

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF  
St MARY THE VIRGIN CHURCH, GREAT BRICKHILL**

**Annual Report and Accounts**

**For the year ended 31st December, 2025**

**St. Mary the Virgin Church,  
Lower Way  
Great Brickhill  
Milton Keynes  
MK17 9AE**

**Bankers:**

**Barclays Bank PLC  
Leighton Buzzard Branch  
The Aylesbury Group  
34 Market Square  
Aylesbury  
Bucks.  
HP20 1TT**

**Independent Examiner:**

**Mr. D. Beatty  
Roxburgh House  
Pound Hill  
Great Brickhill  
Milton Keynes  
MK17 9AS**

**Church Architect:  
Adrian Ringrose Dip Arch BA Arch RIBA AABC  
Stimpson Walton Bond  
Chartered Architects  
59 York Road  
Northampton  
NN1 5QL**

# **Report Of The Parochial Church Council (PCC) Year ended 31st December, 2025**

## **MEMBERS OF THE PCC**

The following persons served as members of the PCC from the date of the Annual Meeting, 13th May 2025:-

The Reverend John Waller (Chairman)  
Jeremy Hopkinson (Licensed Lay Minister; PCC Vice-Chairman)  
Phillipa Cook (Church Warden & Secretary)  
Stuart Jones (Church Warden)  
[ Julia Turner resigned as Warden on 13/5/25 ]

Clare Hankins-Lewis – re-elected  
Sophia Walmsley – re-elected  
Diana Williams – re-elected

Deanery Synod Representative:- Jeremy Hopkinson (elected until 2026 on 9/4/24)

Neil Cook continued in the role of Treasurer, co-opted to the PCC, 10/6/25

N.B. The maximum number of lay representatives on the PCC is 6, as per the prescribed formula for Electoral Rolls up to 50.

## **OBJECTS AND CONSTITUTION OF THE PCC**

The object of the PCC of St. Mary the Virgin Church, Great Brickhill, is to further the work of the Church of England in the parish of Great Brickhill. The Council is constituted under the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 and as amended by the 1969 Measure, and is required to co-operate with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in 2004 provision was made for the annual appointment of representatives on the PCC. All members of the church electoral roll are entitled to vote and stand for election. There is also provision for the co-option of members of the PCC, and the incumbent is ex-officio a member and the Chairman. The LLM, Wardens and Deanery Synod Representatives are also ex-officio members of the PCC.

## **ELECTORAL ROLL AND CHURCH ATTENDANCE**

Membership of the electoral roll is open to any lay person who is baptised, over sixteen years of age and has signed a declaration that he or she is a member of the Church of England and is either (a). resident in the parish, or (b). has habitually attended worship in the parish during a period of six months prior to enrolment.

The number on the Roll at the start of 2025 was 36. A new Electoral Roll is formed every six years and a new Roll was prepared for the 2025 Annual Meeting.

The number that had joined the Electoral Roll at the Annual Meeting was 27 of whom 5 were not resident in the parish. There were no changes during the year.

The average attendance on a “normal” Sunday remains at 18, as last year. Attendance at special services is much higher than for a “normal” Sunday service, average 57.

## **WARDENS' REVIEW OF THE YEAR**

The Reverend John Waller continued as Rector. In November he gave notice that he would be retiring and his last service will be on 26th April 2026. In May the Rector completed a '70k in May' Challenge for Christian Aid, dedicating his regular walks, totalling at least 70 kilometres (about 44 miles) or more, to the work of Christian Aid. He raised an amazing £960 (£1,181 including gift aid).

There has been no change to the general pattern of services – the Rector takes a Holy Communion Service and a Family Service across the Benefice every Sunday unless it is the week when there is one just one joint service in the Benefice for all four parishes.

The Rector writes a letter for inclusion in the monthly Newsletters for each of the four villages. There has been no one in the role of Admin Assistant for the Rector.

Services are held on two or three weeks of every month. Visting clergy take the Holy Communion services when the Rector is on leave. Jeremy Hopkinson as LLM and others fill in as required for the lay led services.

The Revd Canon Dave Bull began his appointment of Bishop of Buckingham in February. The Archdeacon of Buckingham, the Venerable Guy Elsmore retired in September.

Unless work is being undertaken, the church remains open every day of the year between at least 10am and 4pm.

### **Services:**

To make it fair for all four parishes, the pattern of services is complex, but the services are publicized widely to enable everyone to easily access the information through all the various channels of communication. Each month in Great Brickhill, on the first Sunday there is a 9.30am Holy Communion service and on the third Sunday a Family Service at 11am. On the second Sunday a variety of services are held, which are lay led. Generally, there is no service on the fourth Sunday of the month, and a Benefice service is held if there is a fifth Sunday.

### **Special Services:**

During 2025 we had no weddings, baptisms on three occasions, one blessing service and three funerals.

Our usual annual services such as Remembrance Sunday were all well attended and there was standing room only for the Carol Service. The Harvest service followed by tea and cake was held at 4pm and that timing worked well for most people. Two outdoor services were held:

- A Pimms & Hymns service was held on 13th July in the afternoon, in the churchyard where there was plenty of shade from the heat of the sun. Attended by friends from across the Benefice, the hymns and songs were chosen by those who were going to be present. We had a good mix of traditional hymns but also some songs that were new to many, but with lovely tunes. Jerry Breslin and Andrew Smith provided the music on the keyboard.
- The Village Nativity on Sunday 21st December, moved to a slightly different location, the Parish Hall car park. A record crowd of around 200 attended. Over 30 people contributed to this enactment of the Christmas story with children accompanying the adult characters. A duet started things off and two singers accompanied the musicians on the keyboard and guitar.

## **HIGH ASH SCHOOL:**

High Ash School is a Church of England school. Reverend John Waller is one of two Foundation Governors, appointed by the Oxford Diocese. The second Foundation Governor is Mrs Emily Lund.

In July the Headteacher, Mrs Kate Goodger arranged an informal meeting for representatives from our three local churches, parish councils, sports clubs and other groups looking at the year ahead to see how we can work together.

## **High Ash Services:**

We were pleased to welcome pupils from High Ash for their four services - Harvest, Christmas, Easter and end of year Leavers' service.

Due to the size of the school, normally the school comes on two afternoons for their services but, for the Harvest Service the whole school came, which meant that there was no room for any parents. It is good to see the church so full of children, and to hear the readings and songs, which are always sung with great enthusiasm.

## **CHURCH ACTIVITIES:**

The six-week Benefice Lent course "Women of Holy Week" was based on stories of women mentioned in the Gospels from a book by Paula Gooder. There were two sessions each week:- on Tuesday afternoons in Stoke Hammond and a midweek evening session at venues across the Benefice.

The monthly midweek Bible Group for the Benefice continued at The Rectory, except for when the Rector is on leave. The sessions focus on the readings which will be heard in one of the Sunday services.

There is access to the Food Box in the church porch at any time of day for anyone to help themselves if they find themselves in need, either in an emergency or in the longer term. Since the introduction of the Food Box in 2019, there has been a varied amount of demand. We are grateful to all those who donate items for the Food Box and especially the families of High Ash for their Harvest gifts.

## **MUSIC & BELLS:**

Jerry Breslin continues to play the organ regularly at the Sunday services and generally at any special services. Andrew and Margretta Smith provided the music for the Family Services and Sophia Walmsley led the singing.

Jerry continues to lead the choir and the weekly Benefice Choir practices, which are held on Monday evenings, usually in the church at Great Brickhill. The choir tend to sing at the Benefice services and special services, not at the normal weekly services.

Bell ringing practice now takes place on alternate Thursday evenings and the bells are rung before most services. In July, David Middleton resigned as Tower Captain, having put in a huge amount of time and effort in promoting the bells, organising ringers for our services and training new ringers. He oversaw the restoration of the bells and bell frame, which was completed in 2010. We would like to thank David for his dedication to the role of Tower Captain over many years.

Rosemary and Andy Howell are now jointly organising the bells and bell ringing. New ringers are always welcome.

Visting teams of bell ringers frequently come to ring our bells and occasionally to attempt a three-hour full peal.

## **CHURCH EVENTS:**

The events were similar to last year. The two big fundraising events in the early part of the year were very successful.

### **Snowdrop Walks:**

We had another two successful Snowdrop Walks. The first Sunday raised £988, followed the next Sunday with more visitors, which was reflected in the donations given, £1622. With an additional very kind donation of £50 from Drop-In, the total came to £2660. It was wonderful to see the church so full of friends catching up with each other. Thank you to all the cake makers and to those who helped with the setting up and clearing away, and with serving the teas. But most of all, grateful thanks to Sir David and Sally Duncombe for allowing us access to their wonderful grounds.

### **Plant Fayre:**

We had another very successful Plant Fayre. There were 409 visitors recorded, just a few less than last year and the magnificent sum of £3,182 was raised for church funds. Thank you to all who helped - providing the cakes and plants plus raffle prizes, helping with the stalls, setting up and clearing away, marshalling the car park, and the team in the kitchen who worked tirelessly throughout the day.

### **Tomato Plants:**

Huge thanks to John Hall for his donation of **£900** from the sale of his tomato plants. Thank you to all who purchased the plants and to John for his work in growing them.

### **The Christmas Coffee Morning:**

Held in the church, there were the usual visiting craft stalls as well as the St Mary's stalls, plus raffles. The event raised £1107, a little more than last year.

**Other events** included the teas at Brickstock and Carol singing round the village. The Advent Windows lit up the village again from 1st to 31st December.

## **COMMUNICATIONS:**

Communications continue as before.

The website is updated frequently and holds the up-to-date information of services and events, with the key information given on the front Home page. A weekly e-mail is sent to those on the database giving reports of events held and information of forthcoming services and events. Messages are regularly posted on the village WhatsApp group.

A Pew Sheet is produced for all services and a report is sent each month to the online Parish Newsletter. A printed scaled down version of the online monthly Parish Newsletter, with just the news items, is available in the church porch and a copy is delivered each month to those known to be in the village who are not able to receive the Newsletter any other way.

## **POLICY DOCUMENTS:**

The annual review of the Safeguarding Policy took place at the November PCC meeting. No changes were made to the Safeguarding or Domestic Abuse Policy.

An annual safeguarding report was prepared for the November PCC meeting. For the year to 31st October the report is a nil report – no safeguarding incidents had been reported in the last twelve months.

The Health & Safety check, delayed last year due to all the roof and ceiling work being done, was carried out on 20th March 2025.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was last updated in May 2021. The annual review took place in November. There were no GDPR issues to report and no further change required to the Data Privacy notice.

All the current Policy documents are on display in the church porch and available on the website in the Great Brickhill section.

### **DEANERY SYNOD:**

Our Benefice is in the Mursley Deanery, which is the smallest and unusual in that there is no urban setting – 20 parishes, small population with five clergy, plus House for Duty. Jeremy Hopkinson took on the position of Deanery Synod Representative for Great Brickhill at the Annual Meeting in April 2024.

At the March Deanery Synod meeting, there was a plea to parishes for someone to come forward to take on the role of each of the officials. Jeremy wished to step down as Deanery treasurer, but the position remains vacant. Annie Copper as Lay Chair wished to retire, also Malcolm Oliver as the Deanery Synod Secretary. Revd Val Plumb's time as Area Dean was also coming to an end. A discussion was held about the Blessing of Same Sex Relationships.

The Synod Meeting scheduled for 2nd July was cancelled. There was an urgent need for people to take on the leadership roles.

At the meeting in November, it was reported that Bishop Dave would be appointing a Rural Dean soon. There was someone who had volunteered to take on the Treasurer's role, but a new Lay Chair and Secretary were still required. It was proposed to elect a Standing Committee which would meet prior to each Synod meeting to discuss the agenda for the forthcoming meeting.

An application was made to the Deanery to fund a new projector for the Benefice. This was agreed in October and a grant of £269.98 was received.

### **ROUTINE TASKS:**

Following a request for volunteers to help out with the general tasks around the church, and for services, rotas are now drawn up for:- Reading, Sidesmen, Coffee, Cleaning, Flowers, Mowing, Church Locking. A monthly Rota Sheet is circulated with the weekly e-mail at the end of each month as a reminder to those on the rota.

### **WORK ON THE FABRIC OF THE CHURCH:**

#### **Roof Work:**

The leak in the roof at the base of the steps to the Lady Chapel was rectified in January along with the problem with the tower downpipe. At the same time, the repairs required to the chancel roof and masonry on the porch roof, as detailed in the recent Quinquennial Inspection, was carried out.

#### **South Porch Doors:**

Having completed all the work on the roof, the architect was asked to do drawings for an outer door to the south porch which will enhance the entrance to the church and tackle the significant heat loss through the south door. Planning permission has been granted for the doors but approval for the faculty from the DAC is awaited.

#### **Workday in September:**

A team of volunteers came to the church to help tackle some jobs to reduce the amount of heat loss from the church. The void under the centre aisle grating has been thoroughly cleaned and insulation laid to reflect the heat up into the church rather than

down to the soil floor. Flagstones in the porch were lifted to lay insulation around the heating pipes coming from the boiler room into the church

### **Net Zero Carbon Project:**

As reported last year, we are embarking on a project to reduce our carbon footprint. We have been awarded a Net Zero Carbon Preparation grant from the Diocese to help with preparatory work with this. Andrew Smith was commissioned to conduct an audit of the energy use in the church and a plan for decarbonisation. This includes a larger project looking at replacing the old gas boiler, which will soon need replacing anyway, with an air source heat pump. There should be funds coming available nationally and from the Diocese that we can apply for to help with the funding of this work.

Based on the carbon emissions data from the Energy Footprint Tool submissions that are sent to the diocese, we are one of ten churches that have been awarded "Seed" funding from the Net Zero Carbon Preparation Fund to start our net zero carbon project. The award of £3,000 is for professional fees, design work, and other preparation work needed for future decarbonisation, but not capital expenditure.

Andrew Smith conducted a feasibility study to establish the most viable option. He is confident that a heat pump will be feasible, and it will be possible in time to get to net zero carbon.

A site meeting was held in December with Andrew Smith, a heat pump supplier and Russell Christison the architect. Detailed tests have been carried out to provide information necessary for the specification and costings for the installation of the air source heat pump. The data will be used to calculate the capacity of heat pump required. It is likely that we will have two heat pumps located on the roof of the boiler room, the second one coming into action on very cold days.

### **CHURCH FINANCES FOR 2025:**

The accounts, produced on a receipts and payments basis as in previous years, showed a deficit of £1,079. The overall figures for receipts and payments are in line with last year.

The income from Special Activities is slightly down compared to 2024 due to the high amount raised for one of last year's Snowdrop Walks and there being no Open Gardens. The figure for PCC Surplice Fees is dependent on the number of funerals and weddings held.

The Church Inspection fees for 2024 included the £1,020 cost of the Quinquennial.

Despite the general rise in gas prices, the cost for Heating, Lighting etc is very similar to last year. The supplier of electricity has been changed to Octopus, who have a much lower daily standing charge.

The end of year deficit was projected, and as a result, £14K was paid towards the allocation of the £21,885 Parish Share to the Diocese (the same amount paid as in 2024 and 2023, £8K was paid in 2022, £16K in 2021). This preserves the level of General Reserves at £13,984 to allow for cash flow purposes.

### **Restricted Items:**

As well as general income the PCC has received donations which are restricted as to their use, the money having been given for specific purposes. Under the Charities Act accounting regulations, the restricted funds have to be identified separately in the main accounts. The PCC is able to confirm that it holds sufficient and appropriate assets to meet the conditions of expenditure of all restricted funds. Details of the balances of

funds and the assets which are held to represent those funds are contained in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities.

**St Mary's Fund:**

There is now just one General Fabric category for all St Mary's funds. The balance at the year end stands at £2,006. Receipts of £4,330 included donations, gift aid refunds and VAT refund. The Listed Places of Worship Scheme for reclaiming VAT is due to end in March 2026.

Payments from the St Mary's fund of £16,545 included the final amount due to The Leadworks for the roof work and architects' fees.

**The Parish Share** due for 2026 has been confirmed as £21,810, a 0.3% decrease.

**The QR Code & Sum Up device.**

The QR code via the "Give a Little" scheme using the SumUp credit card account is easy for people to gift aid their donation, and was used for carol singing round the village and the Christmas services. It is also on display in the church for any visitors who wish to make a donation. The SumUp device is used more and more by people wishing to pay by their credit card at events rather than by cash.