,168.44)</b>	<b>16,750.94</b>	<b>25,602.40</b>
Reconciliation of funds	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Total funds brought forward</b>	<b>22,471.16</b>	<b>292,289.73</b>	<b>29,227.09</b>	<b>343,987.98</b>	<b>318,385.58</b>
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>17,105.95</b>	<b>315,574.32</b>	<b>28,058.65</b>	<b>360,738.92</b>	<b>296,976.14</b>

St Mary's Church, Wootton

Analysis of income and expenditure

Selected period: 01 January 2025 to 31 December 2025

	Unrestricted	Designated	Restricted	This year	Total Last year
<b>Incoming resources</b>					
<b>Donations, Legacies and similar incoming resources</b>					
101 - Gift Aided	74,262.00	—	—	74,262.00	69,530.00
102 - Tax recovered	20,650.42	—	300.00	20,950.42	19,947.03
103 - Other giving	9,541.00	—	—	9,541.00	10,175.00
104 - Loose Collections	5,882.18	—	—	5,882.18	5,588.70
105 - Gift days- Sundry giving	6,073.42	—	—	6,073.42	7,457.21
201 - Given for specific projects	1,268.51	1,899.50	6,460.00	9,628.01	7,720.01
<b>700 – Pre-School Income</b>					
Received from Bedford Borough Council			146,437.50	146,437.50	138,217.82
Received from fees			13,100.40	13,100.40	15,087.76
Trips and Donations			409.22	409.22	570.00
<b>Donations, Legacies and similar incoming resources Totals</b>	<b>117,677.53</b>	<b>1,899.50</b>	<b>166,707.12</b>	<b>286,284.15</b>	<b>274,293.53</b>
<b>Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects</b>					
302 - Rent for church buildings	21,338.62	—	—	21,338.62	19,868.18
401 - Monies for books	185.95	—	—	185.95	293.55
404 - PCC fees Weddings/ Funerals	3,554.00	—	—	3,554.00	2,937.00
<b>Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects Totals</b>	<b>25,078.57</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>25,078.57</b>	<b>23,098.73</b>
<b>Investment income</b>					
301 - Interest	—	—	6,504.09	6,504.09	7,132.55
<b>Investment income Totals</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>6,504.09</b>	<b>6,504.09</b>	<b>7,132.55</b>
<b>Other incoming resources</b>					
106 - Wootton Charities	—	—	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00
405 - Assigned fees	—	—	4,809.50	4,809.50	5,029.00
600 – Studley Road					
<b>Other incoming resources Totals</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>6,809.50</b>	<b>6,809.50</b>	<b>7,029.00</b>
<b>Incoming resources Grand totals</b>	<b>142,756.10</b>	<b>1,899.50</b>	<b>180,020.71</b>	<b>324,676.31</b>	<b>311,553.81</b>

St Mary's Church, Wootton

Analysis of income and expenditure  
Selected period: 01 January 2025 to 31 December 2025

	Unrestricted	Designated	Restricted	This year	Total Last year
<b>Resources used</b>					
<b>Grants payable in furtherance of charity's objects</b>					
1001 - Overseas Mission	4,875.00	820.80	—	5,695.80	4,690.00
1003 - Home Mission	2,700.00	264.00	—	2,964.00	4,150.00
<b>Grants payable in furtherance of charity's objects Totals</b>	<b>7,575.00</b>	<b>1,084.80</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>8,659.80</b>	<b>8,840.00</b>
<b>Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects</b>					
2001 - Diocesan Quota	78,305.00	—	—	78,305.00	68,000.00
2002 - Working Expenses of Incumbent	1,424.66	—	—	1,424.66	2,762.54
2003 - Parsonage House	120.60	—	—	120.60	—
2004 - Assistant Staff	18,605.68	—	5,500.00	24,105.68	26,662.24
2005 - Church Running expense	7,484.73	—	—	7,484.73	6,692.42
2006 - Church Maintenance	979.59	—	103.99	1,083.58	1,977.99
2007 - Upkeep of Services	1,924.68	—	—	1,924.68	2,771.6
2008 - Upkeep of Churchyard	—	—	1,500.00	1,500.00	—
2009 - Costs relating to books	234.75	—	—	234.75	617.67
2010 - Church hall	16,148.50	—	3,630.00	19,778.50	13,222.58
2012 - Major Works	—	—	—	—	2,400.00
2016 - Honoraria, Assigned fees	474.96	—	4,454.50	4,929.46	4,095.37
6000 - Studley Road	5,465.18	—	—	5,465.18	2,077.41
<b>Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects Totals</b>	<b>131,168.33</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>15,188.49</b>	<b>146,356.82</b>	<b>131,279.87</b>
<b>Support costs</b>					
2017 - Support Costs	3,613.03	1,899.50	721.77	6,234.30	6,451.27
7000 - Pre-School Expenditure					
Salaries			98,111.59	98,111.59	102,437.94
Pension			4,381.40	4,381.40	4,209.64
Employers Tax / NIC			13,329.08	13,329.08	10,702.63
Church Hall Rent/Cost Share			11,882.62	11,882.62	7,908.58
Equipment and Supplies			9,290.84	9,290.84	9,366.31
Staff Training			1,079.60	1,079.60	938.50
Trip			2,750.73	2,750.73	1,194.00
<b>Support costs Totals</b>	<b>3,613.03</b>	<b>1,899.50</b>	<b>141,547.63</b>	<b>147,060.16</b>	<b>143,208.87</b>
<b>Expenditure on managing-administering the charity</b>					
4000 - Administration	4,680.15	—	—	4,680.15	3,276.66
<b>Expenditure on managing-administering the charity Totals</b>	<b>4,680.15</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>4,680.15</b>	<b>3,276.66</b>
<b>Resources used Grand totals</b>	<b>147,036.51</b>	<b>2,984.30</b>	<b>156,736.12</b>	<b>306,756.93</b>	<b>286,605.40</b>



**"LOVELY FAMILY CHURCH,  
PEOPLE VERY KIND AND WELCOMING."**



## Administrative Information

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St Mary's church is situated in Wootton village, Bedfordshire.  
It is part of the Diocese of St Albans within the Church of England.  
The correspondence address is :  
The Vicarage, Church Road, Wootton, Bedford MK43 9HF.


The Registered charity number 1150817

[office@stmaryswootton.org.uk](mailto:office@stmaryswootton.org.uk)

PCC members who served during the year were:  
Revd Peter Ackroyd (chair), Allyson Cable (churchwarden), Tim Dillistone (vice chair, churchwarden; Deanery Synod), Matt Hearn (Treasurer, Deanery Synod), Hazel Sanders (PCC secretary) Jim Hignett (Reader; Deanery Synod), Pauline Kendall (Diocesan Synod), Jenny Yang, Charlie Bellwood, Elaine Sullivan, Jean-Michel Rodrigues, Claire Brice, Annette Hart, Kate Wilson, Alison Reed-Thomsett.

Independent Examiner: Collett Hulance (Chartered Certified Accountants)

This Annual Report was adopted by St. Mary's Parochial Church Council on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026

signed:  .....

Tim Dillistone, vice chair & churchwarden