

St Andrew's
E A T O N

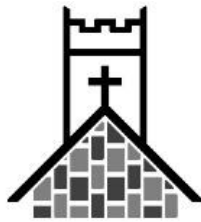
Annual Review

2025

**Welcome to this review of the life and ministry of St Andrew's Eaton.
This review also features work that we share with Christ Church
within the Eaton Parishes Group Ministry.**

**The report is divided into two sections.
Part One specifically relates to St Andrew's Church and
Part Two to joint activities with Christ Church.**

**We hope that church members and visitors alike
will find this review informative.
Our thanks to all who have contributed to it.**



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E A T O N

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ST ANDREW'S EATON
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
MEMBERSHIP - 2025-2026

Vicar	The Rev. Dr James Cook (Chair)
Church Wardens	Chris Smith (Vice-Chair) Vacant
Diocesan Synod	Hannah Ruth King
Deanery Synod	Jane Scott Hannah Ruth King
Elected Members	Christine Bensley Graham Bensley Janet Benson Barry Capon (until 13 th October) Sue Day Patricia Hodgson Leslie Moore Colin Morgan Mary Nelson James Oxley-Brennan Kevin Pinnock James Ryder Edwin Wall
Secretary	Marilyn Evans
Treasurer	Kevin Pinnock

PART ONE: REPORTS COVERING ST ANDREW'S CHURCH ACTIVITIES

VICAR'S REPORT

A New Vision

To see people of all ages, backgrounds and cultures transformed by the love and grace of God in Jesus Christ.

The major development of 2025 was the creation of a new vision for St Andrew's. Following my installation as Vicar in September 2024, I was keen to use my first year to explore with the PCC and the wider congregation a vision for us as a church: who are we, what are our values, and where do we think God is calling us to over the coming years.

This work began in PCC, as over several sessions we used materials by CPAS (Church Pastoral Aid Society) to reflect on the three key 'dimensions' of church life: worship, community and mission. In April, around 40 of us headed out to Mulbarton for a Parish Away Day, during which we did various activities to help us reflect on our story as a church thus far, our values which shape who we are, and our dreams for the future.

Further work over the summer by the PCC resulted in the launch of our new vision in September. As quoted above, it's a vision to see all people from all walks of life transformed by God's grace in Christ. This vision is worked out through four values: heart-filled worship, committed discipleship, generous community and transformative mission. These four values we pray will increasingly shape our life as a church, and beginning at the end of last year, the PCC has reflected on how we can make this vision more of a reality.

A related project was to update the church website and refresh our church logo, to give us a new look for a new chapter. A Christian design company called ninefootone were employed to create the new design: the new logo was launched in September, and the website went live soon after in October. The rest of my report is structured around our four values:

Heart-filled Worship

Following renewal of our green Ordinary Time Communion books in 2024, in 2025 we produced new versions of the seasonal communion books, as well as a new and simplified Morning Worship book. The philosophy behind all these new versions was to make it as easy as possible for visitors who might have no prior experience of church to engage with our Lord in prayer and worship. The new books include short explanatory comments to enable all, visitors and regulars, to understand more clearly why we do each part of the service.

The regular pattern of services continued, with a new feature this year 'Worship for Everyone' services whenever there is a 5th Sunday. A team was set up to plan these services, which are designed to be engage all ages, and involve drama, props, memory verses, testimonies, and creative use of liturgy.

It's a continued joy to have new people joining us on Sundays for worship, whether those who've recently moved to the area, or who are exploring faith for the first time. As the box opposite shows, numbers have broadly increased from the previous year, for which we give thanks to God. For the first time, we also had the Scouts with us at Harvest, as well as their usual visits on Remembrance and Mothering Sundays. Both Easter and Christmas services were well attended: in particular, the main carol service at Christmas saw a huge increase in attendance on the previous year. For the second year running, a group also went carol-singing in Waitrose, which was well received by shoppers and staff alike. Thank you to everyone who volunteered in various ways, and to all those who invited friends and neighbours to join.

One of the privileges of being a Church of England minister are the opportunities for bringing those who don't normally come

Attendance Figures

Average weekly attendance in 2025 (2024 in brackets):

8am: 8 (7)

Main Service: 68 adults + 3 children (64+3)

Café Church: 22 (23)

Midweek: 14 (15)

Major Festivals:

Good Friday: 65 (50)

Easter Sunday: 119 (135)

Carol Service: 121 (85)

Crib Service: 109 (76)

Christmas Eve/Day: 129

to church into worship and an experience of Jesus, especially at the key moments of life. Sadly the main opportunity for that this past year was in funeral ministry. After a run of Christenings in 2024, we had just 2 in 2025, and there were no weddings. There were, however, 23 funerals (16 – 2024), either in church or at the crematorium, and a further 4 Burials of Ashes in the Church Lane Burial Ground. Several of these were of church members, and we grieve the loss of Jennie Nowell, David Gosling, Jacque Bakewell, Ivan Bailey, Judy Green, Robin Gurney, Jean Bloomfield and Alison Holden. They will all be dearly missed, and our prayers are with their friends and families.

Committed Discipleship

I'm always keen to provide lots of opportunities for reflection and study, to deepen our roots in God and his Word. Our Lent Course is always well attended, and this year we looked together at Tony Merida's book, *Love Your Church*. This tied in helpfully with all our thinking about our vision as a church, with chapters reflecting on different aspects of church life: belonging, gathering, welcoming, caring, serving, witnessing. Through each of these themes, we were able to explore areas where we could grow more as a church by God's grace.

Over the summer we had a summer book club, which I hope we can continue each year. Around 15-20 squeezed into the Vicarage living room to read Steve Midgeley's new book, *Understanding Trauma: A Biblical Introduction for Church Care*. We live in a world where there is increasing awareness of the impact different forms of trauma can have on individual lives. This book helped the group to understand how trauma affects people, and to consider steps we could take as a church to care for and support those who are carrying such wounds.

Alongside regular Connect Groups, the Cafe Church continued as a place for deeper Bible study. In the first part of the year, we continued a series called The Story, looking at the story of the whole Bible as one story pointing to Jesus (using materials produced alongside Vaughan Robert's *God's Big Picture*). In the autumn, we began a new series called All for Jesus, considering how we can live all of life for the Lord (using resources from the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity's 'Whole-Life Discipleship' initiative).

Sunday mornings are when we principally gather as a church family to listen together to God's Word. This year we looked at: 1 Corinthians 1-4 and being church together; Acts 21-28 and the persistence of God's Mission in the face of challenges and setbacks; a selection of Psalms, seeing the variety of human experiences they give voice to; Ruth and her story of courageous faith and the providence of God; and the first part of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), with some challenging passages on living in the Kingdom of God.

Transformative Mission

Taking the values slightly out of order, I turn next to a busy year of outreach activities. Our regular outreach initiatives of Toddlers, Old Eatonians and the Community Café continued to flourish, drawing in large numbers from the wider community, thanks to a dedicated team of volunteers. Each of these groups serve our parish with community and care, as well as providing opportunities to deepen relationships in the context of which faith can be shared. For further details, see the reports later in this Review. Likewise, we held the regular annual events of the Spring & Autumn Mission Fairs, the Summer Fair, and the Eco Fair, as well as the less regular Tearfund Quiz Night, all of which were well attended by visitors.

We continue to pray for growth in our work with children and young people, which for primary-aged children is focussed on our Workshops four times a year. These have now developed a regular pattern beginning with a Bible drama – which itself has grown, with more adult actors and young helpers, to help communicate the Bible stories and a simple message about Jesus. Many parents now also join for a short service at the end, which gives an opportunity to pick up on what the children have learned, and to gently introduce them to prayer and praise.

At the start of the year, a new Mission & Outreach team met formally for the first time, to review our outreach activities and discuss new initiatives. Among the new initiatives for the year has been the highly successful Art Café, run by Stephanie and a growing small team. A regular and diverse group of around 20 now come each month, and over craft and cake, community has grown. In December the Art Café ran once again a wreath-making workshop, which this year included a short Christmas message by Bev Dubberley from CityGates church.

In February, again under Stephanie's leadership, we hosted for the first time a Lunar New Year dinner, particularly aimed at serving the growing Hong Kong community in Norwich, and was bursting at the seams with many guests, all bringing a range of tasty dishes to share. Also in February, we established links with the UEA Christian Union, supporting their outreach with food for their annual Mission Week of talks and events.

We also long to share the Good News of Jesus by providing regular opportunities for those with questions to explore faith. This year, after Christmas, we ran 321, a relatively new course taking people through the basics of the Christian faith through high quality videos. After a session introducing us to the person of Jesus, we're taken through the three-ness of God (the Trinity), the two-ness of the world (broken in Adam, recreated in Christ) and our one-ness (the promise of union with Christ).

Many of our outreach events take place in our Church Hall, which is such a wonderful asset for mission and service to the wider community. As many are aware, it is in great need of renovation, and progress has been made with developing plans for a major project. Developments slowed somewhat during 2025, while we waited for a Quantity Surveyor to produce detailed costings for both a renovation of the existing building, and a completely new build. These costings are necessary to determine which option would be the right one to pursue, and to provide a budget for a campaign of fundraising and grant-sourcing. It is hoped that this next phase can begin later in 2026.

Generous Community

Finally, we come to generous community. One of the great privileges of my role is seeing all the care and support that takes place across our community in so many different ways. I have seen how our church family has grown, not just in numbers, but in showing grace and being attentive to each other. Visitors frequently tell me how well welcomed they felt coming to St Andrew's. My prayer is that these qualities of grace and care would increasingly characterise who we are.

Community is grown in part simply by being with each other, and I'm hugely grateful to all of you who work so hard to enable that to happen through providing food and refreshments (and cleaning up afterwards!). Whether it's tea & coffee after church, supper at Café Church, Lent lunches, or the Harvest Supper, your labour of love is a gift to our community life.

On the theme of community, it's appropriate to comment on changes in our staff team this year. After many years of service cleaning our church hall, and latterly the church as well, Philip Clayton retired as our Cleaner. Many may not have been aware of how diligently Philip worked to ensure the site was kept looking clean and inviting, regularly adjusting his schedule to ensure all was ready for a wedding or funeral or other event. He has continued to step in where needed as cover, for which we are all so very grateful.

In April, we were excited to appoint from a large field of applicants, our new Cleaner Laura Toselli. She has thrown herself into the role with great enthusiasm and thoughtfulness, and it is a joy to have her as part of the St Andrew's team.

In other comings and goings, we also bade farewell to Hannah Ruth King as our PCC Secretary after many years of service in that role. As my first PCC secretary as incumbent, I was very thankful to have someone with such attention to detail and a wealth of expertise to keep me on the right path in chairing PCC and my first APCM. Many thanks to Marilyn Evans who has stepped into that role with such willingness and efficiency.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks to each and everyone of you for all that you contribute to the life of our church family, and the continued support and encouragement you show to me. As we look ahead to the coming year together, may our prayer be the vision that of Paul had for the Church in Ephesus:

The gifts [Christ] gave were ... to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the Body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.'
(Ephesians 4:12-13)

To him be glory in our church and in all things always.

James Cook
Vicar

CHURCHWARDEN'S REPORT

It has been a great privilege to witness the leadership James is giving in his ministry amongst us. He is leading St Andrew's in such a sensitive and yet challenging way. His admin and planning skills mean he is often way ahead of the rest of us struggling to keep up! Stephanie's encouragement of our artistic abilities is also much appreciated.

As we give grateful thanks for all they are doing, I am conscious of all the support we experience from everyone else making their particular contribution to the life and work at St Andrew's: the dedication of members of the PCC, the widespread support of members who find it difficult to get to church by the pastoral care team, the warm welcome that visitors receive from the sides people and deputy wardens, the singers who lead our worship faithfully Sunday by Sunday, those who operate the technology with all its unexpected little problems, and many other groups working often unseen in the background.

A most important part of our church life is to reach out to the local community. The Old Eatonians, the Toddlers group and the Community Café all have this as their main aim. And God is certainly blessing this work!

St Andrew's also has responsibility for the upkeep of the churchyard and the burial ground. The team who manage that so well could do with some more support.

A Steering Group has been set up to organise the refurbishment of the Hall. Now they are even considering the replacement of the whole building.

It is always a delight to welcome first-time visitors, many of whom are stunned by the beauty of our church buildings. The Lord is blessing the church with gradually increasing numbers. Let's thank Him for this and look forward expectantly and prayerfully for what He is planning for us in 2026.

Chris Smith
Churchwarden

HONORARY PCC SECRETARY'S REPORT

Currently there are fifteen members on the PCC. Meetings have been held regularly throughout the year.

Safeguarding, Financial Matters, Plant and Premises, Church Hall development, Mission and Ministry were discussed at each meeting.

Reports and Minutes of the many church teams and committees were circulated to members and acknowledged at each meeting. This included the Standing Committee; Prayer Ministry; Pastoral Care; ECO group; Hall Steering Group; joint parishes groups including the children's groups and workshop; Group Council; Donations Group; Eaton Parishes Magazine; Mission Focus; Deanery Synod and Diocesan Synod. Some of these groups include reports within this Review.

In addition, meetings have included approval of and discussion on aspects of 'St Andrew's Vision'. Updates on the C of E's thoughts on 'Living in Love and Faith' were given regularly and discussions held including an audit on how biblically inclusive our church is.

The PCC has approved new Communion Books which are in use in the church.

Copies of the signed Minutes of the PCC meetings are posted in the display area of the entrance to the Old Church. Thank you to all members of the PCC and the office staff Ruth Thorp and Kyla Price for their support during the year.

Marilyn Evans
Hon. PCC Secretary

MUSIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Changes in the Christian music scene are subtle rather than dramatic! But there have been changes this year – thanks to James Cook's sterling work, new service booklets have been produced which have given a much clearer aid to worship for the congregation and the singers. Change has also come in the number of singers regularly leading the worship as illness and relocation means we now only have seven "regulars" to rely on – which makes the holiday season challenging!

I am always aware of the background comments to our services – “Why don’t we sing Number... more often?” (That person was away the week we sang it!). “Why have new hymns and songs?” (Because we aim for a variety of styles, and some of the new worship songs provide a more modern approach to the Christian life). “I’d like Hymn But it’s not sung often!” (Then please let me know your request!). Between James, Colin and myself, we try to plan the music to be relevant, sing-able, uplifting and God-centred for each service – not always easy to get the balance right.

The singers still meet fortnightly at my home to practise – if you’d like to try it out do give me a ring (01603 453010).

I am very grateful once again to Colin Morgan who shares piano and organ playing at the 10 am service each week and the monthly Café Church on Sunday evenings. This year at Christmas we were grateful to some members of the Treble Makers (a local choral group I conduct) for helping us with the music – and to Scott Morrison, back to play the organ. Above all, we give thanks to God and pray that each week our worship will bring glory to Him alone.

Margaret Smith
Director of Music

PRAYER MINISTRY TEAM

The Prayer Ministry Team exists to provide prayer for those seeking it after morning services, and once a term to offer prayer at the rail during Holy Communion. While there are often not large numbers coming for prayer, there is a steady trickle of both visitors and regulars, and it is a much valued ministry by those who seek it.

The team meet three times a year to review practice and discuss our agreed guidelines. This year we have discussed issues including how to manage people waiting for prayer while someone else is being prayed for; noise levels in the church making it hard to hear; prayerfully preparing well beforehand; and the appropriate limits of prayer ministry (not drifting into wider pastoral care). After discussion, the guidelines were revised and recirculated.

Many thanks to the whole team for providing a very valuable ministry in the church.

James Cook
Chair of the Prayer Ministry Team

SANCTUARY GUILD

Thank you to the team of twelve members who have continued to carry out the important and regular upkeep of the church brasses, communion linen and changing the liturgical colours appropriately throughout the year.

If you would like to join this team, please speak to me - the more volunteers we have, the less often duties come round!

Marilyn Evans

SACRISTAN TEAM

The team of sacristans has welcomed two new members. Thank you to this team who set and clear the Altar for communion services throughout the year.

If you attend communion services and could arrive at church 20 minutes earlier two or three times a year, please consider joining this team. Full training and support are given. Please speak to me if you could help. Thank you.

Marilyn Evans

PASTORAL CARE TEAM (PCT)

The team consisted of James Cook (*Vicar*); *Area Pastoral Coordinators*: Ann Copsey, Jane Gascoyne, Jenny Holcombe and Sheila Nunney (*PCT Coordinator and Chair*); *Pastoral Visitors*: Mary Nelson and Valli Rao; and Colin Morgan. However, towards the end of the year, sadly Jane Gascoyne felt the time had come for her to resign from her role as an Area Pastoral Co-ordinator. For many years she had been very involved in both Community and Pastoral Care and was a much valued and respected member of the team. Her contribution in so many ways will be greatly missed. Her resignation gave an opportunity for the team to reconsider how they operated and this will be reviewed in the coming year.

Three meetings took place during the year. The delivery of weekly printed sermons to the housebound continued, although the numbers receiving them declined. Thanks are due to preachers for submitting their sermons in a written form and to Ruth Thorp, Office Administrator for printing them.

At each meeting we continued to discuss a couple of chapters of "Mental Health and Your Church" by Steve Midgley, which resulted in some useful learning to put into practice. A copy was ordered for the Church Library. A stand of Pastoral Mini books was purchased and sited in the New Church; usage suggested this is a useful resource and indicated the titles which are most sought after. A suggestion regarding the setting up of a hardship fund was actioned and work is ongoing.

As in previous years, Harvest Festival and Christmas Gifts were collected and distributed to Archway, Leeway, St Martin's and YMCA MyPlace, in conjunction with Christ Church Eaton. Plants delivered to the sick, bereaved and housebound at Easter, Harvest and Christmas were well received. Sourcing plants proved to be a problem and the search for a suitable supplier continues. Bereavement cards were sent to next-of-kin, who live outside the parish, on the first anniversary of the death. Thanks are due to Ruth Thorp for doing this.

To raise awareness of the team's existence, James Cook interviewed the team at a 10am Service; periodic notices re the pastoral care team now appear in the weekly News Sheet under the "Did you know...?" series; and a dedicated Pastoral Care email address was set up: pastoral@standrewseaton.org.uk Other suggestions were made and actioned to enable people to feel more comfortable in church and at coffee time.

As always, the team members continued to support those in need and where appropriate, Holy Communion was taken to people confined to their homes. New residents to the parish, when we were aware of them, were welcomed with a visit and the appropriate literature.

Sheila Nunney

Active retired priest with PTO (Permission To Officiate) and PCT Chair

HOSPITALITY TEAM

This year hospitality extended beyond the church buildings! We held the annual New Year Celebration Meal on the first Sunday evening in January but in March and April we were involved, firstly, in providing hot meals for students attending the UEA Christian Union Events Week – trundling carloads of jacket potatoes, salads and puddings through the maze of campus streets to the large marquee. The mission week was truly blessed with high numbers of students attending and the food was gratefully received!

The Church Away Day was held at Harvest House in Mulbarton in April, so more trundling of food in cars, and a lunchtime meal prepared in an unfamiliar kitchen – which everyone enjoyed!

Harvest Supper and the Biennial Tearfund Quiz Night were well attended which brought 2025 to a close. And I must mention the monthly Café Church services when “afternoon” tea is served – anything from sandwiches (thank you, Audrey!), scones and cake to toasted teacakes, crumpets in the winter and a summer strawberry tea!

My grateful thanks once again to Jane Scott and Audrey Welch who provide so much support in cake-making, scones and manning the church hall kitchen. But – we really do need some more people, not only to help practically, but to offer ideas as to how we can offer more hospitality to our church family, and especially to welcome newcomers. Let me know your thoughts!

Margaret Smith
Hospitality Team

COFFEE ROTA TEAM

With continued and grateful thanks to all regular helpers of the Sunday Morning Coffee Rota in the Church Hall after the weekly Sunday morning services. We have also much appreciated those who have assisted us in preparing and clearing the necessary furniture ready for friends, families and new visitors to meet and enjoy refreshments together.

I also express a particular thanks to Edward, a student at UEA, who during term time, has quietly and efficiently helped with both Hall preparation and

integration between table servicing and the kitchen for those whose often unseen task requires leaving all in a high state of cleanliness and safety at the end of each session.

The rota list is divided throughout the year and basically requires 4 commitments annually. It has become more difficult to maintain "swaps" and organisation due to lack of a "spare" list from which to draw help, so I would be especially pleased to discuss details with any new volunteers. Do please get in touch.

Janice Hales
Coffee Rota Coordinator

ST ANDREW'S COMMUNITY CAFÉ

The Community Café is run in St Andrews Hall every Thursday between 10.30am and 12.00 noon. We welcome everyone, including the congregation of the 10.00 communion service and many members of the community who come in for a chat and snack in a warm, friendly place. Many come regularly and meet old, or make new, friends. For some it is the highlight of their week. We serve tea and coffee and a variety of snacks, ranging from Gregg's sausage rolls (most popular), scones and cakes to cookies. We always have vegetarian and gluten free items. There is no charge, but visitors are encouraged to donate.

This last year has been exciting with good weekly attendances. The numbers range from 35 to over 50 each week. Three activity groups join us. The Maths group (8 members), meet twice a month in the peace of the front office, to discuss problems mathematical. They do join us for coffee and cakes to feed their minds.

The larger group (18 plus members) of 'Knitters and Stitchers' also join us regularly, in the hall, once a month for a very social morning.

The Cameo group (Come and Meet Each Other) also joins us on the fifth Thursday of the month.

We have a Bring and Take stall most weeks to encourage upcycling, and often have a produce sale, selling marmalade and jam.

The Café is now led by a strong team, two of whom do the shopping, Kyla Price who keeps the books and a team of faithful volunteers who welcome our visitors, help with the tables, the food preparation, serving and washing up. If you feel you could support us by joining our team, we would love to hear from you.

We are very grateful for all the continuing support and advice we receive from Les Moore and the Church to make this a happy, inclusive space.

Café Team

Julia Jones, Elizabeth Ogilvie and Jane Scott

TODDLERS

St Andrew's Toddlers on Tuesday mornings continued to thrive, and in 2025 again welcomed families with under-fives for all 38 weeks of the school year.

Attendance was always worth the hard work of the Team from both our Eaton churches. This year the average number of pre-school children attending each session went up to 22, in about 18 families, with an average of 19 adults visiting each week. Adding the two helpers with refreshments and 4 or 5 of the Team in the hall, the premises were comfortably full, and most weeks there were at least 40 people there. Attendance fluctuated over the year: on two different weeks in March and October we had 55 and 57 visitors of all ages.

In the summer months and the first days of each term we had only 10 – 12 families, but 20 for the last session of December, with extra family members for our Nativity Story time in church. Our wide range of activities were loosely based around our Bible themes. Each term ended with our story time in church – at Easter we processed down the church path and welcomed King Jesus; in the summer we had a Teddies Picnic and 'Fed 5,000'.

Although we see very few families in St Andrew's for main services, we gather that many attend their own Christian churches regularly. It is clear that at our 'two-minute toddler story' about God and his love for us all, in our singing circle each week, many adults are very attentive.

Families travelled some distances as well as many from nearby. Once the thorough set-up and preparations were made, only the back door was opened for buggies to be parked in the back room and the children were

admitted through a safety gate, so that once inside they might play everywhere freely. Little babies had a special carpet with suitable toys. The volunteers' police checks and safeguarding training were regularly followed up, with a Risk Assessment added to our administration. The Council food hygiene 'spot inspection' was again passed at the highest level.

Everyone expressed appreciation for the cheerful welcome, wide range of appropriate play activities and the ordered, peaceful atmosphere. 'Toddlers' appeared regularly on Facebook, thanks to competent publicity from our younger Team member. We are also grateful for those helpers on the rota in the kitchen who cheerfully provided drinks and biscuits all morning, some of whom were also able to help clear equipment in the hall afterwards, and Philip and Laura our cleaners who made sure all is fit for our lovely families.

Children were rarely unhappy and adults relaxed in the safe environment – we aimed to support all carers with smiles, listening and encouragement.

These cheerful times would not have been possible without the Team of Jane and Jenny, Leisa, Viki and Maureen who planned, set up the Hall and were attentive throughout each session. Together we pray for Jesus' love and care to be apparent in our welcome and actions each week.

Jenny Holcombe
on behalf of the Toddlers Team

ART CAFÉ

The Art Café is a friendly and casual space for those who enjoy community and creativity to craft together. Attendees are welcome to join our guided activity, bring their own project, or simply enjoy the company over tea & coffee. Events are generally free of charge, but donations are appreciated to cover costs. When costs require special crafting kits/non-reusable materials (e.g. paper lanterns, needle-felting birds), we may either ask participants to bring these materials themselves, or provide them for a small fee at the event.

Our vision for the Art Café covers these three points:

1. We start from a place of generosity with the vision to share God's love and hospitality with our community.

2. We provide a friendly and affordable "safe space" to cultivate friendships, well-being, and creativity.
3. We deepen relationships with those in our parish, who may not otherwise feel comfortable stepping into a church.

Since our launch in December 2024, we have run monthly events including our annual Christmas Wreath Making Workshop and Easter Egg Painting. Our other events include a range of crafts, including needle-felting, crêpe paper crafts, watercolour painting, still life sketching, embroidery, collage, and crochet. Each session is often fully booked, with around 20-30 attendees each time.

During our first year, people often sat with whomever they came with or similar groups. However, over time, there's been more intermingling between the groups. One of the highlights has been seeing different demographics which one does not typically see in the same room all spending time sharing conversation, cake, and crafting together. Over time there has been an increasing depth of conversation as relationships have deepened, and, in some cases, it has served as a gateway for people to come into the church.

So far, Art Café has been met with great enthusiasm and gratitude from all who are involved. I've received emails from attendees expressing appreciation for our work, and also heard reports of people making friends at their tables. We have a number of regular attendees, and some also invite their friends. People regularly express how fun, friendly, and warm we are as a community and initiative, suggesting that God is meeting our prayers to be a space that shows others His love and hospitality. My thanks to our volunteer team, consisting of Maureen Blandford, Odile Ramstein, Sue Day and Irene Wong.

Stephanie Tam
Art Café Co-ordinator

ECO CHURCH TEAM

The team meets three times a year to review all aspects of church life from the point of view of being good carers of God's Creation. We are guided in this work by A Rocha's detailed Eco Church survey. This underwent a major revamp towards the end of 2024, and so this year we began looking through it thoroughly. We were discouraged to find they had made the awards significantly harder to achieve, meaning on the new scheme we would no longer be at Silver but Bronze. A key piece of work we have begun considering is an Environmental Policy to be submitted to PCC for approval in due course.

Outside of meetings, members of the team are responsible for various aspects of our on-going Eco work, including various recycling initiatives (e.g. blister pack collection, and old tools donated to Tools With A Mission), updating the two Eco boards in the churchyards, keeping an eye on eco-friendly cleaning supplies, and providing regular Eco tips for the Parishes Magazine.

Our major activity each year is organising the annual Eco Fair. This year, we moved the fair to coincide with the Harvest, to provide a weekend of creation-themed events, in the hope of building bridges between the fair and church. This year we focussed on giving space to local businesses who were committed to selling products that were environmentally sustainable. We were joined by old regulars such as Meadow Harvest and Earth & Glade, and joined by new contacts including Ketts Hill Bakery and Fait Maison Wood.

As I said last year, we could do with a few more members of the team, so if you have a heart for creation care, please do be in touch.

James Cook
Chair of the Eco Church Team

SAFEGUARDING OFFICERS' REPORT

Carolyn Pinnock and Jenny Holcombe are the Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSO). They maintain the 'Dashboard' which charts for the Diocese how the parish is safeguarded: there are 3 levels of compliance. The parish has continued to maintain Level Two over the year, with renewals and updates as they fall due. The PSOs have attended regular networking meetings at Diocesan House in turn, and also regularly meet and discuss parish matters as appropriate.

Parish activity leaders are now completing Risk Assessments with the support of the PSOs as needed, to get the necessary PCC approval and registration on the Dashboard. Church members continue to be enabled to complete the relevant safeguarding training. The PCC is regularly updated and ratifies the necessary policies and procedures.

Jenny Holcombe and Carolyn Pinnock
Joint Parish Safeguarding Officers

FABRIC

The architect supplying the Quinquennial Inspection for St Andrew's recommended some repairs to the thatch of the Old Church. These were carried out with the prospect that further work would be needed in the next few years.

The headstock bearings of the two bells in the tower were lubricated to make them move more easily.

The avenue of lime trees was pollarded again to control their growth. Seven years growth was cut away in the process.

Keeping the church clean in wet and wintery weather is not easy. We are very grateful for the dedicated work of Laura Toselli, our cleaner for the church and hall.

The attractive floral decorations organised by Denise Sullivan, Evelyn Nicoll and Maureen Blandford also make our buildings very welcoming, particularly to visitors.

By the time you read this I hope the repairs to the church blinds and the sound system upgrade will be in place.

Chris Smith
Fabric Officer

ELECTORAL ROLL

A new 6 year electoral roll was prepared in 2025, prior to the APCM.

The roll now stands at 113 people, a slight decrease from 134 people who were on the roll as at the APCM in 2024.

The decrease occurred sadly as a result of 3 deaths, 7 requests, 6 moves and the remainder due to no new enrolment forms being returned.

The new roll in 2025 welcomed 13 new members, the majority from within the parish and a few from outside it.

Any members of the congregation not on the roll, please do consider enrolling. Enrolment will include your name in the Parish Prayer Diary which is used by many people in their daily prayers. Being on the roll enables you to vote at the APCM.

Chrstine Bensley
Electoral Roll Officer

PART TWO: REPORTS COVERING JOINT ACTIVITIES WITH CHRIST CHURCH

EATON PARISHES GROUP COUNCIL

Mission Statement:

'The Group Ministry of St Andrew's and Christ Church seeks to Collaborate, Cooperate and Communicate in the Eaton Community.'

The Diocese established a Group Ministry for the Parishes of St Andrew's and Christ Church in 2007 when the old parish of Eaton was divided into two.

Its Group Council is the vehicle by which they 'consult together on any matter of common concern". It has no decision-making power and acts in a consultative and advisory role to the two PCCs.

In 2010 the then Bishop of Norwich said that the Group Ministry should, firstly, facilitate what the people involved wanted to do to benefit and develop church mission in Eaton and, secondly, serve the future development of both churches.

Ongoing activities within the Group Ministry include:

- communications such as the parishes' magazine, Christmas and Easter cards
- supporting Mission Partners, through prayer and fund-raising events
- joint children and youth activities including Children's Workshops
- some joint services
- events such as the Summer Fair, Remembrance Day, and Lent Lunches
- the Joint Parishes' Office
- Groups, including the Mothers Union and the Julian Group.

These feature regularly on the agenda of Group Council's quarterly meetings, and the minutes of its meetings are circulated to both PCCs for report and/or response.

The Lent Lunches (10, 17, 24 and 31 March and 7 and 14 April) were well attended. As usual monies were raised for two charities, In 2025 these were the Bishop's Lent Appeal for You Are Not Alone (YANA) – a charity which provides mental health support for those involved in rural businesses

affected by stress and depression (£556.81) and Tearfund's Middle East Humanitarian Appeal (£686.50), A total of £1,243.31 was raised for them.

The Annual Summer Fair took place on 14 June at St Andrew's Church, Hall, and car park. The new Lord Mayor of Norwich, Paul Kendrick, kindly opened the event. The Fair took place during Churches Count on Nature week so there was a Family Eco-Trail around the churchyard. There were lots of other attractions including children's games, books, plants and home-made cake stalls, delicious hot food from Radu's Keswick Cafe as well as refreshments provided by the Eaton Branch of the Mothers' Union. Over £1,400 was raised for children and youth work in the parishes.

Eaton's Mission Partners, Dick and Caroline Seed in South Africa and Mirna Paulo in Argentina, continued to be supported by prayers and fundraising. The Spring Coffee Morning (10 May) raised £1,124.02 and the Autumn Fair (15 November) £1,286.34. As usual CMS divided this sum between the Seeds and Mirna Paulo.

We continued to communicate with a growing number of children in Eaton. Activity Workshops for junior school-aged children took place at Easter (on the theme of *Jesus can change your life!*), the summer holidays (*Dare to be Daniel*), Autumn half-term (*Forgiveness – the story of Joseph*) and concluded with a Christingle-themed Workshop at Christmas. All the Workshops have a mini drama (which has made a very significant contribution to the Workshops), crafts, games, songs and refreshments.

The joint parishes' Remembrance Service was held at the War Memorial on 11 November with a very encouraging attendance, including many local schoolchildren; we are grateful to David Scott for continuing to organise these Services and for the clergy from the two parishes who lead them. Thanks must also be recorded to the War Memorial Trustees for their continuing loving care of this historic monument.

The Parishes' magazine continues to run successfully with its team of volunteer editors and magazine advertising secretary. As usual Easter and Christmas cards, with a message from the two vicars, were delivered to every home in Eaton.

More detailed reports on joint activities e.g. Mission Support, children and youth work, the Office and the magazine, can be found in other reports.

The following were elected or re-elected to Group Council at the APCMs: Marilyn Evans, Chris Smith, Douglas Durand, Jane Scott and Alison Black (for

St Andrew's), myself, Vivien Humber (Secretary), David Archer, Leisa Devlin, Alistair Bolt and Tony Grubb (for Christ Church). Jane Scott and Leisa Devlin were both elected at the 2025 APCM. My thanks to all Group Council members - whether continuing, retired or new to the Group - for their continued enthusiasm and support.

John Ladd
Chair, Group Council

CHARITABLE GIVING

Donations Team Report 2025

The two parishes' Donations Teams merged in autumn 2023 and they continue to support twelve Christian-based international, national and local charities. In 2025 these ranged from international bodies including Christian Aid and the Mission Aviation Fellowship through local ones such as Emmaus Norfolk and Waveney, Star Throwers and 4Cs.

Information on all the charities selected is circulated through news sheets and the Parishes' magazine to raise awareness and encourage support,

Totals raised in 2025 were:

- the Bible Society (£435)
- Emmaus Norfolk and Waveney (£505)
- Toybox (£372)
- the Magdalen Group (£336)
- Christian Aid (£610)
- MAF (£450.50)
- Mercy Ships (£315)
- Leprosy Mission (£403.50)
- St Edmunds Society (£755.50)
- Tearfund (£708.00)
- Star Throwers (£330)
- 4Cs (£442.50)
- giving a total of £5,663.00 for the year.

The Team is very grateful to the congregations for their continued support which resulted in this wonderfully generous outcome.

Two charities are also supported each year through the Lent Lunches; in 2025 these were the Bishop's Lent Appeal for You Are Not Alone (YANA) – a

charity which provides mental health support for those involved in rural businesses affected by stress and depression (£556.81) and Tearfund's Middle East Humanitarian Appeal (£686.50) giving a total of £1,243.31.

Membership: the Team is grateful to all its members and for the congregations continuing support for this important work.

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

The Joint Parishes' Donations Team

Marilyn Evans (Chair), Caroline Gibbs, John Harrison, Trish Hodgson, David Hughes, Vivien Humber and Catherine Macmillan

PARISHES MAGAZINE TEAM

The magazine is an important part of the Eaton churches' communications package, offering an accessible Christian message to its broadly-based readership. It contains articles on subjects ranging from church events to local community matters, together with information on the goods and services of local advertisers.

The Magazine Team supports the magazine editors and the advertising secretary by reviewing contents, production, circulation and revenues at its two meetings held in the Spring and autumn of each year. The Vicars are ex officio members.

At the two meetings held this year (3 April and 16 October) members reviewed the existing and potential future editorial content, including testimonials, pilgrimages, features on local groups and people and musical items. It was agreed there would be a special edition for the May issue (VE/VJ Day – 80th anniversary) which included an article on those who fell in WW2. It was agreed there could be more special covers in 2026, including May, Harvest Festival and All Saints Day). They also reviewed the magazine's income and expenditure, the advertisers and the editorial rota.

The magazine team is grateful to everyone those who contributed, with particular thanks to regular columnists who were able to pick up key topics whilst maintaining the local flavour which is so important in a parishes' magazine.

I would like to thank all members of the team for their enthusiasm and commitment during the year.

The magazine could not function without its advertising secretary, so thanks are due to Christine Mortimer, who works so efficiently with the advertisers and printers. We are also most grateful for the sterling work of those unsung heroes, the magazine distributors and the Office staff, who have worked seamlessly with them. Thanks also to the printers, BD&H, who continue to maintain their excellent service.

Finally, the magazine continues to generate a surplus which is used to support the work of the two churches. We are grateful to the staff in the Parishes' Office for financial updates, which inform the Magazine Team meetings.

Vivien Humber
Chair

EATON PARISHES OFFICE

It was another 'steady' year in the office in 2025, with Kyla now well established. She and I work together very closely and support one another well.

For some time now, I have been a member of UCAN (the United Kingdom Church Administrator's Network). This national organization supports and trains church administrators, whatever their denomination. Much of the training is done via online zoom meetings, which is great – much more accessible. There are termly lunchtime meetings, called TAPAS training (Tips And Practices for Administrative Success!), in which a presentation on a given topic is discussed, helpful pointers made, with break out rooms for discussion. I find these very useful, and as they only last for 75 minutes, it's manageable to do them whilst eating lunch! There is also a local branch meeting of Norfolk administrators which meets bi-monthly. Occasionally I host the meeting here at St Andrew's. Again, this is a helpful and supportive group, and we use a WhatsApp group to share ideas and ask for tips. It's good to have the outside support and ideas – why reinvent the wheel, if someone else has already done it!

We always try our best for the churches to keep costs to a minimum for the regular items we need to order – toilet rolls, hand paper towels, cleaning

products for St Andrew's (Bridget Archer arranges the cleaning products for Christ Church), paper for printing, teabags to fuel the office staff... Whatever it is, we do due diligence to ensure value for money (good stewardship!) for the churches. To that end, during 2025, we undertook a large research project regarding the office copier machine, whose contract is due to expire in 2026. We contacted other local administrators to find out which companies and machines they use, to ascertain how pleased they are with them. Eventually we presented a proposal to both PCCs, sharing the results of our research, and both agreed to that proposal, which is to obtain a new machine via our existing provider, whose service contract we have always been very pleased with. The new machine will be installed post-Easter in 2026.

Since the closure of Revelation in Norwich some time ago, we have established a good connection with Green Pastures Christian Bookshop in Dereham, the only Christian Bookshop left in East Anglia. They are very helpful and supportive in sourcing what we need, including candles for church, Bibles for those who are baptised, certificates, communion wine etc. Whilst Dereham seems far away to those in Norwich, I drive passed it on my way to and from work, so it's quite convenient to pop in and collect orders. One challenge in the office this year was the office boiler, which developed a popping noise. Suffice to say that it had to be turned off completely whilst awaiting a spare part. Thankfully this was before the winter really got cold, and we are grateful for that!

Last year I mentioned in detail a lot of the types of things which the office staff carry out on behalf of the churches. Suffice to say, it is almost impossible to include everything, and most likely, we do things which you wouldn't necessarily realise!

I would like to give particular thanks to Kyla for keeping the office going when I suddenly needed time off when my mother died in October. Following on from the loss of both of my in-laws in the preceding 12 months, this was an especially difficult time, as my resilience was already low. I'm very grateful to her, and to both vicars, for their unwavering support, and to both congregations who's thoughtful and kind words at a difficult time were very much appreciated. Thank you all.

We are very willing to help in any way we can. Many requests from church members to the office are around printing requests. We are very happy to help with this, but as always, do please give us as much lead time as possible. Whilst we can on rare occasions help with short notice requests, we really

appreciate having time to plan in when we will print things, so that everything is completed in a timely and hopefully stress-free manner! Thank you all for your continued support of the office staff. It really is very much appreciated.

Ruth Thorp and Kyla Price
Parishes Administrator and Finance Officer

EATON MOTHERS' UNION

Mothers' Union is a global Christian movement which has been providing support for families since it was founded by Mary Sumner in 1876. Its work is underpinned by prayer and as an organisation we are working towards a future free of violence, poverty and injustice. There has been a branch in Eaton for well over 50 years. We meet most months of the year in one of the two churches, usually on a Wednesday morning. The Parishes Magazine and church Notice Sheets give details of the meeting.

We started the year on the Feast of the Epiphany when a group of us met for coffee and Midday Prayers. This is the Wave of Prayer which takes place daily at noon throughout the world and the work and members of a worldwide group of Dioceses are prayed for. Norwich Diocese is linked with The Kingdom of Eswatini; Ruaha in Tanzania; Aguata and Lagos Mainland in Nigeria and Chotanagpur in India and all are prayed for between 5-7 January each year.

- Our first meeting of the year was principally one of fellowship with a bring and share brunch and quiz. Our Lenten Reflection was led by Revd Sheila Nunney.
- In April Dame Lorraine Curston spoke about the work of Dawn's New Horizons, which is a non-profit-making domestic abuse support organisation, providing help and support for men and women in the Broadland area. As well as providing support and counselling for victims they also run a charity shop which helps to fund their work.
- The speaker at our May meeting was Tracey Le Gallex, The Regional Services Manager for St Giles Trust, 'Turning a past into a future'. The trust helps people held back by poverty, exploited, abused, dealing with addiction or mental health problems, caught up in crime or a combination of these. In Norwich it is based in St Saviours Church on Magdalen Street where it also the runs The Magdalen Street Pantry, which offers nutritious food, expert advice and support through

trained staff and volunteers, many of whom have experienced the same issues facing the people they support today.

- In June we heard about The Global History of the Mothers' Union from Sheila Tuffield, a member from the Sprowston branch and a Trustee.
- In July members met for lunch and fellowship at the Cellar House and also did some preparatory for our 2026 programme by suggesting suitable topics for our 150th Anniversary Year.
- In September one of our members Dr Valli Rao spoke about the work she and her husband
- Dr Sunder Bethapudy have done in India with The Leprosy Mission.
- On the first Thursday of each month The Mothers' Union leads Midday Prayers at noon in the Jesus Chapel at the Cathedral. For many years now, the Eaton group has led the October prayers and this year we took the theme of The Keys of the Kingdom.
- In October Hannah Worsley from Norwich Foodbank talked about the history of the Trussel Trust and current developments here in Norwich. She started her talk by saying the aim of the organisation was that it should no longer be needed which is the complete opposite of a majority of organisations. We were thanked for the support both churches have given to the foodbank over many years and still do.
- Our final meeting of the year was our Advent Meditation which should have been led by our Diocesan Chaplain Revd James Stewart. Unfortunately, he was unable to do so at very short notice, so I led the meeting using one of Susanna Gunner's excellent study materials, Mapping Advent, Watching and Waiting.

The Norwich Diocese Mothers' Union Refugee Resettlement Project is led by Jenny Holcombe and members not only raised funds for this but also some people helped make up beds with new bedding in preparation for the arrival of a new families to Norwich. Eaton members supported the Angel Tree Project by buying Christmas gifts for 8 children in four families of prisoners in Wayland prison. They also raised funds for overseas work, particularly at the 10am Corporate Communion on the third Thursday of the month at St Andrew's Church.

We started the year with 18 members but very sadly in May, Jennie Nowell, a long-standing member and previous leader, died and at the end of the year Audrey Ridley moved away. Everyone is welcome at our meetings.

Ruth Vaughan
Branch Leader

YOUTH & CHILDREN'S COMMITTEE

The Youth & Children's Committee oversees the children and youth work done jointly by the two parishes, and is a forum for sharing and discussing ideas. Our mission statement is 'to make known the Good News of Jesus Christ to the children and young people in ways that are relevant to them and to coordinate and extend that work.' We meet termly, and receive reports from the Children's Action Team who plan the Workshops that take place four times a year (Easter, Summer, Autumn and Christmas).

This year the Committee discussed the following areas:

- Review of the **Workshops**: These continue to be well attended, especially the ever-popular Christingle Workshop. Many parents now join for the closing 'service'. Children seem to understand and remember the key teaching points from the drama, which has developed with more adults with speaking parts and young helpers taking part.
- Exploring **new initiatives**: including eco opportunities, such as taking part in Churches Count on Nature; a more family-oriented replacement of the Summer Fair (which regularly raised funds for children and youth work); and RAISE Kids new Puzzle Pods, which have been a great success in schools across Norfolk.
- Encouraging **prayer** for children and youth ministry across the two congregations, including through use of Thy Kingdom Come resources.
- Challenges in establishing links with **local schools**, recognising the huge pressures faced today by teaching staff. St Andrew's have managed to maintain strong links with the Eaton Scouts who attend services now 3 times a year.
- Finally, **safeguarding** is a fixed item on the agenda. During 2025 we discussed new parental consent forms, which now need to be re-signed annually. Additionally, we submitted to the PCCs new Photographer Role Descriptions and a photography policy to ensure photographs taken of the workshops are in line with best safeguarding practice.

James Cook
Vicar of St Andrew's Eaton

EATON EAGLES

The churches' sponsorship of Eaton Eagles F.C. dates back to a nine-year stint in the Norfolk Christian Junior Football League (2002-11). We currently sponsor an adult team in the Norfolk Christian League, which continues to perform at a very high level. After winning the 2023-24 league competition, the team reached the final of the 2025 Bishop Maurice Wood Cup, narrowly losing to arch-rivals Heigham Park Rangers. At the time of writing the Eagles were three points clear at the head of this season's table after a convincing 6-2 defeat of Lighthouse.

Club captain Henry Aspin comments: 'We played 24 competitive matches in 2025, winning 16, drawing four and losing four, scoring 75 goals into the bargain. Win, lose or draw we'll be sticking together in the coming year and looking to achieve even more.'

Home games take place on Saturdays mornings at Sloughbottom Park and the fixture list can be accessed via the FA Full Time website. David Taylor from Christ Church is the link between the club and the churches. For further information, contact him at djtaylorwriter@gmail.com.

David Taylor
Club Welfare Officer

OVERSEAS MISSION SUPPORT

In 2025 the Mission Focus team met nearly every month to pray for our link missionaries – Dick and Caroline Seed, based in Cape Town, and Mirna Paulo in Northern Argentina. There were only four of us meeting – Jane Cary is now living in Ivy Court Care Home and Rev Douglas Durand, who is still a member of our team, cannot now easily get to meetings. We will always welcome others who want to join us (on the second Monday of each month, except August and December, at 2 pm). We meet in Saint Andrew's Church Prayer Corner and Christ Church Vestry Children's room alternately.

We received Newsletters every 3 or 4 months from Dick and Caroline Seed through CMS, and monthly letters in between with their news and prayer requests, which Ruth Thorp in the Parish Office prints out and leaves at the back of each church.

In August Dick and Caroline marked their 25th anniversary of serving in theological education with CMS.

We sometimes heard news of Mirna Paulo's work through CMS Prayerlines - her work with Amare (a pioneering women's group) and her support of students at a new theological college training indigenous pastors.

The Spring fair (formerly called The Spring Coffee Morning) was held in the Church Hall in May with the help of members of both churches, organised by Jane Scott. It raised £1,124.02.

The Autumn Fair was held in November and raised £1,286.34. The money raised from both events was divided equally between the Seeds and Mirna Paulo. There was a children's stall for the first time in a long time at the Autumn Fair but, unfortunately, hardly any children came to the Fair, so there will not be one in 2026.

The intercessors of Saint Andrew's Church at the 10 am service each Sunday were reminded to include prayers for our Missionaries and this now they generally do. We want the congregation to be reminded of and to pray for our Missionaries.

Maureen Blandford
Mission Focus Team

NORWICH SOUTH DEANERY SYNOD

The Deanery Synod is a meeting where clergy and lay representatives from churches across Norwich South come together to share in discussion, discernment, and decision-making for the life of our local churches. It connects our PCCs with one another and with the wider Diocesan Synod, and is a required part of the Church of England's governance. The Synod met twice in 2025, on 4 February and 10 June.

The February meeting focused significantly on poverty and social need. Presentations from Broadland Housing Association and Norwich Foodbank highlighted rising levels of hardship, the growth in foodbank use, and the need for both practical response and advocacy. Members were encouraged to support initiatives such as the "Guarantee our Essentials" campaign and the emerging Norfolk Anti-Poverty Alliance, and to reflect on the Church's calling to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

Safeguarding was a major topic of discussion, particularly proposed changes to national structures. Members considered two models before General Synod: greater independent oversight within existing diocesan systems, or more radical outsourcing to an independent body. There was broad agreement on the need for independent scrutiny, though views differed on the extent of structural change required.

Living in Love and Faith (LLF) continued to be a significant area of concern. Synod reaffirmed its desire for Diocesan Synod to address the impact of the process on clergy and parishes. Ongoing delays and theological complexities were noted, alongside the pastoral and ecclesial strain arising from disagreement.

The June meeting included a substantial focus on environmental stewardship. A presentation on Eco Church and the Diocese's net zero ambitions encouraged practical action at parish level, grounded in the fifth mark of mission: care for creation. Members were urged to take achievable steps and to embed environmental concern into worship, teaching, and community life.

Updates from the wider Church highlighted major national investment in clergy wellbeing, mission, and safeguarding, alongside structural financial changes intended to support parish ministry, especially in lower-income areas. Locally, Synod noted continued strong parish giving, ongoing safeguarding training requirements, and the importance of filling key voluntary roles within churches.

LLF developments remained in view, including continuing disagreement across the Church and a forthcoming diocesan consultation. Parish updates reflected encouragements in youth work, discipleship pathways, and ministry among refugees and immigrants, alongside normal patterns of clergy movement and transition.

I am grateful to Sandra Isaac, Lay Chair, and to Vivien Humber for her faithful work in taking minutes, especially in the absence of a formal Synod Secretary.

Patrick Richmond
Rural Dean of Norwich South until Summer 2025

NORWICH DIOCESAN SYNOD

The Diocesan Synod serves as the representative body for governance and decision-making within the Diocese of Norwich. It manages mission strategy, financial oversight, and policy, while linking the national General Synod to local Deanery Synods. It typically meets three times a year to reflect on the shared life of our 600+ churches.

In March, Synod focused on revitalising the parish system. While attendance data showed a national decline, there was local hope, with 27% of our rural benefices showing growth. We addressed the “watershed moment” in national safeguarding, moving toward independent oversight while maintaining our local safeguarding team. A debate on redistributing Church Commissioner funds resulted in a call for national spending plans to prioritise the financial sustainability of parishes.

In June, the Annual General Meeting of the Board of Finance reported a 2024 deficit of £77,000. Despite a 10.7% rise in clergy stipends, Parish Share receipts remained below pre-pandemic levels at 80.6% of the request. Synod also began "Identifying Potential Solutions" for the new Diocesan Strategy, and members provided direct feedback to the National Church regarding the Prayers of Love and Faith consultation.

In November, Bishop Graham’s address called for a “Christian patriotism” rooted in hospitality rather than nationalism. Baroness Sal Brinton gave a moving presentation on the "social model" of disability, challenging parishes to remove attitudinal and physical barriers. Synod approved a balanced 2026 budget of £14.72m and formally endorsed the new “Streams of Growth” strategy. This model encourages churches to discern their current season—whether Fallow, Germinating, Regenerating, Flourishing, or Reforesting—to better target mission support.

Patrick Richmond

**Diocesan Synod member for Norwich South and General Synod
and Chair of the Diocesan House of Clergy**

GENERAL SYNOD

The General Synod is the Church of England's governing body, responsible for making decisions on doctrine, worship, mission, and policy. It consists of bishops, clergy, and lay representatives who meet two or three times a year to debate and shape the Church's direction.

A major focus of 2025 was navigating a period of significant leadership transition following the resignation of Archbishop Justin Welby. In the February sessions, the atmosphere was one of lament and reflection as Synod engaged with the findings of the Makin Report. Safeguarding remained a primary concern, with members debating "Model 3.5"—a hybrid approach intended to provide greater independent oversight of safeguarding practices while attempting to respect the Church's complex legal structure. While some pushed for total independence, Synod opted for this middle path to ensure accountability without further delay, and in 2025 Synod endorsed the progress made developing this path.

The July 2025 sessions, held in York, shifted focus toward the Church's long-term sustainability and financial health. A landmark investment package of £1.36 billion for 2026–2028 was announced, aimed at supporting clergy pay, restoring pensions, and providing targeted aid to low-income parishes. This financial boost was coupled with reports of a "Quiet Revival" in attendance, encouraging a focus on intentional prayer and youth engagement. The Quiet Revival report has since been withdrawn, but there remain signs of a shift in culture towards more openness to faith.

On the ongoing "Living in Love and Faith" (LLF) project, 2025 saw a temporary de-escalation of the intense debates of previous years. Synod voted to withdraw the 1991 document *Issues in Human Sexuality*, replacing it with interim pastoral guidelines. However, this has been followed by a strategic pause; with the work on "stand-alone" blessing services and the status of clergy in same-sex civil marriages now halted until at least 2027, the Church remains in a period of discernment. This hiatus reflects the continued need for deeper theological work and a desire to maintain unity across the diverse traditional and progressive perspectives within the Church. Outcomes will be highly sensitive to voting for the composition of the next General Synod in the late summer of 2026.

Patrick Richmond
Member of the house of clergy of General Synod



St Andrew's
E A T O N

www.standrewseaton.org.uk