



**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 3rd. MAY 2026

at 10.50 a.m. following the 9.30 a.m. service.



The PARISH CHURCH of ST NICHOLAS,
RECTORY LANE, STEVENAGE



Sunday 3rd. May 2026 at 10.50 a.m. in the church.

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of last meeting (Sunday 11th. May 2025)
3. Matters arising
4. Election of church wardens (2)
5. Any other business
6. Date of next meeting: Sunday 2nd. May 2027 (provisional)

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING (APCM)

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of last meeting (Sunday 11th. May 2025)
3. Matters arising
4. Electoral Roll Report (Electoral Roll Officer)
5. Elections
 - ❖ Election of Deanery Synod members (3)
 - ❖ Election of PCC members
 - a) Church council members (3 year full term) (4 people)
 - b) Church council member (2 year term) (1 person)
 - c) Church council members (1 year term) (1 person)
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 2nd. May 2027 (provisional)



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 11th May 2025 at 11.00am

As Rector and Chair of the PCC, Edward Keene opened the meeting at 11.00am.

Meeting of the Parishioners

Apologies for Absence – Paul Drakes, Cathy Bibby, Angela Hepworth, Jacky Swanson, Robin Bailey and Paul Schimmel. There were 35 members present.

Election of Churchwardens –

There were two nominations for Churchwarden: Paul Schimmel, nominated by Mike Wilton and seconded by Cathy Bibby; and Karen Walker, nominated by Steve Bamford and seconded by Alison Hare. They were duly elected(Paul for his 2nd. year and Karen for her 7th. year).

There was no other business.

The date of the next Parishioners' Meeting was provisionally set for Sunday, 3rd. May 2026.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)

Apologies for Absence – Paul Drakes, Cathy Bibby, Angela Hepworth, Jacky Swanson, Robin Bailey and Paul Schimmel. There were 35 members present.

Minutes of the 2024 APCM - The minutes of the last APCM on 26th. May 2024 had been circulated before the meeting and were agreed as a true and correct record. Edward declared them accepted and signed the file copy.

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. The Electoral Roll now contains 111 names in total,not the 112 as stated in the report as sadly Eileen Winters has died. There are 40 new people and 21 who aren't on the updated list. Edward thanked Elaine for her work on the Electoral Roll this year.

Elections:

Parochial Church Council Members – There were four nominations for seven vacancies: Due to the increase on the Electoral Roll three new vacancies have arisen. Edward thanked the retiring members for their service on the PCC - Chris Taplin, Edward Kaahwa, Charlotte Seifi-Lorimer and Evelyn Wilton

For election to the PCC for three years 2025 – 2028

Jason Cox, proposed by Paul Drakes, seconded by Craig Hare;

Ella Houghton, proposed by Craig Hare, seconded by Paul Drakes;

Rona Otegbade, proposed by Paul Drakes, seconded by Craig Hare;

This leaves one vacancy

For election to the PCC for two years 2025 – 2027:
There is one vacancy

For election to the PCC for one year 2025 – 2026:
Miranda Dillsworth, proposed by Craig Hare, seconded by Amanda Steele
This leaves one vacancy

The four were all duly elected. Edward isn't too concerned about filling the other vacancies as there's already a large number (15) on the PCC including other offices. A by-election could be held during the year if necessary.
Thanks given to all by Edward.

Mike is standing down so there is a vacancy for a Deanery Synod rep position now. No nominations were made, but a by-election can happen later in the year. Thanks to Mike for his work on this.

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.
Jason Cox proposed, Mike Wilton 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. Edward thanked the Safeguarding Team for all of their work; Jacky, John and Christine.

Ministry Report - this had been circulated with the Reports Pack prior to the meeting. Edward spoke about his 10 highlights from the year:

1. The inauguration of Prayer and Praise monthly on Wednesdays. Thanks to the Home groups.
2. Preaching through all of the Book of Romans
3. The January Confirmation with 13 being confirmed, 6 baptisms and 2 reaffirmations.
4. The Assistant Minister David Siddenham to start in July
5. The growth of the Electoral Roll from 84 to 111, with the usual Sunday congregation of 85 up from 60. From 90 to 120 who attend at least once a month.
6. The Mission Week held in February
7. The school services at Christmas and Easter
8. The Christmas Journey- 7 sessions with over 200 children attending
9. The formation of the 2nd. Sunday School Group for Secondary School pupils. Edward also thanked all those who lead and help with the Sunday Schools.
10. The Bible by the Beach weekend attended by 25 of the congregation.

There were no questions or comments.

S Club Report - this had been circulated with the Reports Pack prior to the meeting. SClub and highlighted the need for more helpers. Please talk to Mark Parker who's in charge of recruiting. Edward thanked John, Hannah and Jeanette for all their work for Sclub.

Mission Giving Report - this had been circulated with the Reports Pack prior to the Meeting. Chris highlighted that donations to Barnabus have stopped and that Open Door will have donations instead. Edward thanked Chris and Cathy for their work.

Accounts & Financial statements for 2024 – Jason Cox submitted a report which was included in the reports pack. This showed draft results pending statutory audit. He went through this as a powerpoint. He noted that the one-off donations had boosted the income. Without these there would have been a deficit of about £9,000. He showed that about half of the budget goes for the Parish Share. He reminded everyone that pledges are needed for year 2 of the Assistant Minister post. He also highlighted that regular giving by standing order and direct debit are the most helpful, along with Gift Aid. He thanked all involved with helping with the finances. There were no questions.

The Trustees Annual Report (TAR) is currently with the Auditor awaiting approval. Jason Proposed that the unaudited accounts are accepted. This was seconded by Bernie Matthews and as there were no objections were received. Edward thanked Jason for all his work.

Terrier and Inventory, and the Church Log Book - These have been updated and signed off by the Churchwardens. There were no objections.

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

Deanery Synod Report – this had been circulated with the Reports Pack prior to the meeting. Edward thanked Mike and Cathy for their work. Mike is standing down so there is a vacancy for this position now.

All of the reports were accepted by the members.

Any Other Business and Questions –

There were no questions received before the meeting but 3 items of thanks:

Jacky Swanson: Thank you for providing the reports. It was wonderful to see the vast array of activities and work ongoing within the parish. I did not see any reference to the Women's Group, and would like to thank Jeanette, Sue, Evelyn and Hannah for their time and effort in arranging meetings for the women at St Nick's.

Robin Bailey: Much enjoyed the VE Day celebration - a fantastic job done by all so [congratulations!!](#)

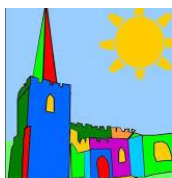
Sue Bailey: Thanks to the Women's group, so lovely to have new people there.

Edward would be happy for questions to be asked to him throughout the year, not just at the APCM.

There was no other business.

The date of the next Parishioners' Meeting was provisionally set for **Sunday, 3rd. May 2026.**

Closing Prayers – Edward closed the meeting at 11.22 am. with prayer.



Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) – Elections Report

Sunday 3rd. May 2026 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 resigned the seat in 2025. As our 2025 electoral roll was over 100, we now have 3 seats to fill for Lay Deanery reps. Elections for all 3 seats will take place at this APCM.

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 B 2023-26	Mark Parker	<i>Anthony Taylor</i> Elaine Forster	<i>Paul Schimmel</i> <i>Evelyn Wilton</i> Miranda Dillsworth	
Term C 2024-27	Dan Seifi-Lorimer	Christine Chambers	Sue Bailey	Vacancy
Term A 2025-28	Rona Otegbade	Ella Houghton	Jason Cox	Vacancy
Term B 2026-29	Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy

In addition to the elected members the PCC also renewed the co-option of its treasurer (Jason Cox) in 2025.

There are six vacancies for ordinary lay members:

- 4 vacancies for full 3-year terms, 2026-2029
- 1 vacancy for a partial 2-year term, 2026-2028
- 1 vacancy for a partial 1-year term, 2026-2027

Independent Examiner: Barker Wilkinson have served again as the independent examiner for the 2025 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), and Mission Secretaries (Chris Taplin and Cathy Bibby).



The PARISH CHURCH of ST NICHOLAS, RECTORY LANE, STEVENAGE



Safeguarding APCM Report May 2026

Overview (Christine Chamber) Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)

Once again we have had a busy year with many changes to documents and policies in reflection to past safeguarding issues for the Church of England. The team bring these changes as they happen to the PCC as they happen.

Please let me remind you about the safeguarding information held at St Nicholas Church 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.

St Nicholas Church has a Safeguarding team to manage the various areas so that we can comply with the needs of the church, these are

Christine Chamber Parish Safeguarding Officer PSO

Jackie Swanson Recruiter and DBS support officer – who ensures and supports all volunteers to complete their DBS checks. It is vital these are done promptly as there is a time limit on the documents.

John Knight Training officer - who ensures that training is done and Completed.
We would like to ask all those who are out of date with their training to access this as soon as possible while we develop in house training.

This year has seen many changes to safeguarding with in the Church of England and the many documents, provide by the diocese.

Alongside the many new documents are the Safer Space information, which can be found in various places around the church. Most of the documents now come with a QR scan for those who are able to access these by phone.

We held a Safeguarding Sunday on 16th November, were the Adults/parents and children all worked together by introducing the theme - Being Safe First, using 7 slides to support the event. We asked the Adults/parent to complete some action pledge cards to help us improve what we do. The children completed Roarry's the lions missing word game and the youth group completed feeling safe code breaker

Work is underway to prepare for this year's safeguarding Sunday, with the date yet to be confirmed by twenty one eight.

We have worked closely with the diocese and have been issued with a number of national alerts and have recruit some side people to be available to support us in church.

I attend the monthly meeting when I am able, 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 John and Jackie.

**God Bless
Christine, Jackie and John.**

Training (John Knight)

A complete assessment of the training status against roles was undertaken in the autumn of 2025. Emails were sent where training needed to be undertaken (i.e. new training requirements or training needing to be refreshed).

There was a good response with training being undertaken and certificates being received in order to confirm completion. However, there continued to be cases where the emails were not acknowledged or training remaining outstanding despite further prompting, including face-to-face discussions.

At the start of 2026, the Diocese confirmed that material was being produced to enable group training sessions to be undertaken. As such, outstanding training was no longer pursued awaiting the material, which has still not been provided.

A full assessment of the status of training will be soon after the APCM, when roles can be confirmed, particularly regarding PCC members.

Update from DBS lead Jackie Swanson

From 01 Apr 2025 to 31 Mar 2026 two DBS checks were updated and 1 new check carried out. 11 reviews are due for the period 01 Apr 2026 to 31 Mar 2027.

There continue to be invitations and subsequent reminders for DBS checks sent, and not acted upon, including for PCC members. Difficulties can arise where ID cannot be satisfactorily confirmed in line with the required documents, but this is a rare occurrence. In addition, it is not always clear who current members undertaking pastoral team and children's work are, in order to maintain up-to-date records. It may be useful for leaders of those key groups to audit and supply a list of their volunteer members to the Safeguarding team on an annual basis to ensure that appropriate and current checks are in place.



ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETINGS May 2026



Ministry Report

The vision of the Church of England is to be 'a Christian presence in every community'. Our churches, 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...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 these visions is fulfilled by our objectives 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 third year as incumbent of this benefice has been as fulfilling and demanding as ever. 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 (CMD)** – The Lord has sustained me again this year and kept me walking with Jesus. I have discussed a couple of possible CMD courses with the bishop in my development review, and another connected with training.
2. **Weekly benefice prayer meetings** – The weekly prayer meeting is still on Thursday afternoons, though was moved backwards from 2:15 to 2:30 a few months ago. David and I are usually there, and it is always welcome to be joined by anyone else from the churches in the work of prayer. We always start with a reflection on an appointed psalm from matins for the day.
3. **Monthly Prayer & Praise** – I am grateful to the homegroups for continuing to lead these sessions in rotation. The ethos should be 'prayer meeting with music', rather than 'service with some prayer' and we need to work at rebalancing that. In general, the parish room is probably a more suitable venue for the meeting, as it allows small groups to join in prayer around tables.

B Sunday services

1. **Series and preaching plans** (inc. church year events and occasional preachers) – This year in Sunday sermons we have worked through John's gospel chapters 1-4, Psalms 25 to 34, Habakkuk, and 1 Corinthians 1-10, as well as following an authorised lectionary for Christmas and Easter. Having preached on the proper lessons from the prayer book, both gospels and epistles, in my first two years in post, I turned this year to the Common Worship lectionary, fitting in well with Year 1. I preached most Sundays, though David has done a few since starting as Assistant Minister, as have visiting preachers including Rev David Banting and Rev David Miller. (A good thing I was not named after my father (David) as it might start to look suspicious.)
2. **Arranging some rotas** e.g., lay service leaders – Thank you again to Dan Seifi-Lorimer, Philip Walker, Mike Wilton, Sue Bailey, Peter Gordon, and Eunice Sirkett for being involved in leading services. A few more people are joining the rota, including Andrew Houghton, who led his first service recently.

3. **Service plans & weekly power point** – The services have continued to be based on the directory-style worship of service of the word, with the Order 2 Contemporary communion rite used at St Nicholas, and BCP and Order 1 at St Mary's.
 - a) I have typically based the opening sentence at St Nicholas on a theme in the opening hymn. In both churches
 - b) I have made extensive use of Common Worship: Times and Seasons for the intercessions, proper prefaces, and closing blessings.
 - c) I always take care in preparing the church family notices slides, with my printout of them assisting me in passing them on at St Mary's.
4. **Sermon & other teaching** (e.g. activity slot, Church as... series) – As the main ministry occasion of the week, the Sunday sermon takes a priority for me, and I am grateful to have had much positive feedback on these.
 - a) The topical focus slot at St Nicholas continued with the 'Church as...' series, looking at 15 Biblical metaphors for the nature of the church.
 - b) With the St Nicholas 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. In the past year, these slots have included such diverse sessions as the meaning of 'fearing' God (1 Peter 2), 'identify that logo' in connection with the symbolism of John the Baptist, 'guess the capacity of the water butt' in connection with the turning of water to wine, a selection of men in the Bible on Father's Day, a welcome slot for David Sydenham, a Badge Sunday mix and mingle, the value of the spring of life, the fields of the world being ripe for harvest (both John 4), Nathaniel Bartholomew (on his feast), sharing faith in the workplace, the Lord as our rock (Psalm 28), St Matthew (on his feast) needing spiritual healing, trust, not being like horses and mules (Psalm 32), the creative power of God's word (Psalm 33), a testimony slot from Niall Thompson, revelation (with an air-fryer; 1 Corinthians 2), the futility of philosophy (with a mix & match; 1 Cor 1), the power of prayer (with prayers for 2026), St Andrew, Remembrance, All Souls, who inspires us (1 Cor 4), leaven and unpleasant additions to food (1 Cor 7), 'you were bought at a price' and expensive things (1 Cor 7), running to win the prize (1 Cor 9), Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, palm trees and Passion Week, and resurrection appearances (using our church stained glass).
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 amazing to have such variety of music in our services.
 - a) For St Nicholas, Martin sends me a monthly list of suggested music which I and/or David review.
 - b) 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.
 - a) St Nicholas continues to have congregational bring & share after the service on most 5th Sundays – albeit now brunch rather than lunch.
 - b) 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) Thank you to Christine Chambers at St Nicholas and Marion Bracey at St Mary's and all those on both flower teams for keeping the churches looking so beautiful, especially at key seasons.
 - d) Thank you to Steve Bamford at St Nicholas and Adrian Sirkett at St Mary's and all those involved in welcome ministry at the church door on Sundays.
 - e) 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.

C Congregational / midweek ministry

1. **Staff & Wardens monthly meeting** – Thank you to Paul Schimmel and Karen Walker for meeting with me and Alison & David on occasions across the year. These meetings have been valuable in planning for and reflecting on aspects of church life.
 - a) St Mary's continues to be without any church wardens sadly.
 - b) Thank you to David Sydenham for moving to Stevenage to join us as the Assistant Minister.
 - c) Thank you to Alison Hare for all the support which she provides across the benefice in so many ways.
2. **Home-group coordination** (leaders' meetings, planning Advent & Lent courses, supporting and visiting groups) – Thank you to all our homegroup leaders, hosts, and members for your work this year. As well as the five existing groups, David launched a sixth group.
 - a) The leaders met twice in the year to consult, plan, and pray together.
 - b) For Advent, the benefice studied Hallelujah – Journeying through Advent with Handel's Messiah by David Gobbett.
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. Most of my visiting has focussed on those who are ill, bed-bound, or in hospital/care homes.
4. **Families & youth work** (tea parties, S-Club, youth work, school application letters, etc) – Thank you to everyone who has served in this demanding and important ministry area. As at the latest mission statistics return, there are now 26 U-18s in the St Nicholas regular worshipping community, up from 12 in 2023. The second regular Sunday group for U-18s which we launched in 2024, the Youth Group, has continued to operate well. Thank you to David for coordinating S-Club and Youth group and to all the teachers and helpers who have stepped forward to make this part of the ministry happen.
 - a) It was brilliant to take 11 of our young people to a Christian activity holiday in July, 'Madness + Mayhem' at Irthlingborough in Northamptonshire – thank you to all who contributed generously to a bursary fund for this. Six adults accompanied as leaders. I am glad that this coming summer 14 youth and 7 adults are due to be going.
 - b) David has run a seminar series at the vicarage for the youth group on dating and relationship ('More to the Story') which went well.
 - c) The youth group have continued to participate in the North Hertfordshire inter-church termly 'Gatherings'.
5. **Men's ministry** – Men's fellowship meetings this year have included breakfasts, teas, and outings. Thank you to David for coordinating this.
6. **Visitor and newcomer follow-up**, inc. termly newcomers' welcome meals – We continue to receive about 35 completed new contact cards per year, bringing the total from the past three years to 106, representing over 167 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 others are not seen again, or are with us just for a season. Hannah and I have now hosted a total of ten welcome meals at the vicarage.
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 2025 was at Oak Hill College with Rev David Banting being our main speaker, on 'The Grace of God through Peter'. Around 70 members of the churches attended.
 - a) The St Nicholas PCC elected for 2026 to do another full weekend away. The venue will be the Frontier Centre (where M+M is held), 19-21 June. Registrations are underway.
 - b) There will also be, for the first time, a Graveley Church away day – coming up at the time of writing – in Walkern Church.
8. **Midweek offices** (Wednesday EP) – John Forster and I have been joined in leading this service by David and by Jackie Swanson. 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** –Thank you to everyone who has supported the word ministry in the benefice across the year.
 - a) David started in July as Assistant Minister and has had a good first 10 months with us, working 3 days per week with the churches and being sponsored by us to study 3 days per week on the part-time theology and ministry course at Oak Hill College in Enfield. During his ‘church time’, David has coordinated Sunday school ministries, led and preached at several Sunday services, helped the music ministry on 5th Sundays and with half-term music club, coordinated Prayer & Praise, helped with the Christmas and Easter Journeys, led a new homegroup, visited Trott’s Hill School for assemblies, and more besides.
 - b) We now have six Lay Leaders of Worship (LLWs) in the benefice (Mike Wilton, Sue & Martin Bailey, Peter Gordon, Eunice Sirkett, and Dan Seifi-Lorimer) and one more keen to undertake the training in due course (Andrew Houghton). Sue has also undertaken Enabler-level training and is exploring taking this further.
 - c) There is a new system from this year for curate placement in the diocese, whereby incumbents must first apply to be recognised as ‘training incumbents’. I completed the application form for this and was invited to interview, with the result I have been conditionally recommended for the ministry, the condition being undertaking some training sessions. This opens the possibility of a curate from summer 2028.
10. **Other fellowship events** – The annual vicarage garden party was held in July with around 50 from the benefice attending. After about three months of dry weather, the heavens opened on the very day of the event, and with force, requiring us to relocate the event to St Nicholas. Thank you to all who contributed to the bring & share. There have been various other events through the year as well, including a summer BBQ hosted by Dan and Charlotte.
11. **Special events & services** –There have been a few special services in the year, including the carol services in December, Christmas Day (which fell on a Thursday this year), Maundy Thursday communion (at St Nicholas), and Good Friday meditations (at St Mary). 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** – The team had a reasonably good summer season in 2025 with several outings to roads, particularly in Great Ashby. Some roads had quite high response rates, other less so. I have recently had another 1,000 church leaflets printed as we had exhausted the supply of those I had done two years ago.
2. **Outreach & discipleship courses** – I ran two Christianity Explored courses this year, one in the late summer and one in the winter. The first was better attended and more obviously impactful, but both were worthwhile.
3. **House move packs** – Phase 1 of Foster Park is nearing completion, with thousands 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 Wilton for distributing them.
4. **Outreach events** including literature and advertising, assembling team, decorations and activities – There were various events across the year.
 - a) We had another 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.
 - b) Attempted carol singing at Norman Court was cancelled by the residents due to an infection going around.
 - c) St Mary’s singers led Christmas hymns at the Wagon & Horses, to a packed pub!
 - d) Chris Chambers organised the Easter Fun Day at St Nicholas on Easter Saturday. We had about 150 from the local community come along for teddy bear zip line, tombola, pong, darts, easter bonnet making, and more. Hannah organised an easter egg hunt with RESURRECTION being the word to find!
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. **Christian initiation: baptisms, dedications, confirmations**, including initial emails & meetings, prep sessions and visits –
 - a) There have been three baptisms at St Nicholas this past year (Kiki, Treasure, Shane), including one by full immersion.
 - b) One baby was dedicated at a private service in July, and another is booked in for this coming June.
 - c) Six candidates were confirmed as part of a very joyful confirmation service with Bishop Rob Munro visiting, on the third Sunday of Advent (14 December).
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 eight weddings this year, seven at St Nicholas and one in Graveley. The schedule for the year ahead is quieter, with just three weddings in summer 2026 and one wedding blessing. There have been several enquiries which have not resulted in a booking and a few bookings which have subsequently been cancelled for various reasons. Weddings are demanding in organisation, with many meetings to line them up. Thank you to our vergers, especially Jayne Hale and Paul Drakes 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 twenty-four funerals or memorial services this year across the benefice, both in church and at Harwood Park and two interments of ashes. This works out as about one every other week, which is a significant volume of work for us to be undertaking. I am therefore grateful to Rev Vivienne Hathaway (Shephall) for taking three of them. Thank you also 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).
 - a) 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 subcommittee. 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. I am grateful that the assistance of Steve Bamford and Gill Shenoy with music has continued at Graveley as none of the staff are musical. I also distributed Bibles to the Year 6 leavers at the end of the summer term.
 - b) We ran six Christmas Journey sessions, for Giles, Trott’s Hill, and Fairlands schools. Thank you to the 32 church members who came together to run the week.
 - c) Alleyne’s year 7 and Almond Hill year 6 came again to Christmas services. Barclays were due to come but ultimately decided not to.
 - d) We ran four Easter Journey sessions, for Fairlands and Trott’s Hill schools. Thank you to the 19 church members who came together to run the week. Thank you to the Bridge Builders staff who encouraged the schools to book in with us.
 - e) Leys years 3-6, Giles Year 3, and all of Graveley school came to Easter services. Thank you to Paul Schimmel and Steve Bamford for playing the organ at these services.
 - f) I have also conducted assemblies and lessons at Round Diamond and Leys. David has conducted assemblies at Trott’s Hill.
10. **Care home & hospital work** – I have been back to Halcyon Days recently for a private visit, and Gill Shenoy has assisted in setting up a ‘songs of praise’ communal visit. Thanks to Richard Brooks who continues to lead a regular service at Pinelodge Home. See above regarding Christmas visits to other homes.
11. **Community presence** – I continue to attend meetings of the Old Town Community Partnership when able to do so and support the work of the Residents’ Sub-Committee. I attended the Graveley village hall Christmas open day again. I have also represented the Churches Together at the Stevenage Interfaith Forum.

E Inter-church & spiritual support

1. **Churches Together** – I have attended most of the monthly CTiS prayer meetings and hosted one in St Nicholas. Few church leaders regularly attend these, but it is so important for us to pray together regularly – we are too busy NOT to pray!
 - a) We were involved in Love Stevenage Day on Saturday 5 July (litter picking down the Avenue).
 - b) I arranged for the venue for the Carol Singing in Roaring Meg.
 - c) St Nicholas hosted two of the Week of Prayer events in January.
 - d) I again led the Good Friday Walk of witness singing to the new town square.
 - e) I have 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 St Nicholas. I have also offered to host one at St Mary's. I have attended all of the Deanery synod meetings, at St Nicholas, Holy Trinity, and Christ the King. Many of the deanery clergy assist with service in the benefice and I have likewise offered support at the other parishes.
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. We have run various 'equipping' events, including in November with Prof Richard Buggs at my invitation. This group has also helped us get low-cost deals on Advent 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.
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.
 - a) The diocesan evangelical fellowship (DEF) has been a good source of support this year, with a new initiative being monthly Zoom prayer meetings.
 - b) Bishop Alan kindly gave continued dispensation to have two communion services in the benefice per month and has confirmed his delegation of responsibility to nominate chalicebearers to incumbents. He retired during 2025, and Hannah served on the vacancy in see committee and Crown Nominations Committee to help identify a replacement. Andrew Rumsey has been announced and will begin ministry later in 2026.
 - c) I attended Diocesan Synod meetings through the year and asked a few questions of senior staff, including around medium-term trends in clergy numbers and diocesan office headcount.
 - d) I had a Ministry and Mission Development Review (MMDR) with Bishop Jane in December which went well.
 - e) Emma Critchley, the Deputy Secretary, has been very helpful to us with faculty applications and guidance on other matters.
6. **Conferences & retreat** –
 - a) I undertook a retreat at Wantage Priory as part of the diocesan year of spiritual renewal.
 - b) I again attended the DEF conference in June in Bushmead (Luton). As it was a weekend about a dozen PCC members were able to come along also.
 - c) Three representatives of the benefice including me attended the ReNew conference 'Growing Leaders', in September in Leeds.
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. I am also grateful to David Banting for the ongoing support he provides as spiritual overseer for me and David and the St Nicholas PCC.
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. I discussed the CPAS Arrow leadership course at my MDR but have not heard back from the bishop about it.
2. **Parochial Church Council** – The PCC standing committees deal with more managerial matters in between quarterly meetings of PCC. 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 ministry report for this annual meeting, and contributed to the annual reports, as well as discussing them with PCC secretaries Jane Luff and Andy Kelly to prepare for the meetings.
4. **Staff and volunteers management** – Thanks again to our assistant minister David and administrator Alison 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 Paul Schimmel, 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. **Parish Trusts** – I continue to serve as trustee of six parish trusts.
 - a) The PCCs and church school I have commented on above.
 - b) Bury Mead – the main issue is the works outstanding from 2023 that SBC were supposed to carry out with the £3,000 compensation from HCC for the commons surrender. I have chased this, thus far to no avail.
 - c) Hawkes Trust – thank you to Sue Bailey for serving as administrator of this. I have negotiated with the diocese to conclude the affairs of the trust and transfer the remaining assets to a restricted fund of St Nicholas PCC. I hope this can be completed during 2026.
 - d) Friends of St Nicholas – I have not been involved with any activity this year aside from a few emails.
8. **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 newcomers' meals, youth group seminars, Christianity Explored, and many other individual meetings. We have continued to seek to improve the property, with extended loft boarding, a new loft hatch with collapsing ladder, and a new box hedge screening the wilderness. I have also pursued the diocesan property team about a new party fence with the Bury Mead and extended hard standing for vehicle parking in the front yard.
9. **Expenses & signing-off on spends** – I am up to date to end-2025 with expenses claims. I continue to check, approve, and where necessary query, a steady stream of expense requests.

I continue to maintain some involvements outside the benefice, continuing as a trustee of the Church Society, Brookside Trust, and 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, by the grace of God, it has been a fruitful year. 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 18 April 2026



The PARISH CHURCH of ST NICHOLAS, RECTORY LANE, STEVENAGE



Children and Youth Work APCM Report May 2026

Overview

Thanks to the commitment of Leaders and Helpers, we have continued to be able to run two groups for our young people. S-Club, which meets in the Upper Parish room, is for children aged 3 to 11 (i.e. the final year of Primary School). The Youth Group, which meets in the Bell Tower, is for children that attend Secondary School. In addition, Martin Bailey has, kindly, run further music based sessions attended by both groups, as well as additional music sessions in school holidays.

S-Club (John Knight)

The S-Club rota shows that around 20 different children have attend sessions over the past year. Normally, attendance has varied dramatically from week-to-week. Accordingly, an additional helper is named for each week to provide support when a large number of children attend, particularly when there is a significant number of children of pre-school age.

The group is continuing to use lessons selected from the Mustard Seeds resources that have been used for many years. As previously noted, 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. 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.

Youth Group (David Sydenham)

Youth group currently has 10 regular young people on Sunday mornings, and they have been looking at Acts (seeing the kingdom grow), Nehemiah (what kingdom building looks like) and John (getting to know the king) in the last 12 months. There is no youth group on the first Sunday of each month so that they get some exposure to adult preaching and prayers. We have taken on a few new leaders, and have a good team of 8, with one leader and 2 assistants each week.

Aside from Sundays, we have taken groups of 8-10 young people to The Gathering, a termly inter-church event for young people in evangelical churches in North Hertfordshire. Seven of the older ones have also been doing a short series on what the bible says about Attraction, Identity and Relationships.

Summer Camp (Hannah Keene)

St Nicholas Church is sending 14 of our young people (aged 10-17) to the Christian Holiday Camp 'Madness & Mayhem' at the Rock Frontier Centre in Northamptonshire from 25th July – 2nd August 2026. They are being supported by six leaders, two assistant leaders (and possibly a third assistant leader).

St Nicholas Church PCC are hoping to be able to sponsor each child £100 towards the cost of going on the camp. The cost is £320 per child. People can donate using the tap/donate machine at church, in cash in an envelope or via bank transfer to the church bank account.

Training for Leaders (Hannah Keene & David Sydenham)

David runs termly meetings with all the leaders of S-Club and Youth Group, with some basic training using the book *Starting Out In Children's Ministry*, plus opportunities for feedback, safeguarding reminders, and prayer.

On Saturday 18th April, ten of the leaders who support S-Club and Youth Group attended a training session run by the organisation 'Growing Young Disciples'. Topics included:

- Biblical wisdom on hardship, suffering, and perseverance.
- Practical teaching on Scripture's answers to anxiety, fear, and uncertainty.
- Building long-term resilience through gospel-centred ministry and mentoring relationships



The PARISH CHURCH of ST NICHOLAS, RECTORY LANE, STEVENAGE



REPORT OF MISSION GIVING FOR THE APCM, SUNDAY, 3rd MAY 2026

From 1st January 2026 our mission partners have been:

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

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.

Open Doors – use extensive research, interviews and detailed information to rank the countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution. We receive regular updates from them which are available to the congregation.

CMS, Crosslinks and Open Doors are paid £130 each month with Bridge Builders being paid £260.

Cathy Bibby/Chris Taplin

Mission Giving Group



The PARISH CHURCH of ST NICHOLAS,
RECTORY LANE, STEVENAGE



April 2026

ANNUAL FABRIC REPORT

This report covers the period April 2025 to March 2026.

General maintenance

The building maintenance team are headed up by Paul Drakes, Paul Schimmel, Chris Taplin, Mike Wilton and Steve Bamford.

The PCC via the Churchwardens and the building group maintains a schedule for the upkeep of the church, with regular inspections of critical items such as the lightning conductor, electrics, cess pit, boiler, safety, fire equipment, CCTV, security lights, alarms etc.

We do have to use specialist contractors where necessary to maintain and comply with legislation and our insurer's requirement on such items as the fire equipment and the heating system. The maintenance team meet on a Thursday morning to undertake the scheduled activities, including fire alarm testing, light bulb replacement, rubbish clearing, security checks and safety checks, ground level drain checks, and general inspection and carry out minor repairs

Another essential contribution in maintaining the building is made by the cleaning teams, who clean the church on a weekly basis. One group clean the kitchen, toilets, and both the parish room and the upstairs room and the other group clean the church areas.

Our portable appliance testing has been carried out by Stuart Marshall to whom we give our thanks, and any equipment used in the Church should be tested before it is used. The electrical safety testing which is being carried out by Dan Sefi-Lorimer has been completed.

Churchyard maintenance is the responsibility of the Stevenage Borough Council. They are just about to start work on the 5th May to the brick wall between us and Church Cottage.

The maintenance team also contribute some churchyard activities, i.e., rose pruning, light path maintenance, drain clearing, tidying up, etc. as required.

The PCC and the wardens thank all those who contribute to the regular upkeep of the church, in particular the cleaning and the maintenance teams.

Fabric

We had our Quinquennial inspection during November 2025 which was carried out by a nominated architect which identifies areas of the church structure that need works carried out or regular inspection. Our current church architect is Mark Eddison who was the architect for the revitalisation project and carried out the inspection the inspection during November 2025.

Roof & Spire

The roof was inspected as part of the Quinquennial with the following recommendations:

Arrange a drone survey to photograph and review the pinnacle.

Arrange a leadworking specialist to review the condition of the Spire's leaded apron and how best to repair the rib.

Repair the lead gutter abutments and associated render damage over and where cracks have appeared along the top of lead abutments.

Paul has a drone and will try and inspect this on a non-windy day.

Lightning conductor

This period the lightning conductor met requirements, there is a missing clip that needs to be replaced later in the year when the weather improves, it does not require immediate replacement.

Walls, Tower and floor.

The quinquennial report listed a number of areas on the external walls which need monitoring and repair. These issues will be addressed in the 5 year maintenance plan.

There has been a problematic issue of water ingress in the south aisle which has been occurring over many years, depending on the amount of rain and wind direction. A contractor has now been booked to fix this with work starting in June.

Heating

The boiler was not replaced as part of the revitalisation project. The main area of the church has underfloor heating, with the parish rooms, vestry and tower being a conventional radiator type of system.

The boiler is serviced regularly, and a gas safety certificate is maintained for the boiler.

Live Streaming CCTV and Roof Alarm

We continue to live stream our services.

Our insurers required us to install a roof alarm, which needed to be installed by a certified installer and the system to be monitored 24/7. This work has been carried out, and all roof areas are covered by motion sensing cameras, so that in the event of an intruder on the roof the monitoring station are able to identify the presence of an intruder and call the police and members of the maintenance team. The lead to the roof was also marked with 'Smart Water'

This work has enabled the Church to be full insured against any metal theft and damage caused.

Fire Equipment

The fire alarms are serviced twice a year by Efire to maintain compliance; however, the building group carry out a test to the fire alarms and a flick test to the emergency lighting each week and record the results.

Additionally, we have fitted an auto dialler to the fire alarm, so that in the event of an activation of the fire alarm, the auto dialler will phone a member of the building group to advise activation, it does not contact the fire brigade.

Cess tank

The Church is not on the main drainage system and is served by a cess pit which requires emptying on a regular basis, roughly every 3 months, and is being regularly inspected during Thursday morning maintenance.

Graves & memorials

Every year a number of queries are received from interested parties regarding grave locations and history etc. In response to this it is proposed to further organise the records of the memorials and graves, to map numbers and names to graves.

Property Register and Log Book

The property register and log book are maintained in the vestry and are available for review. An electronic copy of the property register along with supporting descriptions is also stored electronically.

P Schimmel and K Walker, Churchwardens. April 2026



The PARISH CHURCH of ST NICHOLAS,
RECTORY LANE, STEVENAGE



REPORT OF STEVENAGE DEANERY SYNOD FOR APCM ON

SUNDAY 3rd, MAY 2026

The Deanery Synod met three times during 2025/2026

10th June 2025 at St Nicholas Church

14th October 2025 at Holy Trinity Church

11th February 2026 at The Church of Christ the King

10th June - we had a talk from Tim Coulson, who is the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance. He spoke about the work of the Diocesan Board of Finance and then answered questions.

14th October - Suzanne Clackson, who is the Chair of Management Group, Diocesan Dispute Advisory Service, gave an informative talk about the work of the service. More information can be found on their website *Dispute Advisory Service – The Diocese of St Albans*.

11th February - Mark Rodel, Deputy Director of Mission and Ministry attended the meeting, and we discussed how we could shape our Ministry Strategy with regard to gathering stories, insights and signs of God at work in ministry across the diocese.

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

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

If you would like to read any minutes from the meetings above, please contact me.

Cathy Bibby - Deanery Synod Rep



The PARISH CHURCH of ST NICHOLAS,
RECTORY LANE, STEVENAGE



Electoral Roll APCM Report May 2026

Electoral Roll Report for APCM

We currently have 118 members of our congregation on the Electoral Roll
63 resident in the parish. 55 non resident.

This is an increase of 6

However this isn't a true reflection on our growing congregation.
Over the last year we have lost 6 members who have passed away.
May God bless their souls and may they rest in peace.

3 members have moved away.

We are pleased to welcome 15 new members.

Electoral Roll Officer
Elaine Forster