

St. John the Baptist Parish Church
Crowthorne

Parish Report

2025 - 2026



CONTENTS

Agendas.....	3	Churches Together in Crowthorne	20
Minutes of previous AMP & APCM.....	4	Deanery Report – Area Dean.....	22
Churchwardens Report	8	Deanery Synod.....	24
Befrienders/ Baptismal support.....	9	Fabric Committee.....	25
Bible Study Group.....	10	Games Afternoon	26
Book club.....	10	Green Team/ Mustard Seed.....	27
Choir	11	The Mustard Seed Project	27
Christian Discipleship.....	12	Ministry in Schools	29
Church Cleaners.....	13	Missions Committee.....	30
Church Flowers.....	13	Mothers Union.....	32
Church Library	14	Pastoral Group	33
Church Office.....	14	Prayer Groups.....	33
Churchyard	15	Safeguarding.....	34
Come and Be	16	St. John's Sunday club.....	35
Come and Play	17	Servers and Crucifers	36
Come and Rest.....	17	Social Committee.....	36
Come and See	17	Stewardship	38
Come and Sing.....	18	Website	39
Communications Group	19	Welcome Team.....	39

CROWTHORNE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS to be held on Sunday 10th May
2026 in the Church Hall at 11.30 a.m.

AGENDA

1. Opening Prayers
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners 2025
4. Election of Churchwardens

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING of the CROWTHORNE
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL to be held immediately following the
meeting of Parishioners on Sunday 10th May 2026 in the Church Hall

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the 2025 Annual Meeting of the Parish
2. Matters Arising from the Minutes
3. Presentation of the Annual Report and Accounts
4. Report on revised electoral roll
5. Presentation of Parish Reports
6. Elections
 - (a) Parochial Church Council
 - (b) Deanery Synod
7. Appointments
 - (a) Treasurer
 - (b) Secretary
 - (c) Hon Independent Examiner
8. Notices

Closing prayers

Crowthorne Parochial Church Council

The Revd Laura Wheatley Downs (chair)

James Laverick (Churchwarden)

Tracy Perrett (Hon Treasurer)

Pamela Carter (Hon secretary)

Meeting of Parishioners held in the church hall on Sunday 11th May 2025

The vicar opened the meeting with prayer.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from, Anne Pelham, Anne Mohan, Jasmin Bushnell, Carol Cain, Richard and Caroline Ireson, Jenny McKeever, Kathy Lindley, Sheila Stickland, Sue O'Hare, Tom Lewis and Bob Wade.

Minutes

Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2024 was proposed by Margaret Barnes, seconded by Gillian Gyenes. All in favour, no abstentions, the minutes were signed as a true record by the vicar.

Election of Churchwardens and Deputy Churchwarden

Anne Pelham was proposed by Leigh Welham and seconded by Jill Pope. All in favour, no abstentions.

Ken Perrett was proposed by Anne Pelham and seconded by Carol Frost. All in favour, no abstentions.

David Rance (Assistant Churchwarden) was proposed by Joan Clarke, seconded by Sally Abbott. All in favour, no abstentions.

All three received a round of applause.

Laura thanked James Laverick for his work as Churchwarden which had included both a vacancy and maternity leave. He had been a fantastic support and she presented him with a gift as a token of appreciation.

There was applause for James

Mary Harwood expressed thanks to Laura on behalf of the parish for all she does.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Sunday 11th May 2025 following the meeting of Parishioners

Ken Perrett joined Laura for the meeting and was presented with a sizeable set of keys by James.

Laura reminded those present that voting at the meeting is restricted to those on the Electoral Roll

1. Minutes

Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2024 was Proposed by Tracy Perrett, Seconded by Joan Clarke. There was 1 Abstention all the rest in favour.

There were no matters arising.

2. Presentation of the Annual Report and accounts

Tracy Perrett gave her report as follows.

2024 was a fruitful year for our finances here at St Johns. As a result of some very generous donations, legacies and grants, together with lower-than-expected expenses, the General Fund saw a surplus at year end of just over £21k which meant that the total fund at the start of 2025 stood at over £91k. Whilst being prudent with our monies, such a fund means that, if appropriate, the PCC could consider using some of the fund for new initiatives and projects. However, this is very much dependent on the continuing generosity of our congregation who provide the bedrock of our income for the day to day running of our church.

Our Missions Giving in 2024 included:

- over £11k to St John's 7 designated charities (The Church Army, Church Mission Society, The Leprosy Mission, Embrace the Middle east, Corrymeela, The Bible Society and Hopezone). This represents 12.5% of all planned giving in the year.
- Over £3k was given to the recipients of the Lent lunch, Missions Sunday and Giving Tree appeals
- and almost £2.5k was given to other charities including The Children's Society.

Thanks must go to Hazel and the Missions Committee for all the work they have done, not only in 2024 but over so many years, in encouraging every one of us to look beyond ourselves and to support so many worthwhile causes.

Our Restricted Funds also saw a large increase with a new fund established for work with children and young people following a substantial legacy from a much-loved member of our congregation.

Another new fund was established following a grant from the Oxford Diocese to conduct a net zero feasibility study.

Whilst we can only give thanks for such a positive financial year, as Treasurer I cannot help but be cautious about the situation going forward.

Compared to this time last year our income is down by more than £8,000. Accordingly, the forecast income for this year is currently significantly down on 2024, whilst budgeted costs for 2025 are higher than last year's actual costs.

This year the cost of running our church is expected to be in the region of £2,600 every week. So far this year our weekly income is more than £400 short of this figure. If everyone of us could just increase our giving by a small amount, that shortfall could be closed.

As such, I would ask all members of our church to give prayerful consideration to their giving

Tracy asked if there were any questions.

Richard Price asked if it would be possible to earmark some Sundays especially for giving toward the fabric of the church. Laura explained that there were opportunities for giving to specific causes and thanked him for his suggestion

Tracy expressed her personal thanks for the support she receives in her role especially from Julia and Leigh.

3. Report on revised Electoral Roll.

Judith Book (Electoral Roll Officer) reported that this year we had a full revision of the Electoral Roll and the figure is now 113.

In accordance with the Church Representation Rules the amended Electoral Roll was displayed for 14 days to allow anyone to appeal against the inclusion or removal of any name. No such appeals have been received.

Laura thanked Judith for taking on the role at such a difficult time, replacing Julie Roberts. The drop in numbers could partly be explained by a change of policy by Ranelagh School who no longer require families to be on the electoral Roll of a church. Now that the closed period is over it will be possible to join the Roll if anyone missed the revision date.

4. Presentation of Parish Reports.

Laura asked if there were any questions on the reports and thanked all who contributed, and the office team for putting it together. It reflected what a huge range of activities there are in the Church.

5. Elections

Two vacancies on the PCC are due to Brian Berry and Julie Roberts moving away from the Parish. Thanks are due the Brian and Hazel for all they have done and to Julie who also dealt with copyright matters.

There are six vacancies on the PCC, three for three years and three for one year. Six nominations had been received as follows:

Catherine Pandya	Proposed by Carol Frost	Seconded by Gillian Gyenes
Terry Dungate	Proposed by Sheila Stickland	Seconded by Pam Carter
Sylvia Dungate	Proposed by Sheila Stickland	Seconded by Pam Carter
David Rance	Proposed by Ken Perrett	Seconded by Pam Carter
Tracy Perrett	Proposed by Pam Carter	Seconded by Julia Norton
Pam Carter	Proposed by Tracy Perrett	Seconded by Julia Norton

They were declared duly elected.

Laura explained that there would be Deanery Synod elections next year and asked people to consider the role.

6. Appointments

The following appointments were voted on by members of the PCC

Hon Secretary	Pam Carter	Proposed by Veronica Burgess, Seconded by Julia Norton. All in favour.
Hon Treasurer	Tracy Perrett	Proposed by Julia Norton, Seconded by David Rance., All in favour.
Hon Auditor	Laura Myers	Proposed by Carol Frost, Seconded by Gillian Gyenes. All in favour.

7. Closing

Laura thanked everyone for attending and the team who provided the refreshments.

She closed the meeting with prayer asking us to consider acts of kindness and encouragement to others.

Churchwardens Report

Churchwardens normally serve for 4 years here at St. Johns. However, they need to be re-elected every year at the APCM. Then, before they can take up their role officially, they are sworn into their office at a Service called the Archdeacon's Visitation which usually happens in May or sometimes in June. In 2025 Anne and Ken went to Greyfriars Church in Reading for the Visitation.

2025 going into-2026 has been a busy time.

In 2025 the major Net Zero Project was renamed as the Mustard Seed Project. The PCC gave approval for further exploration by the C&C heating engineers to explore more eco friendly heating options for the Church and hall. The PCC also appointed an architect to look at how we could make the Church more user friendly for everyone. Coming up to date on the 8th of March 2026 we had a vision day to discern the way forward so that our church building can enhance our mission here to be, joyful, nurturing, inclusive and creative.

On Sunday the 8th of March 2026 we held a church vision day here at St. John's. The afternoon was led by Rhodri from the diocese and together we explored questions about our church building, missional reasons for making any changes and where we would like our church to be in 5 or even 10 years' time.

In 1 Peter 4:10 it says, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."

There are so many people for us to thank for their dedication to our mission here at St. John's and the wider community. There is not enough space in this report to mention everyone who without their hard work, we churchwardens couldn't fulfil our roles.

During the last 12 months we have been so lucky to have our curate, Rev'd. Jen Green, as well as our vicar Rev'd. Laura Wheatley Downs to lead the ministry here at St. John's. Both of whom have brought so many new and exciting ideas to enhance our worship. We have also been very fortunate to have Rev'd. Canon John Edwards who has officiated at many Services and led us on an inspirational course on the Gospel of John. Not forgetting the LLM's, Gillian, Julia and Carol who assist at Services and go out into the community to reach those who are unable to join us in Church. In mentioning LLMs we of course have to mention Hazel Berry, who was a wonderful LLM here for so many years and moved in the spring with her husband Brian to Horsham.

Thanks to the small fabric team who amongst other things in the last 12 months have dealt with a breakdown of the church boilers and a major leak in the church roof. They work hard to keep our 150-year-old building a warm and dry place in which to worship and socialize.

Thanks to the PCC especially the treasurer, Tracy Perrett, who puts in a lot of hours to ensure our finances are in order. Also, the secretary, Pam Carter, who spends a lot of time on her computer not just writing up the PCC and Standing committee minutes but also sending round lots of electronic communications to keep everyone up to date.

Thanks to James Laverick, churchwarden last year, who continues to do so much work on the increasing technology that we use every day here at St. John's. This includes a problem with locking system on the front door, which is controlled by the computer and required James's technical know-how to sort out the problem to allow us access to the Church!

Finally, we would like to thank you as well - all the many hardworking people in the congregation. Those who feed us at socials; those who clean and tidy the church and hall; those who arrange the flowers so beautifully and many, many more. All of you make St. John's such a welcoming and caring community.

Anne Pelham & Ken Perrett

Befrienders/ Baptismal support

There has been an increase in the number of Baptisms St. Johns Church has administered over the last 12 months. There have been 2 male adult Baptisms and one Female. May 2025 and Feb 2026, one of which was a total immersion.

Four children under the age of 12yrs and three babies.

Laura and Jen (our present curate) held a successful four week Baptism preparation course for the above candidates and parents.

Laura or Jen and myself continue to meet the candidate and parents at their home or in church. Laura/ Jen, talk through the meaning of the baptism and collect together their Hymn/song choices for the service. At this meet up I present the family (on behalf of the Mothers Union) with a booklet called , 'Your Babies Baptism'. This booklet contains a complete guide for families preparing for their babies/child baptism.

The service still tends to be on a Sunday afternoon and is personally tailored to the individual need of that candidate.

During the service, myself or another Mothers Union member will present the candidate / parent with a lighted candle and certificate acknowledging their baptism.

A glazed glass angel, with a colourful ribbon attached is also presented by the vicar.

Also, for the next 4 years an anniversary card is sent to the candidate acknowledging their baptism.

June Todd

Bible Study Group

Ten people gather twice each month to study God's word. Jenny McKeever is our gracious host. Our choice of material is chosen democratically with wise counsel from Julia Norton. During the year we have studied the Book of Esther, The Letter of Paul to the Philippians, the Nicene Creed, and the Book of Jonah. We even had a special discussion on the Christian Resistance to the Nazis. Currently we are working through The Acts of the Apostles.

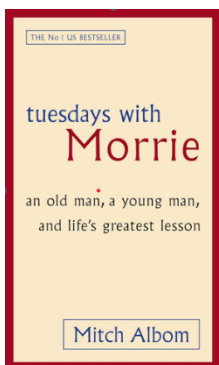
Ken Perrett, Julia Norton

Book club

We have met four times since the last APCM. In May, September and January. At each meeting, we discuss a book, which has been selected by the group. We enjoy a glass of wine and some nibbles, while we have some lively and wide-ranging discussions about the diverse books we have read during the year.

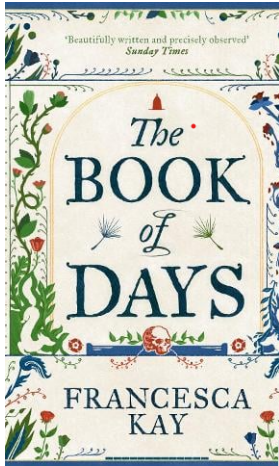
In May we discussed "Our Daily Bread", by Father Alex Frost. It is non-fiction book about an Anglican priest, Father Alex Frost, and his parish in Burnley. We found the book interesting. Father Alex had a very surprising journey into faith and ordained ministry. The parish in Burnley certainly has challenges and is very different from our own. It was a very interesting read.

Then in September we discussed "Tuesdays with Morrie" by Mitch Albom.



In the book Mitch Albom tells the story of his former professor Morrie Schwartz a man facing terminal illness with wisdom and acceptance. As Morrie confronts the final stage of his life, he shares profound insights on living with intention, embracing mortality, and prioritizing meaningful relationships over societal values like materialism and status. (synopsis from Shortform website).

Finally, in January we discussed "The Book of Days" by Francesca Kay.



This novel is set in 1546 a time of change. When Henry VIII is dying and the old religious ways are being replaced by new Protestantism.

Waterstones review: "Things change; we have to recognise that; the world will not stay still. What we must hope is that the new is better and stronger than the old." This novel is set in Anno Domini 1546. In a manor house in England a young woman feels the walls are closing round her, while her dying husband is obsessed by his vision of a chapel where prayers will be said for his immortal soul."

Anyone is very welcome to come along to our get togethers where we discuss the latest chosen book.

Anne Pelham

Choir

Nothing much has changed in the last year! The choir has continued to lead our weekly worship; they have remained a loyal and dedicated group of singers. It goes without saying that we are more than ready to welcome those of you who would like to lift your voices with us!

Our current choir members are:

Sopranos: Anna Pearce, Celia Mc Dowell, Julie Cavell

Altos: Sue O'Hare, Maggie Wade.

Tenors: Jim Wearing. Josh Cavell is at university, though he did come and sing at Christmas.

Basses: Peter Hattersley, Bob Wade.

We were delighted by the number of 'extras' who joined us for the Service of Nine Lessons. We all appreciated how wonderful it was to have Katherine to conduct. We had five lovely, keen children on this occasion, but sadly there was no further commitment. These youngsters are the foundation of a new choir – the rest of us are 'getting on a bit' and we really do need some younger voices.

We still believe that finding a **permanent director is an imperative**. We need to be more assiduous in our search, since it is likely to take a great deal of time to find a suitable candidate requiring an interview and approval by all those involved.

In the meantime, alongside all her other commitments, Katherine is standing in on special occasions.

As an RSCM (Royal School of Church Music) affiliated choir, our hymns each week are mainly recommended by the RSCM supplement 'Sunday by Sunday' which gives the theme, readings and psalms for that Sunday.

Enormous thanks must also go to our highly experienced organist, Richard Seaton, who has been a tower of strength for us all – choosing the weekly hymns (and changing them regularly!) and encouraging us with his wonderful organ skills. He now 'shares' the organ with Jennifer White and Janet Rogers

It is often quoted that: 'to sing is to pray twice,' which we do, as we sing so many lovely hymns (even the unfamiliar ones!). We are very blessed indeed.

Finally, renewed thanks to all in the choir who have kept going so well under such challenging circumstances.

The Choir

Christian Discipleship

Over the past year there have been a number of opportunities for people to develop and deepen their Christian discipleship.

In Summer 2025, *The Pilgrim Course on Baptism* was delivered over four weeks on Monday lunchtimes and Monday evenings. Following the Pilgrim Course, a monthly home group has been established, primarily for those who are new to Christianity or who are rediscovering and exploring their faith. The group is currently reading *How to Eat Bread* by Miranda Threlfall-Holmes, a guide to reading and engaging with the Bible.

During Advent 2025, a *Creative Prayer Course* was offered on Monday afternoons and Tuesday evenings.

In January and February 2026, a baptism preparation course was offered for primary school children and their families, helping them to prepare for the promises made as part of the baptism service. In February 2026, Revd Canon John Edwards led a well attended *Come and Explore* course on the Book of John.

During Lent 2026, *The Difference Course* has been offered on Monday afternoons and Wednesday evenings.

Each of these courses offered has been well attended. By offering both afternoon and evening sessions for some courses has enabled a wider range of people to participate.

All those preparing for baptism also meet individually with a member of the ministry team for a series of sessions, allowing discipleship to develop in a one-to-one context.

Alongside these planned courses, there have been many conversations with individuals about their faith journey and spirituality, which in some cases have developed into more intentional mentoring relationships.

Overall, the picture of discipleship at St John's continues to be encouraging. We are seeing people who are new to faith, as well as others returning to faith, who feel called to make St John's their worshipping community. It is also encouraging to see a genuine desire among many to deepen their faith and grow further in Christian discipleship.

Jen Green

Church Cleaners

Once again a very big **THANK YOU** is due to all the volunteers who give up their time to keep our church clean on a regular basis and especially to Lia Watson who is now working towards her Silver D of E Award. This year Lia's mum, Lia Davies, has joined our cleaning rota. Welcome Lia and Lia.

If there are any other members of our congregations who feel that they could help by contributing your "time and talents" to keeping the church clean regularly, please talk to Laura or Jenny McKeever to add your name to the list. The cleaning can be done any time during the week allocated. The church is divided into five cleaning areas so that each cleaning session should only take 1 to 1½ hours. The nave and hall are often cleaned by a couple either with a spouse/partner or with a friend. We are particularly short of couples so do talk to your friends and see if you can persuade one of them to join you in making church cleaning part of your Church membership. Generally cleaners take on to clean four times a year, so it is not such an arduous chore. This is not something that needs to be left only to the ladies as we all know that you, gentlemen, are just as handy with a vacuum cleaner, brush and duster as the females.

Thank you to all who participated in the annual 'Spring Clean' on Saturday, 14th March. The church looks particularly smart in the current spell of lovely Spring sunshine.

Jenny McKeever

Church Flowers

The Church Flower arrangers provide flowers for the Sunday services throughout the year, except during Lent. The whole church is decorated for the festivals of Easter, Harvest and Christmas, with special arrangements for the Patronal Festival, Confirmation and Remembrance Sunday. We also provide flowers for weddings and funerals when required.

We are currently a team of 14 happy flower arrangers. We work well together and support each other when necessary. For example it can be quite a daunting task to do a special arrangement for a wedding! We are very fortunate to have so many talented flower arrangers in our church family. If new members of the congregation would like to join us you would be most welcome . Most of us are self taught and there are plenty of us to help if you have no experience but would like to give flower arranging a try? As mentioned last year the Mothers Union no longer provide flowers for the Lady Chapel. This is related to the fact The Lady Chapel is no longer used as part of our regular services. So we have decided jointly that the Mothers Union members now provide the finance for the Remembrance Table flowers that are displayed in the main church. This is usually next to the Remembrance Table that contains the Book of Remembrance. If you would like to remember a loved one on their anniversary, birthday or other special date by having flowers arranged either at the Remembrance Table or Altar we are happy to do that for you. We have found that the increase in the price of flowers this year has been a problem, so the fact the Mothers Union members are now providing finance for the Remembrance Table is very helpful . A few more donations would be very welcome. I would very much like to thank those people who have made a donation this year particularly the flower arrangers, who I know often give generously with extra flowers.

Carol Cain

Church Library

Over the last 6 months work has been done on St. John's atrium by the fabric committee- I think you'll agree it looks fabulous! As part of this renovation, St. John's library was pruned a little so that borrowing books would be made easier for people, and to give us more space for groups who hire this space. A huge thankyou to Anne Pelham who had been keeping on top of the library! If you would like to borrow anything, please do take a look. There are some fabulous finds. Before donating, please ask yourself- Has this been a blessing to me, and would it be a blessing to someone else? If the answer is no, then I'd encourage you to recycle it in another way. Donations of bibles are always welcome, particularly CEV, NIV and NRSV for those who visit our church and would like one.

Laura Wheatley Downs

Church Office

We are very fortunate to have three very capable and reliable people to staff the Church Office -Anne Pelham, Carol Frost and myself.

We can access all the Church files and systems from home and can even unlock the Church door remotely. This is very helpful as the Church Office is only open on a Wednesday morning.

It is very lively on Wednesdays, with the Come and Play helpers and children and the people who come to the weekly BCP service. Thanks to the faithful refreshments team who keep us plied with tea and coffee

We refill the candles, charge the lantern lights, check the post, print and post notices for upcoming events, print copies of the worship rota for the Sunday worship, print 60 copies of the Readings sheet, update the spreadsheet copy of the Burial Register and program the doors each week. Laura keeps us busy with her excellent publicity posters. We post these in the front window and the back noticeboard.

We automatically divert Church telephone calls to one of our homes when we are not there, so we can answer calls throughout the week.

The Office Team has continued to share the preparation of the Weekly News which goes out by email on a Thursday evening. Some paper copies are made available at Church and a few are delivered to homes.

During the week, one of the team is responsible for checking and responding to emails sent to the Office. This person also sends copies of the weekly news to each of the care homes.

The Church diary is maintained electronically by Anne Pelham. This is particularly important for bookings and for setting the door locks and heating. The diary is accessible to anyone with a Church email address.

Ken Perrett

Churchyard

The churchyard is maintained by a small group of volunteers who meet regularly each week on a Wednesday and/or Friday morning. A big thank you to all the helpers: Anna Pearce, Anne Mohan, David Rance, Jill Pope, Linda Armstrong, Mary Harwood and Mike Frost.

We are kept busy in the Spring and Summer mowing and strimming the grass areas and around the headstones. We aim to cut all areas at least once at the start of the growing season before allowing some areas to grow freely to give a wonderful display of wildflowers and grasses. The insects and birds benefit from this but it adds to our workload in the Autumn when the tall grasses need to be cut back! Soon after this the leaves start to fall so we get out the rakes and leaf blower.

The grass on the Garden of Remembrance suffered badly during the long dry summer so it was reseeded in September. Thankfully that was successful and we will endeavour to keep the area well-watered this summer.

The team regularly remove dead flowers and pick up fallen twigs and the bins around the churchyard are emptied each week. Mary has done a fantastic job this year keeping the front flower beds stocked and weeded. We are looking for someone else to help with this job.

The churchyard has two brown bins and we ensure that both are full to be emptied each fortnight, either with fresh or with un-composted material from the compost heap (holly leaves from the annual hedge cut take an age to rot down). We also use some composted peat to fill depressions around the churchyard; the intention of these two actions is to stop the continual increase in the size of the compost heap, thus saving the cost of having it removed by a grabber lorry.

We have also pruned the lower branches of some trees this year and maintained the gravel and block paths around the church. Mike approached Anvil Forge and oversaw the installation of the new front gate which I hope you agree looks splendid.

If you would like to help in the churchyard in any way then please speak to me or anyone in the team – or just come along on a Wednesday morning.

Anne Mohan

Come and Be

In September 2025, a small team led by Rev'd Jen began running *Come and Be*, a half-termly group at St John's for secondary school-aged students to explore their faith. The initiative was supported by Rev'd Laura, Susan, Julia and Veronica.

Unfortunately, due to consistently low attendance, the decision has been made to discontinue these sessions. Nevertheless, we remain hopeful that there may be opportunities for future partnership working as we prayerfully reflect on how we might best respond to the needs of young people in our community.

Engaging young people can often be challenging, and it can be difficult when initiatives do not receive the level of participation we had hoped for. However, the wider picture across Crowthorne remains encouraging. Hopezone continues to run from the Baptist Church, St Sebastian's has recently begun a fortnightly Friday evening youth group, and there has been notable growth at Vineyard 25.

Jen Green

Come and Play

It will be 2 years this September that this group has changed its name from 'Minus 5's' to 'Come and Play'. It is an informal group meeting on Wednesday mornings in term time, from 9.30- 11.00, for parents/ carers with children under 5. Many of the children are younger, often coming before they go to pre-school groups. The adults appreciate having time to chat with a coffee and the children to play and engage in various activities from time to time. We hold a short and simple service in Church, with action songs and a story, before finishing at about 11.00am. The group has become increasingly popular and we regularly have 18-20 children each week who are getting to know each other really well. The group is free and all are welcome to join us. We are also grateful to the very supportive helpers who join us regularly and to Tracy Perrett who has very successfully taken over the organisation of 'Come and Play', including a popular and useful What's App group.

Gillian Gyenes

Come and Rest

Come and Rest was set up as a contemplative and restorative space in January 2025 for people to use between 12 and 1pm on a Monday.

Whilst St. John's is open every day from 9-3pm, Come and rest sets aside time for individuals to intentionally be still and engage in activities which are restful.

Our time together begins with a poem or mediation, with the hour in between for people to use as they would like. We provide soft music, blankets, pillows and art materials, but you can bring along a book or a craft, or your lunch (or just yourself!) You don't have to come along for the whole hour, but if sitting in the peace of the church alongside others feels like something you would like to do, I'd encourage you to come along and try it out.

One of the wonderful blessings of this space, apart from the ability to stop at the beginning of what is often a busy week for many, are the encounters with individuals from outside the church community who have felt drawn to visit us during this time which has led to deep pastoral care, discipleship and encouragement.

Laura Wheatley Downs

Come and See

Following a review of the attendance to the Sunday afternoon Come & See sessions, Rev Laura suggested moving it to Thursdays after school during term-time, from 3.45-5pm. So, from May 2025, we have been meeting after school on the 2nd Thursday of the month.

Refreshments are still kindly supplied and served by the wonderful MU women, but the format has changed slightly, being even less of a formal service. Rev Laura, Jen, Kate Meads and Sam Khan collaborate on a monthly theme, and ideas for activities. There are normally 5 different crafts or activities on offer, relevant to the week's theme. On each table will be a question or prayer for participants to be led in discussion of by the adults. Refreshments are available throughout, unless the food is part of an activity, such as pizza making.

After the activities, we move into the church for a brief chat about the theme, referring to the table questions, with a song or two, and prayers. This is a very relaxed time, with children allowed to move freely throughout.

At January's session on baptism, Laura led a lively and informative talk on baptisms, supported by Jen Green. There were 12 children and 13 adults.

The move to after school on Thursdays seems popular. We have had to bring the timing forward as people were arriving 15mins before it was due to start at 3.45pm. We have a few regulars attending, returning, and building friendships, which is very encouraging, as well as some new faces recently.

Our intention is for everyone who comes to feel welcome, supported and loved, no matter their age, situation, or behaviour, and to help parents and carers relax into this non-judgemental embrace, whilst learning about Jesus.

Kate Meads, Sam Kahn

Come and Sing

Come & Sing is now a regular gathering on the first Sunday of each month, and we usually have 20-30 attendees. Sometimes more! People seem to really appreciate this opportunity to sing together, and it's been lovely to welcome such a mix of people. The hymn and song choices continue to enrich our sessions, and offer us all a way to connect with God, as well as with each other.

We still open with our Come & Sing prayer, and at our last session we included a reflection for Iran and the wider Middle East, and prayed the Lord's Prayer together too, before our final hymn. The sessions are joyful, reflective and prayerful, and the fellowship is a real blessing.

I am hugely thankful to everyone who continues to support this venture - those who provide refreshments (and wash up afterwards!) and those who come along to sing each month, and invite friends to join them (especially Anna Forbes!). I'm especially thankful

for Anne P, Anne M, Tracy, Ken, and of course, Janet, who accompanies us on the piano for most of our sessions.

This Easter, I've been delighted that a number of Come & Singers have chosen to join our Easter Community Choir, to lead the singing at our Easter Sunday service. I look forward to where God will lead us next!

Katherine Bond Smith

Communications Group

The Communications group continues to meet regularly using Teams.

We aim to keep the congregation and our community informed about the Church. We do this through:

- The Church website
- Social Media
- Information posted on our noticeboards
- Weekly News
- Crowthorne Eye

During the year the noticeboard at the front of the Church has been updated and looks beautiful.

The noticeboards in the Vestibule have been replaced and the layout updated. Hopefully this makes it easier for newcomers to find information.

At each meeting we review the effectiveness of our communications and plan the communications for the coming weeks. Laura provides us with lots of stunning graphics and we are very grateful for that.

The growth of people donating through the card reader and on-line by means of the website or QR codes has been significant and beneficial to the causes we have been able to support.

We deal with a lot of technology. This is the group that oversees the use of:

- Administration of Microsoft Office, Teams and Onedrive
- Mailchimp for the Weekly News
- WordPress for the website
- The card payment device
- Just Giving and GiveALittle Charity Giving pages
- Ticket Tailor for selling tickets.
- CANVA for image design
- The photocopier
- The AVS

- The Voice over IP (VOIP) telephone

Communications Group: Revd Laura Wheatley Downs, Revd Jen Green, Ken Perrett (Chair), Anne Pelham, Carol Frost, James Laverick.

Churches Together in Crowthorne

The Churches Together in Crowthorne group consists of seven churches who work with each other for the benefit of the residents of Crowthorne. The seven churches are St John the Baptist, Crowthorne Baptist Church, Crowthorne Methodist Church, Holy Ghost RC Church, St. Sebastian's Church, St James in Finchampstead and the Vineyard 25 Church.

Janet Rogers from St Sebastian's is the Chair and acting as Treasurer while Imogen Forsaith, the Treasurer, is on maternity leave, Leigh Welham of St John's is the Secretary and Barry Bailey also of Vineyard is vice-chair.

St Johns have two lay representatives at the moment, Anna Pearce and Leigh Welham and Reverend Laura Wheatley Downs and Revd Jen Green are the clergy representatives.

Funding for the CTC comes from the **coffee shops** which are held weekly at the Methodist church on a Tuesday morning and Baptist church on a Thursday morning. The funds raised cover the costs of the CTC – Insurance, Summer Activity costs and associated costs of the Christmas Lights and Late-Night Shopping in December. The CTC also gives funds towards other events or initiatives which benefit the local community such as HopeZone.

There are usually four meetings per year in January, May, September (AGM) and November and then we hold other events either for fundraising or for joint worship.

Joint worship this year started with a service for Christian Unity which was held in January at Crowthorne Methodist Church jointly with the Sandhurst Churches Together. In March we met again on the first Friday in March for the World Day of Prayer, again at Crowthorne Methodist Church. Then in April we met at Crowthorne Baptist Church for a service to mark Good Friday, following this we walked through Crowthorne giving hot x buns to any adult we saw and a 'Real Easter Egg' to the children, wishing them all a happy Easter and explaining the good news that 'Jesus loved them'. Well outside the comfort zone of a lot of us but the reception we received was mostly positive and we are hoping to repeat this again.

Every year we hold a St Patricks Market for Corrymeela and send all money raised to the charity, often the CTC representatives vote to increase the donation. Keep an eye out for the next one and come and support this good cause.

This year some of the churches supported Crowthorne Parish Councils Big Green Week with St Johns holding an event on the 4th and an Open Air Church service on the Sunday and St Sebastian's holding a Love Your Burial Ground event.

On 8th June the churches of Crowthorne joined with those of Sandhurst to put on a production of the music from Joseph at St John's. This also included children from some of the schools.

Of course during the school summer holidays we held the Summer Activities on the first four Fridays of the holidays. This event is free to attend although we are always happy to receive donations as it costs around £6,000 for all the activities and of course the pizza's that round off the afternoon. We are always looking for people to join us on the Morgan Rec on the afternoons to help put up and take down and to also help with supervising the activities, if you can help, we would be pleased to see you. One Friday, or more if you can manage it.

In December we once again arranged for the installation of the Christmas lights in the High Street and helped the parish council with the organising and running of the Late Night Shopping event. We make sure there is some form of Christian message in the entertainment on the High Street with our carol singing and short entertainment. This year the weather was not our friend, but the show still went on.

We also went Carol Singing in the pubs on the Friday before Christmas and this year Revd Laura designed and printed a beer mat (coffee mat for those that don't drink beer) with a Christmas message on one side and a prayer on the other. This is a good form of outreach and well received so will be repeated in the future. It was also pointed out that members of the churches that did not want to join the singers could still support us by inviting friends and family to join them at the pub and this way the message would get to more people. We look forward to seeing you in the pub next time!! We sang carols outside the Baptist Church in the High Street on the Saturday before Christmas and gave out Angels to members of the public, we also gave out some of the mats to gentlemen that didn't want an Angel. So one way or another we got the Christmas message out to the Crowthorne Community.

CTC also support a number of the charities in the community – Good Neighbours, they need drivers if you can help. HopeZone which run clubs for Year 6 children on a Monday afternoon and year 7, 8 and 9's on a Friday evening during term-time. If you think you could help with this, they would be glad to hear from you, it would not be every week, but you could join the rota. Also the Crowthorne Food Bank.

CTC events and activities are open to all, and we look forward to welcoming you.

*CTC Reps
Leigh Welham, Anna Pearce*

Deanery Report – Area Dean

Once again, it has been a year of significant change in Sonning Deanery.

In September 2025, Revd. Julian Bidgood (Barkham) finished serving as Deanery Co-ordinator. We give thanks for his ministry among us, particularly through his support of the many parishes who found themselves in vacancy and his work on our Children and young people's plan which has given us a firm foundation to work from. A thank you was given to Julian before his sabbatical in the summer of 2025. In June 2025, Deanery Synod also said thank you to John Sutton and Lynne Paine who stepped down as Lay Chair and Treasurer respectively. A huge thanks for all they gave to those roles.

The Bishop of Reading asked Revd. Laura Wheatley Downs (Crowthorne) to serve as Area Dean from September 2025, and she has been working alongside Leigh Welham (Secretary), Anthony Pollock (Treasurer) Anna Pearce, David Horrocks, John Sutton, Revd. Gemma Donnell (Parish of Finchampstead and California) and Revd. Mark Gould (Twyford and Ruscombe) who have served as members of the Deanery Standing Committee and Mission and Pastoral Committee. Revd. Mark Gould was licensed as Associate Area Dean on 1st March 2026. Behind the scenes, advocating for deanery is Peter Wells. Special thanks also go to him for all his work managing our Parish Share allocations.

Over the last year, the remaining three incumbent vacancies have all been filled. It has been an absolute delight to welcome Fr. Sam Tanna-Korn (St. Paul's and Woosehill) Revd. David Chislett (Wargrave and Knowl-Hill) and Revd. Peter Hyson (Owlsmoor). It has also been wonderful to welcome other priests into the parish – Revd. Cathryn Howse as Associate minister in the parish of Finchampstead and California, Revd. Andrea Platt as Associate priest at All Saints and Revd. Robert Wynford-Harris (PTO).

This year, we have also said farewell to Revd. Julian McAllen who left the parish of Finchampstead and California in the summer. And farewell and good luck to Revd. John Castle in Sandhurst who has taken up a new role at St. John the Baptist, Aldenham. He had joyfully served his community for 21 years, and we have been enriched as a deanery through his ministry. We wish him all the best!

Sadly, Revd. David Webster died in February. He had continued to minister to those at Suffolk Lodge which was his home toward the end of his life. We give God thanks for his years of faithful service.

One of the most significant beginnings within the Deanery has been the first phase of work on our Deanery plan which has taken up the majority of our time at Synod since September 2025. During this time Synod has been discerning where our deanery priorities lie. A consultation has also taken place in Deanery Chapter and explored through conversations across parishes. The Deanery has reflected on: signs of God at work, parish treasures, anxieties, priorities, community needs, required resources, and hopes for the deanery's future.

Out of this work have emerged some exciting key priorities to focus on as a Deanery which will be discussed at our next Synod AGM, alongside our vision and values.

Our next step will be to encourage those with a gifting, passion or skill in our priority areas and other key offices who would like to facilitate informal deanery clusters which meet a few times a year where others who are also interested in collaborating and sharing learning, encouragement and prayer about a particular area can gather together. e.g. safeguarding, churchwardens, children and young people. This already works successfully amongst our Treasurers and our Green team- a huge thankyou to all those involved in that.

We are also in the process of looking for a new Deanery Secretary. This is an important role within the life of the Synod. Leigh has been a fantastic secretary, but serves in so many other places- if you want to know more about what the role entails, please do speak with her. We're also looking for a new Lay chair. Again, an important role that enable the voice of the faithful members of our churches to be represented, and to ensure balance in how we work together as clergy and as laity. Please do speak with Laura if you'd like to find out more.

This next year, I would encourage anyone who has a heart to see our churches work together to grow God's Kingdom through any of the roles above or below, to sign up to be a deanery representative over the next 3 years at your APCM. And don't worry, if synod isn't for you- there are plenty of other ways to be involved! I look forward to seeing what God does through us.

Grace and peace,

Revd Laura Wheatley Downs

Supporting

Clergy, individuals and churches to serve their parishes and communities by meeting together, sharing resources and engaging in mission.

Discerning

Deanery Synod is a place where encouragements, concerns and missional ideas from individual parishes can be shared and potentially considered by the diocesan synod, which can then be considered at General Synod. At each of these stages, those involved are seeking to serve God and grow God's Church.

Connecting

People together from different churches across the area in worship, mission and governance. Parishes with deanery, diocesan and national initiatives and vice-verse through the sharing information.

Deanery Synod

We have four lay reps on the Deanery Synod Committee, reps are appointed for a 3-year term, the number of reps is dependent on the number of people on the electoral roll. Anna Pearce and Leigh Welham are members of the Deanery Standing Committee and Leigh Welham is also the Deanery Secretary. There are four meetings per year held in churches throughout Sonning Deanery.

At the March meeting at St Paul's in Wokingham we said goodbye to the Treasurer, but luckily, we were able to find a replacement quickly. At this meeting we heard a number of speakers from various churches across the Deanery, including Katherine Bond Smith who talked about Come & Sing, passing on ways they had found to increase congregations in their churches.

June was AGM, and this was held at St Mary's Twyford,

In September we met at St Mary's, Wargrave and in November here at St John's. At the June meeting we had a presentation on the CAN Bill that was passing through Parliament and was on the verge of being passed but there was a change in Government. We continued to discuss it though as we had been assured that the new Government was likely to continue with it. We passed a motion that was then presented to the Diocesan Synod and passed by them. Richard Lamey left for a new job following the AGM in Norwich after 6 years as Area Dean, Revd Julian Bidgood is Deanery Co-ordinator while we wait to find out who the new Area Dean will be.

In September, the meeting was at St Mary's, Wargrave and we welcomed Liz Jackson to the meeting to speak on 'Welcoming the Stranger.' She spoke about people coming from Ukraine and Hong Kong and also challenged how the media and we use words to describe people and situations.

This final meeting of the year was here at St John's.

When there is a speaker at a meeting, we are happy to welcome visitors to come and participate and understand if they do not want to stay for the business.

Throughout the year we have continued to discuss Children and Young People and how we can encourage them in their worship and what resources are available to churches either through the church or from other organisations.

The Deanery has also continued to support churches on their journey to Net Zero with the Green Fund. All churches can ask for match funding for one project per year. Here at St John's, we have received two donations over the last two years, one to the replacement

lighting and in this current year towards the replacement of the kitchen door, both these projects will see a reduction in our carbon footprint.

*Deanery Synod Representatives
Lia Davies, Carol Frost, Anna Pearce, Leigh Welham.*

Fabric Committee

The Fabric Committee consists of a small group of volunteers co-ordinating maintenance and repair of the church and surrounds. Other groups in the church are looking at long term strategic fabric planning.

Our thanks to Terry Dungate who chaired this committee this year; he has stepped down from Chair but has agreed to stay on the committee. David Rance has agreed to take over as Chair. Other members are Anne Mohan, Mike Frost, the Vicar and churchwardens.

- **Health & Safety -**
 - Annual Fire Extinguisher Service completed, and certificate filed
 - Lightning conductor tested. Remedial work to be carried out imminently
 - Aluminium ramp fitted to front doorstep to aid wheelchair/walker access

- **Heating -**
 - Annual Church and hall boilers serviced Accurate Services Ltd
 - New fan fitted in church boiler #2 - an expensive repair
 - Three small leaks to church radiators rectified by Mike Frost
 - Each week, from October to April, the heating needs to be set for all events in the church and the church hall. This has been done by Anne this year.

- **Plumbing**
 - New seal fitted onto outside tap
 - Plunger used on kitchen sink to improve flow of waste water.

- **Outside Lighting**
 - Replacement LED light fitted on Beech Tree and also on Lady Chapel path
 - Replaced PIRs and bulbs for dusk-to-dawn lights
 - Two new motion sensitive solar lights fitted to wall at side of front steps

- **Churchyard**
 - Annual hedge cut in October. Our thanks go to Pinehill Tree Services who gave their time and to all church volunteers who helped cut and clear up the cuttings.
 - Garden of Remembrance was successfully re-seeded in the Autumn
 - Sunken patch on the front brick path was levelled

- New metal front gate, made by Anvil Forge of Farley Hill, installed. Our thanks to the churchwardens for obtaining the faculty for this.
- **Church Hall**
 - The entrance to the hall was decorated; for reference colour is Rock Salt. Old notice boards have been replaced by new, lighter ones.
 - New double-glazed back door fitted. It is a fire exit and has a push bar on the inside to always allow exit. Lock on door changed so existing church key can be used.
 - Numerous repairs in the hall e.g. window seal on back window and window catches.
- **Other Jobs Carried out this year**
 - Hornet nest removed from void in roof above choir vestry. Work done by Lady Bugz, Sandhurst.
 - Main noticeboard on lawn at front of church reworded on new face panel. Work done by Thrower Signs.
 - Organ repaired by BC Shepard and Sons. They have taken over maintenance from James Richardson Jones who moved away from the area.
 - New humidifier for organ fitted in December
 - Significant leak from roof west of the Lady Chapel door fixed by Frost Roofing of Ascot. Leak was caused by blockage in hidden gully; the blockage was caused by debris collecting by protrusions from incorrectly cut roof tiles. Scaffolding was required.
 - Faculty obtained (thank you CWs) for new board for list of names of vicars. Colin Rosekilly made the board and Mike Frost painted Laura's name on it and fixed it alongside the existing board at the back of the nave.

Anne Mohan

Games Afternoon

On one Saturday afternoon in most months, we hold a board games afternoon in the church hall. The afternoon is for all ages. However, it is mostly older people who come along.

People bring along their favourite games and choose which of the games to play. There is always a game or two of Rummicub going on. Even the timeless classic Snakes and Ladders has been played!

It is all light-hearted and fun. Halfway through the afternoon we have tea and cake. For which there is a donation. Everyone is very generous with their donations.

Anne Pelham

Green Team/ Mustard Seed

The major effort for the past year has been focused on The Mustard Seed Project.

The Mustard Seed Project

In February 2020 General Synod set the Church of England an ambitious challenge: to reach net zero carbon across our parish, cathedral, diocesan and school estates by 2030.

The roadmap for Cathedrals and Churches was as follows: Over the duration of a Quinquennium and from 2022, all cathedrals and the top 20% of energy-consuming churches (of which we are one) to develop net zero carbon action plans for completion by no later than 2027. These should include, as a minimum, low-carbon heating options to replace fossil-fuel heating at end-of-life, such as heat pumps or far infra-red heating panels.

Our Church gas boilers were installed in 2012. They broke down twice in 2024 and 2025. We need to be considering their replacement - this was in the 2024-25 Annual Report

Our Diocese requires Churches to undertake a net zero feasibility study before they will consider any proposals for replacing existing gas boilers.

As part of our Mission Action Plan we started work on this in March 2024 - this is in the 2024-25 Annual Report. Cook and Cardenas were appointed by the PCC to undertake a feasibility study in September 2024 after a tender process.

In March 2025 Cook and Cardenas produced a draft design for the hall which was accepted by PCC. This would involve air source heat pumps and warm air heaters in the hall, the Church Office, the Meeting Room and the Vestibule. There would be an electric water heater in the kitchen and small electric radiators in the toilets. We would install solar panels on the flat roof of the hall and some batteries to manage the electric generation and use.

The way forward for the Church was not clear - this is in the 2024-25 Annual Report. The options identified were warm air heating as in the hall, and radiant heaters. We commissioned Cook & Cardenas to investigate these further. The radiant heater option was quickly dismissed these would require an upgrade to our electric supply and the monthly standing charge was more than our total energy bill now.

We were left with only one option remaining and there were some issues with introducing a warm air system into the Church.

During our discussions, we were reminded of long standing serious issues with the floor of the Church. This had been highlighted in two Quinquennial Surveys as needing urgent attention, but despite a resolution to the PCC being approved in 2023 to have the floor repaired at a cost of £70,000, no progress had been made.

It was decided to consider another option which would deal with the heating and the floor. This was to look at the feasibility of installing underfloor heating in the Nave. We approached the Diocese and they approved the appointment of an architect. After a tender process we appointed John Radice in July 2025, who had carried our previous two Quinquennial Surveys. He was asked to look at heating options for the Church.

In September we focused on Creationtide and our responsibilities to care for the world. Following that we undertook a consultation to seek people's views on possible changes to the Church.

As a result of the feedback the PCC decided to commission an investigation into the modernisation of the toilets and the kitchen. Our architect was asked to do that and we await the results.

On 4th November 2025, Hannah Robertson, our Case Officer on the DAC visited our Church. We had the opportunity to discuss the potential options and the impact on the heritage of the Church with her. She provided us with detailed comments on 18th November 2025.

We received John's report in December 2025 and the PCC approved it at the PCC meeting in February 2026.

The base option is that we repair the current floor and install a warm air system in the Church. The estimate for the total cost of the hall and the Church for this option is £635,000.

Another possibility is that we install an underfloor heating system. This would raise the floor of the Nave. Then we would lay a new ceramic or wooden floor across the whole Nave. The floor would be level with the hall and the Sanctuary and so provide benefits in accessibility. The estimate for the total cost of the hall and the Church for this option is £678,000.

These costs do not include the cost of the modernisation of the kitchen and toilets, nor the possible double glazing in the hall.

To date we have spent the £15,000 grant from the Diocese, plus £10,769 authorised by the PCC from General Funds.

We are now going to take some time to look again at our Mission and talk about our Vision for the future. We hope that this will inform our discussions on how to proceed.

Ken Perrett

Mustard Seed Project Manager

Ministry in Schools

Ministry in the Crowthorne C. of E. School is a privilege. The pupils are always attentive and respond quickly and accurately to questions.

During the Summer term Laura and Julia continued sharing the weekly assemblies. Topics in that term included: forgiveness, trust, compassion, Ascension/Pentecost, being green (coinciding with the Parish Council's Green Week), liberty (a British Value), well-being, and inspirational athletes. Laura took a Service at the end of term to celebrate 'Moving On' for some and 'Up' for others.

Jen Green joined St. John's as Curate in the autumn term and has taken a share in the weekly assemblies and other activities in the School. During this term topics included: harvest, rule of law (a British Value), resilience, Diwali and festivals of light, Remembrance Day, power for good and Advent. The term culminated in a joyful, whole school, Christmas Celebration at St. John's.

The C. of E. School celebrated their 150th birthday during the year and Bishop Mary visited the school in September and gave them a blessing and Laura attended their 150th celebrations.

Spring term has seen the same sharing of assemblies between Laura, Jen and Julia with topics including spirituality, environment and wildlife, British values, Lent, resilience/self-efficacy, and science. We also welcomed the whole school to the Church in April for their Easter Service.

In December 2025 year 4,5 & 6 pupils, who are in the school choir, joined the Mothers' Union for their Christmas celebration and sang festive songs to the delight of M.U. members.

We are also involved in Crowthorne C. of E. with Laura in her capacity as a school governor. Currently, Laura is working closely with the school as they re-evaluate their vision and values and work toward SIAMS. She also delivered training on collective worship in the school last November during an inset day.

We hope that the SIAMS inspection will produce a similar outcome to the OFSTED inspection which was outstanding in all areas. We feel that this result was borne out of love, care, hard work and excellence from the staff, children and community that support the school, and we are deeply proud of all that the school has achieved.

Jen and Laura have also been invited into the school to engage in consultations with the children about St. John's Mustard Seed Project and Collective Worship.

We are involved with Oaklands Infant and Junior Schools, particularly at Christmas when they use St. John's for their Church Services and it was wonderful to welcome them again.

Wildmoor Heath reception class came at Christmas and Jen led them on a church treasure hunt and retold the Christmas story creatively for them.

At Easter, Laura goes into Oaklands Infant School to talk about Easter and the year 2 children ask her questions. Laura has to think quickly on her feet as there are some rather deep and surprising questions!

Carol is part of the Churches Together in Crowthorne rota which provides coffee/cake for staff at Edgbarrow on a Friday during their mid-morning break. She normally does two or three sessions each term.

Laura, Jen, Julia & Carol

Missions Committee

The Mission's Committee is responsible for co-ordinating our support for the seven Christian missions to which St John's contributes on a regular basis. These missions and their representatives are, Church Mission Society (CMS) – Claire Taylor; The Leprosy Mission - Wendy Allerton; The Corrymeela Community – Diana Gray; Church Army - Gini Cope; Embrace the Middle East - Ken Perrett; Hopezone – Jenny Mckeever; Bible Society – Veronica Burgess.

In 2025, St. John's donated a total of £10,708. representing 12½ % of the planned giving by church members and shared between our seven Missions. Donations were made by bank transfer to avoid the handling of cheques.

Historically in addition to those seven Missions we support a local hospice, Alexander Devine Hospice for Children situated in Maidenhead and Carol Frost keeps us informed about their work.

The Children' Society is also under the banner of the Missions Committee. We keep the congregation informed about the Society through Sunday morning speakers and articles in the Weekly News. We support the Society financially through the annual Christingle Service and occasional fund-raising events. In December 2025 the Come and See Christingle Service raised £87 for the Children's Society.

The week before Christ the King Sunday in November, on the day of our Advent Fair, Richard from Alexander Devine Children's Hospice, spoke movingly about their home in

Maidenhead and the services they offer there and to the local community. Richard also brought some items from the hospice to sell at our Aven Fair and there was a bucket collection appeal which raised £606.26.

In December our Christmas Giving Tree raised £1,268 in support of our local Food Bank. We are currently in discussion for a representative from the Crowthorne Foodbank to come to speak to our congregation.

There will be no Lent Lunch this year. Instead on 8th March, the Church will spend the day in prayer and discussion about the way forward following our investigations into achieving Net Zero for the Church. This will include a Bring and Share lunch.

The members of the committee contribute articles to the Weekly News to coincide with any visits of the mission's preachers and giving more information about the mission. Further information about the missions we support can be found on the Parish Website.

The committee has continued as always to keep in contact with the missions they represent, and I would like to thank them for what they have achieved in the past year to support their own and the other projects mentioned in this report and those in our congregation who so generously support these missions and projects.

Over the coming year we are exploring new ways in which we continue to offer our support.

It was decided at our committee meeting in January that in future, new Missions would be funded for a period of three years. However, this could be renewed if so decided by the Missions Committee. We decided that funding to Church Mission Society and Corrymeela should stop. Our CMS contact, Ruth Sayers, has now retired and Claire Taylor, our long serving representative has decided that this is an opportune moment to stand down from the Missions Committee. (A big thank you to Claire). Corrymeela started in the troubles of Northern Ireland and has done wonderful work in working for peace and reconciliation. Much of that work has been done and so the Committee consider this an appropriate time to focus on a new Mission. At our next meeting in April, the committee will decide on the Missions we will support for the next three years.

Carol Frost

Mothers Union

The Mothers' Union has had an eventful year. We hold two meetings a month, the first one on the second Wednesday of the month at 2.00pm with a speaker and a Prayer and Coffee Morning on the fourth Thursday at 10.00am in the hall. Everyone is welcome at all our meetings.

Since the last Annual Report we have had a variety of speakers including a very interesting talk by Shirley Pearce on dementia telling us how to recognise the early onset of this disease in others and how to approach and treat people suffering with it. It was a very helpful and uplifting afternoon. Revd Roy Burgess, as well as chairing our AGM, talked about the work of chaplains in general and his connection with the fire service in Bracknell in particular. Steve Pope talked about the symbols on the processional cross here at St John's. His talk had the title 'Tetramorph' which caused some confusion until he explained the meaning of the word with illustrations. Revd Colin Bass took Evening Prayer in September and the local World Day of Prayer Committee arranged a very interesting meeting. Sandra Simmonds told us more about her eventful life after escaping from an orthodox Muslim marriage, and Alan Copeland and PC Jackie Dimmock both returned to continue with the second part of their talks. Our Vicar, Revd Laura, took the Lent Eucharist in church and Samantha Hunt will be giving us an update on her missionary work in Rwanda.

Apart from the regular meetings there has been several events. Since the last Annual Meeting, we helped Gene Mathews celebrate her 100th birthday, we had a very interesting outing to St Mary's Winkfield and attended Mothers' Union national and diocesan meetings in Oxford and Benson. A small group went to Ronald McDonald House attached to the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford where we experienced the support and care the team give to families and carers of very sick children in the hospital. We left keen to continue with the collection of toiletries to fill the bags we assemble that give some comfort to people under great stress.

We continued to support the church by providing cakes for the visit of the Bishop of Reading to the deanery and for the Advent Fair, refreshments for Come and See, Simnel cake and posies for Mothering Sunday and Christmas cards for the chaplain at Bullingdon Prison to distribute, amongst other activities.

This year the Mothers' Union will be celebrating its 150th anniversary with its four million members in 84 countries. We are proud to be a part of this great organisation and we will continue to offer our support to our members, the church and the wider community.

Penny Rickards

Pastoral Group

This is a committee who between them try to care for as many people as possible in our congregation. This includes visiting, phone calls, emails and text messages and any other ways of keeping in touch. Cards are sent on various occasions to let the recipient know that they are in our thoughts and prayers. We have a Welcome Table at the 10.00am Sunday Eucharist for newcomers to be welcomed into the congregation. The MU also have pastoral lists so that their committee can keep in touch with their members too. Home Communion is taken to individuals who are housebound and to local care homes. If you have any concerns or would like to talk to someone please have a word with one of the following:

Revd Laura; Carol Cain; Julie Cavell; Ann Cottrell; Carol Frost; Gillian Gyenes; Julia Norton; Penny Rickards and June Todd.

Gillian Gyenes

Prayer Groups

The life of the parish is supported by prayer. There is a rota of intercessors for our weekly 10.00am service and a prayer board in the main body of the Church for everyone to use. A group meets regularly every Friday at 5.30pm in the Choir Vestry to pray for healing for those mentioned on the prayer board and for anyone else known personally to us, as well as for the needs of the parish. MU also holds a monthly prayer group. All are welcome to attend.

Gillian Gyenes

- **Mothers Union Prayer Group**

The Mothers' Union holds a monthly Prayer and Coffee morning every fourth Thursday at 10.00 in the church hall. We follow a set pattern but adapt and add prayers connected to local, national and international issues. We use the names on the prayer board in church to remember those for whom prayers are requested and for the worldwide dioceses listed in the Mothers' Union Prayer Diary. We take part in the Wave of Prayer that extends round the world, as the prayers of one diocese come to an end another begins, creating a web round the globe. We also use the special prayers for the 16 Days of Activism and Gender Based Violence. We have a Prayer Walk round the churchyard in the summer and support the World Day of Prayer Committee at their service in March and host an ecumenical meeting, arranged by them, in October. These meetings, as with all our gatherings, are open to everyone and we guarantee a warm welcome.

Penny Rickards

- **Praying for Streets**

Each month we produce a list of specific streets and roads in the parish. Those streets and roads are put in the prayer section of the Weekly News. They are also mentioned during the intercessory prayer in our Sunday Services. In this way we can pray for every street or road in our Parish. It takes over a year to cover all the streets and roads. This list of is also sent out to the other churches in Crowthorne so that they can also pray for the same streets.

Mary Harwood and Anne Pelham

Safeguarding

Over the last few years or so, Oxford Diocese, in line with the National Church, has taken a new look at many aspects of Safeguarding, as the Church has very much needed to update its practice here. Most importantly, we should all now be more aware of each other's safety within our Church community, irrespective of age or our role within the Church. It is no longer solely the responsibility of one or two named individuals or even of a committee. There has been some adverse publicity recently about how some historic examples of abuse have not been followed up appropriately when concerns have been reported. The Church has however wanted it to be known that safeguarding at a parish level is being dealt with well and that victims also recognise this. They have, however, felt let down at a national level. In fact, and Sarah Mullally (Archbishop of Canterbury designate) has recognised this and apologised on behalf of the bishops and others where there has not been appropriate action taken and for the hurt and sorrow caused.

To enable us to work as efficiently as possible and at the request of the Diocese, we have compiled a very comprehensive audit, listing all those whose role requires/invites them to attend or complete online, the relevant Safeguarding course, provided by the Diocese. I should like to thank the very encouraging number of people who have taken part in these courses and who have had their DBS checks renewed, thanks to Anne Mohan. It was also heartening to realise, in carrying out this exercise, what a great number of people volunteer in so many different ways, contributing overall to the smooth running of our Church.

'Promoting a Safer Church Action Plan' which acted as a checklist for all aspects of Safeguarding has been reviewed, and, with many thanks to Veronica Burgess, the 'Safer Recruitment' section is now also up to date.

A safeguarding dashboard and hub are also now available as a further check that we are carrying out all the training and checks that are necessary. Jane Vershueren and I have been working on this.

Training courses have been held online including one on Domestic Abuse, which was a particular concern during lockdown. We have had regular communications from the Diocese regarding Safeguarding and all the LLMs have attended the Advanced Leadership Course as well as the Domestic Abuse course. PCC members have completed the Basic and Foundation online Courses and Pastoral Group members the Domestic Abuse course as well.

Following our Churchwardens' completion of the Leadership Course, there are now cards on the pews and posters around the Church with names and photos of those to contact should the need arise.

Should you want further guidance over any matter, please do contact the Vicar or myself, if that would be helpful. We have a model Safeguarding Policy which is approved annually by the PCC and there is a contact list of Who's Who (regarding Safeguarding) on the Church website.

Gillian Gyenes

St. John's Sunday club

Connect, Create, and Celebrate.



Sunday Club @ St John's continues to flourish and provide an opportunity for primary school age children and their families to meet in the church hall and gives them a chance to celebrate their shared faith together. The sessions start at 10:00 am and continue until the children and leaders/helpers join the main congregation during the Offertory/Peace; in time for those who have been confirmed to prepare to receive Holy Communion; and for the children and those not yet confirmed to receive a blessing. After this has been completed a Sunday Club member may wish to share with the congregation what they have been doing. Sunday Club is now available every Sunday during term time (note: not the first and last Sunday of school holidays or during school holidays, returning the Sunday after term time resumes). Please note that Sunday Club does not take place when there are special services, i.e. 'All Together', 'Come and share' services. At each session we explore either the Gospel reading for that Sunday or another theme through games and crafts. We are always looking for more helpers; **DO YOU THINK THAT THIS COULD BE YOU?** If you think that you are able to consider this and would like to have a chat to find out what this would involve, please contact Carol Frost or Julia Norton for more information.

A very big thank you to all our helpers, without you we would not be able to deliver this valuable ministry.

Carol Frost carol.frost@crowthorneparishchurch.org.uk

Julia Norton julia.norton@crowthorneparishchurch.org.uk

Carol Frost, Julia Norton

Servers and Crucifers

Thanks go to Barry Brewster, Chris Watson and Shaun Rance for their commitment to providing support at the Eucharist and processing the magnificent Tetramorph Cross. Thanks also go to Jack Duffy who was able to serve when his Army duties allowed. We are very pleased to welcome his brother Wesley who has agreed to join the rota. It is good to report that young people have recently been participating in the roles of Acolyte and Crucifer, we hope that they are able to continue, especially at Easter and Christmas.

Steve Pope

Social Committee

The team members are Leigh Welham, Jenny McKeever, Jill Pope, Lia Davies, Jim Wearing, Nigel Cavell, Richard Ireson and Sylvia Dungate.

As a team we aim to help at as many social events in the church calendar as we are able to. Below is a list of the events we undertook in 2025,

Pancake Evening 1st March where we cooked pancakes for 48 people, provided both savoury and sweet fillings and held a fun quiz.

Hazel & Brian's Leaving Do 22nd March Afternoon Tea.

APCM 11th May, we provide savoury nibbles and glasses of wine to encourage people to come along and participate.

The parish council held a Big Green Week 7th – 15th June and the church participated with two events. The Green Team had a churchyard quiz on Saturday 14th June, the church was open for refreshments provided by the Social Team and people were on hand to show people around the church and there was craft for the younger members of the community to take part in. The following day on Sunday 15th the church held an open air service in the afternoon, with refreshments following, once again provided by the Social Team.

There was a production of the music from Joseph and his Technicolour Dreamcoat on 8th June from members of the of churches of Sandhurst and Crowthorne and some children from the schools. This was followed by refreshments.

On June 29th the church celebrated the Patronal Festival with a BBQ in the Vicarage garden. This is probably the major event of the year. Preparations begin on the day before with the Social Team aided by other members of the church to erect tents, move furniture from the church and transport BBQs to site. The team then provide chicken, sausages and burgers from the BBQ, ably cooked by the chefs that join the team for the day, we couldn't do without their help, a table full of salads provided by the team and added to by members of the congregation and then of course there are the strawberries and cream. At the end of the day the equipment then has to be returned to church and people's homes.

There were two Come & Share services in 2025 on 14th September and 2nd November which the Social Team provide the refreshments for.

The Harvest Supper was held on 4th October and again the Team provided a two course supper for members of the congregation along with a short quiz.

We were lucky to again be joined by the Hart Male Voice Choir on 18th October and following the concert the Team provided refreshments for the very appreciative audience.

The following week the Cecilia Singers entertained the local community on 25th October, and the Social Team were asked to help on the evening by serving the refreshments provided by the Singers.

We are lucky that a number of groups want to church the church as a venue to entertain the community as this raises money for the church from the rental revenue but by providing the refreshments we also raise money for the church by doing this. In December the Choral Society held their Christmas Concert and the following week the Crowthorne Symphony Orchestra also held a concert on 13th.

This was followed on the Sunday evening by Nine Lessons & Carols with a mulled wine and mince pie reception to follow.

My grateful thanks go to the hard-working members of the Social Team who put a lot of effort into our social evenings and into assisting with refreshments. We are also very grateful for the extra help given by members of the congregation as and when needed.

Thank you to everyone that has lent a hand at the many events over the last year, and we will be looking for your help again in a busy 2026 as this year we will again be hosting the Flower Festival in July alongside the other events.

Leigh Welham

Stewardship

Current members of the Stewardship Committee are Laura Wheatley Downs (Chair), Philip Foster, Julia Norton, Ken Perrett, Tracy Perrett and Paul Verschueren.

The Stewardship Committee continues to encourage individuals to sign up to regular giving to St John's as part of its mission which is to encourage the congregation to exercise financial stewardship as part of their Christian discipleship.

Members of the congregation can sign up to regular giving using either

- the Parish Giving Scheme at <https://www.parishgiving.org.uk/donors/find-your-parish/crowthorne-st-john-reading/>
- or the Standing Order Scheme (Talk to Tracy Perrett who can give you a form)

In addition, all members of the congregation who are able to Gift Aid their donations are asked to consider signing up to the Gift Aid scheme (Talk to Tracy who can give you a form).

During the year, the Stewardship Committee spent time reviewing the financial status of the church and considering the best use of its resources. It made a number of recommendations to PCC regarding the use of various restricted funds as well the annual review of the Internal Financial Controls Policy. At its November meeting it gave careful consideration to the draft 2026 budget prepared by the Treasurer and made a number of changes before recommending its adoption to the PCC. It also recommended the allocation of the General Reserves Fund at the end of the year.

Many thanks to Phillip Foster who, after serving this committee faithfully for many years, has decided that now is the time to step down.

Tracy Perrett

Website



The website is

www.stjohnscrowthorne.co.uk

It is updated each week with details of the upcoming events.

Ken Perrett

Welcome Team

Welcome Teams continued to provide helpful support to our congregation for regular Sunday worship and additional special services.

Changes to Welcome Team membership over the reporting period were:

- After many years of dedicated service both **Sue Sumner and Kathy Beard** have retired from welcome team duties, Sue due to ill health while Kathy has moved out of the area. We thank them for their service.
- We welcomed **Judith Book** as a new volunteer within Chris Watson's team (Team D)

Welcome Team membership over the reporting period were: **Team A:** David Rance, Ann Cottrell, Barry Brewster, Doreen Norfield, Sheila Stickland, Mary Clark, Pam Carter. **Team B:** James Laverick, Carol Cain, Nigel Cavell, Lyz Martyn, Jill Pope, Julie Sharpe, Keith Wilkinson, Sylvia Dungate. **Team C:** Ken Perrett, Jenny McKeever, Katey Williamson, Leigh Welham, Philip Foster, Anne Pelham, Simon Harding. **Team D:** Chris Watson, Grant Robertson, Sue Robertson, Daphne Bass, June Todd, Judith Book, Tom Lewis & John Ebdon.

May I extend my sincere thanks to all for their continued service to the parish.

If any parishioner is interested in joining the Welcome Team, please do email me at david.rance@crowthorneparishchurch.org.uk.

Welcome Team co-ordinator, David Rance