



Devizes St John & St Mary

Heart and Soul in the Centre of our Town

The Ecclesiastical Parish
of
St John with St Mary, Devizes

Annual Report 2025



Our Vision:

The Lord calls us to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God:
Micah 6:8

Administrative information

St John's Church is situated in Long Street, Devizes. St Mary's Church is situated in New Park Street, Devizes. The parish is part of the Diocese of Salisbury within the Church of England. The correspondence address is: the Parish Office, The Parish Rooms, Long Street, Devizes SN10 1NP.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a registered charity No.1133990 and is made up of:

Incumbent: Vacant

The Revd. Caroline Spindlow

Churchwarden:

Martin Houghton (until 11 May)

Representatives on the Deanery Synod:

Catherine Brown - Treasurer

Peter Crofts

David Evans

Elected members:

Claire Arden

Judy Bridger

Martin Houghton

Tim Lacy-Hulbert

Alan Martin

Mike McClelland

Jane Scorer - Lay Vice-Chair

Bob Simpson

Sue Tovey

Co-opted members:

Christopher Rogers (from May 2025)

Parish Ministry

Rector: Vacant

Associate Priest The Revd. Caroline Spindlow

Clergy with Permission to Officiate:

The Revd. Robin Stephens

The Revd. Canon Chris Burdon

The Revd. Keith Lamden

The Revd. Andrew Sinclair

Anna Chaplain

Claire Arden

Licensed Lay Ministers with Permission to Officiate:

Chris Cox

Lay Pastoral Assistants:

Catherine Brown

REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF DEVIZES, ST JOHN & ST MARY

AIM AND PURPOSES

St John & St Mary Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent, when not in vacancy, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of St John's Church, St Mary's Church and St John's Parish Rooms.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

- The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our parish community.
- The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions on how our services can involve the many groups that live within our parish.
- Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament.
- When planning our activities for the year, we have considered the Commission's guidance on public benefit and the supplementary guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. We try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:
 - Worship and prayer; learning about the gospel; and developing their knowledge and trust in God.
 - Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish.
 - Missionary and outreach work.

To facilitate this work it is important that we maintain the fabric of our parish churches and the parish rooms.

Reserves policy

It is PCC policy to try to maintain a balance on free reserves (net current assets) which equates to at least three months' unrestricted payments.

It is our policy to invest the short-term investment fund balances with the CCLA Church of England Deposit Fund, and the remainder in the CCLA Church of England Investment Fund.

Structure, governance and management

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England.

The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure. The PCC is a Registered Charity.

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules.

At St John & St Mary the membership of the PCC consists of the incumbent (our rector), the associate priest and the assistant curate, churchwardens, and members elected by those members of the congregation who are on the electoral roll of the church. All those who attend our services / members of the congregation are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent. New members receive initial training into the workings of the PCC.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

The Parochial Church Council met ten times during the year and the following topics were discussed:

- Health and Safety policy updates
- Deanery Synod
- Churches Together in Devizes
- Safeguarding Policy
- Parish Profile and vacancy matters
- Omnes ad Unum
- Churchyard maintenance
- Church Heating
- Finance and Fund-raising
- St Mary's project
- Director of Music contract
- Completion of the organ project

Liz Overthrow

THE ELECTORAL ROLL

As ever, we have lost some friends throughout the year and gained some more. At 31 December 2025 there were 92 names on the Electoral Roll.

As always, I would urge members of the congregation to ask if those sitting next to them each Sunday are on the Electoral Roll. If they are not on the roll, encourage them to see me and complete an application form. Forms will also be available in church.

Catherine Brown - Electoral Roll Officer

REFLECTIONS 2025

Report from Rev'd Caroline Spindlow, Associate Priest of the Parish of St John with St Mary's Devizes.

Although, inevitably, the vacancy has had a feeling of 'standing-still' for the parish it is obvious that a great deal has happened over this time which bodes well for the future. And reports reflect that enthusiasm and passion of different our congregation members. Although we have had a period without church wardens, we are incredibly grateful that Martin Houghton remained as Church Warden for as long as he could, but understand that this was no longer tenable with other work that he had taken on.

And we have been very blessed that Jane Scorer, Bob Simpson, Jerry King, Judy Bridger and Michael McClelland have stood in as 'stand-in Churchwardens' for so many services and events.

The year has obviously been a challenging year without an incumbent however worship has been very well maintained throughout. The only regular service that we were not able to cover was the Thursday morning Eucharist service. The other services were led by our team of PTO clergy: The Rev'd Canon Chris Burdon, The Rev'd Andrew Sinclair, The Rev'd Canon Keith Lamdin and myself. We are most grateful for the extra work, services, and meetings that they have covered. We are also blessed that our bishop, The Rt Revd Andrew Rumsey was able to take some key services for us – including Easter and Christmas Day services.

As the Civic church we have continued with regular services for the mayor and the town council, hosted the West Wiltshire Carol service and been a part of local school's Christmas festivities. It was a privilege for us to host Wansdyke School's carol service and was a lovely opportunity to meet the headteacher and his staff, the pupils and a church full of adoring parents.

Our PCC meetings have continued to be regular and well supported. And thanks go to all those involved with that and subgroups within it. A special thank you to Jerry King, our Safeguarding Officer, who has continued to ensure that officers are DBS checked and has had to deal with the aftermath of the national data breach. A hugely essential but not always the most rewarding task!

A key subcommittee was formed to work on the Parish Profile. This work was done thoroughly, with questionnaires sent to all congregation members, meetings with those involved which culminated in a comprehensive and attractive Parish Profile to attract our new incumbent.

A new clergy team structure evolved after Rev'd Poston left the parish and regular team meetings included the clergy team, Catherine Brown our Administrator, Joe Scarfe the Music Director and a member of the standing committee (Jane Scorer, Liz Overthrow or Martin Houghton). They met mostly monthly to look at the church services coming up and to ensure that services were appropriately planned. This ensured that occasional offices were covered in addition to the main services.

It was wonderful to have the new organ up and running over the year and exciting that the choir were able to sing the Devizes Mass that had been written especially for them with the new organ. Joe Scarfe has attracted new members to join the choir and the high standard of music is regularly commented on.

The work that Barry Payne and Janice Payne do to support the choir and our occasional offices should also be noted. Their work enables the choir to flourish and our weddings and baptisms have been blessed by their skills.

One further, indispensable, group should be mentioned. Those wonderful, regular and faithful people who help set up and help lead our services, greeting congregation members as they arrive, opening up the church on Sundays and for other services/occasions. Our LLM, our sacristan and our Anna Chaplain and our LPA! I hope you don't feel taken for granted because you are so valued and we can't do without you.

It is incredibly exciting that we have had Ben Wrench exploring his vocation here at St John's and we are delighted that he will now be moving on to ordination training – I am sure that we will be blessed with seeing much more of him in the near future. We are also helping another congregation member explore God's calling to possibly be a Licensed Lay Minister. Recognising these callings reflect on all of us at St John's and we should be excited and proud about this.

Throughout this time our Administrator, Catherine Brown, has been there for us all! She is dependable, very knowledgeable and incredibly efficient. A huge thank you Catherine for all you have done for us over the year.

The individual reports demonstrate that the church has been active and busy despite the vacancy - including the new Parish Prayers time that has been introduced since the vacancy started. However, there is a general feel that we need a leader to unify and steer us – I am sure I echo everyone's views in this! It is very exciting that this new season is about to begin.

Rev'd Caroline Spindlow

SAFEGUARDING

The regular flow of DBS checks has been generally straightforward. A mid-year flurry of activity and concern was caused for some of our members by a data breach in a contractor's systems holding national church-wide personal data. It was a reminder of our individual and communal need for vigilance over matters of personal sensitivity.

By chance, the timing of the breach was when the Diocese was beginning the transfer of DBS activity to another company, Thirtyone:eight, and the introduction of the Parish Safeguarding Hub to bring together all aspects of safer recruitment and safeguarding training. Perhaps inevitably the new systems bring new terminology, for example Hub Owner, Administrator and Viewer, and I will no longer be doing DBS ID checks as the familiar Verifier but as a Recruiter.

My annual reassurance: these sometimes-complex procedures help to create an environment that is safer for us all, so that the PCC complies with its duty to have “due regard” to the House of Bishops’ guidance in relation to safeguarding. If you have a question about any aspect, by all means contact me.

Jerry King - Parish Safeguarding Officer

REPORT FROM BUILDING & GROUNDS SUB-COMMITTEE

St John’s

- Since the last APCM, our new organ has been commissioned and is in regular use. Side panelling on the west side is still required but the hope is that this will be included with an array of en chamade trumpets that are planned.
- The scaffolding towers at the west end of the church have been removed and we can now actively begin to think about reorganising/reordering the rear of the church.
- Parish Rooms – no decision yet about their future
- Quinquennial inspection – consequent repair work not yet commenced. Waiting on our architects to progress.
- A long-term review of church heating requirements continues. In the meantime, we have had to replace the heat exchangers on both boilers at considerable expense.
- Our clock has recently been stripped down and rebuilt.
- Subject to being able to find sufficient volunteers to open and close up, the church will be kept open every day.

St Mary’s

- Regular use of SMV has been hampered by access difficulties consequent upon dangerous and deteriorating box tombs on the south side of the church. Devizes Town Council are planning work on these tombs to make them safe - hopefully in the next few weeks
- Reordering Project – with St Mary’s Devizes Trust. A setback in that very late in the day we have been informed that a Faculty is required and also a surveyors report for the Charity Commission.

Mike McClelland

Health & Safety

With the Organ, now well and truly 'up and running' and its countless components once housed in the north isle, no longer presenting a trip hazard, St John's Church is very much back to normal. That is normal, except that trip hazards continue to present themselves throughout the church! This is especially the case now that after service coffee and teas are served at the west end of St John's, and where a number of floor height variations remain. The hazard tape used to highlight these changes of level, is sometimes difficult to adhere to both wooden and especially, stone surfaces. Any area lacking attention should be reported to my successor directly or to Catherine, our administrator.

A new, much shortened Health & Safety Policy has been drawn up and presented to the PCC this past year. Over time, Risk Assessments for most – if not all – church activities, have been provided, including for visits made by lay members of the congregation, to private homes or care homes. As a result, the new H&S Policy refers to Risk Assessments which play a more exacting part in defining procedures. Should there be another pandemic, as experienced following COVID 2019, such a risk assessment remains in place. The most recently added Risk Assessment is on behalf of those who care for our churchyard garden. The PCC approved the H&S Policy for St John's at its meeting on 28th January and should do so annually at this time.

Over the year, St Mary's Church has remained somewhat detached from our activities and as such, the original H&S Policy and Fire Risk Assessment have not altered. There are no Risk Assessments currently in place at St Mary's but common sense must prevail.

Choir member, Helen Bourne, has 'level 3 award in emergency first aid at work' and remains our first aider until January 2027 when her certificate of competence will require renewal.

Alan Martin

SPIRITUALITY

Pastoral Care Team (Pastoral Visiting/Home Communion):

We continue to identify and support members of the congregation requiring pastoral care and/or home communion, and arrangements continue to be made for authorised personnel to visit. At the time of writing, we have 17 people requiring some degree of oversight ranging from keeping a 'Watching Brief' to regular supportive visits and/or home communion.

Regular meetings of the 'Pastoral Care Team' (five authorised volunteers) are held to review those receiving pastoral care and amend our provision as required. Pastoral visits are undertaken primarily by the Rector, Curates (when available), our LLM, our Anna Chaplain, and LPA, although a small number of experienced others are authorised to undertake this role on behalf of the parish.

Reflection:

The 'Reflection' group provides an opportunity to engage in silent contemplative prayer (meditation), gentle discussion, and Christian fellowship. Meetings start with a reading (poetry or prose on a spiritual or theological theme...but not scripture), continue with a period of silent contemplative prayer (meditation), and end with a discussion centred on the theme of the reading. We meet monthly on the third (3rd) Tuesday of each month with seven regular participants. The group continues to meet in the Beauchamp Chapel at St John's from April until October. With the end of British Summer Time, one of our members kindly hosts us in their home to see us through the winter months.

We are an open group and anyone wishing to join us would be warmly welcomed.

Room to Breathe:

'Room to Breathe' opens our church to the local community, particularly those who live and work in the town centre. It offers people the opportunity to take time out for rest and quiet, to be still, and to enjoy silence within a church setting. We continue to welcome people seeking a time of quiet and also visitors wishing to look quietly around the church. Room to Breathe is organised and facilitated by a small group of volunteers who open the church each Tuesday between 12.00 midday and 2.00 p.m.

Lectio Divina:

Lectio Divina, commonly known as 'Lectio' (pronounced 'Lexio'), simply means 'divine reading' in Latin, and is a simple way of reading scripture with our hearts and minds open to God. It is a contemplative method of praying with the scriptures that emerged from within the Christian monastic tradition and can be practised alone or in a group. Previously, the Lectio Divina group met on the fourth (4th) Friday of the month in St John's Parish Rooms at 10.00 a.m. However, because of diminished numbers the group was discontinued and remains suspended. We hope to review the future of the group with our new Rector when she is in post.

Chris Cox LLM

PARISH PRAYERS

We started Parish Prayers at the end of January 2025, when it became clear that the 10.00am Holy Communion on a Thursday would not be continued during the vacancy. If this service would not be taking place, it seemed important to me that we should introduce some particular kind of prayer during the vacancy, both for a new priest and for the parish and, as Claire Arden and Karen Barber were regularly church sitting from 11.30 on a Thursday, it seemed appropriate to tie it in with this and have the prayers at 12 noon.

Thank you to Canon Chris Burdon for help with the order of service. Around a dozen people have been coming to pray – obviously it varies a lot but on average half a dozen are usually there. As well as praying for the needs of the parish and the sick and departed, we also pray for the people whose names are put in the prayer requests basket in church. Thank you to Claire and Karen for help with this.

Judy Bridger

THE BIBLE STUDY GROUP

During the past year the same group has continued to meet at the home of David and Carie Evans. We studied the epistles of James and Peter, a selection of Psalms and the Book of Exodus.

A shadow fell over the group at the close of the year when Charles Slater ceased to be able to attend and then went into hospital. We are much saddened by his death and Diana's grief.

David Evans

THE FLOWER GUILD

The Flower Guild has thirteen Flower Arrangers as Amy Mulder has joined during the year. Lyn Payne and Juliet Bazeley have decided to retire, and I am grateful for their help over many years. I am pleased that Sue Long has agreed to join the team. I would like to thank them for their skill in arranging the flowers in Church during the year except at Lent and Advent.

The Flower Guild held a Coffee Morning last June in the Parish Hall which raised £495.10 for the Flower Fund. I would like to thank them for the items made by the team and their support in organising the event and for the congregation and friends who came.

The Flower Guild is most grateful for the donations that have been given during the year which help pay for the flowers. If any one wishes to remember a special occasion with a flower arrangement in Church or give a donation please contact me as the Flower Guild relies on donations to fund the flowers.

I would like to thank John Twentyman who has kindly audited the Accounts for many years and Catherine who has agreed to deal with the Flower Guild Account to avoid having to incur bank expenses.

Di Remlinger, Sue King and myself enjoyed staging a floral exhibit on behalf of the Church at the Flower Festival "The Spirit of Water" which was staged at Salisbury Cathedral last May.

Heather Blyth

THE BELLS AND BELLRINGERS

2025 has been an interesting year. The work done on the bells in 2024 continued to bed in throughout the year. We all still notice how much better they ring and we've had a lot of opportunities this year to show them off.

Almost like the famous movie, we rang for five weddings and a funeral. The funeral was for Alan Field who was a very long-standing member of the St. John's congregation and had been instrumental in the previous restoration of the bells some 25/30 years ago, so it was a pleasure to be asked to ring for his funeral.

We also rang on Remembrance Sunday, the 80th anniversary of VE day and the Lord Lieutenant's annual carol service.

We've been more involved in the local community this year, with a visit from the 6th Devizes Beavers in March and a talk on bellringing I gave to a group at St. Andrew's Church in February. A standout event was the St. John's Church Fete in the summer where we worked with the church team to put tours on in the tower, showing off the ringing chamber, the bell chamber and finishing off with visitors enjoying the view from the roof. We also had a lot of people try out bellringing that day which was great fun for all.

We also hosted our Devizes Branch Business meeting in April. These alternate between towers in the Branch, and since there are 39 of them it's been a while since it was last held at St. John's. It's an opportunity for ringers within the Branch to ring at St. John's, attend a service in the church and have a nice Tea in the Parish Rooms ahead of a business meeting. We held a similar session in November when an alternative location was needed at short notice.

This year has also been a busy year with learners. Our first got in touch in the summer and was making really good progress before sadly having to stop for personal reasons. But she was closely followed by four more who are continuing to progress well so we hope they will be able to join our Sunday ringing sessions in the near future.

David Powell, Tower Captain

Deanery Synod Report

Given the fact that so many parishes were in vacancy and that there was change in the leadership of the deanery, it is not surprising that the Synod this year lacked a sense of direction, though the new rural dean, Richard Curtis, did his best.

Whenever other matters are not proposed, the issue of the parish share fills any vacuum, though it tends to generate more heat than light. It is obvious that financial problems are very severe in this diocese. Many parishes were unable to pay their share in part and at one point in the year too little was coming in to pay the expenses of maintaining the clergy.

It is not so obvious what can be done about the problem and viable constructive ideas did not emerge from our discussions.

Despite the money troubles, the parishes always had some good news to report about successful local initiatives. We also listened to an interesting talk about work with young people, one area where the Deanery Plan has made advances. In the early months of 2026 a great many new clergy will be taking up positions within the deanery and we hope for renewed energy and a strong sense of purpose.

David Evans

CHOIR AND MUSIC

Firstly, I am please to share that we have welcomed a new treble chorister, Jemima, who has recently joined the choir. She has settled in very well and is already making a positive contribution to our choral sound. Her arrival is a welcome sign of growth and helps strengthen the future of our treble line.

Secondly, I am very pleased to confirm that the commissioned cantata has now been completed. This marks an important milestone in our ongoing commitment to supporting new music and enriching the culture of the town. Further details regarding its performance and any associated events will be shared with the PCC in due course.

Thirdly, organists from the Salisbury and District Organist Association will be visiting St. John's later this year to play the new organist and St John's has been invited to join the Pipe Up Scheme to support organ tuition for young people.

Joe Scarffe – Director of Music

Social and Fundraising Group

With a primary purpose of bringing the congregation together and creating fellowship during the vacancy and beyond the last year was very successful. We ran themed coffee mornings around springtime and harvest which were well attended with positive feedback. We also restarted the Summer Fete with guided tours up the medieval tower and bell ringing proving very popular! We made jams and cakes galore supported local businesses and crafts but sadly had to cancel the dog show due to a heatwave!

Our year rounded out with a festive Christmas bazaar which broke records in fundraising terms and contained lots of fun and laughter. As a group we have taken on the quarterly commitment to offer Parish Lunch after the Sunday service.

We are a dedicated but small group and are actively looking for new members!

The total raised last year for the general church funds was £3,500

Karen Barber

