

A circular logo with a white background. Inside the circle, the text "ST FRANCIS" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below it, a horizontal line separates the name from the tagline "LIFE WITH GOD", which is also in a black, sans-serif font.

ST
FRANCIS

LIFE WITH GOD

A logo for Hope Church. The word "Hope" is written in a stylized, cursive font where the letters are interconnected. The "H" and "o" are red, while the "p" and "e" are yellow. Below "Hope", the word "CHURCH" is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.

Hope
CHURCH

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a church interior. A large, dark wooden cross is mounted on a light-colored wall. To the right of the cross is a tall, narrow window with a stained glass design. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, suggesting sunset or sunrise, with clouds visible through the window.

APCM 29.4.26

ST FRANCIS CHURCH
7.30PM

ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DEC 2025

St Francis & Hope Churches
Salisbury
Charity Number 1130133

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REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

Church Details

St Francis Church is an Anglican Church in the Diocese of Salisbury. The church building is situated in the northern part of the city, at the junction of Castle Road and Beatrice Road.

Correspondence to the Church, the PCC or its officers can be addressed to:

The Parish Office, St Francis Church,
Beatrice Road, Salisbury SP1 3PN

Structure and Management

The PCC is a corporate body established by the Church of England and operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure. The PCC registered with the Charity Commission during 2009; our Registration Number is 1130133. The appointment of members of the PCC is governed by and set out in the Church Representation Rules.

Churchwardens at St Francis are normally elected for a three-year term of office. They can attend training days to make them aware of the responsibilities that they have as Churchwardens, and that the PCC has overall. When necessary and appropriate, individual members of the PCC attend courses to learn about specific issues and to report back to the PCC.

The PCC meets regularly on alternate months; in the intervening months a Standing Committee meets. The Standing Committee comprises the PCC Chair, Treasurer, Operations Manager, and both Churchwardens – one of whom is Vice-Chair. Reports are received by the PCC from Deanery and General Synods, our link missionaries, and PCC Committees. The PCC has appointed sub-committees and task forces for special responsibilities and tasks, as follows:

	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Building & Grounds Committee	To deal with issues relating to the fabric of the church building and grounds
Mission Partners Committee	To liaise with our mission partners and inform our church giving and praying
Safeguarding Team	To report any safeguarding matters arising since the last PCC meeting
Hope Church Navigation Group	Report on the Pioneer Church at Old Sarum at every PCC meeting
Other taskforces are formed as and when they are needed for special events and for the appointment of staff.	

PCC membership

The following people served on the Parochial Church Council (PCC) during 2025 and consequently formed the Board of Trustees of the PCC during the period:

Incumbent	Reverend Canon Jean de Garis	Chair of the PCC (<i>from 2019</i>)
Assistant Minister	Reverend Mary Terry	(<i>from 2021</i>)
Assistant Curate	Reverend Joe Stone	(<i>from July 2023 – Dec 2025</i>)
Pioneer Priest	Rev Suzie Allen	<i>St Lawrence & Hope Church (from 2024)</i>
Churchwardens	Tom Wilkins	<i>elected 2020</i>
	Liz Liversage	<i>elected 2025</i>
Officers	Jane Franchi	Secretary (<i>from 2020</i>)
	Mark Venables	Treasurer (<i>from 2019</i>)
Deanery Synod Representatives	Jean Filtness	<i>elected April 2023</i>
	Sally Reed	<i>elected April 2023</i>
	Keith Leslie	<i>elected April 2024</i>
Elected Members	Sarah McNicol	<i>elected April 2022 for 3 years</i>
	Sherwin Polius	<i>elected April 2022 for 3 years</i>
	Sara Ferguson	<i>elected April 2024 for 3 years</i>
	Phil George	<i>elected April 2024 for 3 years</i>
	David Storey	<i>elected April 2024 for 3 years</i>
	Brian Webb	<i>elected April 2024 for 3 years</i>

Craig Gibbons
Mark Inman
Chris Lewis
Mark Venables

elected April 2025 for 3 years
elected April 2025 for 3 years
elected April 2025 for 3 years
elected April 2025 for 3 years

Review of Financial Activities and Affairs

Our accounts for the year are subject to Independent Examination. The PCC's Independent Examiners are Moore Stephens (South) LLP.

AIM AND PURPOSE

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Francis Church is responsible for co-operating with the Vicar, in promoting the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical, in the ecclesiastical parish. It is also responsible for overseeing ministry and mission on the Old Sarum and Longhedge estates especially through Hope Church. This Missional Community was lay led under licence from the Bishop of Salisbury. In 2020 it was launched as a church plant from St Francis, meeting at Old Sarum Community Centre, offering regular Sunday worship in addition to the previous missional activities. The PCC carries responsibility for the maintenance of the Parish Church and the adjacent Church Hall and Youth Lounge. The PCC is drawn from members of both St Francis Church and Hope Church, and some members regularly worship at both venues. The primary leadership for Hope Church has been exercised by Rev Suzie Allen since her licencing in April 2024.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The primary objective of the PCC is the proclamation of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrine and practices of the Church of England. St Francis PCC tries to achieve this by co-operating with and supporting our Vicar in promoting the mission of the church to the whole parish.

The Standing Committee (which sets the agenda for meetings of the PCC) seeks to keep a healthy balance in the agenda of meetings to include practical items (including finance, fabric and staffing) with pastoral and evangelistic and developmental priorities (including evangelism, children and youth, discipleship, worship and serving our community).

REVIEW OF THE YEAR (ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE)

ST FRANCIS



Identity

We express our life as a church through the strapline **"Life with God."** As a fellowship of believers, we do not "go to Church" so much as remember that **we are the Church** and that we aim to share every part of our lives as fully as we can with God. Every church activity is intended to achieve one or more of our 3 "E" objectives to:

Encounter	(meet with God)
Equip	(train us and form us in the likeness of Jesus)
Engage	(understand and serve the world more effectively in the power of the Spirit)

Benefice Connections

Throughout 2025 we have continued to grow as a **united benefice** of three Churches: St Francis, St Lawrence and Hope Church. These three expressions of being church are not in conflict or competition, rather they offer different ways and styles for diverse people to be in vibrant communities of faith. Our three Churches have become more interdependent, especially in sharing clergy for services each month at St Lawrence. St Lawrence is a separate parish with its own PCC and so publishes its own accounts and is not reported further here.

Clergy and Staff

In April 2024 **Rev Suzie Allen** was appointed into a new role of Pioneer Priest overseeing both St Lawrence and Hope Church. It has been a great joy to welcome her and her leadership gifts into these two worshipping communities. **Rev Joe Stone** shared in an increasing range of ministerial opportunities across the benefice. At the end of 2025 he was appointed to a new post: Team Vicar in the Avon River Team. So, he completed his Curacy in our benefice. Joe and Emily and their family have been sent to their new home and benefice with our love and blessing.

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Rev Mary Terry has continued in her valued role as Assistant Minister. Her pastoral ministry has been especially valued including running The Bereavement Journey course, in supporting the ministry of our four Lay Pastoral Assistants, and as a key voice our church leadership team.

We were grateful for **Emily Stone's** development of her role as Children & Families Pastor in 2025. She extended the number of Sundays for children's groups and offered new holiday "Stay and Play" drop-in provision at St Francis. The children's Holiday Club "Deep Sea Divers" in August 2025 was especially popular. We are really delighted to have been able to appoint **Jacinta Blunt** to this role, starting in January 2026, following Emily's departure at the end of 2025.

Cat Evans completed her first year as part time Worship Pastor at St Francis. She is responsible for the delivery of our 11 am band-led worship and for growing and resourcing our music in worshipping community. We were delighted to welcome Clive and Melanie Williams to the 11 am worship leadership team. Cat has developed space in worship for greater expression of the creative arts which has been appreciated, especially at "Creative Encounter" evenings. Cat took the lead in writing our Mission Hub bid for external funding for pioneering outreach, described later.

As Operations Manager **Jane Franchi** manages much of the day to day running of the Church. With characteristic creativity she oversees our internal and external communications, bookings, PCC policies, supports our HR and is Secretary to the PCC. **Sophie Stokes** has continued her excellent work as our part-time Youth Pastor. She initiated and led the Youth Alpha Course for the city in the autumn term, with two other churches, in which 100 teenagers participated. This has led to an exciting spirit of greater cooperation and collaboration going forward across several Salisbury churches. Sophie's ministry also includes some schools' ministry.

In March 2025 we were delighted to appoint **Helen Gill** as the new Hope Church Co-ordinator. We thank **Priscilla Venables** who had previously done an excellent job in organising Hope Church comms across different media as well as a range of administrative roles. **Charlie Davies** has continued his valuable service as church caretaker, unlocking and locking, moving furniture and cleaning. **Alan Goldie** administers our external bookings and also shares in caretaking part time. We continue to thank God for the joyful ministries of our Licenced Lay Ministers (LLMs): **Jo Inman, Melanie Williams, Sara Ferguson** and **Richard Hollands**. We thank God for the enthusiasm, faith and expertise of all our staff members and volunteers.

The **Clergy and Staff Team** meet every week for prayers and sharing current activities and future initiatives in ministry. St Francis has a culture of working collaboratively in the daily running of practical ministry and engaging with policies together. We pray for each other and offer each other valued mutual support. Some of us were able to attend the excellent HTB Leadership Conference at the Royal Albert Hall in May.

Overseeing our Church finances is our Treasurer **Mark Venables**. He does an excellent job of advising the PCC towards prudent decision-making. Mark makes the payments and tracks the huge number of income and expenditure items each month, as well as preparing our annual accounts. In this role he is ably assisted by **Sally Reed** who authorises payments in our 2-person authorisation system and oversees our staff salaries, pensions and NI contributions. **Sharon Goldie** oversees and tracks our Gift Aid claims to HMRC, which is a vital element of our income stream. These volunteers work behind the scenes with great professionalism, discretion and devotion.

We do face a **serious financial challenge** in the years ahead. We have always paid our **Parish Share** in full (the money requested by the diocese to fund ministry across the whole diocese). Historically, the diocese has not been financially sound. For the last 20 years expenditure has significantly exceeded income. Assets and Investments are now greatly reduced and Parish Share has had to be increased. However, the way this is calculated by the diocese has changed in the last year. As a result, St Francis has been asked for an **added £60,000** in 2026. It is forecast to increase further in 2027. Without a massive increase in the number of households giving to the church and/or a massive increase in a small number of very generous donors, it is hard to imagine how this swift increase of Share can be met in the future.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a vital part of our caring for people well: it is an expression of the Gospel. In our benefice we have three Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs): one in each church community. We thank **Hannah Wilkins** and **Jean Filtness** for their commitment in this role. Jean Filtness has been especially helpful in re-writing our Safeguarding Policies to ensure they are compliant with legal requirements and good practice. We convene meetings three times a year with Clergy, Verifiers, Children and Youth Pastors and PSOs to ensure best practice is maintained. We have an annual Safeguarding Sunday which includes basic signposting and training for every church member. We have safer recruitment practices, including taking up two references and DBS when appropriate. We currently have well over 100 church members who serve children and vulnerable adults who have been DBS checked. We ensure all have been

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appropriately trained to the correct level and that their training is up to date. We thank the safeguarding team for their vigilance and care.

Following a serious national data breach affecting the Church of England in 2025, Salisbury Diocese has moved to a new provider for data management called **thirtyone:eight**. Data is still being migrated to the new system at a diocesan level. The **Safeguarding Dashboard** encourages every Anglican Church to track their policies and procedures accurately. St Francis, Hope Church and St Lawrence are all actively working towards complete compliance – a task that is always in process as national guidelines are regularly revised and annual local checks are continually updated. We should never be complacent about Safeguarding. Unequal power dynamics can easily lead to problems in any organisation, including churches. We believe and teach that Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

ST FRANCIS CHURCH

St Francis Church offers a varied pattern of Sunday worship. These include:

9.30 am Holy Communion and **11 am Informal Worship** (with families and youth groups in term time). Once a month, each month on Sunday evenings at **7 pm** we have a **Bible Focus, Encounter** or an **Iona Evening Communion**. Our range of worship experiences includes a small choir ably led by Susan Carey, worship bands, formal liturgy and all-age interactive worship. Often for the teaching component of worship, age-appropriate groups are formed for some of the service. The church is blessed with having several excellent different venues on site for small-group discipleship.

The **Sunday Teaching Programme** in 2025 included exploring over 12 weeks what it means to be **the Body of Christ**. During Lent we used themes from Richard Foster's **Celebration of Discipline** to grow our personal devotional practices (connecting with our Lent Course on **Prayer and Fasting**). We then spent 12 weeks in **1 John**. In the summer we noticed some of the "little characters" only found in **Luke's Gospel**. In the autumn we looked in detail at some **Sayings of Jesus that reveal God's Heart** from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 and 6. The themes in Advent and Christmas helped us prepare to welcome Jesus. We are extremely grateful for the ministry of our preaching team which in 2025 added **new speakers** including Rev Rupert Charkham, Rev Gale Hunt, Rev Brian Meardon, and Edmund Phillimore to the existing team. Rev Sandra Williams worships at St Francis Church, but also regularly leads and preaches at St Lawrence Church which is enormously appreciated. She has additionally taken on responsibility as St Lawrence's PSO.

St Francis connects with a large number of **children and young people** each week. This is through a combination of the Sunday programmes and mid-week activities. Thursday **Teddy Bears** serves a large number of local families with young children. St Francis is a safe place to meet, connect with other local families, and enable children to enjoy socialising and playing together. About 40 of us camped for a joyful **New Wine** again at Shepton Mallet in August.

Our **Youth Ministry** includes a Friday night club with 2 sessions (school years 6–9 and 10–13). There is Sunday provision for older and younger youth during services, and a Sunday evening discipleship group each week which includes fun games and eating together. As mentioned earlier in this report the highlight of our youth programme was the dynamic inter-church autumn **Youth Alpha** course. Exciting and creative **excursions** were organised through the year and enjoyed by young people. Assembling enthusiastic and committed teams of volunteers continues to be crucial in all these activities.

In addition to services in our church buildings, clergy and LPAs take Holy Communion to house-bound members and lead worship every month in **five residential homes**. We take assemblies and support the curriculum regularly in **three local schools** and offer support in a variety of ways.

St Francis supports individuals and other charities engaged in mission. Each September we have a **Missions Sunday** when instead of a sermon, we have short presentations on up to 8 of our 12 **Mission Partners**. Every week we include at least one of these partners in intercession. We support all in **prayer**; some through **sharing** details of their ministry; and others with **financial support**. Sometimes we have visits, or interviews in services with our mission partners. In 2025 we were delighted to develop a new phase in our relationship with **Melissa Hall** as a mission partner.

In 2025 we had **211 people** on our **Church Electoral Roll**. The **Average Church Attendance (ACA)** through 2025 was similar to 2024 at **174** adults on Sunday mornings at St Francis and Hope services combined. Including children, the ACA through 2025 was **217**. This number increased greatly for the main Christian Festivals. Through the summer holidays the additional **Worship on the Green** was popular for families with young children. New church members have come through a combination of moving to the area and wanting to find a new church, some moving to St Francis from other churches, and a small number of people coming to faith and joining us.

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The **Adult Alpha Course** in the autumn led to several people deciding to become Christians. Two were baptised in the chilly River Avon in December declaring their faith in Christ. Though around 174 adults attend most Sundays, through the course of a month, that might well be 250 different people, as a significant number attend only once or twice a month. Those who are new to the Church are invited to a **Welcome Lunch** usually hosted each term.

In many ways the life blood of the church is expressed in the 15 mid-week **Life Groups** (LGs). These are typically run every fortnight in a church member's home with 8 – 12 members in each. **Phil and Sue George** oversee our adult LGs. The groups are invaluable for growing as disciples of Jesus and caring for one another. There are currently around 140 adults in groups. LG Leaders are invited to a termly meeting for mutual encouragement, prayer, training and resources to help their groups to flourish.

The **Church buildings and grounds** are extremely well used at all times. An excellent and committed small team, ably led by **Brian Webb**, keep them in an excellent state of repair as our 2024 **Quinquennial Survey** reported. Early in 2025 we fitted an excellent new Allen & Heath **Sound System** including in-ear monitors for the band. An additional **36 Solar Panels** were fitted on the roof which will be good for reducing both our carbon footprint and our electricity bills. Our buildings are used not only by the church but in supporting our wider community in a wide variety of ways. **External users** include children's academic support groups. We offer space and a "home" for many community groups such as U3A, a Community Choir, Rainbows, Brownies and Guides, as well as charities and other churches. We also sponsor the **Ladybirds Preschool** in the hall.

MISSION ACTION PLAN

The PCC is in the second year of defining and developing our Mission Action Plan (MAP). These are the things we consider our top missional priorities as a church. The four areas we have identified for particular focus are:

- 1 Evangelism and outreach:** sharing the good news of Jesus more widely and more effectively as a church
- 2 Church Community:** helping to build connections and stronger relationships within our church fellowship
- 3 Training and Development:** identifying and prioritising opportunities for individuals and groups to grow
- 4 Worship:** offering an appropriate range of worship opportunities for groups and individuals to respond to God

These priorities are led by small groups who are passionate about these priorities and help to organise programmes and activities towards their goals. MAP progress is reported at each PCC meeting using the colour coded RAG rating (Red / Amber / Green) to identify outcomes that are on track or behind schedule. The MAP runs on a three-year rolling time-line and has helped us to prioritise more effectively in our decision-making as a Church Council.

MISSION HUB BID

In January 2025 St Francis was invited by Salisbury Diocese to submit a bid to be one of the "Mission Hubs" in the diocese to be supported with money from the national church. They aim to develop Mission Hubs to help to transform and grow the local church. We were one of 13 churches whose bid was accepted in principle. The diocesan application was then submitted for funding from the Diocesan Investment Programme, funded by the **Church Commissioners**. £5.1 million has been awarded to accelerate the development of the diocesan vision, in response to the core challenges identified: declining attendance, missing generations and diminishing resources.

The **five interventions** St Francis and Hope are aiming to resource through this additional money are:

YOUTH WORK – to expand this critical ministry, by serving and empowering the next generation in discipleship, outreach and evangelism

SERVING THE VULNERABLE – to serve the physical, mental and spiritual needs of vulnerable adults, supplementing the work of other health professionals in the city, aligning with other pastoral pathways by recruiting a Parish Nurse

A CREATIVE HUB – offering a new creative space where those in both our communities and churches can flourish as they engage with the arts, questions of faith, and encounter life-giving community

DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS IN MISSION – continuing and increasing our collaboration with churches and other agencies across our city who are seeking the same good outcomes

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EVANGELISM – resourcing Hope Church for evangelism on the Old Sarum and Longhedge estates and growing outreach with the younger generations in the place they engage

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Cat Evans and Jean de Garis have been asked to re-submit a revised bid to fulfil the necessary funding criteria, but we hope that this will be submitted and approved early in 2026. The money would enable us to employ current staff for additional hours towards mission-specific activities. We would also employ a Parish Nurse in the newly created role.

HOPE CHURCH

Rev Suzie Allen as **Pioneer Priest** oversees Hope Church supported by the **Navigation Group** (comprising Suzie Allen, Jean Filtress, Lorna Foster, Jean de Garis, Helen Gill, April Hall, Sophie Stokes and Joy Wilkinson). The Navigation group is a specially constituted group of the PCC with Terms of Reference to serve the communities of Old Sarum and Longhedge. The Navigation Group met eight times in 2025 overseeing liturgical, pastoral and missional activities. This has been challenging but also fruitful. We thank the Navigation Group for their dedication and faithfulness in serving God and the Church. They spent time on a questionnaire seeking to clarify **identity** and **vision** for Hope Church.



As Suzie shares her time between Hope Church and St Lawrence Parish, she normally worships twice a month with each. Through 2025 the Average Church Attendance (ACA) was **16 adults** and **14 children**.

Most Sundays of the month Hope Church had the following pattern of worship:

1st : All Age / 2nd : Messy Church / 3rd : Communion & Hope Kids / 4th : Bible Brunch

Highlights in 2025 have included the popular and missional **Easter Egg Hunt**, **Dwell** “listening prayer” evenings to hear God, a very full and imaginative range of benefice-wide **Lent Activities**, a Big Day Out at the **Heavy Horse Farm** which was especially enjoyed, **Stay and Play** activities (run with support from Emily Stone) and a **Community Lunch**. The arrival of Hope Church branded T-shirts has been an attractive and effective way of advertising the church in the wider community. Some changes and innovations have been introduced to the pattern and content of worship at Hope Church for 2026.

THE FUTURE

I have been vicar of this wonderful benefice for seven years and I will retire in May 2026. Since my arrival in May 2019, we have all needed additional resilience to cope with the challenges and changes we have faced. Some of the challenges have been global, like the pandemic and subsequent economic collapse. Other challenges have come through the shifting sands of cultural and theological uncertainty within both society and church. There has also been a loss of confidence because of moral failure in high profile political and religious leaders.

But the Kingdom of God will prevail. The shape and style of local congregations and even national churches has always needed to be able to flex, pivot and adapt. Sometimes through painful change and God’s grace, it is re-born. Jesus said to an elderly religious man that he needed to be “born again”. It left the man confused and slightly irritated. But the offer of new life is always offered to us all – as individuals and as a community of believers.

A ship in the harbour is safe - but it’s not what ships are built for. We are called in every generation to proclaim afresh the hope there is for all humanity through what Jesus accomplished in his life, death and resurrection. This is not a time for us to retreat to what appears to be safety. It is a time to raise our sails, catch the wind of the Spirit of God and to be bold in the service of Jesus.

Romans 15.13

“May the God of hope
fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,
so that you may overflow with hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

SAFEGUARDING



St Francis and Hope Church continue to take seriously their responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable adults within the parish.

Over the past year, a small number of safeguarding disclosures have been made. These were appropriately referred to the Salisbury Diocesan Safeguarding Team, and while no immediate action was required in most cases, some situations continue to be monitored with ongoing diocesan support. All matters have been handled in line with Church of England safeguarding procedures, with due regard for confidentiality and the welfare of those involved.

There have been several key developments in safeguarding systems and practice. The Diocese has introduced the Thirtyone:eight platform for managing DBS checks, streamlining administration and improving oversight. The Salisbury Diocesan Safeguarding Hub has also been launched as a central resource for guidance and support. The parish continues to engage actively with the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard, working jointly across the benefice. Significant progress has been made, with compliance levels high and remaining actions largely administrative. The dashboard is reviewed regularly to ensure continued compliance and identify areas for development.

Safeguarding leadership has evolved over the year. Hannah Rendall has taken on the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer at Hope Church. As Hannah starts her new role Jean Filtness will support her as well as lead on the DBS clearances for Hope church. Sandra Williams has taken on the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer for St Lawrence church at Stratford Sub Castle.

Training and safer working practices remain a priority. A well-attended safeguarding training session took place in September 2025, and Jacinta Blunt (new Children and Family Pastor at St Francis) is currently training to become a safeguarding trainer to support future in-house delivery. Training records are maintained and regularly updated in liaison with the Diocese. Depending on the number requiring foundation training / update an in-person safeguarding training may be arranged for a date later in the year.

Safeguarding continues to be embedded in the life of the parish. Termly Benefice Safeguarding Team meetings are held to review safeguarding matters and discuss key topics such as safer recruitment, lone working, and compliance through the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard. The Safeguarding Action Plan is a standing agenda item to ensure consistent progress. Policies, including lone working, are reviewed regularly, and safeguarding information is visible across parish websites and church settings. A safeguarding awareness weekend was also held following the safeguarding foundation training in September 2025 to promote vigilance across the church community.

This year key actions identified from ongoing review and a recent safeguarding audit include ensuring robust fire evacuation procedures, routinely obtaining references for all children's and youth volunteers and ensuring safeguarding displays are checked regularly. Additional focus has been given to online safety, particularly in relation to youth WhatsApp groups, and to identifying a named person to oversee church-related social media.

Looking ahead, the parish will continue to strengthen safeguarding practice by embedding the use of the Thirtyone:eight DBS system, making full use of the Diocesan Safeguarding Hub, and progressing towards full compliance on the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard. Risk assessments for children's activities will continue, and regular monitoring of safeguarding processes will remain a priority.

Hannah Wilkins, Parish Safeguarding Officer

HOPE CHURCH IN 2025

- Hope Day Out – A great many of us enjoyed time together at the Dorset Heavy Horse Farm
- Hope Lite Services during the School Summer Holidays (stripped back services)
- Josh's Sports Day Haemophilia Society fundraiser (raising money for a charity chosen by Hope Church)
- Zoom Discipleship began and meets weekly on a Thursday evening
- 'Food for Thought' Hope Barbeque - an opportunity for a social and reflection on where we are as a Church.
- New branded Hope t-shirts - many of us brought our own T-shirts to wear when out and about on the estate 'being church' i.e. when we litter pick.
- Audio Sermons have started to be added to the website
- Bring Your Own Christmas Craft Evening - an outreach and bonding evening for our community.
- Christmas Carols at Avonbourne House - as a Church we visited and had an amazing time with the residents. (some of the children dancing along to the carols was greatly appreciated!).

Restructured Services from January 2026:

Week one – Breakfast Church (our intentional 'invitational' service)

Week two – Reflect and Connect (led by lay member, Sophie Stokes)

Week three – Sunday Gathering with Holy Communion

Week four – Worship and the Word (led by lay members, the Fosters)

- Jacinta Blunt joined as Community Missioner 12.5 hours a week.
- Stay and Play - we continue to put on this community afternoon in the school holidays regularly. A great opportunity to meet the wider community.
- Tots Together - we have begun a new toddler group at the Community Centre. Its started well. Jacinta and Suzie lead this and are looking for rota'd volunteers!
- Easter Egg Hunt - Joy Wilkinson organised an amazing community egg hunt - there was a good turn out from the community (with contacts growing from the outreach events and toddler group).
- Keep Britain Tidy Spring Litter Pick 'Love Where You Live' - Hope 'out and about'...

Hope continues to be a place of great love and acceptance.

We are in the process of holding our first ever elections as this report goes 'live'.

2027 will be concentrating on building relationships (with individuals and community groups), and getting Hope's name 'out there'. We are beginning to look to our finances as a Church but remain a small congregation of approx. 12 family units.



St. Francis Youth

Younger Youth refers to school years 6-9

Older Youth refers to school years 10-13

Regular activities:

Thursday Discipleship (available to yr 6+) mostly attended by Hope Church Youth, this was a very special space with games and a Bible Study. Relationships became deep and vulnerable. Unable to continue into 2026 due to staffing.

Friday Night Youth social gathering – outreach (available to yr 6+) numbers dropped near the end of 2025 however relationships have become closer. Fully staffed although a spare pair of hands would be useful. Had visits from some mission partners including Child of Hope, Women's Refuge and the Food Bank.

Sunday gatherings during church services – younger and older groups merged to ease burden of getting volunteers and to encourage older youth to attend. Sophie is leading 2/4 of these and by Dec '25 fully staffed. Young People (YP) seem to enjoy this space, there is investigation into making it more accessible – available quiet space plus a set structure.

Sunday evening discipleship (available to yr 6+) has a set 2/month structure, young people leading their own Bible studies or watching The Chosen with discussion. YP are inviting friends and this is quite well attended by some who find it tricky to access church.

Sunday PM Youth (available to yr 10+) runs weekly, 3 of 4 are an hour playing and an hour session, 1 of 4 is either a movie night or the encounter evening (which are both available to yr 6+). Good engagement and deep conversations. Most who attend Sunday PM do not attend church in the morning also

Sophie had been regularly visiting Georg at SWGS for a drop in session, this paused after Summer as Georg moved positions within the Bridge.

We paused all regular evening church activities (Thursday discipleship, Sunday discipleship and Sunday PM) to run a collaborative Youth Alpha series in the Autumn Term. Over 100 booked on and 80 attended regularly (with approximately 20 adult volunteers helping each week). This was a huge success and many YP attended every week. This included games, food, testimonies from adults and YP, Alpha videos, discussions and worship.

Events:

Viney Hill Youth Retreat – 15 attended including 2 who do not come to our church, it was a great weekend with lots of fun and some very deep conversations

Church Camp (great opportunity for YP to spend time with other children, YP and adults from our church family). Especially lovely for Sophie to be able to play games with the YP .



Families picnics happened approximately once per term. Opportunity for children, YP and their families to come together and bond outside of the church service. Well attended by children, not very well attended by YP – more promotion required for 2026

Trips to the beach and NFWP with Salisbury Baptist Church ahead of Alpha – excellent fun and such a good idea because they began to recognise each other by the time Youth Alpha came

13 YP joined their families/friends at New Wine and had a fantastic experience. Sophie joined them for 1 night

Youth development/leadership:

11 YP were 'young leaders' for Alpha which meant they arrived early to set up & pray for their tables, they were a good influence and made sure their tables were engaging

To advertise Youth Alpha multiple children went into Salisbury City Centre and approached teenagers, played a game, shared sweets and told them about our churches with a personal invitation to Youth Alpha

YP are serving @ St Francis on worship & tech team, kids, welcome, coffee bar and requesting to help with prayer ministry, leading and preaching. Various YP are leading Bible Studies during the discipleship group and are involved in helping to plan Friday Night Youth. YP have also requested to be a part of leadership within the church, asking to be part of the MAP group conversations and on the Nav Group.

YP are serving @ Hope on worship & tech team, kids, welcome, refreshments, leading and preaching. A youth led service @ Hope is almost 100% led by youth.

2 YP have received mentoring from an adult, 1 YP is becoming a mentor for a child

A YP is now involved in work experience with St Francis and multiple are completing their DofE experience with St Francis

2 young people have attended additional courses in 2025, both have done Amplify (a YP evangelism course) and The Scattering (a mission trip in Wales) and have spoken to other YP about how they might implement some of their evangelism/mission training in Salisbury in 2026

Other exciting news:

YP are finding themselves coming to the 9.30 service without their families. Mary has been caring for them. God is moving among YP! The decision has been made that Mary will journey with them and guide them to Youth activities until they leave school/college (upon completion of yr 13) where she will work with them more closely

2 YP were baptised



CHILDREN & FAMILIES

We are very grateful for the dedicated volunteers who make the children's work possible at St Francis. As happens, a few volunteers have had to step down but thankfully others have stepped up to help. Volunteer Sunday, asking parents via the WhatsApp group and asking people face-to-face has yielded enough volunteers that we enter 2026 with a full rota.

From January to March, Emily ran a Parenting for Faith Course and we had 17 parents overall from St Francis taking part over eight sessions. Parents found the course beneficial and, from our weekly discussions, it was seen to have an impact on their families' lives.

There are three children's groups that meet on Sunday mornings. We continue to meet every Sunday (unless it is an All-Age). The Family Time session takes place in the Chapter Room and consists of 0 years to pre-schoolers and their parents. It is led by one volunteer and often a member of the Youth and another helper. The Younger Group, who meet in the Ladybirds Pre-school, is for children in Reception to Year 2 along with two volunteers and often one or two volunteers from Youth. The Older Group meet in the hall and is made up of children from Year 3 to Year 5, two volunteers and one or two volunteers from Youth. This year, after consulting with the Family Time volunteers, we did not keep their themes the same as the other two groups. We all agreed that songs and stories work so well so we went down that route and focused on men and women in the Bible.

In April, as a follow on from the Parenting for Faith Course, Emily led a session for all parents during a Sunday service where they explored the vision at St Francis and what that means as parents raising their children in the faith and helping their children to engage during the services. The children in the Younger and Older Groups then did a whole term's worth of informative sessions on what church is, what we do in the services and why, how we can work together as the body of Christ and so on.

With the help of the children, Emily designed and refurbished the space where the Older Group meet. This is now a calm, comfortable and inviting space for the children which they (and the volunteers) really enjoy.

All-Age Services are generally on the second Sunday of the month unless at specific times of the year such as Christmas. We have continued to develop these and we now consistently have a large space at the front for children and their families to sit comfortably. Children are encouraged to join in with the worship and are then given a sheet during the sermon which has questions and activities on linked to the theme. This seems to be working well. Uniformed Groups are actively invited to three services throughout the year: Mothering Sunday, Remembrance Day and the Toy Service. The 23rd Scout Group, led by Ed Halsey, have attended every service. The Rainbows from 14th St Francis Salisbury Group and Old Sarum Beavers have also joined us this year.

Church on the Green took place throughout the summer holidays and took a more 'forest church' approach which was well received by adults and children alike. We explored five of Jesus' "I am..." statements and did a related hands-on activity, such as leaf 'bashing' onto fabric, leaf imprints on clay, weaving, a stick 'candle' and bread-on-a-stick over a fire.

Deep Sea Divers Holiday Club took place in August and was a huge success. Thirty volunteers - including 11 youth – made it possible for 49 children to learn about the grace and goodness of God over three fun-packed mornings! It was wonderful to see four to 79 year-olds coming together and praising God! It was a huge amount of work from many people but worth it!

We continued our half-termly BYO picnics this year which encourage families to come together and get to know each other more. Youth families are also involved. There were some Stay & Play sessions during the holidays earlier in the year but these were discontinued at St Francis due to a lower take up and our focus turning to supporting similar sessions for Hope Church and their local community.

Joe led Men Behaving Dadly sessions throughout the year which brought together a group of dads and grandads and their (grand)children. Usually meeting in the Youth Lounge or on the Green, they enjoyed bacon butties and fun activities.

Teddybears continued to provide a safe, welcoming space for families from the local community to come on Thursday mornings during term-time. Once again, committed volunteers make this much-loved group possible. We have expanded the team to include volunteers committed specifically to conversing with those who come. This means we can be an even more welcoming group, especially for those who come for the first time – of which we seem to have, on average, one a week.

The link with Mrs Hoxey and the Collective Worship Council at St Mark's School continued largely in the form of supporting a Praying Parents WhatsApp group. This grew out of the work on prayer last year. The children at the school regularly write prayers, put them in the Prayer Box and Mrs Hoxey passes them on to the WhatsApp group knowing that there are a group of willing parents and Emily who pray for them.

A special thank you to Margaret Woodhouse who prepares and leads fortnightly crafts at Teddybears, organises the posies for Mothering Sunday and sends out baptism anniversary cards to children who have been baptised at our church. Thanks also to Olwen Brockway who has sewn many a cushion cover this year and helped in the refurbishment of the Older Group's space.

Emily Stone

MUSIC IN WORSHIP

In 2025 God was faithful as we:

- installed a new sound system and drum enclosure, with training and a period of troubleshooting, giving greater control and flexibility with sound.
- Grew our Encounter evenings to include diverse forms of worship and prayer, helping adults and young people listen to God's voice in new ways.
- Cleared the Lady Chapel and treated the floor so it can, as time and funding allow, be used as a creative workshop space.
- Encouraged small groups to consider how worship can be incorporated into their gatherings.
- Helped our children explore worship through singing, journalling and art.
- Sought to include our classical musicians by creating arrangements for a wider range of instruments.
- Seen young people begin to get involved in worship teams and sound desk training.
- Experienced powerful times of worship at Youth Alpha, with cross-church collaboration among adults and young people.
- Continued exploring ways to include children in Sunday morning worship (with a further change coming in March 2026).
- Created and progressed the Mission Hub funding bid, and served the diocese by helping shape and lead prayer and worship within Mission Hub gatherings.

Cat Evans, Worship Pastor

ST FRANCIS CHURCH CHOIR (9.30AM SERVICE)

We have continued to meet with Nicola each Sunday at 9.00am to 'warm up' our voices and sing through the hymns relevant to the theme of the day. Hopefully, early arrivals in the congregation then know what to expect in the service.

We are most grateful to Nicola for all the preparation of the music she does during the week and look forward to having a reliable replacement organ! Do not be deceived by the pipes seen in the gallery – they were left there when the original organ was dismantled many years ago.

It will be good to have some new members to help continue the tradition of leading the singing – we know there are some of you 'down there' in the congregation!

Susan Carey, Choir Director

ST FRANCIS COMMUNITY SINGERS

We have had another enjoyable and fun year with Suzanne, our Musical Director. We took part in the Salisbury Choir Festival, sang at Elizabeth Court for the residents, and at Christmas visited Avonbourne Care Home and were one of the choirs singing at the Tree Festival at St. Thomas' Church. We also went to the Ladybirds Pre-School on the church site to sing at their Christmas get together, and were accompanied by the children shaking instruments! (Our thanks to Mel Williams who played the piano for us on that occasion).

We are about 17 strong at the moment, and have good alto and soprano sections, with two much appreciated male members singing bass and tenor. We meet on a Monday afternoon in the Beatrice Room. 2.30 pm for tea and 3.00pm for singing. No fee the first time! No experience necessary! If you'd like to join us please contact Di Webb, tel. 07733433615 or speak to Jane in the Church Office.

DEANERY SYNOD

2025 Deanery Synod Annual Report – for the APCM

St Francis is represented by lay members Sally Reed & Keith Leslie with Jean de Garis as the clergy member. Mary Terry also attended some of the meetings. Our parish is entitled to have 3 lay members and we ought to be able to fulfil our quota with a congregation our size. Anyone interested should contact Sally or Keith. The meetings help one to keep in touch with what is going on in the other parishes in the city. They are well planned so that time is not wasted. This cross fertilisation of ideas can be beneficial as well as encouraging.

During the 2025 - year energetic & lively meetings were held in February at St Mark's Church, July at St Lawrence Stratford Sub Castle & November at St Paul's Church Foyer. The items covered during the year included :

The "Make Jesus Known" initiative,

The Diocesan Vision – small groups discussed "How does your congregation intentionally aim at growing younger members & becoming more diverse"

The new regulations for a meeting to be "quorate" ie enough members to be present to hold a vote if necessary.

Finance of course (Deanery & Diocesan). What to do with money held in the Deanery Treasurers account which should be disbursed.

Mission Hubs at which Jean gave a clear explanation of the plans at St Francis & Craig Ryalls spoke about St Paul's intentions.

In July Suzie gave a talk about St Lawrence Parish & its history, then contrasted it with Hope Church where she is assistant priest which was started in 2020.

The Deanery Synod is still looking for someone to act as secretary for the group. This person has to be a member of Deanery Synod & be prepared to attend the DS standing committee meetings.

The dates for 2026 were fixed as: 10th February, 17th June, 12th November.

Sally Reed

We usually meet on the second Wednesday of the month in the Beatrice Room from 9.45am for coffee; ready to start our meeting at 10.30am. We have a short devotional time and then a talk or discussion on a theme. Parish Communion is at 11.15am to which all are welcome but is mainly attended by our small group.

Every year we each receive our Mothers' Union Prayer Diary booklet, which has a short prayer/ meditation for each day and subjects for the Wave of Prayer for every week, naming Countries, Specific Areas and members needing our prayers and support.

We have a twice-yearly magazine called 'Connected' with information on MU work throughout the world. Within the Diocese we have an MU "Windows" newsletter circulated in Spring and Autumn. Occasionally members, who are more physically able, support or attend MU events in the Diocese

This year we are celebrating the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Mothers' Union. We are a remarkable Christian organisation, women-led but open to all who support our aims. Some 4 million members in 83 countries work at grass roots level with practical faith-led action, providing Christian care for families in various community projects and global programmes. Our work is guided by our three core pillars of transformation: Ending Violence, Ending Injustice and Ending Poverty and underpinned by prayer.

We are delighted to welcome new members to our group but attending a group is not necessary for membership as all our activities are founded on prayer. Membership is open to anyone, man or woman, (not just mothers) who would like to join us and support our aims.

You are most welcome to join us at a meeting or contact Carole (01722 324421), Carrie (01722 500845) or Jenny (01722 328761) to find out more. MU website www.mothersunion.org



STRICTLY COME LADIES

Strictly Ladies have met regularly this past year generally on the third Friday of the month. We have recently had new people join which is encouraging. Our intention is to provide a lighthearted evening exploring various activities from crafts and flower arranging to bowling and guided walks.

The evenings have been designed to give people an opportunity to contribute in some way either by sharing their experiences or bringing in pictures etc to show. We hope this format encourages people to get to know each other and develop new friendships .

FRIDAY CAFE @ ST FRANCIS

The Cafe continues to be a popular venue for coffee and home made cakes on a Friday, where a warm and friendly welcome awaits all our customers. We have an ever increasing core of regulars, who come nearly every week, plus an increasing number of newer visitors, many of whom have now become fairly regular themselves.

On the first and third Friday of the month we also have a small group of local walkers who meet to take a light walk around Victoria Park, followed by tea or coffee and cake at the Cafe. They are, of course, very welcome and make an interesting addition to our regulars.

We operate from the Beatrice Room, with one larger table inside the church itself. Our visitors can sit on their own and read the papers, if they so wish, or join one of the many welcoming tables of customers.

We are very grateful to to all the volunteers who so generously give of their time and talents to make the Cafe the friendly, welcoming place that it is. We are also grateful for the help of Charlie, our Caretaker, who does so much to assist us and is ready to chat to anybody who needs it.

If you feel you could help with the Cafe, we are always grateful for new volunteers and you would be warmly welcomed. Just speak to me, or you can contact me on 07518007234.

Penny Green

ST FRANCIS COMMUNITY SHOW

This year saw another amazing show, not an easy year for vegetables and flowers, but the spread was plentiful and the judges said a high standard. The numbers in the baking and handicraft are impressive, with lots of healthy competition. We love to see the smiles on the children's faces when they come in to check how their entries have done, with lovely comments from the judge. Thankyou to all who make it happen each year, committee, judges and people entering.

Emma Turner

LADYBIRDS PRE-SCHOOL

This is my fifth and final annual report as Chair of Ladybirds.

I want to thank my fellow committee members.

Sharon Goldie, as Treasurer, does an outstanding work keeping a clear eye on our accounts and the general management and running of Ladybirds.

Bill Wilson, as Secretary, has not only written and circulated Agendas and Minutes, but also been an invaluable help in drafting policies and enabling good governance of Ladybirds. Both have been really committed to the smooth, safe and successful running of Ladybirds.

Next, I thank the Ladybirds staff.

Nicola, is approaching the end of her second year as manager of Ladybirds. There are always changes and challenges to address in leadership. I especially thank her for her compassion and care of the children in her charge. She brings energy and kindness to the role. Other staff, Kylie and Sonia, have made invaluable contributions to the safe and effective running of Ladybirds. We were delighted that Maria could join the team this year.

In the year ahead many of the head-winds outlined in recent years are still present:

- a difficult financial background to our wider economy and running any UK business
- a national shortage of early years education professionals
- children leaving in the summer of 2025 made it hard to balance the books

But positively, we have a dedicated, committed staff team who work together well. The Church Fabric Team (led by Brian Webb) continue to improve the Ladybird's site. We were able to replace the astroturf in October which was excellent. Little by little new names are being added to the school roll, re-building our numbers.

We thank parents for entrusting us with their precious children.

Ladybirds children bring their energy and enthusiasm for life to everything they do. It is a delight to work with them. I enjoy coming in regularly and leading singing with them on the guitar. It is always great fun.

Ladybirds Pre-School offers a wonderful local service.

There are good facilities and a dedicated staff team. We want to see it thrive and attract many new children in the months ahead.

Early years lay foundations for a child's future:

what they experience in their homes and opportunities they are offered at Ladybirds set a template in their young minds about values:

self-worth, caring for others, sharing, taking turns, enjoying play,
creativity, and simply standing in awe at this amazing, wonderful world.

Thank you to all who contribute in different ways to the success of this Pre-School.

Jean de Garis, Vicar of St Francis Church, Chair of Ladybirds Committee

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE REPORT FOR 2025 TO 2026

Repairs and maintenance of the grounds and buildings, including any electrical work needed has continued in order to keep the site safe and in good condition. The grass mowing has continued whilst keeping dedicated areas 'uncut' for conservation.

Hall:

The items in last years' report have all been dealt and we continue to use LED lights when there are any options to do this.

A blocked outside drain in the Ladybirds play area has been cleared.

A netting cover has been fitted over the sports court to retain the balls, etc. and galvanised cover strips have been fitted to make safe the joints in the plywood sheets on the climbing wall.

The floors of the 'Guide' hall and Youth Lounge have been sanded, primed and lacquered to extend their life. (Should be re-laquered approx. every 5 years)

New exterior doors have been fitted to the Gnome and garden stores

Church:

The wooden doors on both the Castle Road entrance and the Beatrice Road have been re-hinged, with door closers and finger protection fitted so they now operate as they should.

The Perspex outer weather covering has been re-newed on the first 4 of the tall windows on the south side of the church. We hope that this will stop the water leaks in the south aisle. Some extra sealing has also been carried out.

The steps from the pavement on Beatrice Road up towards the Tower entrance have been re-newed.

36 solar panels have been fitted to the main roof which are rated at 20.7kW with a 20kW hybrid inverter and 2 no. 4.66kwh storage batteries. This installation should provide for all our electricity usage in the church plus give us some income. A monitor screen in the Beatrice room shows live information including energy being produced. Included in this installation was an upgrade to our lightning protection system. The plant was commissioned on 25th June 2025 so we have had some income from it.

PAT testing (over 85 items) will be complete by the time of the APCM. The 5 yearly test of all Electrical circuits have been carried out for the church and hall.

The carpets in the church have been cleaned and the Lady Chapel floor lacquered. We have improved the markings on the parking guides in the car park and had the large Sycamore tree down the side of the hall removed, also a diseased tree in the hedge.

Extra acoustic panels have been fitted in the Beatrice room to reduce the sound level. Freestanding shelving has been added behind the screen on the platform to allow storage of the musicians' equipment.

We are in the process of improving the Wi-Fi for the whole site to give better and safer access. (st-francis guest and staff Wi-Fi should now be available throughout the whole site)

Quinquennial inspection (2024) We have completed all items needing immediate attention, half of the items due within 2 years, and the Lady Chapel floor (in the 5 yr. section)

We had a useful maintenance day in December which included a good tidy up.

Thanks, as always to our caretaker Charlie and all those helping with the mowing and keeping the site tidy. There is always more to do if anyone has spare time.



LIFE GROUPS

Life Groups continue to be an important part of the life of our Church.

We currently have 13 groups within an average attendance of 10 in each group and they meet during the week some daytime but mostly in the evenings on a regular basis. These are places where we deepen our faith, gain new friendships and enjoy fellowship together. A variety of topics and themes are looked at along with some following the “go deeper” questions set following the Sunday sermon. Life Group leaders continue to gather twice a year to share resources and encourage another in this wonderful ministry.

If you want to deepen your faith, have fellowship with others and make friends why not join one this year?

For further information please do contact Phil or Sue George. Email and phone numbers available on ChurchSuite.

MISSION PARTNERSHIPS

St Francis continues to support a number of local, national and international Mission Partners through prayer, pounds, presence and practical ways. Details of our Mission Partners can be found on our website. Mission Sunday, the last Sunday in September, gives an annual focus and overview of our Partners work, and is much appreciated by the congregation and our Mission Reps.

Mary Terry & Clare Morris



FLOWERS IN CHURCH

People: There have been some changes in the team that keep the church consistently alight with lovely flowers.

Several people have retired, however the team remains enthusiastic and mutually supportive. If any younger members of church would like to join the rota that would be very much appreciated.

Events: A core team contributes to the three key events of the year, working together for Christmas Easter and Harvest Festival.

At Christmas we use a combination of dried or imitation flowers kept from year to year in the church storeroom, together with fresh vegetation.

Team members bring suitable decorations for the wreaths adorning the pillars.

Expenditure: Whilst the Church Flower Fund covered some of the cost of Easter lilies and harvest flowers purchased from David Salter flower wholesalers this year, there were also financial contributions from the team and others in the community for which we are most grateful.

50S AND BEYOND

Who are we? A fellowship and service group focused on people 50+ in age.

Monthly events vary with 15-30 participants from St Francis and the wider community.

We are sponsored by St Francis but about 15% of our attendees are from the wider community.

What were the 2025 events? We had a variety of events including Fish and Chips and a Movie with Strictly Ladies, Christmas Tea, Pub Lunch, lunch with the Vicar, Salisbury History Walk, Ice Cream Social and more!

Who runs the events? The Steering Committee meets twice a year to plan the schedule, and the members act as host for 1 or 2 activities. We currently have openings on the committee and encourage anyone interested to contact us Kris@richardson.net

How do I find out about the events? Watch the Link for upcoming events; look at the St Francis website or to be added to the email distribution list, contact Kris@richardson.net.



Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) 11th May 2025

Jean opened the service with a prayer which was followed by two worship songs.

Appointment of Church Wardens

Elizabeth Liversage and Tom Wilkins were the only two candidates and were duly elected.

Appointment of Deanery Synod Member

Kathryne Abbott was the only candidate for the vacancy and was duly appointed.

Appointment to the Parochial Church Council (PCC)

The following were elected : Craig Gibbons, Mark Inman, Mark Venables (re-elected) and Christopher Lewis.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 28th April 2024 were agreed with no corrections.

Jean gave an overview of the many activities to be found within the Annual Report.

There were no questions.

Mission Action Plan

Phil George outlined the process of creating the Mission Action Plan over the past year. Understandably, mission is a key area, the church existing as it does for non-members.

A small group comprising of Jean Filtness, Jane Franchi and Phil George had analysed what is already happening in church. The church is growing, an indicator that good things are happening.

A consultation process took place during the autumn where all members were invited to give their views on where church priorities should lie. There were three questions:

- What does St Francis do well?
- What could we do better?
- What other things would you like to raise?

Phil thanked all those who responded on behalf of the groups. Four clear priorities rose to the top and were presented to the PCC and staff team:

1. Outreach and evangelism
2. Our church community
3. Training and development
4. Worship

The next step is to set up some working groups to move these priorities forward. You will hear more from us regarding this.

Safeguarding

Hannah Wilkins, the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) gave an update on the work of those responsible for safeguarding in the Benefice. She underlined that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility but that there is a Benefice Safeguarding Team that oversees this area of work, regularly updating policies, recruitment documents and discussing any issues that come up. There is an incredible Diocesan Safeguarding Team that are available and helpful. Lots of people use our facilities and it is really important that they are our staff our safe. The Church of England has set up a safeguarding dashboard system. This is basically a to do list which makes sure that we cover everything that we need to do. Jean Filtness has done great work updating the safeguarding policy and all members of staff ensure that every activity is carefully risk assessed. There are communications both on our website and on notice boards across our sites regarding our safeguarding practices, as well as regular training for all volunteers as part of our safer recruitment procedures.

Treasurer's Report

Simplified statements show an income of £356,000 and expenses of £262,000 which leaves a difference of £94,000. The funds at the end of the year are £187,000 as compared to breaking even in 2023. Parish share of £84,500 was paid but staffing was reduced in 2024 as there was no Worship Pastor.

Giving: there has been a 16.8% increase in monthly giving, which gives a gift aid total of £48,000. Gift aid makes a huge difference to our income. Mark invited everyone to gift aid if they have not already completed the form. As income was higher than expected the PCC decided to give some one-off additional gifts which totalled approx. £9,500 to our mission partners. We have additional income because all our outstanding loans have been paid off, both the Diocesan loan for the roof and the congregational loans towards the construction of the Beatrice Room. We have also received two generous legacies one for £5,000 and one £25,000 which had to be accounted for in 2024 even though the money arrived in 2025. We also pre-paid for solar panels and a deposit for a new PA system, the cost of which will be accounted for in 2025.

What to do with the surplus? Hope Church, while now breaking even, was still bearing the negative balance of about £17,000 because of its start-up costs. These have been written off so that Rev Suzie is able to start with a clean slate. Money from the General Fund has been moved to the Fabric Fund to pay for the solar panels and the PA system. The Extension Fund has been written to zero as all work has finished on this.

Emergency Reserves (required by law for all charities) have been increased to £100,000. Our policy is to keep at least six months general expenditure in case of an emergency. The General Fund is now sitting at £44,000 compared to £18,000 at this time last year.

Two points were raised: (1) Regarding income on page 14 of the Annual Report. Mark confirmed this income was due to the legacies. (2) It was commented what an extraordinary difference the extra money for our mission partners has made. Juba School have received £3,000 to refurbish the girls boarding house and this will make a huge difference for them.

Mark expressed his thanks to Sally and Colin Reed who organise all staff salaries and bank all monies; and to Sharon Goldie who does all the necessary work to allow us to claim gift aid. Mark is hugely grateful to all volunteers who help with church finances.

Appointment of Independent Examiners: Mark explained that Moore South, the current auditors, have been very helpful and given him sound advice. He proposed re-using Moore South for the coming year. This was unanimously agreed by all present.

Jean thanked Mark and his team for all the hard work they do every week to keep church finances in order. He is confident that there are solid processes in place, including two-person authentication for all payments.

Church Wardens Report

Tom Wilkins invited those present to check the inventory which was available to read. He thanked Mary Terry for updating and reviewing the inventory this year. Tom thanked all the volunteers who make church life possible, especially those who welcome and steward who are the church's first point of contact with newcomers. Lastly, he thanked Jean for his incredible hard work especially in this year where he has not only led the church but led all the music. Jean is a pleasure to work with, and he leads with grace and good humour.

Vicars Report

Jean read Luke chapter 17 v 8 – 23.
Full report on next page.

Any Other Business

Colin Reed spoke on behalf of our organist to say that the organ is showing its age. Colin invited the PCC to consider replacing the organ with something more suitable.

Electoral Roll Report: Jane Franchi reported that 211 people had signed up for the new Electoral Roll. It is usual when the Roll is re-started to have a decrease in numbers (last year was 235) as inevitably some people forget to sign up. Jane noted, however, that this year's number is higher by 50 people when compared to the last time the Roll was re-started six years ago. This reflects the growth in numbers over this period.

11.5.2025

Vicar's Report to the APCM

Luke 7.18-23

John the Baptist asked Jesus, "Are you the One?" (7.18)

John was in prison, so he needed to ask others to get word to him from Jesus. But John was articulating a question many people today are asking.

For those of us who have followed Jesus for years and are part of a church, it can seem a redundant question. We don't hear the urgency in many human hearts. In recent weeks I've been with people in mental health crisis, in aching bereavement, with deep pain in relationships, uncertainty about finance or direction in their lives. And many of them have asked, directly or indirectly: "Will Jesus help me or not?" In other words, like John: Are you the one – or should I look somewhere else?

And then we read "At that very time Jesus ..." (7.21) Then there is a list of his activities. He cured, freed, gave sight, restored life, poor people unexpectedly heard good news.

Jesus tells the messengers, "Go back and report what you have **seen** and **heard**." (7.22) He again lists the signs of his saving activity. It appears Jesus does lots of different things. But, actually, it's only one thing: **Jesus is bringing the Kingdom of God to people**. He makes the Father's rule and reign incarnate here and now: to one person after another. Some need healing. Other deliverance, or teaching, or raising or forgiving. But The Kingdom of God is **one** thing expressed appropriately for different situations.

Luke 10.9 He sent them out with 1 sermon: "The kingdom of God has come near to you." When his disciples ask him how to pray, he says pray this: "Your Kingdom come". That's it!

I say this because we can appear to be a busy church, with lots of activities. But it's really one thing expressed in varied ways in many different contexts. The kingdom of God in Jesus coming near and being revealed to people here and now.

I am so grateful to Phil George, Jean Filtness, Jane Franchi and our PCC for engaging in the process and helping to bring clarity over our missional priorities "**MAP**".

It's not enough to do things because we have always done them.

Together we must ask, "Is the Kingdom of God in Jesus made known when we do this?"

I hope that if you haven't yet read the reports in full, you will make time to do so. We don't want to be a busy church. We want to be a healthy, faithful and fruitful church. Jesus said to the messengers, "Go back and report what you have seen and heard." My hope and prayer is that people could look at each and every activity we offer here and be able to say, "That's what God's Kingdom looks like."

Jesus finished by saying something a bit strange:

Blessed is anyone who **does not stumble** on account of me." (7.23)

On the roads, then as now, a stone might stick out higher than others.

One could easily trip on it. In Greek "Skandalon" is a stumbling block, a scandal.

Jesus says people are blessed if they don't trip over as he demonstrates the Kingdom.

But we know that quite often they did!

May God help us to demonstrate his Kingdom in **word** and **deed** effectively.

There are always trip hazards. We won't please everyone, even when we get it right!

But as we become clear about our priorities, when people ask, "**Is Jesus the One?**"

They will be able to report on what **they have seen and heard** and say "Yes!"

Thank You to everyone who serves and for making God's Kingdom known here and now.

SPACE FOR YOUR QUESTIONS &

NOTES

**Annual Parochial Church Meeting
Wednesday 29th April 2026 at 7.30pm
St Francis Church**

AGENDA

- 1** Welcome and opening prayer
- 2** Apologies for absence
- 3** Election of Churchwardens
- 4** Election of Members to serve on the Parochial Church Council (PCC) and Deanery Synod
- 5** Minutes of the 2025 APCM
- 6** Matters arising from the Minutes
- 7** Written Reports
- 8** Mission Action Plan
- 9** Safeguarding
- 10** Any other business
- 11** Electoral Roll Report
- 12** Treasurer's Report
 - (i) The Annual Accounts
 - (ii) Appointment of Independent Examiner
- 13** Churchwardens' Report and Inventory
- 14** Vicar's Report

(If you have any item to raise under any other business it will be appreciated if you inform the PCC Secretary, Jane Franchi, before the meeting).