



**THE PARISH CHURCH OF
ST NICHOLAS STEVENAGE**



In the United Benefice of St Nicholas and St Mary's Graveley

Reports Pack

for the

Meeting of Parishioners

and

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Sunday 11th. MAY 2025

at 10.45am following the 9.30 am service.



The PARISH CHURCH of ST NICHOLAS,
RECTORY LANE, STEVENAGE



Sunday 11th. May 2025 at 10.45 a.m. in the parish church.

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of last meeting (Sunday 26th. May 2024)
3. Matters arising
4. Election of church wardens
5. Any other business
6. Date of next meeting: Sunday 3rd. May 2026 (provisional)

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING (APCM)

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of last meeting (Sunday 26th. May 2024)
3. Matters arising
4. Electoral Roll Report (Electoral Roll Officer)
5. Elections
 - a) Church council members (3 year full term to fill 3 vacancies & 1 new post) x 4
 - b) Church council member (2 year term to fill 1 new post) x1
 - c) Church council members (1 year term to fill 1 vacancy & 1 new post) x2
6. Appointment of independent examiner
7. Other reports (written)
 - a) Safeguarding & PCC compliance (Safeguarding Officer)
 - b) Ministry (Rector)
 - c) S Club (Co-ordinator)
 - d) Mission Giving (Mission secretaries)
 - e) Accounts & Financial statements for 2024, including Trustees Annual Report TAR (Treasurer)
 - f) Terrier & Inventory (Churchwardens)
 - g) Logbook (Churchwardens)
 - h) Fabric & General (Churchwardens)
 - i) Deanery Synod proceedings (Synod representatives)
8. Questions (please submit to Rector & wardens in advance)
9. Any other business
10. Date of next meeting: Sunday 3rd. May 2026 (provisional)

We hope to finish by 11.15 a.m.



The PARISH CHURCH of ST NICHOLAS,
RECTORY LANE, STEVENAGE



In the United Benefice of St Nicholas with Graveley

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parishioners and Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Sunday 26th May 2024 at 10.45 am

As Rector and Chair of the PCC, Edward Keene opened the meeting at 10.45 am.

Meeting of the Parishioners

Apologies for Absence – Paul Drakes, Amanda Steele, Jason Cox and Lynda Matthews.

There were 40 members present.

Election of Churchwardens –

There was one nomination for Churchwarden: Karen Walker, nominated by Amanda Steele and seconded by Jane Luff. Karen was duly elected(for her 6th. year). There is a **vacancy** for the other Churchwarden position. Edward hopes that this important role will be filled in the future.

Edward thanked the Churchwardens and others for their dedication and service and especially to Mike Wilton who is stepping down. Edward spoke about the many different roles Mike has undertaken during his time as churchwarden. Edward presented him with a thank you gift (by email!).

Mike thanked all and talked about how his time as churchwarden was a privilege.He is hoping to be a Diocesan Synod member.

There was no other business.

The date of the next Parishioners' Meeting was provisionally set for Sunday, 25th. May 2025.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)

Apologies for Absence – Paul Drakes, Amanda Steele, Jason Cox and Lynda Matthews.

There were 40 members present.

As both Edward and Jane were new to their respective roles as chair and secretary, Edward asked for members to say if something was wrong with regards to the meeting.

Minutes of the 2023 APCM - The minutes of the last APCM on 14th. May 2023 had been circulated before the meeting and were agreed as a true and correct record. Edward declared them accepted and the file copy will be signed by Martin Bailey (last year's temporary chair) who was unfortunately absent due to illness.

Matters Arising - there were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

Electoral Roll Officer's Report –Elaine Forster's report was included in the APCM pack. There were no further questions for this.

The Electoral Roll now contains 93 names in total, including 18 new people! Edward thanked Elaine for her work on the Electoral Roll this year.

Elections:

Parochial Church Council Members – There were five nominations for five vacancies:

For election to the PCC for three years 2024 – 2027

Christine Chambers, proposed by Jane Luff seconded by Margaret Cooper;

Sue Bailey, proposed by Margaret Cooper, seconded by Don Cooper;

Daniel Seifi-Lorimer, proposed by Hannah Kinsey, seconded by Martin Bailey;

For election to the PCC for two years 2024 – 2026:

Elaine Forster, proposed by Joan Layzell, seconded by John Knight;

For election to the PCC for one year 2024 – 2025:

Charlotte Seifi-Lorimer, proposed by Hannah Kinsey, seconded by Martin Bailey;

They were all duly elected and Charlotte can stand again next year for a three year term if she wishes. Edward is very pleased to have the full complement for the PCC (with the exception of the 2nd. churchwarden).

Thanks given to all.

Edward intends to co-opt Jason Cox again on the PCC as Treasurer.

Independent Examiner – The PCC has elected to subject the financial statements to

independent examination and it proposed to renew the appointment of Barker Wilkinson as independent examiner until the next APCM. Mike Wilton proposed, Don Cooper seconded and all members agreed.

Reports:

The reports had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Safeguarding Report - this had been circulated with the Reports Pack prior to the meeting. Mike thanked the Safeguarding Team for all of their work, Jacky, John and Chris. He highlighted that all of the mechanisms required by the Church of England have been satisfied.

Ministry Report - this had been circulated with the Reports Pack prior to the meeting. Edward spoke about the aims and objectives of the Church of England, the Diocese and the Parish. He highlighted the need for a focus on young people. He aims to refresh the Parish Vision of 5Gs during the coming year with the PCC as they are now 8 years old. The Ministry report also covers Sunday services, congregation and midweek ministry, outreach e.g. in local schools, partnerships with various church organisations, governance, safeguarding and the PCC, Diocesan matters and Graveley. Edward asked for feedback as he is only 11 months into his ministry here.

S Club Report - this had been circulated with the Reports Pack prior to the meeting. John Knight thanked those who help with SClub and highlighted the need for more helpers. There used to be 3 groups, but now there's only one covering all age groups. Please talk to Mark Parker who's in charge of recruiting.

Mission Giving Report - this had been circulated with the Reports Pack prior to the Meeting.

Accounts & Financial statements for 2023 – Jason Cox submitted a report which was included in the reports pack. This showed draft results pending statutory audit.

Terrier and Inventory, and the Church Log Book - These have been updated and signed off by the Churchwardens and 2 PCC members. They are available for inspection, please ask.

Fabric and General – this had been circulated with the reports pack prior to the meeting.

Deanery Synod Report – this had been circulated with the Reports Pack prior to the meeting.

Edward asked if there were any questions with regards to the reports. There weren't any. All of the reports were accepted by the members.

Any Other Business and Questions –

There were no questions received before the meeting and no further questions at the meeting. Jane thanked Alison for her help over her first year as PCC Secretary, and Edward thanked Alison for all her other work as Parish Administrator.

There was no other business.

The date of the next Parishioners' Meeting was provisionally set for Sunday, 25th. May 2025.

Closing Prayers – Edward closed the meeting at 11.07 am. with prayer.

The APCM Reports Pack 2024 can be found on the website at:

[PCC – St Nicholas Church \(saintnicholaschurch.org.uk\)](http://saintnicholaschurch.org.uk)



The PARISH CHURCH of
ST NICHOLAS,
Rectory Lane, Stevenage



Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) – Elections Report Sunday 11 May 2025 at 11am

Deanery Synod: In May 2023 two lay representatives were elected (Stuart Marshall and Cathy Bibby) to serve a term of three years, to 2026. Stuart was elected to Diocesan Synod in 2024, a by-election was held for his seat, and Mike Wilton was elected. Mike has resigned the seat, and a further by-election will be held for this.

Ordinary Lay PCC Members: Members are elected by thirds for a term of three years (*CRR M16(5)*) and may serve for two consecutive terms. Members who have served two consecutive terms may be re-elected again only after taking at least a year off.

Those members in their second term are indicated below **in bold** and those who have resigned or been elected to other roles *in italics*. As our electoral roll has increased to over 100, three new positions have been created this year. *

	Member 1	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4*
Term A 2022-25	Edward Kaahwa	Chris Taplin	<i>Kate Casey</i> Charlotte Seifi-Lorimer	N/A
Term B 2023-26	Mark Parker	<i>Anthony Taylor</i> Elaine Forster	<i>Paul Schimmel</i> <i>Evelyn Wilton</i> Vacancy	<i>New post</i> Vacancy
Term C 2024-27	Dan Seifi-Lorimer	Christine Chambers	Sue Bailey	<i>New post</i> Vacancy
Term A 2025-28	Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy

In addition to the elected members the PCC also renewed the co-option of its treasurer (Jason Cox) in 2024.

There are seven vacancies for ordinary lay members:

- 4 vacancies for full 3-year terms, 2025-2028
- 1 vacancy for a partial 2-year term, 2025-2027
- 2 vacancies for a partial 1-year term, 2025-2026 (one replacing Evelyn)

Independent Examiner: Barker Wilkinson have served again as the independent examiner for the 2024 accounts. The PCC, having made appropriate enquiries, propose to renew the appointment of Barker Wilkinson as independent examiner until the next APCM.

Appointed Officers: The Rector and wardens appointed two Assistant Churchwardens in 2024, Mike Wilton and Steve Bamford. The PCC appointed or re-appointed a Safeguarding Officer (Christine Chambers), Treasurer (Jason Cox), Secretary (Jane Luff), Electoral Roll Officer (Elaine Forster), Churches Together Lay Representative (Stuart Marshall), and Mission Secretaries (Chris Taplin and Cathy Bibby).



The PARISH CHURCH of ST NICHOLAS,
RECTORY LANE, STEVENAGE



Electoral Roll Report 2025

This year saw the complete revision of the Electoral Roll.

I am pleased to say that we now have 112 members of the church on our Roll.

We also have 2 more who wish to be on the Roll but currently are not eligible for a few more months and will be added during the year.

Our number on Roll has increased by 19

However, this number isn't a true reflection of our growing church family.

We have 40 new members on the Roll.

As it has been a complete revision there are people who have moved away from the area or chosen not to renew their enrolment.

21 people have been taken off.

It is a wonderful affirmation of God's work through Edward's ministry and our loving church family that our numbers are increasing.

May we be blessed even further by God's love and guiding Spirit throughout the coming year.

Elaine Forster

Electoral Roll Officer



The PARISH CHURCH of ST NICHOLAS,
RECTORY LANE, STEVENAGE



Parochial Church Council Safeguarding Report

May 2025

This has been a busy year as always. Changes happen continually and the team works hard to bring these to the PCC as they occur.

Please let me remind you about the safeguarding information held at St Nicholas which can be found in the entrance area on the left hand side notice board as you come through. I have also started to add more of the various notices in the parish room and for the children in the upper parish room.

This year has seen the National Safeguarding Guidelines introduced and there is more information on the links on the safeguarding board. Alongside the many new documents are the Safer Space information all documents now come with a QR scan for those who can access these.

We held a Safeguarding Sunday day where the children did a quiz around what they should do to keep safe, while the adults were introduced to the Safeguarding team.

Christine Chamber Parish Safeguarding Officer

Jackie Swanson Recruiter and DBS support officer – who ensures and support all volunteers to complete their DBS checks.

John Knight Training officer - who ensures that training is done and completed.

This worked well and we will be doing something for the next safeguarding Sunday when planned.

There have been some changes around who must do the training and we are working through these now and will be approaching those who need to know.

All new volunteers to roles within the church may find some level of DBS check and training is required. One of the team will be in contact as we progress through the new information.

We have received some national alerts and have recruit some side people to be available to support here. There has been one incident which has been followed through and is still on-going, this being outside of the church family.

I attend the monthly meeting with the Diocese safeguarding team and find this a useful opportunity to raise questions and concerns.

If anyone has any further questions or concerns then speak to me at the APCM or contact me using the details on the safeguarding notice board.

Thank you to everyone who complete their DBS documents and training as asked it is very helpful to those who have to log the information.

Please see attached report from Jackie.
Christine, Jackie and John.

God Bless

APCM 14th May 2025 **Lead Recruiter Report**

Over the last year 15 DBS checks have been conducted, both renewals, and for new volunteers wishing to support children's work or as PCC members. The process for DBS checks is pretty simple. Having offered to volunteer for roles eligible for DBS checks within the Church, the volunteer is required to complete a self-declaration form, available from Christine. Once complete, the Lead Recruiter (Jacky Swanson) will send an email including a link inviting you to complete an electronic application. This requires some personal details and requests a summary of the voluntary role to be undertaken. An ID check is required. The simplest way of doing this is to upload photos/scans of current documents with your application, although this can also be done manually if required. Typically, a current passport, photo driving license and recent utility bill are all that is required, although other documents can be used if these are unavailable. Once complete, the lead recruiter checks and approves the application allowing the DBS check to be progressed. The result is usually returned within 1-3 weeks. Usually, the result comes back sooner rather than later, but in one instance took up to 6 weeks. The certificate provided is valid for 3 years. At the end of that time, the checking process needs to be repeated. However, there is a window of opportunity to sign up for an Update Service, but you need to act as soon as you get your DBS result. You have 30 days from the issue date of your certificate to register for the Update Service and any hassle in renewing your DBS certificate melts away! This also provides improved safeguarding for the church, as the automated renewal ensures that your certificate doesn't lapse and leave St Nick's in a vulnerable position. Well worth doing. Not all volunteer roles within the Church require a DBS check. We follow an Eligibility Guide which is clear when Enhanced Checks are needed. The Eligibility Guide also offers the opportunity for Basic checks to be conducted for a number of roles. Currently it is unclear which roles St Nick's considers suitable for Basic checks, and this is an area that the PCC would do well to clarify. Thank you to all who do take on voluntary roles within the Church and who readily respond to the invitation to apply for DBS checks. Your rapid action in this regard helps to keep our church community safe as well as minimise our reputational risk.

Safeguarding Training

Overview

Safeguarding Training is undertaken in accordance with the guidelines set by the Church of England. The training is dependent upon the role undertaken within the church and is summarised in the table below. The Rector and Parish Safeguarding Officer are required to undertake additional training modules that are not presented in the table.

Training Module	Required Attendees	Recommended Attendees
Basic Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Those going on to complete any other safeguarding learning pathway.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Those wanting or needing a Basic Awareness of safeguarding.
Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Those in a role which involves work with children, young people, or vulnerable adults, including Tower Captain.• Churchwardens.• PCC Members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not applicable
Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Those working with children, young people, or vulnerable adults, including Pastoral Visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PCC Members*.

*The PCC have agreed that all members are to undertake this module.

Training is required every three years, noting that the Basic Awareness module does not have to be re-taken if the Foundation module is completed. All modules are taken online. Each module includes questions to confirm the knowledge gained. A percentage of correct responses is required in order to pass the module. There is an opportunity to reassess responses when a question is answered incorrectly.

On completion of the training, a link is provided, enabling the download a PDF of the training certificate. The must be emailed to the church training coordinator (currently John Knight) to update the church training record and for secure storage of the certificate, should a Diocese audit seek to check the information held.

Status

At St Nicholas, there was a major focus on Safeguarding Training in 2022 when the Church of England Safeguarding Training Framework was introduced. This provided clearer definition of training requirements for each role. Due to the three year expiry of the training, there is a current focus on ensuring that training is up to date, in addition to checking that people new to their role complete the required training. Unfortunately, training undertaken for other, non-Church of England, bodies is not transferable and so the Church of England modules have to be completed.



Benefice of Stevenage (St Nicholas) and Graveley with Chesfield (St Mary)



ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETINGS

Sunday 11 May 2025

Ministry Report

The vision of the Church of England is to be 'a Christian presence in every community'. St Nicholas and St Marys are that presence in northern Stevenage (including Great Ashby, St Nicholas Estate, Chancellor's Estate, and Forster Park), Graveley, and Chesfield.

The vision of St Albans Diocese is to 'live God's love'; that is, 'to see flourishing, Christ-centred communities, inspiring young people of all ages and backgrounds to discover God, grow in their relationship with him, and respond to his transforming love through serving others'.

The essence of both of these visions is encapsulated by the ethic of 'gather in, build up, send out'. We seek to draw people all backgrounds into Christ's kingdom, to build them up in his name, and to send them out into the world to live for him.

My second year in the benefice has been fulfilling and demanding. Below is a rough list of my responsibilities with some comments on how they have gone *in italics*:

A Prayer & devotional

1. **Personal Bible reading, prayer, and continuing ministerial development** – *The Lord has sustained me this year and kept me walking with Jesus. All the glory to Him!*
2. **Weekly benefice prayer meetings** – *The weekly prayer meeting moved to a permanent Thursday afternoon slot last summer, making way on Wednesday evenings for a monthly Prayer & Praise and a weekly evening prayer. Graham Squires led devotions in Job through some of the year but has now stepped down from this responsibility.*
3. **Monthly Prayer & Praise** – *This is led most months on a rota by one of our homegroups. Each homegroup has brought a distinctive style to the evenings and it has served to increase the number and range of members in our church who are joining in prayer.*

B Sunday services

1. **Series and preaching plans** (inc. church year events and occasional preachers) – *In the past year we have completed the preaching series in Romans, worked through another chunk of Psalms, done the 10 Commandments, and had lectionary series over Advent/Christmas and Passiontide/Easter as usual. The lectionary series have again been from the prayer book communion propers, this time taking the epistle readings rather than the gospel readings. I have undertaken the majority of the preaching, though I am grateful to Rev Ray Porter, Rev David Miller, Philip Walker, Graham Squires, Aaron Fokinther, Andy Montalbano, and Jonathan Van Es for the occasions on which they have preached on Sundays, including to cover for me when away on leave or at Bible by the Beach. The practice of 5th Sunday joint services has been discontinued, partly as there is less need for them outside interregnum, but also largely because both churches have experienced people turning up to church when the service was not there, despite thorough notices in advance.*

2. **Arranging some rotas** e.g., lay service leaders – *Thank you to Dan Seifi-Lorimer, Philip Walker, Mike Wilton, Sue Bailey, Peter Gordon, and Eunice Sirkett for being involved in leading services.*
3. **Service plans & weekly power point** – *The services have continued to be based on the directory-style worship of service of the word, with Order 2 Contemporary communion rite used at St Nicholas, and BCP and Order 1 at St Mary's.*
4. **Sermon & other teaching** (e.g. activity slot, Apostles Creed series, elements of communion series) prep – *As the main ministry occasion of the week, the Sunday sermon does take a priority for me and I am glad to have had much positive feedback on these. I am glad to have resumed a topical focus slot with the 'liturgy low-down'. With the activity slots, my aim is always to give families something memorable and Biblical to be able to talk about over the Sunday lunch table after the service, and sometimes to tee up the sermon later for adults. Recently, these slots have included sessions on learning the 10 Commandments with our fingers, on the peace, on the days of creation, on the 'bridge to life' gospel outline (with enactment), on the fruits of the spirit, a 'guess who' on women of the Bible (for mothering Sunday), and a youth & kids work update.*
5. **Music oversight** (checking songs/hymns, liaising with music groups/organists) – *I am very grateful to Martin Bailey and the whole music team at St Nicholas and to Andy Kelly and to all the members of the organ rota at St Mary's (Ron Hollings, Paul Schimmel, Steve Bamford) and the choir for their tremendous service to us in leading sung congregational worship and in providing reflective music during communion and after services. It is wonderful to have such variety of music in our services. For St Nicholas, Martin sends me a monthly list of suggested music and at St Mary's I have been selecting the hymns for each Sunday, being careful to avoid too much repetition and to match the hymn with the theme and season the church year, as far as possible.*
6. **Conducting & registering Sunday services, post-service fellowship** – *Sunday services were held throughout the year, with major feasts marked in the proper fashion. St Nicholas continues to have congregational bring & share after the service on 5th Sundays – albeit now brunch rather than lunch. Thank you to Christine at St Nicholas and Marion at St Mary's and all those on both flower teams for keeping the churches looking so beautiful, especially at key seasons. Thank you to Robin Bailey at St Nicholas and Janet Singleton at St Mary's and those on both refreshment teams for keeping us fed and watered on Sundays. Thank you to Chris Forster at St Nicholas and Peter Bracey at St Mary's and all those on the two tower crews for ringing for us Sunday by Sunday.*

C Congregational / midweek ministry

1. **Wardens meeting** – *Thank you to Paul Schimmel and Karen Walker for meeting with me on occasions in the year. These meetings have been valuable in planning for and reflecting on church life. Thank you also to Alison Hare for all the support which she provides across the benefice in so many ways. St Mary's continues to be without any church wardens sadly.*
2. **Home-group coordination** (leaders meetings, planning Advent & Lent courses, supporting and visiting groups) – *For Advent, the benefice studied Sing in Exultation by Jonathan Landry Cruse, studies in some Christmas carols.*
3. **Pastoral visiting & 1-2-1s** (occasional pastoral support e.g., hospitality & hospital visits, home communion, and individual Bible reading) – *Thank you to all members of the congregation who have welcomed me in for a visit and/or helped me in visiting others. There was a particular spike in hospital visits over winter.*
4. **Families & youth work** (tea parties, S-Club, youth work, school application letters, etc) – *It has been good to see families work grow this year. At St Nicholas we went up from one to two regular weekly U-18s groups, with the launch of a youth group meeting in the ringing chamber. Thank you to John Knight and Hannah Keene coordinating S-Club and Youth group respectively and to all the teachers and helpers who have stepped forward to make this part of the ministry happen. We are excited to be taking 11 of our young people to a Christian activity holiday in July, 'Madness + Mayhem' at*

Irthlingborough in Northamptonshire – thank you to all who have contributed generously to a bursary fund for this. Our fundraising target was more than met.

5. **Men's ministry** – *We do now have a steering group for the men's ministry and have had a few good meetings in the past year, including Bible studies on Gideon and Samson, and visiting speakers Graham O'Brien and David Banting.*
6. **Visitor and newcomer follow-up**, inc. termly newcomers' welcome meals – *Over 70 welcome cards have been completed on regular Sundays over the past two years, representing over 100 individuals who have attended services as visitors. I have followed up all of these, with some becoming regular members of our church families, though many other are not seen again! Hannah and I have now hosted a total of eight welcome events. Thank you to Stuart and Christine Marshall for also hosting one this year.*
7. **Annual church weekend / day away** (identifying & booking venue, catering, programme, speakers, children's team, music team, transport, finances, etc.) – *The benefice away day on 6 September will be at Oak Hill College with David Banting being our main speaker. Over 80 members of the churches are already signed up to come, though I hope we can get to over 100. There is plenty of space at the venue! Oak Hill is where our mission partners Bernie and Rachel are currently studying and where our recently appointed Assistant Minister David will be studying part-time.*
8. **Midweek offices** (Wednesday EP) – *John Forster and I continue to alternate in running this. We normally use prayer book vespers, though sometimes CW. This service has been used to mark various events in the church year, including Ash Wednesday and Ascension Day.*
9. **Developing ministry team** – *All incumbents in the diocese were invited to make expressions of interest in applying for curates in summer 2026. I did complete this expression (one of 20 incumbents who did so, with only 6 stipendiary curates due to start in 2026) but after an interview we were sadly not invited to make a full application. We did however push on with the idea of an Assistant Minister. The St Nicholas PCC will be the employing body. A working party of the PCC met to draw up the documentation in January and it went to advertisement in February. After several expressions of interest and applications, we ran a competitive selection process and assessment day. A special PCC meeting agreed to appoint David Sydenham on a 0.5 FTE basis, with sponsorship to study part-time at Oak Hill college alongside. Meanwhile, we now have five Lay Leaders of Worship in the benefice (Mike, Sue, Martin, Peter, and Eunice) and two more due to undertake the training in the autumn (Philip and Dan).*
10. **Benefice monthly newsletter** – *I have provided an opening reflection in each month of the Herald, including on 2 Timothy 3 (on being counter-cultural), Matthew 20 (on serving as Christians), Leviticus 25 (on jubilees and freedom in Christ), 1 Peter 3:15 (on making a defence for our faith when asked), Psalm 51:17 (on having a contrite heart), and Psalm 78:4 (on telling the gospel to the next generation). Alison Hare continues to do the initial drafting of the rest of the newsletter and I then add any other items for the month and do some formatting before she proof reads it and sends it out.*
11. **Other fellowship events** – *The annual vicarage garden party was held in July with over 70 from the benefice attending. We enjoyed good weather and a splendid marquee from Jacky Swanson. Thank you to all who contributed to the bring & share. There have been various other events through the year as well, including the quiz as part of mission week and a BBQ hosted by Dan and Charlotte.*
12. **Special events** – *There have been a few special services in the year, including the carol services in December, Christmas Day (which fell on a Wednesday this year), Maundy Thursday communion (at St Nics), and Good Friday meditations (at St Mary's). Thank you to Tim and Jenny Franklin for hosting the post-service refreshments after the Graveley carols in their superb barn.*

D Outreach & Chaplaincy ministry

1. **Door to door team & follow up inc. producing literature** – *I have not had sufficient spare time this year to lead the team and it has only conducted a few outings, including one during the mission week in February (not the best month for door-to-door).*

2. **Outreach & discipleship courses** – *I have run a Hope Explored course in November and will lead another course like this in the summer, God willing.*
3. **House move packs** – *The new estate on Foster Park is going up fast, with hundreds of residents already moved in. Thanks to Chris Chambers for inviting local businesses to contribute toward welcome packs and compiling them and to Mike and Evelyn for distributing them.*
4. **Outreach events** including literature and advertising, assembling team, decorations and activities – *We had our first parish mission week at St Nicholas in a few years in February, with a visiting team from Cornhill. We engaged in door-to-door, street work, evangelistic quiz night, and guest services and men's breakfast. At Christmas, a team from St Nicholas went into three local care homes – Norman Court, Truro Court, and Wisden Court to sing and share. We had a very successful Graveley Open Day in August, with hundreds of visitors from far and wide. Thanks again to Tim and Jenny Franklin again for hosting this, to Gill Shenoy and others for advertising and organising it, and for manning stalls. St Mary's singers also led hymns at the Wagon & Horses, to a packed pub!*
5. **Online presence oversight** (website, Facebook, YouTube, Google, Twitter, etc.) – *Thanks to Steve Bamford for his work on our website, Evelyn for hers on the Facebook page, and Hannah to hers on our TripAdvisor page.*
6. **Baptisms, confirmations, & dedications**, including initial emails & meetings, prep sessions and visits – *There have been around a dozen baptisms at St Nicholas this past year, including three by full immersion. Four of the baptisms were as part of a very joyful confirmation service with Bishop Rob Munro visiting, on the 12th Day of Christmas (5 January). Thirteen candidates were confirmed, and two renewed baptism vows, and one was received into the communion of the Church of England having been episcopally confirmed in another communion. There were several testimonies of God's grace in the service. We are due to have a dedication in July.*
7. **Weddings & wedding blessings**, inc. initial emails & meetings, prep work (e.g., document) and visits, follow up inc. submitting documentation, updating brochure – *There have been about ten weddings this year, nine at St Nicholas and one in Graveley. The schedule ahead is busy on this front. Weddings are demanding in organisation, with many meetings to line them up. Thank you to our vergers, especially Jayne Hale for helping this these.*
8. **Funerals, memorial services & interments**, inc. initial emails & meetings, prep work and visits, annual memorial and celebration services – *There have been about twenty funerals or memorial services this year across the benefice, both in church and at Harwood Park. Thank you to our vergers, especially Paul Drakes and Mike Wilton for helping this these.*
9. **Schools work** (courses, assemblies, R.E. support inc. classes and visits, fetes, presentations, relationship-building) – *There has been lots of schools work this year in eight of the nine schools in our benefice (but not the RC Newman school). Graveley has the only church school in the benefice and I do a monthly assembly there and sit on the board of governors (not an insignificant time commitment) as well as the finance sub-committee. School assemblies (or collective worship) are only 15 minutes, so there is not much time for me to use – but I have been giving them a talk on a Biblical or topical theme and prayer time. We have added music to these this year, with the assistance of Steve Bamford and Gill Shenoy. I also distributed Bibles to the Year 6 leavers at the end of the summer term and attended the end of year fair. The staff have been courteous and welcoming. Alleynes and Barclays year 7 and Almond Hill year 6 came again to Christmas services. Leys years 3-4 and all of Graveley school came to Easter services. We ran seven Christmas journey sessions, for Giles, Trott's Hill, Fairlands, and Knebworth schools. I have conducted assemblies and lessons at Round Diamond, Trott's Hill, Graveley, and Leys. We have seen some visitors to Sunday church off the back of this schools work.*
10. **Care home & hospital work** – *Although I have not been back to Halcyon Days this year, I have visited Pinelodge, along with Richard Brooks who leads a regular service there. See above regarding Christmas visits to other homes. There is now again a full time CofE chaplain at the Lister.*

11. **Community presence** – *I continue to attend meetings of the Old Town Community Partnership and support the work of the Residents' Sub-Committee and the Christmas lights switch-on carols. I attended the Graveley village hall Christmas open day again. I have also represented the Churches Together at the Stevenage Interfaith Forum and spoken apologetically there.*

E Inter-church & spiritual support

1. **Churches Together** – *I have attended most of the monthly CTiS prayer meetings and hosted one in St Nicholas. We were involved in Love Stevenage Day on Saturday 6 July (cleaning up the Martins Way bridge). I led the Remembrance Day proceedings at the town war memorial (a huge assembly of some 2,000 people). I also led the Good Friday Walk of witness and Ecumenical Service in the new town square, and attended CTiS leaders meetings.*
2. **Deanery chapter, synod, and mutual clergy support** – *I have attended most of the monthly chapter meetings and hosted one in the upper parish room. I have also attended both of the Deanery synod meetings, at Shephall and St George's. Many of the deanery clergy assist with service in the benefice and I have likewise offered support with occasional offices and leave cover at the other parishes, for example taking a run of Thursday communions at Chells and the Maundy Thursday service at Christ the King Symond's Green.*
3. **Stevenage ministerial fraternal** – *I am grateful for fellowship with Ben Epps (Longmeadow Church - FIEC) and Jon Woodrow (Grace Community Church - NF). This has been a wonderful source of prayer support and encouragement. Russell Knell did a pulpit swap with me during the year. We have run various 'equipping' events. This group has also helped us get low-cost deals on Advent and Lent devotional books.*
4. **North Herts Preachers group** – *I have hosted most of the meetings of this prophesying at the parsonage. Ben Epps has ably chaired it and we are joined in fellowship by ministers from Baldock, Royston, Letchworth, and elsewhere. The group also collaborates to put on 'The Gathering', a termly youth event.*
5. **Diocesan relations** – *There is a seemingly never-ending stream of emails from the diocese, mostly I presume attempting to be helpful, though few of which I have time to fully engage with. Bishop Alan has kindly given continued dispensation to have two communion services in the benefice per month and has confirmed his delegation of responsibility to nominate chalice-bearers to incumbents. I have attended a bishops' garden party in Knebworth. I attended the triennial clergy conference in June though along with other DEF clergy was not in conscience able to attend all of the sessions. I had a Ministry and Mission Development Review (MMDR) last year which passed very positively and without incident. Emma Critchley at the DAC has been very helpful to us with faculty applications and guidance on other matters.*
6. **Conferences & retreat** – *I again attended the DEF conference in May in Bushmead (Luton). Four representatives of the benefice including me attended the ReNew conference 'How Great a Salvation', in September in Leeds. It was good to see diocesan colleagues from Frogmore and Chorleywood there. I also attended the Junior Evangelical Anglican conference in August in Northampton, the last one which I was eligible to attend. Six of us from the benefice attended the Church Society Fellowship of Word & Spirit conference.*
7. **Spiritual support** – *I am very grateful to an older Christian friend for continuing to provide monthly prayer support and wisdom. I am also grateful to other Christian friends and family in this respect who regularly pray for what goes on here in Stevenage. Particular thanks to Hannah in this respect.*
8. **Pastoral reflections & record keeping** – *In the interests of ministerial development I have sought to keep up to date with pastoral reflections (held securely and anonymised) as well as with any necessary reporting, e.g. health & safety incidents and safeguarding.*

F Governance, training, & admin

1. **Safeguarding awareness, training, and reporting** – *I am up to date with my safeguarding training, have recently refreshed my Leadership training. I would benefit from undertaking the CPAS Arrow leadership course soon.*
2. **Parochial Church Council** – *The PCC standing committees deal with more managerial matters in between quarterly meetings of PCC. The annual joint benefice PCCs away day deals with bigger strategic-level matters. This year it was at Cuffley Church and had David Banting as a visiting speaker. I have written ministry reports and standing committee reports for each PCC meeting and chaired the meetings.*
3. **Annual Parochial Church Meetings** – *I have prepared the agenda and ministry report for this annual meeting, and contributed to the annual report, as well as meeting with PCC secretaries Jane Luff and Andy Kelly to prepare for the meetings.*
4. **Staff and volunteers management** – *Thanks again to our administrator Alison Hare as well as to each and every person who so kindly volunteers in our church, whether in the cleaning rota, the flower teams, the pastoral team, the PCCs, the tower teams, the readers and intercessors rotas, service leading, preaching, the evangelism team, hospitality, church wardening, the maintenance team, and many other areas. Particular thanks to the St Nicholas Maintenance team and Marion Bracey at St Mary's for their work in the church and churchyard!*
5. **Finance oversight and support** – *Huge thanks to our treasurers of this past year, Jason Cox at St Nicholas and Andy Kelly and Alison Blanshard at St Mary's for all they have done behind the scenes to keep our churches going. This is one of the toughest jobs! I have met and liaised with them at various points about aspects of budget and spending.*
6. **Fabric oversight & improvement** – *Thank you to all who have helped with aspects of our fabric this year. Thanks to Mike Wilton and Martin Bailey for their work on various St Nicholas fabric issues, including the roof repairs, the music area extension, and the AV extension into the parish room. Thanks to Andy Kelly for liaising with our inspecting architect Mark Eddison regarding the St Mary's repairs arising from the quinquennial report. St Mary's continues to face significant fabric-related challenges which will be difficult to overcome especially without anyone forthcoming to project manage.*
7. **Parsonage issues** – *Hannah and I are grateful for the provision of St Nicholas House as a ministry base in the parish. We have been delighted to host many events in the vicarage, including the annual benefice garden party, newcomers' meals, and many other individual meetings. We have continued to seek to improve the property, with a new outside shed, new blinds for two windows, and new interior door handles.*
8. **Expenses & signing-off on spends** – *I am up to date to end-2024 with expenses claims.*

I continue to maintain some involvements outside the benefice, continuing as a trustee of the Church Society and of Castle Street Episcopal Chapel in Reading and as a seasonal chaplain with the Intercontinental Church Society (though I have not undertaken any tours of duty since moving to Stevenage).

In summary, as stated to begin, by the grace of God, it has been a productive year here. THANK YOU to everyone who has served in any way in the ministry. This is a team effort and I thank the Lord for all of you. Through our church may 'the manifold wisdom of God [continue to] be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places' (Ephesians 3:10). Amen.

Rev Edward Keene, Rector
Saturday 3 May 2025



The PARISH CHURCH of ST NICHOLAS,
RECTORY LANE, STEVENAGE



S-Club Report for APCM May 2025

Overview

Following successful appeals for more Leaders and Helpers, we have been able to run two S-Club groups since September 2024. The Younger Group, which meets in the Upper Parish room, is for children aged 3 to Year 6 (i.e. the final year of Primary School). The Older Group, which meets in the Bell Tower, is for children that attend Secondary School. Martin Bailey has run some music based sessions attended by both groups

Generally, the Younger Group meets every week and the Older Group meets on the same basis except for the first Sunday of each month when the children remain in the service. The exceptions, for both groups, are Easter Sunday, Christmas Day, the Sunday between Christmas Day and New Years Day and the August holiday periods.

Younger Group

John Knight is responsible for the staffing of the Younger Group and for choosing the subject for the lessons, which are selected from the Mustard Seeds resources that have been used for many years. The Leaders for the group are John, Hannah Keene and Jeanette Parker, supported by a small group of helpers.

The running of the Younger Group has been less challenging than previous years because of the reduction of age range, with the running of the Older Group. Despite the material being aimed at the 3 to 11 year old age range, some of the younger children don't really engage and other activities are provided to keep them occupied. Most of the older children engage well with the lessons, with some showing a very good knowledge of the bible stories, particularly those relating to the New Testament.

Older Group

Hannah is responsible for coordinating the volunteer rota for the older group and selecting the material to study. The study material for the Autumn term was taken from the Mustard Seeds resources for older children. However, Mustard Seeds have a limited range of material available for children aged 11+. Since January, the devotional 'Explore' notes have been used to guide discussions and we have been looking at the book of Acts, covering Acts 1-8 so far.

The older children have benefitted from having teaching more geared towards their age group. There are more opportunities for them to ask questions and we can discuss a wider range of topics. The children each have their own scrapbook where they can write the verse of the day, or other information they want to remember from the discussions. The children engage very well and their knowledge of the early church is growing quickly.

Safeguarding

As required by the St Nicholas Safeguarding Procedure, all S-Club sessions are attended by two 'staff' who have completed the required safeguarding actions (DBS check and training). One person is nominated as the Leader and the other as the Helper. The Leader is responsible for the selection of the specific material for the session, as indicated below, and delivery of the material. The Helper supports the Leader, usually undertaking minor administrative tasks and helping the children with the craft activity.

The Church of England has mandated the Awareness of Domestic Abuse training is undertaken by people working with children in addition to the training modules previously mandated. This additional burden has caused one person to step down as helper, particularly as training undertaken for another Christian body was not accepted.

The St Nicholas parent consent form, for the S-Club activities, has been enhanced and we are gradually getting all parents to complete the forms.

Material

S-Club Younger – Mustard Seeds

The S-Club lessons use the Mustard Seeds resources developed by Teaching and Training (TnT) Ministries, for which St Nicholas Church pay an annual subscription. Since 1993 TnT Ministries has been resourcing and equipping people to teach the Bible to children and teenagers more faithfully, more creatively and more effectively. Their comprehensive range of printed material covers the entire 18-month to 18-year age range. It has been used around the world and translated into twelve languages. Mustard Seeds is their new range of highly versatile, downloadable material.

As noted above, S-Club uses material developed for teaching the 3 to 11 year age range. The material is split into topics comprising of a number of lessons. The associated syllabus covers a period of 4 years but this is used as a guideline rather than being followed explicitly. Each topic has associated information:

- Series Aims
- Series Context
- Series Overview
- Guidance, e.g.
 - Using This Resource
 - Craft Symbols
 - Memory Verse Ideas
 - Suggested Session Outline

Each lesson comprises:

- The Story So Far (A reminder of the previous lessons (where applicable))
- Leader's Study Notes (Detailed information about the verses in the Bible passage and the points that are raised in consideration of the lesson aims)
- Reflect (A set of points for the Leader to consider, usually with a point for personal reflection)
- Introductory Idea(s)
- Bridge Questions (Items for the children to listen for)
- Teaching Plan (Ideas for how to present the Bible passage)
- Game Ideas
- Discuss and Apply (Ideas for how to get the children to think about the Bible passage)
- Activities (normally a choice of simple or more complex craft (of which the main part is colouring the craft) and worksheets (questions relating to the lesson))
- Memory Verse

The Suggested Session Outline, noted above, details how the lesson could be structured. However, the delivery of the lesson is at the discretion of the Leader, with consideration of the number and age of the children present and the time available for the lesson.

Youth Group – Older

The Explore Bible Study notes are designed for individual's personal devotions, not group study. However, the questions and exploratory information within the notes themselves has meant that they do actually serve incredibly well as a resource for group discussion, particularly with this age group. Each of the leaders and helpers for the older group has a personal copy of the Explore notes so they are able to follow along and prepare for the sessions.

The notes take it chapter and verse at a time, often encouraging the reading of 3-4 verses in Acts followed by 1-3 questions. This is very helpful for the older children as it means that the passages are taken bit by bit and broken down. The Explore notes also reference passages in the Old Testament that are relevant to the book of Acts and we revisit these as part of discussions as well.

Facilities

The printer obtained in the previous year continues to be of a benefit, allowing material (e.g. craft sheets) to be printed during the S-Club sessions, ensuring a copy is available for each child. This has been particularly useful when numbers in attendance at the sessions are higher than anticipated.

Support

Your support to the work of S-Club would be appreciated in the following ways:

1. Pray for the work of S-Club:
 - that the Leaders and Helpers are sustained by God's word, teaching faithfully to the children,
 - that the children themselves come to put their faith and trust in Jesus,
 - that the church would see growing numbers of children and young people attending and putting their trust in Jesus.
2. Prayerfully consider whether you may be able to support S-Club in a practical way. We are particularly looking to grow our team of both Leaders and Helpers. Please speak to Mark Parker if this is of interest to you and, if desired, he can arrange for you to come and observe an S-Club session in order to help you decide.

Thanks

We would like to thank all those that have practically supported S-Club over the last year. It's the only activity in the church that inhibits attendance at the service!

We would like to thank parents / guardians for trusting us with the Christian growth of your children.

Hannah Keene / John Knight
S-Club Leaders
May 2025

“Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name
welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not
welcome me but the one who sent me.”

Jesus speaking Mark 9:37 NIV



The PARISH CHURCH of ST NICHOLAS,
RECTORY LANE, STEVENAGE
REPORT OF MISSION GIVING FOR THE APCM SUNDAY, 11th MAY



From 1st January 2020 our mission partners have been:

CMS – with our mission link Katia Rocks in Florianopolis, Brazil. We receive regular link letters with their news which are sent out via email to the congregation

The Barnabas Fund – we withheld donations in November 2024 because of inappropriate behaviour of certain Barnabas staff.

Bridge Builders – our local partner working with primary schools to give opportunities for children to explore the Christian faith and class visits to local churches for themed events such as The Easter Journey and the Christmas Journey.

Crosslinks – we are supporting our mission partners Rachel and Bernie Muluuta from Kampala, Uganda who are now back in the UK and are in training at Oak Hill College, North London. After their training they intend to return to Uganda.

CMS and Crosslinks each receive 20% of our giving and Bridge Builders receive 40%.

The support for these mission organisations will be reviewed by the new PCC and Open Doors has been suggested as an alternative to the Barnabas Fund

Cathy Bibby/Chris Taplin

Mission Giving Group



The PARISH CHURCH of ST NICHOLAS,
RECTORY LANE, STEVENAGE



Fabric Report 1/5/25

Paul Schimmel & Karen Walker

- Still not got the actual gas safety certificate, but verbally has passed with an advisory. The advisory could become serious the next time round due to lack of availability of spare parts thus requiring full boiler replacement. Diocese not keen on gas boiler replacement so this could become 'interesting'.
- We seem to have a moth infestation. Paul has put a UV unit in the church and it's killed many. Hannah has ordered some additional traps she's used successfully in the past. The source seems to be the carpet in the Creche, which has now been thoroughly hoovered, but we may have to dispose of it.
- There have been ongoing internet problems leading to streaming dropouts, but Paul Drakes now seems to have them under control and Sunday services are now streamed without issues. These problems are particularly embarrassing when the streaming has been used as part of a funeral or wedding service and at least one refund has had to be issued.
- Ongoing alterations, logged on diocese portal awaiting further architect input on first two:
 - Roof leak repairs.
 - Music area expansion.
 - AV installation in downstairs parish room. Quote received from ESS, general PCC agreement to proceed with this as they installed existing equipment.



The PARISH CHURCH of ST NICHOLAS,
RECTORY LANE, STEVENAGE



**REPORT OF STEVENAGE DEANERY SYNOD FOR APCM ON
SUNDAY, 11th MAY 2025**

The Deanery Synod met twice during the year 2024 -2025

18th June 2024 at St Mary's Church

16th October 2024 – this meeting was cancelled due to there being no substantial business

12th February 2025 at St Andrew's and St George's Church

The subjects for the meetings were:

18th June – we were shown a 20 minute video in which Baroness Sal Brinton spoke about disability and the Church. Following the video small groups discussed disabilities within our own churches

12th February – Deanery members discussed various topics including what we wish as a Stevenage Deanery to see from the next Bishop of St Albans and how to make our time together as fruitful as possible.

At each church an introduction is given and members take part in the type of worship of that congregation.

Reports are given from General Synod, Diocesan Synod, Rural Dean's notices, Treasurer's report, Mission and Pastoral Committee and CTIS.

If you would like to read any minutes from the meetings above, please contact Stuart Marshall or myself.

Cathy Bibby/Stuart Marshall

Deanery Synod Representatives



The PARISH CHURCH of ST NICHOLAS,
RECTORY LANE, STEVENAGE



Report of Churches Together in Stevenage

SUNDAY, 11th MAY 2025

This year CiTS publishes a newsletter which is distributed to the church members and has organised an Advent Calendar video, the Walk of Witness on Good Friday and is trying to encourage churches to take part in this year's Love Stevenage event.

There have been few meetings of the church representatives this year a sign that those on the committee are getting jaded. I am standing down this year as the St Nicholas Church Representative having been the Rep for 8 years as there is a need of fresh faces and ideas to take the CiTS forward.

Stuart Marshall

CiTS representative