



St John's & St Leonard's Church Bedford

APCM Reports 2026





St John's & St Leonard's Church Bedford

Contents:

Church Wardens Report	Page 3-4
Rectors Report	Page 5-6
Safeguarding Report	Page 7-8
Treasurers Report	Page 9-12
Land & Buildings Report	Page 13-15
Environment Report	Page 16-17
Outreach Reports (Worship, Coffee Morning, Women's Fellowship, Babies & Toddlers and Prayer Meeting)	Page 18-22
Homegroup Reports (Dan & Lizzie & Siham)	Page 23

Churchwardens Report for 2025

The year started off with Helen still being on Maternity Leave and we were very grateful for the clergy that came and took our Communion Services.

We had our first outreach event on 4th March when we celebrated Shrove Tuesday with Pancakes. This was very well attended. During the year we have had four other outreach events consisting of Easter Party, Summer Bonanza, Light Party and Christingle all held at St Leonard's. We have been very blessed with well over 100 children and adults attending. Our Christingle Party was more successful this year as we had food and activities first then the Christingle service.

In March Impact used St John's church for their Easter Experience. The event was well attended by school children and their helpers/teachers. There was also a chance for those who support Impact to come and see the Easter story. In December Impact also used St John's church for their Christmas Nativity.

In April we welcomed back Helen to lead us full time and we enjoyed having Isabelle with us also, especially the cuddles and watching her grow.

In April our new administrator Kaci was employed. He has been a great asset to us in organising the office, revamping our weekly newssheet, promoting our centres and carpark at St John's for hire and making sure our website is up to date plus other social media promotions.

This year we joined St Michael's for our Maundy Thursday meal organised by Mike and Helen. It was great that the church was so full as we remembered Christ's last supper with his disciples. Our Good Friday service was held at St John's which was reflective. Then on Sunday we celebrated our risen Christ

at St John's. The adults were given an Easter Egg and the children had an Easter Egg hunt in the hall.

On July 29th was our last Sunday service at St Leonard's. When it was agreed by the PCC that all services would be at St John's. From September we have been having midweek communion service and lunch on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month at St Leonard's. This has been attended by around 10 members and we have enjoyed the fellowship together. St Leonard's is now our main parish outreach centre because of its position.

Our Harvest Festival was held on 12th October when the PCC decided to support Tibbs Dementia with our harvest offering.

During the end of the year our quinquennial works were carried out and are now nearly completed. I would like to thank David Lambert for arranging the grants and overseeing the whole project. Thank you God that we did receive some grants towards the cost of the project.

Hilary Searle

Rector's Report for 2025

What a busy year it has been. As I reflect on all that has taken place across both St John's and St Leonard's, my overriding feeling is one of deep gratitude. Thank you to everyone who has given their time, energy, gifts, and prayers so generously.

The life of our churches depends on the faithful commitment of so many people, often in ways that are unseen, and I am truly thankful for all the help and support offered throughout the year.

One of the most significant and difficult decisions we faced this year was to stop holding weekly services at St Leonard's. This was not a decision taken lightly. Declining attendance meant that we needed to think carefully about how best to steward our resources and sustain a meaningful worshipping presence. I recognise that this has been a painful change for many, and I want to acknowledge that sense of loss. At the same time, we continue to seek new and creative ways for St Leonard's to remain a place of prayer, welcome, and community.

Out of that period of change, it has been encouraging to see new initiatives take root. The fortnightly Communion Lunch Club has been a particularly positive development. With an average attendance of around 10 people, it has created a warm and welcoming space where fellowship, food, and worship come together in a meaningful way. It is a reminder that smaller gatherings can still be deeply impactful.

Our outreach events have continued to grow both in strength and in scale. Welcoming over 100 people at each event is a remarkable achievement and speaks to the dedication and vision of those who organise and support them. These occasions are a vital expression of our mission, helping us to connect with the wider community and to share something of God's love in accessible and joyful ways.

Practical work has also made a real difference this year. The clearing of the gardens has transformed our outdoor spaces, making them safer, more usable, and more inviting. This not only benefits our regular congregation but also enhances our ability to host community activities and welcome visitors.

Pastoral visiting has increased significantly, and it has been a great privilege for me personally to spend time with so many people across our congregations and beyond. These moments of connection—whether in homes, hospitals, or other settings—are at the heart of our calling as a church, and I am grateful for the trust that people place in us during both joyful and challenging times.

Our Sunday services continue to be a real strength. Week by week, they are marked by thoughtful teaching and meaningful worship, and I feel very blessed to be part of such a gifted and committed team. It is also wonderful to see our Sunday School growing. The energy, care, and creativity that go into nurturing our younger members are inspiring, and I am deeply thankful to all who contribute to this vital ministry.

Looking ahead, one of my hopes for the coming year is that we will continue to grow in confidence as we think about our mission. In particular, I would like us to explore how we can better reach those we are not currently engaging with. This may involve trying new approaches, building new relationships, and being open to change—but it is an exciting opportunity to share the good news in fresh ways.

Thank you again for all that you do. It is a privilege to serve as your Rector, and I look forward to all that lies ahead as we continue this journey together.

Revd Helen Stewart

Safeguarding Report for 2025

This past year (2025) has continued to be a very difficult year for the Anglican Church and the Church of England regarding safeguarding, and, as a result, changes in the way the Church of England administers safeguarding in the future are trickling down. I will attempt to keep up to date with this, with the help of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team who are always very helpful.

I am pleased to report that there have been no serious safeguarding incidents during this past year.

I can also report that the PCC has complied with the duty to have “due regard” to the House of Bishops’ guidance in relation to safeguarding and training.

The guidance from the House of Bishops on Safeguarding Standards has been noted. Posters detailing these are up in all church buildings, and the PCC have discussed Standards 1(Culture, Leadership & Capacity) and 2 (Prevention). Four more to discuss!

I can report that all training and DBS checks are up to date for those on the PCC, Children’s work on a Sunday and on the Prayer Ministry Team, including the Awareness of Domestic Violence course. I will of course, ensure that any new members of either undertake the relevant checks and training. I will try to chase all those who need to renew either their DBS checks or their training, but it would be helpful if all those who have either a DBS check or training that has run out, that they take responsibility for this, in case I haven’t picked it up.

I keep up to date with my training as a Parish Safeguarding Officer and take every opportunity to undertake training when it is offered, and also any Safeguarding Forums run by the Diocese.

The Diocese sends out Safeguarding Training Newsletters twice a year, and these often have important information in them, so I arrange for them to be circulated to the PCC members so that they are aware of any changes, etc.

I try to be available and approachable most of the time, so please contact me if you have any queries.

Please remember that I cannot as one person, have eyes and ears everywhere during our activities, so please do not hesitate to approach or contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Let's continue to keep our children and vulnerable adults safe!

Margaret Lambert

Treasurers' Report for 2025

The multi-page Annual Report and Accounts 2025 (a separate document) is made up of the following sections:

- i) Annual Report 2025
- ii) Charity Commission Statement of Financial Activities [SOFA]
- iii) Charity Commission Balance Sheet
- iv) Notes to the Accounts
- v) Examiner's Report

In addition, the following document, giving further detail, has also been circulated:

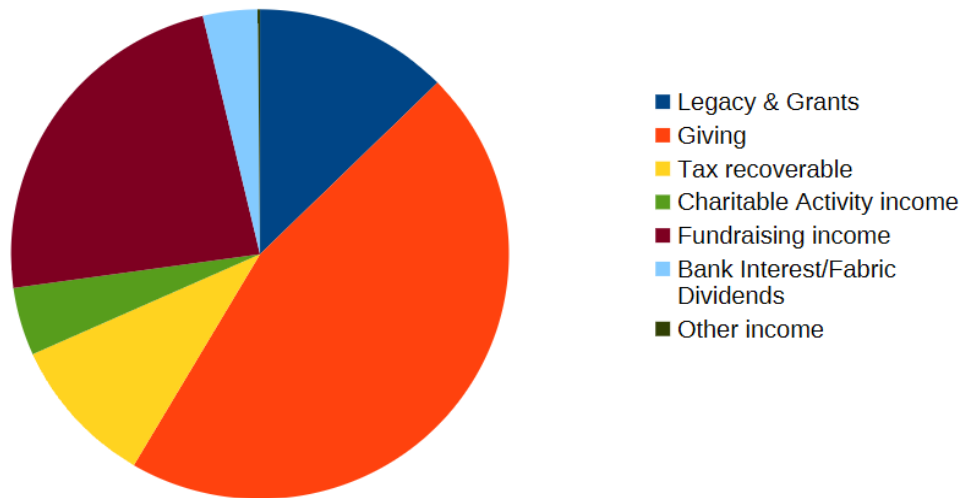
- vi) YE 2025, Budget 2026_summary

1. 2025 Annual Report and Accounts

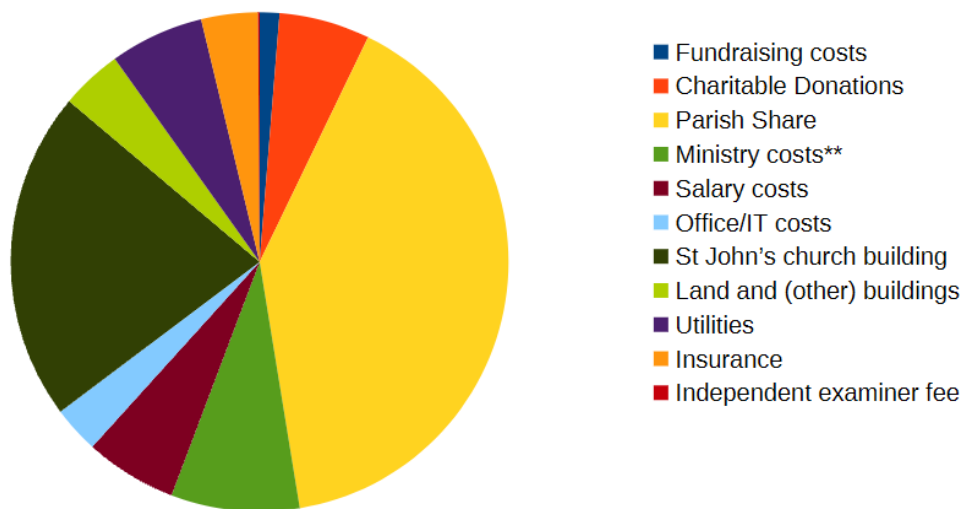
The Annual Report and Accounts is a statement of our work and witness as a church, as well as being a legal document demonstrating how we have fulfilled our charitable purposes during 2025. The Annual Report and Accounts have been independently examined by Barrie Frost, and were approved by the PCC at their March meeting. Thank you to those who compiled the non-financial part of the report, and on the accounts side of things I would especially like to thank Angela for all her work (and patience) over the past year.

The finance section of the annual report covers the 'key points' of our income and expenditure in 2025, and the (non-statutory) summary document vi) has further details. Suffice it to say here, our overall deficit was considerably lower than budgeted; please read the report.

Income 2025



Expenditure 2025



2. Examiner

The APCM is required to agree an examiner for the 2026 report and accounts, and on behalf of the PCC I propose Barrie Frost, who has been our examiner since 2010, and who has indicated that he is willing to perform this task once again.

3. 2026 Budget

The PCC approved the budget for 2026 at the March meeting, a summary of which can also be found in document vi).

The headline figure of a deficit of around £36,500 needs some explanation to place it in context, and I will say more in the meeting. But here are some pointers ...

The completion of the Quinquennial works on the church building in the first quarter of 2026 will contribute around £7,000 to this deficit. Even so, our (restricted) cash Fabric Fund is projected to be around £10,000 at year end, far from being completely emptied as we might have imagined when we received the detailed quotations back in the autumn, thanks to the grants we have obtained towards this building work ... for which we are grateful to God. And thank you to David for his work in preparing grant applications and for overseeing this major piece of work.

In addition, we have pencilled in some significant works to our other buildings (whilst holding back on some that were proposed); we are aware that if we do not keep on top of these essential maintenance works the state of our buildings will deteriorate rapidly, leading to even greater expense in the future.

The salaries figure looks high compared to 2025, but note that the Administrator's Deanery hours are covered by the Diocese, and the Children's Worker is part funded by the Diocese. Energy bills are static, as we are in the middle of a 3-year fixed rate contract, a blessing in the light of recent rises in fuel costs. As always, the Parish Share is, by far, the most significant element of expenditure.

We reported to the APCM in 2025 that the Diocese had told us that we fully owned the Curate's house (which had not been our understanding up to that point). Our tenants left at the end of October 2025, prior to us putting the property up for sale, and

the budget has been prepared with the assumption that we would start to receive rent on a replacement property from September 2026; ten months without rental income have had an impact on our income stream. The position of the Diocese, however, has been revised, with Helen informing the PCC at their March meeting of the final settlement reached. The situation going forward is a matter for the new PCC.

We hope to sign off on a couple of significant rental agreements in the near future, which will certainly help to reduce our overall deficit going forward.

We are thankful to God for Josie Line's extremely generous legacy that is enabling us to continue in worship, discipleship, pastoral care, community service and outreach, as we seek to live out God's Kingdom in our lives and in our parish; and we look to God to provide and direct us for the future.

Simon Brocklehurst

Land & Building's Report for 2025

The following information is provided in the annual report for 2025, covering the period to 31st December 2025.

Buildings and Land

General: The care and use of the buildings and land is an important aspect of the church's stewardship of resources in its care. This is achieved through regular cleaning, maintenance and up-keep; also the appropriate use of the buildings. The environmental aspects also form part of the 5th mark of mission. We were awarded an EcoChurch Bronze award and during the year further work was carried out which is being measured against the A Rocha EcoChurch criteria (Silver Award)

St John's Church: The church is a Grade 1 Listed Building having been re-listed in 2018. Smart Water is applied to the building as a forensic aid against theft. An Energy Audit and Advice Report has been carried out. Routine maintenance was carried out during the year. We have been working with Bedford Borough Council and the Diocese on quinquennial work to the closed churchyard. Following award of a faculty, repairs to walls, and substantial undergrowth and tree work was carried out. This will be finalised during 2026. A works package, based on the most recent Quinquennial Report, was finalised in early 2025. The work primarily includes masonry repairs and roof repairs to the tower. was competitively tendered and awarded to a local Stonemasonry company who commenced work in November 2025 under the conditions of the Archdeacon's Permission for works under List B dated 16th May 2025. The work is being overseen by the approved surveyor. Grants have been obtained from heritage trusts, for which we are duly grateful. Work will continue into the early part of 2026.

St John's Church

St John's Hall: Regular maintenance has been carried out, working parties carrying out wider cleaning and maintenance on the hall and grounds.

St Leonard's Church Centre: Regular maintenance has been carried out, and the premises are maintained in good order. The gas fired kitchen water boiler was replaced by an electric one. The adjacent car park is used in conjunction with the centre. Redecoration and upgrades were undertaken during the year and further clearance work on the adjacent car park to keep it clear for parking. St Leonard's is now being used more extensively for a wider range of activities.

Curate's House: Since June 2013 this had been rented out on a commercial basis on a formal short-term tenancy managed by a local agent. The latest tenants have now vacated the building. In engaging with the Diocese over the future of the building, which provides a valuable asset for a future curate, it has been established that the PCC own the full equity in the building. This has opened up further opportunities for its long-term future, particular in the light of the long and short term works identified by the Quinquennial inspection.

Update since 31st December 2025:

St John's Church Quinquennial works are substantially complete, within budget despite the unexpected replacement of stonework over the West (main entrance) door., with a final inspection for the main due before the 2026 APCM, The closed churchyard works where the Bedford Borough are responsible is still subject to agreement of the requirements associated with the main entrance lantern.

St John's Church Hall. Door closer obtained and fitted to the front door to improve safeguarding protection.

St Leonard's Church Centre: The heating system has been erratic and in need of attention over the winter, resulting in heating failures. After protracted discussions and a lengthy time

obtaining quotations, a repair was carried out in early April involving pump replacement, system clearance and header tank adjustment. Introduction of inhibitor and a further header tank float adjustment is due by the end of April. Excessive water bills have been experienced, partially corrected by a cistern flush replacement in March, and hopefully obviated by the heating system repairs.

The damaged gates (to the area behind St Leonard's) have been repaired and re-set.

David Lambert

Environment Report for 2025

Over the past 12 months, the Environment Group has begun to take shape as a new area of ministry within the life of our church. It has been encouraging to see both practical progress and a growing awareness of our shared responsibility to care for creation.

We are delighted that the church has been awarded the Bronze Eco Church Award through A Rocha UK. This is an important milestone, and we are now beginning to explore what steps may be needed as we work towards the Silver Award.

At St Leonard's, the grounds are currently looking particularly good, with spring flowers bringing colour and life. The outdoor space was a real blessing during our Easter party, enabling us to host games and crafts outside. This reminds us that these spaces are not just to be maintained, but to be enjoyed as part of our shared life together.

We are especially grateful for the faithful work of Sam and Catherine Whalan, who have been consistently maintaining the grounds at St Leonard's on Monday mornings since September 2025. Their service has made a significant difference and is greatly appreciated.

At St John's, we continue to explore how best to establish regular gardening sessions and build a sustainable rhythm of care across both sites.

As a group, we agreed a budget of £500 for the year to support tools, planting, and other practical needs. This gives us a helpful foundation as we continue to develop the group.

Looking ahead, we are keen to encourage wider congregational involvement. This includes opportunities to share seeds, plants,

and produce over the coming months, as well as practical ways people can help maintain and care for our grounds.

More broadly, we recognise that caring for creation goes beyond our church spaces. We hope to share simple, practical ideas for how we can all care for the environment in our everyday lives at home, whether through reducing waste, being mindful of energy use, supporting local wildlife, or making sustainable choices. This is not just about gardening, but about how we live as stewards of the world God has entrusted to us.

As a new group, we are still developing direction and momentum, but we are excited about the opportunities ahead. We see this work not only as practical upkeep, but as part of our calling to steward God's creation and to create spaces that are welcoming, life-giving, and reflective of His goodness.

Dan Payton

Outreach Reports for 2025:

WORSHIP REPORT:

Between January and July Sunday morning services at St John's, also available on Zoom, have alternated between Morning Praise (1st & 3rd Sundays) and Holy Communion.

We have held Intergenerational/All-age services on 5th Sunday mornings. Our more informal 'Hungry for God' Sunday evening services were held in St John's Hall (2nd & 4th Sundays, the latter with Holy Communion). Morning services were held at St Leonard's (alternate weeks, and alternating between Holy Communion and Morning Praise).

Since September Sunday morning services have only been held at St John's, with Holy Communion the first 3 Sundays of each month.

Midweek Communion services have taken place on alternate Wednesdays, at St John's until July, moving to St Leonard's in September.

We have followed the set lectionary readings throughout the year.

Our occasional choir, as usual, helped to lead worship at the carol service in December.

We are grateful for our team of leaders/preachers (Helen, David, Sue, Simon, Jill), also those who read and lead intercessions week by week. We are also thankful for the visiting clergy who have helped to lead our worship, and to preach, during the first part of the year during Helen's maternity leave.

I am hugely grateful to Hilary, Dan and Chris who support me in leading the musical side of our worship at St John's; also to those who, 'behind the scenes', operate the computer and sound desk. The liturgy and song words (taken from a wide variety of sources) are projected onto the screen.

If you would like to be involved in any aspect of the music in our worship please do get in touch with me. Please do pray for God's leading in our service planning and preparation, as 'with gratitude in our hearts we sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.' (Col3:16)

Simon Brocklehurst

COFFEE MORNING REPORT:

We meet alternate Fridays at 10.30am for a good chat tea/coffee cakes and sausage rolls. There are between 15 to 20 who meet most weeks but we always welcome new people. At about 11.15 we stop for a short pause for thought with a Christian message brought by a few people who volunteer.

Last year we were given in donations over £711.00 of which £600.00 was given to different charities and the rest carried over to this year which we have already sent off £200.00 including donations given since January.

Sylvia King

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP REPORT:

Women's Fellowship meet on the 1st & 3rd Wednesday, in St John's Hall to chat, sing, pray and listen – either to visiting speakers or to one another as we share our experiences and testimonies.

We always make time for tea & biscuits and sometimes have a fish & chip lunch. Numbers are few, but each member contributes by their loyalty, concern by their loyalty, concern and friendliness. How about joining us, if you are free...

Jill Thomas

BABIES & TODDLERS REPORT:

Both groups have been running successfully for the last year.

St Leonard's group has an attendance that is usually around 12-14 children. Most of these children come very regularly, but a few come occasionally. One childminder attends most weeks bringing three children. Some families drive, but around half walk from the local area. This group has a high proportion of families from Eastern Europe, especially Poland and Romania. The small group has been helpful in building the confidence of some parents in spoken English and in introducing the children to a group situation in an additional language.

St John's group has a steady attendance of about 22 families with between 25 and 30 children. On a few occasions, more families have wanted to come in and we have had to turn them away, for safety reasons (22 is our agreed maximum). The children range from babies to 4 year olds with the majority aged between 1 and 3. Two childminders attend this group and are well-integrated. Several children are brought by grandmothers representing around a quarter of the families. Most families drive to St John's with several from Shortstown and Brickhil, but we also have about a third walking and filling our buggy space in the PCC room. Several families are here with their third child.

Overall, between both groups we have nearly 50 families who attend regularly, or semi-regularly. Both groups have a mix of British and other nationalities, with a good proportion being from Eastern Europe. Several of the families are Christian (from St John's and St Leonard's, King's Arms and others) and we also have a few families of other faiths including Muslim, Hindu and Sikh.

Our sessions include free play with a sensory activity weekly (eg play dough, rice, water), large activity play (slide, trampoline etc), jigsaws, construction toys, small world and role play toys. A weekly craft ties in with the story. At the end of the session the families help to tidy up before we gather for a snack of savoury biscuits/crisps and fruit and water, a story and song time. At least monthly the story is a Bible story. For their birthday each child is given a Bible storybook and a card. Through these activities we are helping parents to provide a wider range of activities than they can at home and support them in preparing their child to start school or nursery.

During this year we have also taken the opportunity to celebrate Christmas with a toddler Nativity service in St John's, and under gazebos in St Leonard's, marked Harvest and Easter, without bunnies or chicks! Last summer we celebrated the end of the Summer term with a picnic at each venue and presented children who were leaving to go to Nursery or Reception class in school with a children's Bible.

In addition, we have been able to provide advice and emotional support to parents struggling with behaviour issues, concerns over suspected additional needs, language delay and encouraging parents who are shy or have social anxiety to grow in confidence. In this we have also been developing links with The Community Link Workers from the Family Hubs. In

addition, we have one family with an adopted toddler and another who is fostering. At the end of every session we gather as a team to pray for any needs the families have shared with us, or we have identified. Needs that we have prayed for and/or offered support for include cancer diagnoses, new babies, caring for grandchildren and elderly parents concurrently, and other life stresses.

The teams (St Leonard's -Simon, Chris and Liz), (St John's – David, Liz, Jill and Teresa) are dedicated and reliable which enables the families to get to know them and for the church to be seen as approachable and human. This has certainly helped as families invited to other events have been keen to attend the various family activities during the year.

Recently several parents have said 'You are like family to us and my children.'

Alison Clark

PRAYER MEETING REPORT:

A group of us met 6 times during the year on a Friday either at St John's or St Leonard's. We have a time of worship consisting of a bible reading and song, then we pray about different concerns regarding our church, our Babes and Toddler Groups, social outreach events, parish, Lea and Petra Williams our missionary partners, world affairs and members of our congregation.

Hilary Searle

Homegroup Reports for 2025:

LIZZIE & DAN'S HOMEGROUP REPORT:

Our home group continues to be a faithful and encouraging space, meeting weekly on Zoom on Tuesday evenings. Over the past 12 months, we have explored a mixture of studies, some using book-based resources, and others created within the group. These have included series such as reflecting on a meaningful psalm or song. Leadership is shared, with different people leading week by week, which has been a real strength of the group.

We have been pleased to welcome a new member since the start of the year, and the group remains open to others who would like to join. If you are interested, please do get in touch with Dan or Lizzie Payton.

Alongside our online meetings, we also gather in person from time to time, often for lunch after church, which helps to deepen relationships. Prayer remains central to the group, as we support one another and pray for the life of the church.

Dan & Lizzie Payton

SIHAM'S HOMEGROUP REPORT:

We have 7 members and meet fortnightly at Siham's house. We have been studying the book of Acts for a year

Margie Jewson