



Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Tuesday 21st April 2026



Photo: Catherine Jessop

Reports for the year ending
December 31st, 2025

Agenda

Presentation and Adoption of the 2025 Financial Report and Accounts *(separate document)*

Parish Reports:

The Vicar – Rev. Caroline Halmshaw

The Parochial Church Council – Keith Embleton

Churchwardens – Charlotte Wellburn and Sam Hearn

Treasurer – Julian Tanner

Stewardship – Patricia Mann

Electoral Roll – Angela Collins

Safeguarding – Shelagh Allsop

Deanery Synod – Simon Surtees

Reports from working/activity groups

- Coffee Club – Sara Hodson
- Communications – Catherine Jessop
- Fundraising and Events – Julian Tanner
- Garden – Isabelle Marks
- Meditation Group – Sheila White
- Music – Tom Torley
- Poetry Group – Sue Hearn
- Refugee Support – Rachel Tanner
- Stay and Play – Shelagh Allsop
- Sunday Coffee – Cathy Morgan
- Youth Group – Lucas Tanner

Report from the Vicar, Reverend Caroline Halmshaw

Our church building and our garden continue to be places where all people are welcome, those who have been part of our church community for many years as well as those who are new or rarely come. As I read the comments in the visitors' book, I realise how the presence of the church touches people's lives in ways that are often hidden. I'm so grateful to our volunteers who enable our church to be open every day of the year. Many people come because it is a place for prayer and quiet reflection, and find that stepping into the church brings a sense of renewed hope.

2025 saw the start of my third year as vicar of St Paul's; I can no longer say I'm new! This year we started several initiatives, as well as ensuring the continuity of those that are established, in line with our Mission Action Plan which was finalised in 2024. The MAP has three main strands: children and young people; spiritual growth; and caring for the community.

Growing younger

It's been wonderful to welcome new people into our congregation over the last year, including a steady increase in the number of young people coming along to our services. There is a sense in the wider church that younger people are open to exploring faith and being part of the church, and it's been great to experience this here at St Paul's. We continue to seek new ways to support and engage younger people, including starting a supper club for 20s-40s, which showed us how keen this group is to support local voluntary initiatives, to have a focus on health and wellbeing, as well as explore our Christian faith and its relevance to their lives. Our youth group has continued to meet regularly and a highlight of the year was when six members of the group were Baptised or Confirmed at St Paul's Cathedral in November. The youth continue to be a part of the wider church life, taking part in our new All-Age services and serving regularly.

Spiritual growth

Creating time in our busy schedules for learning and reflecting is always a challenge. Our focal points for this in 2025 were our Lent and Advent groups and two Parish Quiet Days. In September, we started the Growing Leaders course; what I particularly like about this course is how it combines building confidence in Christian leadership alongside exploring and deepening our faith. Barbara Studd joined our ministry team this year. Barbara is in her penultimate year as an Ordinand at St Mellitus College, and we welcome her participation and leadership in many areas of our church life.

Caring for the community

The garden continues to go from strength to strength and is a great space for bringing local people together. We have ambitions to expand the garden and improve the area that surrounds the church, and this work continues to be supported by a group of inspiring volunteers. Our core community events have continued: the Friday coffee club has grown in

numbers throughout the year and our Stay & Play sessions for babies, toddlers and their carers is now meeting twice a week. We held a wonderful pet service this year, which attracted a very welcome wide range of canine friends and their owners, some of whom were in a church service for the first time in many years.

Our fundraising efforts in 2025 not only raised significant income but were a great way to welcome many people who don't regularly attend church services at St Paul's. Highlights were the flower festival in May, the fashion show in June and our sell-out Mike Reed and Friends concert in November; all three events brought the wider Grove Park community together for fun and celebrations.

We said goodbye to our parish administrator Annabel Hughes-Parkinson in the summer, as she left to continue her studies. In the autumn, Angela Collins, who is also a member of our congregation, took over this important role. Many thanks to both Annabel and Angela for ensuring the smooth running of the parish office. I was also delighted to welcome Sam Hearn as a new churchwarden during the year, working alongside Charlotte Wellburn.

We were all saddened by the death of a stalwart member of our congregation, Carolyn Ashford-Russell, who died unexpectedly in September. Carolyn was involved in many aspects of life at St Paul's, from the PCC, to the choir, to our Friday Coffee Club and as a regular Welcomer at our Sunday services. We miss her very much.

Each time I've reflected on the year that's just been, I realise how much this church belongs to all of us, and that it's the dedication and energy that people give that enables St Paul's to flourish. Thank you to everyone who plays a part in the life of our church, thank you for your wisdom and insight, and for your support to me over the last year.

Parochial Church Council

Keith Embleton, secretary

Our role as the Parochial Church Council is to consult and co-operate with the vicar on matters of general concern to the parish, including pastoral, social and ecumenical issues, church finances and the care of the buildings and grounds.

In addition to general outreach, our mission this year has focused on encouraging the younger members of the congregation and the parish and engaging them actively in our regular services.

Also, this year, we have had our five-yearly review of building fabric, an environmental review, and a fire safety assessment, each of which has highlighted issues that need to be addressed, in order of priority, over the next two to three years. We are also developing the church garden as an attractive space for parishioners and the local community to enjoy.

PCC Members in 2025

<i>Incumbent</i>	Rev Caroline Halmshaw (Chair)
<i>Churchwardens</i>	Charlotte Wellburn Sam Hearn
<i>Elected Representatives</i>	Shelagh Allsop (Safeguarding Officer) Marian Armitage Claire Carter Sara Hodson Anusha Rajiyah Peter Ryan Simon Surtees (Lay Minister) Julian Tanner (Treasurer) Jane Theakston Robert John van Exter Bea Vickers
<i>Co-opted Secretary</i>	Keith Embleton
<i>Co-opted Electoral Roll Officer</i>	Angela Collins

Churchwarden's Report

Charlotte Wellburn and Sam Hearn

The churchwardens are responsible for maintaining the fabric of the church and Grove Park Rooms as well as the church grounds.

Roof: In the early part of the year, JL Roofing erected scaffolding to repair the roof at the west end of the church and above the organ chamber. Water ingress has halted since this work was completed. Chunks of plaster have now stopped falling from the ceiling in the organ chamber.

Quinquennial Inspection (QI): Michael Swords (Michael Swords Studio) was appointed, with the approval of the DAC and our PCC, to carry out the inspection. Michael was selected as the best of three strong candidates. His report was received at the end of July. He reported that the fabric of St Paul's was largely in good condition and well cared for and that the urgent items highlighted in 2020 QI had all been addressed.

The actions summarised in the 2025 report, and their suggested timings, have all been accepted. Significant progress was made in 2025 on those items requiring immediate attention,

and those to be completed within 18 months. Progress on the remaining actions has continued in 2026.

The QI identified active wood worm damage to the wooden floor of the church. Quotations were obtained for the chemical treatment of the infestation. All the floors and the wooden pews were sprayed by Timberwise early in 2026.

To comply with new legislation the QI recommended that the font cover lifting mechanism should be inspected annually. Alternatives are being investigated but no easy or inexpensive solutions have been identified.

The Energy Action Plan: The Diocese commissioned and paid for an Energy Saving and Net Zero Carbon survey of the Church and church rooms by Energy Efficiency Ltd. The purpose of the survey was to help us “take the first steps towards decarbonisation” in line with the Church of England’s Green Agenda.

The report focused on the alternative options available for heating the church e.g. infra-red heaters and air-to-air heat pumps. Grants are likely to be available for this work. These are being actively researched but the need to keep the existing heating systems working has taken priority. Serious problems with the heating of the church were eventually resolved and a new contract placed with our heating maintenance company.

The report also emphasised the desirability of converting the church’s interior lighting to LED bulbs. The likely failure of more of the remaining halogen light bulbs and the impact that this would have on church events makes this a priority in 2026. It is likely that grants will be available for this work.

Asset Inventory: An up-to-date inventory, with photographs, of all items belonging to the church and in the garden was completed in August with the help of Angela Collins and William, her son. Their time, patience and attention to detail is much appreciated.

Grove Park Rooms: Roof works during the winter period 2024 has stopped the water ingress into the upper floor of the Grove park Rooms. Redecoration of the room and the stairwell was completed in March 2025 by Phil Robinson. In the summer, Keith Embleton refurbished and painted the two exterior doorways of the Grove Park Rooms. He also donated a new name sign for the main entrance which matches the sign boards in the garden. It all looks very smart.

Tree Works: An order was placed for necessary tree works in the church’s environs; removal of dead trees, lopping of branches over hanging pavements and reducing crowns. Planning consent was not obtained for the works until 2026.

Low Level Vandalism: In common with other local churches St Paul’s has experienced some petty damage to the interior of the church itself and the Grove Park Rooms. An external key

safe was broken into and damaged. The Police were informed. Repairs were straightforward and inexpensive.

New Church Warden: Sam Hearn was inducted as a second churchwarden in September, bringing with him a wealth of experience in building maintenance and care.

Treasurer's Report

Julian Tanner

Income

Total unrestricted income in 2025 was £138,394, which represented a significant 20% increase over 2024. Service collections, donations and planned giving combined amounted to £49,528, an increase of 23% over the £40,316 raised in 2024.

Income exceeded expenditure by £3,957 in 2025. This was a lower surplus than 2024, but very welcome against a 2025 budget that had forecast a deficit of more than £18,000 for the year. It also reflected a year of some major costs incurred in maintaining the fabric of the church building and increased running costs.

Year-end total net assets, as shown in the Balance Sheet, were £684,114, compared to £680,158 in 2024. By far the largest element of the net assets is St Paul's Hall in Pymont Road, which is let to Toddlers' World nursery.

Fundraising income was £14,631 in 2025, slightly lower than the £15,472 raised in 2024. Notably successful fundraising events included the flower festival and fashion show in the summer, and the hugely enjoyable Mike Reed & Friends Songs from the West End concert in November.

Rental income from lettings of the church and Grove Park Rooms was £13,586, a 15% increase on the £11,845 revenues in 2024 and indicative of the improved appeal of the premises following the investment in the refurbishment of the Grove Park Rooms in 2024.

Stewardship Report

Patricia Mann

Total donations in 2025 were £53,569; of these donations £50,304 were to the General Fund. General Fund donations exceed those for 2024 by £6,114 an increase of 14%. There were 40 people who gave donations by bank standing order or by direct debit using the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS). These donations, classified as planned giving, were £33,637 exceeding those for 2024 by £6,502 an increase of 24%.

During the year we lost one regular donor and gained seven new regular donors. Planned giving for 2026 is estimated at £34,776 assuming current levels of giving, an increase of 3% over 2025.

Donations for 2025 comprised:

Bank SO	11,650
PGS DD	21,987
Total planned giving	33,637

PGS one-off	2,042
CollecTin card reader	3,237
Loose plate	2,796
Gift Aid yellow envelopes	7,233
Bank transfers	942
Web	415
Total unplanned giving	16,666

Total general fund	50,304
Total refugee fund	3,265
Total all giving	53,569

Gift Aid claimed by St Paul's	7,017 (includes £2,472 for 2024 donations)
*GASDS claimed by St Paul's	1,131 (includes £461 for 2024 donations)
Gift Aid claimed by PGS	5,815
Total Gift Aid + GASDS	13,963

Gift Aid to be claimed by St Paul's in 2026 for 2025 donations	£1,535
GASDS to be claimed by St Paul's in 2026 for 2025 donations	£423
Total to be claimed by St Paul's in 2026 for 2025 donations	£1,958

*GASDS – Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme, where Gift Aid can be claimed on donations of less than £30 without a Gift Aid declaration.

Electoral Roll

Angela Collins, Parish Administrator

Following the renewal of the Electoral Roll in 2025 (a task that is completed every six years), the current roll looks like this:

112 individuals, representing 69 families

The gender split is 70 female, 42 male

65 live within the parish, 47 outside

In the coming weeks, we will promote inclusion on the roll to new members of the congregation. This will be done via items in the pew sheet and newsletter, and also as a mention within church courses, such as Growing Leaders, the Pilgrim course for 20-40s and the Lent course so that people are invited to build their association with our Church. This

could be done alongside a focus on Parish Giving as the two areas involve encouraging engagement.

Safeguarding

Shelagh Allsop, Safeguarding Officer

We have occasional actual safeguarding concerns to deal with and when these issues come up, the Diocesan Safeguarding Team are a stalwart support.

But safeguarding is more than reacting to issues. The main business of safeguarding is creating an environment and ethos that make the likelihood of anyone coming to harm as minimal as possible. So we aim to have a consistent and constant process of ensuring that we comply with C of E guidance and requirements, which themselves are constantly developing and evolving. Barbara, one of our ordinands, works as a safeguarding officer in a large primary school and she is helping me with this complex business.

We need to ensure all the relevant people have up-to-date training; that those who need it have appropriate DBS clearance; that for all the various roles in the parish there is a role description and proper supervision; and that risk assessments are carried out for all of our activities.

I take opportunities to bring safeguarding thoughts to the fore. On Safeguarding Sunday in November, I used the sermon slot to focus on Safeguarding. I have visited the Youth Group to talk about safeguarding from their own point of view, and on another occasion, to discuss safeguarding in the context of the Welcomers role, with which they have expressed an interest in becoming involved. In every PCC meeting I make a safeguarding report and we also make space for a focussed discussion on an aspect of safeguarding.

Together with Caroline, Simon, our Ordinands Barbara and Anne, our church wardens and everyone who volunteers and supports us as a parish, we carry the responsibility of making sure our church is a safe place for every single person who comes in and I aim to make sure that everyone in the parish is equipped to carry out that responsibility. Please do make contact with me if you want to discuss any matters about safeguarding. I am easy to find. Usually here on Sundays and Fridays and very visible on the website.

Deanery Synod

Simon Surtees

The Hounslow Deanery Synod plays an important role in bringing parishes together and is led by the Area Dean, the Reverend Martine Osborne. Currently I am the Chair of the Laity.

Topics this year have included a brief on mission work, which focussed on a mission working with parishes in Southall. There was also a very good session on ways of developing Meditation and Prayer in the religious life of our parishes.

St Pauls is entitled to three places on the Deanery Synod. In 2025 the Lay members were myself and Carolyn Ashford-Russell, until she sadly passed away in September.

The year ending April 2026 has been the third and final year of the current Deanery Synod. Elections for the new triennia are about to take place. I encourage anyone in our parish and on the electoral roll who is interested in the wider role of the Church of England both in Kensington and in London to join us. Please see Caroline or me if you would like to find out more.

Reports from Working/Activity Groups

Coffee Club

Sara Hodson

Another successful year for the St. Paul's Coffee Club, which has run throughout the year on Friday mornings between 10.45am and 12 noon. It is held in the church where a host provides a warm welcome to all guests with delicious cake, plentiful coffee, and the occasional tea. For the first half of the year, towards the end of our session, Shelagh brought in the Stay & Play children and their carers, and the children entertained us with their action songs, which is always joyous. However, once the sun came out, there was more interest in the garden and so we haven't seen much of them latterly.

If you haven't yet joined us on a Friday, do plan it into your diary on occasion, bringing a neighbour or friend to enjoy the coffee, cake and excellent conversation. The number of regular guests has increased, an equal mix of congregation and non-church members, with more drop-in visitors who are walking past or who have a reason to visit the church. During the cold winter months we had slightly fewer guests, but as the weather improved over the summer and autumn, we welcomed more people and this has continued into 2026.

A big loss for all of us was the sad and untimely death of the marvellous Carolyn Ashford-Russell who was a dedicated host from the start of our Coffee Club. She always brought a smile, a warm welcome and plentiful cake on her rota days. Her generous volunteering and energetic welcoming style are much missed.

As mentioned last year, and with the loss of Carolyn, we need more people to join our rota of hosts. I'd like to thank all the hosts - Cassandra, Catherine J, Hillie, Jane, Margaret, Rachel and Rick - you have done a wonderful job throughout 2025 and our coffee club guests really enjoy your welcome.

Communications

Rachel Tanner

The St Paul's website, managed by Catherine Jessop, can be found at www.stpaulsgrovepark.com. It aims to reflect the values, mission and ethos of our church as well as providing easy-to-find, accurate and up-to-date information about our services. The Welcome/Home page always includes a seasonal message from Rev'd Caroline as well as all

the events and services for the following two months. Visits to the site increased substantially in 2025; we regularly received between 2,000 and 2,500 visits a month, compared with 1,200 and 1,500 a month in 2024. To contribute ideas, content and photos to the website, please contact Catherine.

Our Newsletter was emailed to subscribers fortnightly during 2025, publicising church services and parish events. The number of subscribers grew from 120 to 128 over the year and we typically had an “open” rate of 40-45% each month. If you do not currently receive the Newsletter and would like to, please contact Rachel. Contributions and ideas for new articles are always welcome.

St Paul’s boosted its social media presence towards the end of the year, when Makbule set up an Instagram account, [stpauls_grovespark](#). There is a link to the account on the home page of the website.

In addition to online communications, Catherine continued to support all our services and events with her colourful posters, banners and flyers - a wonderful visual marketing presence for the church!

Fundraising and Community Events

Julian Tanner

We ran a very busy programme of events in 2025, raising more than £14,600. Enormous thanks to everyone who contributed their time and talents - a huge team effort throughout the year.

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| January | Quiz night - a fun social occasion and a great way to open the year |
| March | Bingo afternoon - eyes down!
Produce bring and buy - delicious homemade treats |
| April | Poetry Evening: Spring to Life - readings and celebration |
| May | Flower Festival - this two-day event brought joy and many visitors to the church |
| June | Fashion Show - an outstanding evening of fashion and music, a huge success |
| September | St Paul’s to St Paul’s - more than 20 “pilgrims” joined the sponsored walk |
| October | Car boot sale - our stall at Chiswick School was very popular (repeated in December)
Produce sale - seasonal produce sold out |
| November | Mike Reed and Friends Concert - Songs from the West End Musicals - a highlight of the year! |

December Wine Tasting Evening - just in time for Christmas!
Concert, Joy to the World - a wonderful community event to round off the year

Garden

Isabelle Marks

The focus of work in 2025 and into 2026 has been to improve and repair the children's area in the church garden.

In 2025 we submitted a grant application to the local council to support the restoration and development of the children's play area. Unfortunately, this application was not successful. Alternative fundraising efforts were organised in order to move the project forward: a fashion show in June raised £3002; gifts from guests attending my birthday celebrations raised £1,128; and three large garden pots, generously given to me by my neighbours, were sold on Ebay and raised £450. We were also successful in securing external support from the Chiswick Flower Market, which kindly awarded the church a grant of £3,000 towards the improvement of the children's garden area. In total we raised £7580 last year to fund improvements to the garden.

The following work has been carried out so far:

- Repairs to the children's playhouse, including the installation of a new roof, and repairs to the small inner gate.
- Installation of a new fence and gate separating the children's garden from the vicarage garden, new fencing around the outside meter, and installation of compost bins to keep the area tidy and free of debris
- Removal of several large shrubs and overgrown planting to create a safer and more usable space for children.

Work in progress:

Levelling the ground to allow for the installation of a storage unit (garage) that will house the children's ride-on cars, bicycles, and outdoor toys.

Future Plans:

To create a walkway and designated play surface in the cleared area. A new bin storage unit in the area by the south door into the Grove Park Rooms is also planned.

The improvements made so far have already helped restore and enhance the children's garden area, with further development planned to make the space safer, more practical, and more enjoyable for families using the church grounds. A huge thankyou to Gwen, Cassandra,

Shelagh, Jo, Lisa, Derek, John, Julian and Keith for all their help. New gardeners and volunteers always welcome!

Meditation Group

Sheila White

The group meets on Monday evenings at 7pm in the Church. Numbers grew in 2025 to around 15 members, although an average turnout is 10 to 12. Sue Shorter kindly provides us with her gentle music, after which we have a short reading to help us to centre in our time of silence and stillness. After our meditation of about half an hour, we have a short convivial social time for those who are able to stay with us before we go home with, we hope, a little extra spiritual preparation for the week.

Music

Tom Torley, Church Organist

It has been another fantastic year of music at St Paul's. We are lucky to retain a wonderful choir who sing during Communion on Sunday mornings and at other special services. Their voices bring a reflective and spiritual atmosphere to our Sunday worship, which I know is greatly appreciated by many in the congregation.

At the beginning of 2025 we held our Candlemas Evensong, marking the end of the Christmas season. This was the brainchild of our wonderful tenor, Simon Surtees, who chose some challenging music for the three choirs of St Nicholas', St Michael's Elmwood Road, and St Paul's. They rose to the challenge to give a wonderful rendition of these beautiful pieces, my personal favourite being *And I Saw a New Heaven* by Bainton.

Over Easter weekend 2025 we joined forces with the choir of Christ Church, East Sheen, for two performances of Stainer's *Crucifixion* with some terrific soloists.

We sadly said goodbye to one of our stalwart members, the wonderful soprano Carolyn Ashford-Russell, who died in September. A choir of over 40 singers at her funeral sang some of her favourite music. There couldn't have been a more fitting tribute or testament to her than having so many people from the different walks of her life coming together to make music in her memory.

We again joined forces with St Nicolas' and St Michael's for a wonderful Advent carol service at St Michael's. And in January 2026 the three choirs performed a very special Choral Evensong at St Nicholas' to mark the retirement of Father Simon Brandes, a beautiful service, and all of us from the choir who joined will, I'm sure, remember it very fondly.

Our own Christmas Concert at St Paul's, Joy to the World, was another real highlight of the year. It was the best attendance we have had so far and the choir sounded absolutely terrific.

The inaugural Chiswick Brass Festival was held at St Paul's in February 2025, and the event was repeated in March this year. I would like to thank the church for all its help in getting the Festival off the ground. The event means a lot to me and it wouldn't have been possible without the support, infrastructure, and kindness of everyone at St Paul's. I really can't thank you enough!

To the last and most important note (pun intended): the choir is always on the lookout for new members! We welcome all singers, young and old. If you have ever considered joining, or know someone who would like to join, then please speak to me or Simon. We would love to involve as many people as possible.

Poetry Group

Sue Hearn

The Poetry Group continued to meet online, weekly, through the year. A theme is chosen for each session and attendees select a piece to share. The group is particularly valued by members of our congregation who are housebound or have limited mobility; we have a loyal following who value the stimulus, friendship and sense of community. We were greatly saddened by the death of group stalwart, Carolyn Ashford-Russell, in September. New members, or occasional visitors to the group, are most welcome.

Refugee Support

Rachel Tanner

The Refugee Fund set up in 2020 continued to support a group of women and children seeking asylum and living in a hostel in Hounslow during 2025. We provided access to Wi-Fi, a regular payment of £5 per week (rising to £10 in the summer) to each adult, and various emergency payments, such as grants for school uniforms, travel to refugee and church social events, and travel to hospital appointments.

We did our best to make life more fun for the children. Stephanie White arranged outings during school holidays, including attending a family workshop at Chiswick House in the Easter holidays, and swimming lessons for two 12-year olds during Spring half term. In the summer holidays we accompanied some of the families on the annual trip to the seaside organised by Refugees Welcome Hounslow. In September we helped four of the families attend a joyous kite-flying afternoon organised by Hounslow Rotary and arranged for one of the children to experience riding on horse. And in December, two of the children went to the Christmas at Kew light show and were very excited to be given some pocket money to spend there.

Three women who were granted refugee status during 2025 were given resettlement grants by the fund, to help them access private rented accommodation and set up their new homes.

In January 2026 we received confirmation that the hostel would close within three weeks, which prompted a flurry of activity to support the three remaining families who were moved

by the Home Office to locations outside Hounslow. As the hostel has closed and people have been sent far afield, it is no longer feasible to have weekly contact with the women but we are still in touch with some of them and continue to offer friendship and moral support.

We are now considering the future of the Refugee Fund within the broader context of St Paul's outreach work.

Stay & Play

Shelagh Allsop

Stay & Play group on a Friday morning continues to be popular. As is the way of these groups, there is a level of churn; children grow out of it and move on to nursery, and new younger children join. At the moment we have an average of 6 adults attending with 1 or 2 children each so there are often approximately 20 people in the Lower Grove Park Room.

I usually run the group. A consistent face lends stability and predictability to the atmosphere. But I do have several volunteers to call on who are experienced and have DBS clearance to run the group if I am unable to be there.

The adults who come to the group tell me that they like it because the coffee is good, it is peaceful (we don't have background music although we do have a music and story section in the morning), and the group is small and contained. And, of course, our beautiful garden is very much loved and enjoyed by the children and their carers.

Sunday Coffee

Cathy Morgan

Sunday morning coffee continues to be an important part of our ministry as a way of welcoming new members and also enabling regulars to catch up with friends and offer support if needed. I would like to thank my regular helpers who are wonderful. As the congregation is growing considerably, to serve coffee to around 50 each week is no mean task! To my new helpers, thank you very much! Helping with the coffee with an "old hand" is a way of getting to know other parishioners and feeling included in church life.

Donations to the coffee fund have reduced considerably as we are now largely in a cashless society. I assume donations are made via the card reader by the door but this is impossible to evaluate. I am stepping down as the organiser this Spring, and very keen to hear from anyone who is interested in taking over this worthwhile and enjoyable role

Youth Group

Lucas Tanner

Youth Group met fortnightly during term times throughout 2025. The sessions were held on Sunday afternoons and led by Bea Vickers and Rev'd Caroline, with help from youth leaders

Sophia Cook and myself. There were typically around six teenagers attending sessions, although numbers fluctuated throughout the year.

The remit of the group is to encourage young people to think honestly about the teachings of Jesus and to participate in worship and the life of the church. All teenagers aged between 12-18 are welcome, whether they are committed Christians or whether they are thoughtful, curious atheists who are searching for moral answers to life's big questions. Each session offers a mix of informal social time, some focussed discussion, and prayer.

In the Spring term we based our discussion on the theme of Miracles; after Easter the group considered the appearances of Jesus after the resurrection. There was lively discussion about the disciples' discovery of the empty tomb and the challenge posed by the story of doubting Thomas. As we moved into June we centred on a theme inspired by 1 Corinthians 13: *faith, hope, and love*. In July we reflected on the primacy of love, the hollowness of other virtues without this fundamental grounding, and ways in which the Christian calling is not merely one of contemplation but prescribes action and service in our communities and the wider world. The ending of the academic year was celebrated with a barbecue in the vicarage garden where the young people enjoyed burgers and marshmallows cooked over the firepit. Bea Vickers, who had valiantly run the group since 2012, stepped down at the end of the Summer term. Many thanks to Bea for her dedication!

Youth Group resumed in the Autumn term, under the leadership of Rev'd Caroline and with support from our ordinands, Anne and Barbara, as well as myself. As most of the members were interested in Confirmation, we used the sessions to prepare for a Confirmation Service that was held at St Paul's Cathedral in November. We drew on the Youth Alpha Course to complement the sessions, finding their videos thought-provoking and engaging. Broadly, the course covered the following topics: faith and spirituality; The Church; worship and the sacraments; The Holy Trinity; Christianity and other faiths; Jesus' death and resurrection; and evangelism. Alongside the confirmation course, several members of the youth group began serving in church and contributed to the first all-age service in December.

This year so far, the theme of the sessions has been *The Lord's Prayer*. We have been reflecting on the prayer in sections, trying to better understand its language and meaning, and the ways in which we can integrate it into a fuller life of daily spirituality. Although two members of the group have unfortunately stopped attending due to other commitments, we have had two new boys join us in the same period. As well as lots of interesting discussion and sharing of ideas, there has been much fun had playing games of *Would I Lie To You?* and decorating cupcakes for Mothering Sunday. We are looking forward to the warmer weather returning so that we can return to the vicarage garden for badminton, table tennis, and football.

Final words from Rev'd Caroline

We are grateful to God for the year that has finished and look forward to continuing to serve him and our community in 2026.

