



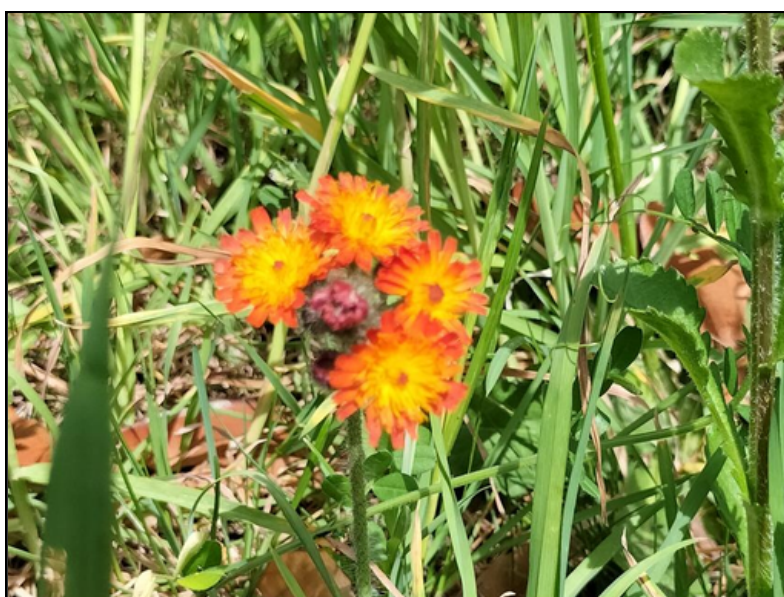
2026

ANNUAL REPORT

ST MATTHEW'S CHURCH, WALSALL

CONTENTS

The Rector's Report	Page 3
Churchwardens' Report	Page 6
Safeguarding	Page 6
Worshipping God	Page 7
Equipping His People	Page 19
Growing His Kingdom	Page 23
Serving Walsall	Page 31
Minutes of the 2025 APCM	Page 39
Church Council (PCC) Membership 2025/26	Page 44
Agenda for the 2026 APCM	Page 45





THE RECTOR'S REPORT

“ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples,
if you love one another. ”

John 13:35

St Matthew's verse for the year 2026

St Matthew's continues to be a wonderful church to be part of and it is great to see the diversity across the church. Bishop Tim frequently talks about how “intercultural” church is better than “multicultural” church, with people not just being in church alongside each other but interconnecting across the different cultures. I think that describes the journey we are on, and have been on for the last few years, and our verse for the year (above) naturally links into this.

As regular readers of this annual report will know, each January I produce an annual return for the diocese. This year was very encouraging as it showed a big increase in attendance (see tables over the page). A recent update looking at this year's attendance also showed we are continuing to grow. For those who are interested, more information about the statistics I submit to the diocese can be found elsewhere in this report.

However, one surprising aspect of the attendance at St Matthew's is the relatively low numbers on the Electoral Roll and in the Worshipping Community given the Average Sunday Attendance. It seems to suggest that we have a number of people who attend church just occasionally or for a short period of time. Some of these people may consider St Matthew's their church, but don't attend frequently enough to count as part of the Worshipping Community. Others may be visiting or just passing through.

St Matthew's Summary attendance over the last 11 years (Average Sunday Attendance)

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Weekly Adults (no repeats)	176	171	170	171	168	Covid affected services		115	127	135	150
Weekly Children (no repeats)	26	22	20	25	22			19	21	22	27
Home communions		6	15	4	5			11	6	5	7
Online								49	39	43	47
Total	202	199	205	200	195			194	193	205	230

Worshipping Community - Age Breakdown

Start of year	Children (Age 0-10)	Young People (Age 11-17)	Adults (Age 18-35)	Adults (Age 35-55)	Adults (Age 56-69)	Adults (Age 70+)	TOTAL
2023/2022	26	13	38	56	22	62	217
2024	25	18	36	60	37	70	246
2025	26	18	49	62	37	57	249
2026	24	14	52	50	44	56	240

I am, as always, very grateful to members of St Matthew's who do so much, both the paid staff members and the unpaid members led by the churchwardens (Daniel Barker and Ben Butterfield). I do, however, feel that the church members are being a little complacent and it is unfair on our current wardens that rather than four wardens we only have two. Discussions lead us to believe this is, in part, because misconceptions are often barriers to people taking on the role.

These misconceptions stem from recent history, when some wardens did indeed do a very large amount of work, particularly after St Matthew's ceased to employ a verger. However, in recent years we have put numerous systems into place that have changed the warden's role, releasing the burden. There has been a steady transition to delegated authority, as befits a church of our size and the legal role of churchwarden. This is part of the transition needed to move from a medium size church mentality to a large church mentality. A churchwarden is primarily about oversight, both spiritual and legal - with process and policies that can then allow other responsible people to carry out work on behalf of the church. If you would like to know more about this, please do speak to our churchwardens.

A significant part of the transition we have made is due to the work others now do and I am always very grateful for the volunteer work that goes on, including the deputy churchwardens (John Edlin and Paul Davico), as well as the many others who support the mission and ministry of our church in so many different ways. Paid employees (Nancy, Chris, Alyson, Andrew, Camila and Priscilla) have also assisted in allowing the churchwardens to focus their energy and time in different areas and, whilst many of our paid workers are part time, they all make an extremely valued contribution to church life and often give additional volunteer hours to the church as well as their paid hours.

Similarly, I am also very grateful for the ministry of Pastor Adil, Rev Yemi and Rev John who embody what intercultural church leadership can look like and take away from me some of the direct pressures of ordained and licensed ministry. All of these many people, lay and ordained, free me, and thus enable me, to assist in the leadership of the wider diocese as an Associate Archdeacon and Deputy Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, for which I am exceedingly grateful.

Over the year our Leadership Team has been working to discern the vision and direction of the church for the next five years. As much of the good work done over the last 10 years is still in place and working well, our primary vision remains the same (Worshipping God; Equipping his people; Growing his kingdom; Serving Walsall). However, we have discerned some areas that we need to focus on, and these broadly fall into five strands around:

1. Who we are
2. Connecting
3. Welcoming and building relationships
4. Nurturing disciples
5. Developing leadership

More information about this will be shared at the Annual Meeting, with a launch for the new vision planned for September.



So much has happened over the last year, as you will see in the rest of this report. This includes new ventures as well as the continuing and developing aspects of life at St Matthew's. For me, St Matthew's and Walsall are still a wonderful and delightful place to minister where no two days are ever the same.

May God bless you and may He continue to bless St Matthew's, as we seek to live out His purposes in the life of His church.

Rev Jim
Rector

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

It is a great privilege to serve St Matthew's Church as a warden. The church has an extraordinarily broad range of activities, people, influences and - dare I say it - problems! I'm delighted to say, however, that the majority of people in this church are more into the business of solving problems than creating them!

As wardens, we are incredibly grateful to the many, many people who do small acts of service to help the church family and the building where we worship to stay as healthy as possible. In the pages of this report some highlights will be shown but many people's work will remain hidden. And so we want to say a big "thank you" to all who have worked for the benefit of others, whatever your role.

Despite the resounding call for people to step up to fill the warden vacancies over the past three years, we haven't had a full complement of wardens for that time, and only two out of four posts filled for the year '25-'26. The hard work of Rev Jim, deputy wardens, committees and other volunteers has made the role easily manageable for those with busy lives, so I remain hopeful that some new wardens are elected for '26-'27, which is due to be the last year in post for both Daniel and myself.

What a pleasure it is to be worshipping God, equipping His people, growing his kingdom and serving Walsall alongside you all.

Ben Butterfield

With Churchwarden Daniel Barker

SAFEGUARDING

It is a requirement of the House of Bishops that we pay 'due regard' to the guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. In doing this we ensure that, using Church Suite, we keep up to date with DBS checks and training records for all those involved directly with children, young people and the vulnerable. The training records and DBS checks are completed by our Church Administrator. Church Suite is an effective tool to ensure all checks and training comply with policy.

The Safeguarding Policy has been slightly amended to encompass the most up-to-date method for recording a serious incident/concern. During the year there have been a few areas that have needed addressing and this has been acted upon within policy guidelines. Safeguarding remains an agenda item at every Church Council meeting.

As Christians, part of our care for others makes safeguarding important in everything we do and is therefore the responsibility of all church members.

Barbara Parker

Safeguarding Officer



WORSHIPPING GOD

SERVICES, WORSHIP & PREACHING

During 2025 we continued with the four-service pattern which looks like this:

8.45am Traditional Parish Communion

This service continues to alternate between a Book of Common Prayer Communion Service and a Traditional Common Worship Communion Service. With robed clergy and organ-based music, the service has maintained its numbers at around 25 people each week. The preaching is usually based on the lectionary readings for the day with special themed sermons during Advent. I am very grateful to all those who are actively involved on the reading, prayers and communion assistant rotas. There is now an established good link with refreshments served after this service and before the 10.45am service. It has been encouraging to see church members from different services taking the opportunity to mingle. I am especially grateful for the support provided by Pastor Adil, Rev Yemi and Rev John at this service and to Paul Davico, who is the service supervisor and enables things to run smoothly each week.

10.45am Morning Praise (with children's groups) & live-streamed

This continues to be a mix of All Together services, Morning Praise and Communion Services. The band leads the music, with a variety of people of different ages joining and enhancing the music for our services. Unsurprisingly, this service tends to be the one that families attend, although not exclusively. This is why we run our children's groups at this service. We continue to live-stream this service for those who are unable to make it to church, perhaps due to illness or shift work, and we are also sometimes joined by people from around the world. It has been good to see people engaging with the service live online and interacting with the service and each other by using the YouTube live comments facility. The numbers viewing the service over the course of a week averaged around 47 people in 2025. This service continues to grow in numbers and we often see new faces, some of whom become regular church members. There is still a rapid turnover of people as they move to the area, sometimes for a short period of time, and then leave.

More recently we have started to use live translation and closed captions via the Breeze Translate app at this service to enable more people to engage. Over the course of 2025, as well as following lectionary readings around certain seasons, we started the year with a sermon series looking at some key incidents in Moses' life, followed by sermon series on "Five traps for Jesus" and a brief series on the Nicene Creed to celebrate its 1700th anniversary. These were followed by a themed series looking at "Five questions disciples are struggling with" and a brief consideration of "Generosity" before an Advent sermon series called "Small Wonder", based on resources from the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity (LICC).

1.00pm Asian Congregation

The Asian Congregation continues to be led by Pastor Adil (our Licensed Lay Minister) assisted by many other congregation members. It has continued to grow slightly over the year. The service is usually in Urdu/Punjabi, although when Rev Jim attends to lead communion and preach these parts of the service are in English. This year we also trialled a Holy Communion service booklet which allows the congregation to follow the service in multiple languages - thank you to Kashif Zareen for facilitating this. I am also very grateful to Gulfaraz Adil who is the service supervisor for this congregation.



6.30pm Evening Service

Our informal Evening Service continues to be led by Rev Jim, Jimm Rennie and Sam Fawkes. With a strong discipleship focus the pattern for the service is table fellowship with refreshments, a time of sung worship, a talk and then focused conversations before finishing with prayer. Being very contemporary and relaxed in style, the service is very diverse with a range of ages attending. The service has developed a new kind of pattern with the Alpha course in the first term, a follow-on course in the second term (this year we used the Bible Course) and then a preaching theme in the Autumn term. Attendance at the evening service also grew encouragingly over the course of the year.

Rev Jim
Rector

ASIAN CONGREGATION

The Asian Congregation: has been meeting every Sunday at 1pm in St Clement's (Prayer) Chapel. We are delighted that a new family of two members joined us this year so we now have five families and two individuals meeting every Sunday. Two to three family members have also been meeting in the Centre on Saturdays for social gatherings this past year.

A Holy Communion booklet has been designed for Urdu and Hindi church members. There has been an opportunity also for all members to participate in the church services through intercessory prayer, Bible readings, preaching the gospel and singing hymns. Rev Jim has been coming to preach and serve holy communion to our Congregation once every month.

- January: We did not hold a New Year church service on 1 January but instead celebrated on the first Sunday of 2025.
- February and March: The Congregation celebrated Lent by learning through Biblical messages given by different speakers.
- April: The Asian Congregation attended the Walk of Witness on Good Friday in Walsall town centre. The Easter service in church was followed by a shared meal, with gospel singing after the meal. A family of four visited us from Coventry.
- May and June: We celebrated Mother's and Father's Days and distributed gifts to parents. There was also a family who were baptised immersion.
- June and July: Our Congregation celebrated cultural day at a Wolverhampton church.
- July to September: We held regular church meetings, at one of which we had a Punjabi guest speaker from Birmingham, Inayat Masih, to preach.
- November: The Congregation met regularly for praise and worship. We attended and participated in English services, too.
- December 2025: Asian congregation organised Carol service at the centre around 65 people attended from the nearby areas. Solo and group carols have been sung. After the programme a meal was taken in the church. We held home carol services at four places.



The Congregation has been meeting online from 8pm to 9pm Monday to Friday throughout the year. Young and old take part in this service by leading, praying, reading a Bible passage, preaching and singing psalms and hymns. The Asian Congregation is also broadcasting through Facebook live every Sunday, and our youth helps us with this.

Adil Burke
Local Lay Minister

JAM



JAM is an after-school club that runs every Wednesday from 3.30pm till 4.30pm, and it is open to children from Reception to Year 6 across Walsall.

Each week we have a different theme and the children get to learn something new every week. Last year we had a letter from King Charles in response to the birthday cards all the kids sent for his birthday.



The group has grown so much more since last year and we always look to improve every week to give the best resources to all of our JAM kids!

Camila Marticorena
JAM Leader

THE EVENING SERVICE

The Evening Service has continued to run during term time. Following Alpha 2025 we did the Bible Course, a series of video teachings and group discussions from the Bible Society in the Summer term. This was received well by those who attended, commenting that it helped them gain an understanding of the different books in the Bible and to see the bigger picture of how all the books contribute together to connect the dots between before and after Jesus.

In the Autumn term we completed the LICC Life on the Frontline course, which was interwoven with live talks from a range of speakers, some who hadn't spoken before which was very encouraging. We had positive comments about the course itself and for the live talks. Those who attended enjoyed the practical tips and prayer time that happened in small group discussions and videos.

In January we held another Alpha course which was well attended and each group leader reported having great discussions. Some who joined us for Alpha have started coming along to church on Sunday which is very exciting! We have just started the "Practising the Way" course, which is a series of video teachings and group discussions that will run almost until the summer holidays where we will take a break, pausing the service until September.

Sam Fawkes
Evening Service Leader

MUSIC MINISTRY AT THE 10.45AM SERVICE

The Music Ministry team at the 10.45am service continues to grow, with regular bass players and additional musicians now part of our line-up. We are still happy to welcome new players and singers.

In Advent, we collaborated with Blue Coat Academy choir to field 52 voices for the Civic Carol Service anthem, and have continued to add new songs to our repertoire from a range of sources.



MUSIC MINISTRY AT OTHER TIMES

The Evening Service draws on the musical forces of the church, including the gifts and service of a new pianist. (Volunteers for this work should speak to the service coordinators.) The 8.45am service continues to sing with joy and considerable volume! Budding organists are welcome to experience playing for this service - just ask.

Festival services (Lent, Advent, Christmas, Pentecost) were supported with appropriate songs and music. We accompanied funerals and weddings with equal care to serve the congregations that gathered for them. We also supported other church music ministries and welcomed their musicians to join us. Junction 10 Church coordinated the sung worship at the Love Walsall Pentecost evening service.

Andrew continues his involvement with Walsall Church Musicians' Social and United Adoration (a multinational church creatives support charity). Supporting Christian creatives across the town remains a priority for developing our own team and engaging in collaborative efforts.

MUSIC IN THE COMMUNITY

St Matthew's Community Choir met throughout the year, continuing to gather and serve a diverse community. They gave concerts and supported other church and community activities.

Great Barr Brass receives two hours per week from Andrew in his capacity as Music Director, and is flourishing with a series of concerts and gigs planned for the coming year. The band continues to grow in number and they have included some of Andrew's own arrangements in their repertoire.

Andrew worked with St Gabriel's Church to jointly present an Easter Oratorio called *48 Hours in Jerusalem*, supported with a generous grant from the Saltley Trust. An amateur cast of singers and chorus presented an imagined exploration of the events of Holy Saturday as Jesus' followers reacted to Good Friday without fully understanding that Sunday was coming.

Once more, singers gathered to Deck the Mall – carolling in the town centre – and further community singing opportunities are being planned throughout the year. We were once again welcomed to local pubs to carol, and are planning to support the Walsall FC Christmas service next year.

Andrew Clayton
Director of Music

HERITAGE

The focus each year is on Heritage Open Day events, which was 19 and 20 September 2025. The September weekend held the Rotary Club Dinner and talk in the nave. Tower and Crypt Tours, and self directed tours assisted by guides took place on Friday evening and Saturday. Also, John gave an illustrated talk three times to groups called “St Matthew’s Stories” over the weekend. The Mayor, Louise Harrison, her consort and guests, and three Councillors enjoyed the talk and meeting St Matthew’s representatives. Also, as official guests, Walsall Writers Circle came with Cath Edwards as their lead author. Some 16 volunteers helped the event run smoothly, looking after approximately 80 Tower/Crypt visitors out of some 120 visitors in total.

Informally, most weeks we have visitors looking round during Places of Welcome, and often these visitors go to the Crypt: Nigel and Pat act as guides. The Display Boards serve us well. Heritage also is increasingly represented through the Bun and Shilling Ceremony held following the Mayor’s Carol Service where 40 Blue Coat Academy students are chosen to receive the commemorative tokens. John also gave a talk at the Nurses Badge Ceremony on the significance of Sister Dora based on the book by Jo Manton, and the time when Walsall led the world in good nursing practice: this seems likely to become an annual fixture. Continual reading and research brings new illustrations to light of the immense impact St Matthew’s has held on the history and development of Walsall.

John Edlin
Building Manager



CHURCH BUILDING AND CHURCHYARD

Personnel

Kyle Banks began as the Operations Assistant. He was making very good progress ... and then received a job offer far too good for St Matt's to be able to match, so he left. It took several months to recruit his replacement, Chris Boden, who is rapidly learning the many responsibilities of looking after the Centre and church. Volunteers make huge contributions to improving the setting of St Matthew's in the Church Hill Conservation Area through litter-picking, dealing with fly tipping, completing repairs and doing environmental work. Mick Pymm has added greatly to the Team with a particular skill of dealing with tree roots beneath brick paving.

Work

The two Nave boilers are 26 years old, and service parts are now virtually impossible to source. Congregations endured three weeks with no heating in January. After repeated attempts, one boiler was resurrected. New heating controls were fitted at a cost of £1,500, though the savings made in the first year covered this cost. Maintenance work continues, keeping water out and completing very many minor repairs. The machete damage on the West Door was repaired professionally. A clock repair to the face in the Ringing Chamber was carried out invisibly with help from Trevor Chapman of Walsall Rotary Club.



Bumble Bee Project

The relationship with Walsall Rotary Club continues to develop and flourish. The churchyard was entered into the Diocesan Churchyard Competition, receiving a Silver Award. John was invited to speak at a Diocesan Conference about the achievements of the Maintenance Team in the churchyard and the Church Hill Conservation Area.

John Edlin
Building Manager

BELL RINGING

When I look back over 2025, it's been a year of extraordinary development. At the beginning of the year Caroline became a member of the Archdeaconry Society. Three more, Abi, Dan and Neil, also qualified and were presented with their certificates in December at Aldridge. The band is much more resilient through having a larger pool of ringers and, consequently, there is greater variety on practice evenings. Friday lunchtime practices have contributed greatly to improving ringing. The skills the band now takes for granted - ringing up and down, rounds, call changes and place-making - barely existed in January. The band is becoming increasingly accurate in hunting. Ruth has relearned bob doubles inside after almost no opportunity to practise for close on 20 years. With the introduction of quarter peal ringing, concentration for extended periods of time is growing - to the point where Olly, John and Caroline successfully completed a quarter peal in November. Sunday ringing is much more regular and improving, particularly with the added contribution of a calling bell from Tony. Communication is greatly improved through the use of the WhatsApp group.

Five Archdeaconry events took place - two visits of the Three Spires Youths, one Archdeaconry Peal and another Quarter Peal, and a Sunday Evening general practice. We acted as one venue for the National Youth Contest and hosted the Advanced Ringing Academy. We rang for four weddings.



Band photo, 1 October 2025, to mark the 250th Anniversary of the first peal rung in Walsall.

Olly	Dan	Antoni	David	Neil	John
	Caroline		Tony		Ruth
	Abi	Diana	Soula		

The Blue Coat Tuesday practices finished due to declining commitment from youngsters. And, sadly, we lost three of the band - due to health, work/life balance and declining interest.

Blue Coat Year 6 visits to the Ringing Chamber (some 80 students) and Heritage Open Days tours (another 50 visitors) featured, with the Mayor, Cllr Louise Harrison, listening to Antoni and Abi saying why they enjoyed ringing. The mayor visited again a week later to view the exhibition of tower ephemera marking the 250th Anniversary of the first peal rung in Walsall. Splendid work has been carried out by Olly and Diana on Peal Records and the history of bells and ringing at St Matthew's - and solving one of the mysteries of the tower in the form of the huge handbell that has graced the clock chamber for decades.

The bells and mechanisms are in fine condition; they are serviced quarterly and minor repairs are addressed promptly. Unfortunately, three stays were broken in one month, with No 9 requiring a substantial piece of ash from our reserves of timber. The clock face in the ringing chamber was cleaned and serviced. The temporary repair carried out by John Edlin and Neil Simpson a decade ago was expertly repaired with a new brass connecting rod supplied by Trevor Chapman from Walsall Rotary Club. Clock servicing was carried out by bell ringers, saving the church £300, and all the clock faces show the correct time reliably. The curtain in the Ringing Chamber was dry cleaned and rehung as part of the band's care for the tower.

This snapshot of life in such a busy tower shows a collaboration of committed band members whose support makes my role very fulfilling, so I say "Thank You, all".

John Edlin
Tower Captain

HOLY DUSTERS



Are you pleased to polish, or prefer not to? Do you delight in dusting, or dislike it? Are you happy to Hoover, or hate it?

Whatever you feel about cleaning we can find something for you to do if you join our little team. Come regularly, or just come when you can – either way you will be given a warm welcome. We meet at 9.15am on Friday mornings, but additional days may be possible so do please get in touch if you are interested.

This is a great opportunity for me to thank those that do come to help – each of you do an extraordinary job and I am hugely grateful. Thank you.

Sue Sargent
Holy Dusters

CHURCH FLOWERS

Our little band continues to meet periodically to refresh the flower arrangements, which we hope add to the joy of worship.

You may have read of a motion at the Church of England Synod encouraging churches to use fresh flowers. Many fresh flowers are flown into the UK and are wrapped in plastic, and a large proportion are then discarded before they can be used. Local seasonal flowers are a lovely idea in theory but in practice are expensive and difficult to source. Faux flowers can be reused for years and have lower transport emissions as they can be transported by sea as opposed to air. As we already have a good selection of attractive artificial flowers we will continue to make use of them for our beautiful floral displays.

Huge thanks to the amazing team who work so hard to make St Matthew's look so beautiful week after week!

Paula Tonks
Flower Team



TREASURER'S REPORT



The role of treasurer in any organisation is not generally one that many people clamour to take on; in fact some are horrified at the thought of having to deal with the finances, although, like it or not, nothing happens without money being involved somewhere. Perhaps it is that it takes a certain skill set to do it and, whilst it looks easy to those of us whose job it is, for some it's an unfathomable minefield.

The online recording system, purpose-built for places of worship and charities, can certainly look like an unfathomable minefield at first glance, with its meticulous detail, but it is that very detail that allows for the transparency and accountability demanded of those entrusted with looking after the finances. For instance, if a particular project began and it would be necessary to identify the income and expenditure for that project, as distinct from any other income and expenditure, specific designations can be made so that any transactions relating to that project could be easily identified.

Like most churches and charities, St Matthew's faces certain financial challenges, not least the costs of trying to maintain a large historic building, where what might be a modest expense in a modern building is a frighteningly large expense, creating a lot of work by numerous people to enable it to be carried out. When that happens I seem to have the easy job of paying the bills and keeping the records, for which I must express my thanks to Rev Preb Jim Trood, members of St Matthew's Church Council and my colleague, Operations Manager Nancy Candlin, who have been generous with their help and time as I do what's necessary to keep the finances in good order.

Alyson Green
Finance Officer



HOMEGROUPS

Homegroups provide an opportunity to meet with other Christians during the week in a small group for Bible study, prayer, friendship, support and social activities. They are a good way of growing your faith and Bible knowledge, sharing prayer requests and getting to know a small group of people in an informal setting.

In the spring of 2025, the groups studied different biblical leaders; in the summer, the groups picked their own material; and, in the autumn, most groups chose a book or film and drew out Christian themes and teaching from it. In spring 2026, nearly all the groups followed a study on Exodus entitled "Lessons from the wilderness". Meanwhile, one group chooses to discuss the readings for the upcoming 8.45am service each week.

Each term, Judith and Priscilla aim to get together with the homegroup leaders to pray, feedback about their groups and plan for the term ahead.

Ben and Izzy Butterfield started a new homegroup recently. There are currently eight homegroups, including daytime and evening groups on different days of the week, with in-person and Zoom groups and a new, ninth group will start in April 2026 at the *Black Country Arms* pub. So there really is something for everyone.

New people are always welcome to join a group and can come for just a term or try out different groups before choosing a permanent "home". If you'd like to know more, please contact Judith or Priscilla.

Priscilla Trood and Judith Ridgway
Homegroup Coordinators



PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Personnel Committee is a group of church members that oversee staffing at St Matthew's. We work closely with the Church Council and the Leadership Team when they make decisions about future staffing at St Matthew's. We meet and exchange emails to prepare for employment, support our current staff, and conduct any work delegated to us by the Church Council. Last year we made sure that each employee's wage is in line with the Real Living Wage, a calculated hourly rate to be able to buy the essential goods and services. The Church Council are committed to continuing increasing wages appropriately as the Real Living Wage changes year on year.

We have six employees working for St Matthew's as pictured below.

This year we recruited Chris as Site and Operations Assistant, supporting both Nancy and John. Welcome to the team Chris! All our employees are DBS checked and have completed their safeguarding training.

This year we are looking at Volunteer Roles within the church and how we improve our sickness policies to best support our employees and the Church Council.

Thanks to all employees for all that you do at St Matthew's and to all those in the Personnel Committee and line managers for their hard work this last year.



Chris Boden
Site and Operations Assistant



Alyson Green
Finance Officer



Priscilla Trood
Young Children and Families
Worker



**Camila
Marticorena**
4-11's Kids Club Worker



Nancy Candlin
Operations Manager



Andrew Clayton
Director of Music

CRÈCHE



The Children's Chapel continues to be a valued and welcoming space for the youngest members of our church community. During Sunday Morning Praise, the room is available as a crèche area for children under three, offering comfortable seating for feeding, a changing table, highchair and a wide range of toys, books and simple craft resources. Families are encouraged to make use of the space freely, and we are grateful to parents and carers for helping to keep it tidy, safe and ready for others to enjoy.

Following feedback from families, we no longer operate a volunteer crèche rota. Parents shared that they preferred to remain with their children rather than leave them in the care of others, and many have appreciated being able to engage with the service through the live TV stream while also enjoying time together with other families. This arrangement has worked well and reflects the needs of those currently using the space.

A gentle reminder has also been given that children should not be left unattended in the room, particularly because of the nearby fire exit, and we are thankful that this has been well observed. For safeguarding reasons, the Children's Chapel should only be used by adults accompanying their own child.

During All Age Services, when crèche and Children's Church do not run, we create activity areas at the front of church for school-aged children, alongside a welcoming space for babies and toddlers. Thank you to all our families for helping make our youngest worshippers such an important and joyful part of church life.

Hannah Dallaway
Crèche Coordinator

CHILDREN'S CHURCH

Children's Church is for all children from around 3 to 11 years old and is thriving!

We meet at the back of church towards the start of the 10.45 am service on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sundays of the month and go over to the Church Centre for the sessions. (On the other Sundays there are All Together services.)

We aim to make the sessions as fun and engaging as possible using Scripture Union material. The activities include Bible stories, craft activities, games, quizzes, worship, drama and prayer.

Since the last report, we've been sad to say "goodbye" to Carla, Janet and Gill. However, I'm pleased to say that we've also had lots of new volunteers, and I'd like to thank Uzoamaka, Alex, Rhoda and Mick for joining the rota and to Obumneme and Ros due to start next term. This means we have enough leaders and helpers to run two groups for the older and younger children. It's great that the team is becoming increasingly diverse in lots of ways, reflecting the makeup of the church.

The leaders and helpers now wear lanyards with photo ID to help parents know who is running the groups each week and we have started to discuss potential safeguarding scenarios and how to deal with them in our termly meetings.

We were joined once again by some of the children from the Blue Coat schools for our Christmas party and the children were gifted a book and some chocolate.

Priscilla Trood
Children's Church Coordinator





GROWING HIS KINGDOM

MISSION REPORT

Each year, as a Church, we confirm our decision to support charitable courses, both at home and abroad. Once the accounts have been finalised and accepted by the Church Council, we know how much money is available. We have previously agreed to distribute 60% of available money to three overseas charities, and 40% to four local charities.

The annual Mission Giving meeting in October shared a list of charitable giving over last 10 years. The overseas charities receiving the charitable donations for 2025 were:

- CSU (Christian Service Unit - preacher Franklin is a regular annual preacher at St Matthew's)
- Open Doors
- Doctors Without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontieres)

The local recipients are:

- Seasons rehab facility
- Church Pastoral Aid Society
- Salvation Army, for work with the homeless
- Young Minds - a charity that Blue Coat Academy works with

The overseas charities received £1938 and the local charities £969. Links to the charities have gone on the St Matthew's website.

Mission Giving Committee

ALPHA COURSE

Moving our annual Alpha course to after Christmas has proven to be a very positive move with a number of people attending after hearing about it at Christmas services. Like last year, we ran our course on a Sunday evening, as part of our Evening Service. For the first time, alongside our Alpha course, Rev Yemi assisted by leading a Beta group for those who had completed Alpha before. This proved to be very successful.

This meant the course had a mix of church members and guests. It is very exciting to see God moving in people's lives as they seek to learn more of him. Including the leaders and helpers we had an average of 35 people attending each evening. As always, I am very grateful to the team of people that makes Alpha courses possible – it is always hard work, but it is always worthwhile.

Rev Jim
Rector

LOVE WALSALL & LOVE BLACK COUNTRY

St Matthew's Church remains committed to the Love Walsall network of churches, which is part of the wider Love Black Country organisation. Our aim is to seek the peace and prosperity of the place where we live. For more information and to join the mailing list go to <https://loveblackcountry.org.uk/love-walsall>

We usually meet for a 7am breakfast on the first Thursday of the month at The Table to network, discuss local church issues and how we can work together and support each other, to pray and worship and be inspired. This meeting is attended by a mix of people including church leaders, business leaders, and people representing other organisations. From St Matthew's those who often attend include Rev Jim, Patti Lane, Nigel Dutton and Andrew Clayton – representing both our church and other areas of the wider community life in Walsall.

Every Thursday local church leaders meet for an hour to pray, specifically for Walsall. This prayer meeting started during lockdown and has been continuing ever since. One of the joys of this meeting is the variety of churches that are represented and the diversity of the church leaders.

The monthly youth network services continue and both Rev Jim and Izzy Butterfield spoke at one of these over the last year.

Another major event each year is the Love Walsall Unity service held at St Matthew's Church at Pentecost. This year will be the 10th anniversary of this service. In recent years, the Love Walsall network has also worked with the Town Centre Ministries churches to develop a follow on event to the Walk of Witness, held on good Friday, to explain the good news message of Easter to those who won't be in church on Easter Day.

The Love Black Country network continues to resource churches across the area. These include training, teaching, networking and worship events. The Together Festival is planned for June 2026 and promises to be as good as ever. Tickets are on sale now and as a sponsoring church our members can get a discount by using a special code. (Speak to Rev Jim to get the discount code).

Rev Jim
Rector



COMMUNICATIONS

During 2025, we have continued to utilise our various means of communication to keep church members and the general public connected and informed about all that is going on at St Matthew's.

Social Media & Outreach

- Facebook & Instagram: We continue to regularly post news and inspirational content on these platforms.
- TikTok Launch: We successfully launched our TikTok account. A big thanks to Sacha Jones for her hard work in creating videos and establishing our presence there.
- YouTube: We continue to livestream our 10.45am service every week for those joining us online.
- Community Engagement: We are grateful to everyone who likes, comments and shares our content as this helps our news reach a much wider audience.

Digital Community & Innovation

- Live Translation: We recently introduced a live translation and caption service at our 10.45am service (powered by Breeze Translate), improving accessibility for our diverse congregation.
- WhatsApp Announcements: Following a successful trial of a WhatsApp announcement group for the Church Weekend Away, we hope to roll this out to the wider church soon to facilitate more immediate communication.
- Prayer Support: Our daily prayer diary emails are sent every morning at 6am. The prayer chain remains available for ad-hoc requests sent to prayer@stmatthewswalsall.co.uk.

Website & Mailing Lists

- Online Hub: We continue to maintain the church website, ensuring the weekly bulletin, service sheets, and event updates are available to all.
- Weekly Updates: Every Friday, we send a link to the weekly bulletin and highlight upcoming news to our mailing list.
- Subscription Management: New members can subscribe via our website. Existing members can manage their communication preferences through the My ChurchSuite app.

Printed Media & Branding

- Parish Outreach: We produced and delivered over 4,100 Christmas cards to houses in the parish, with a special thanks to the Blue Coat sixth form students for their help with delivery.
- Advertising: We continue to design flyers and posters for events as required, and we maintain our regular advertisements in the Pioneer magazine.
- Design Tools: We utilise Canva for our visual graphics. If you require a design for a church-related activity, please get in touch with Mike Ray.

Internal Communications

- Systems: Our internal email and Microsoft Office licenses continue to be managed via Office 365.
- Policy: All staff and those with positions of responsibility use official @stmatthewswalsall.co.uk email accounts to ensure secure and professional communication.
- Support: If you require an email account for your voluntary or paid work at the church, please contact the office.

Mike Ray
Communications Coordinator

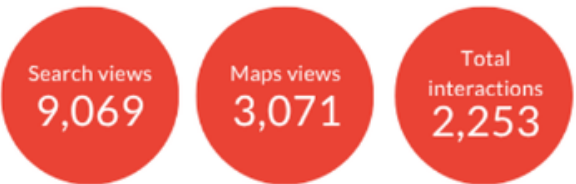
Google Business Profile Insights



St Matthew's Church
Google Business Profile



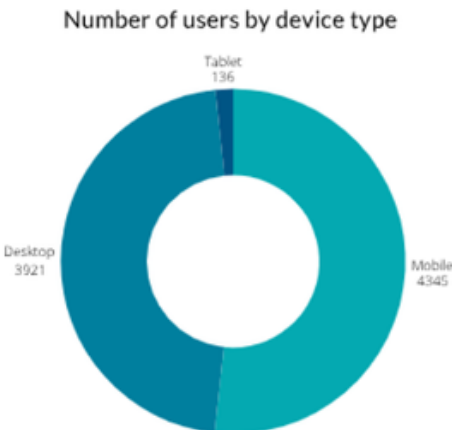
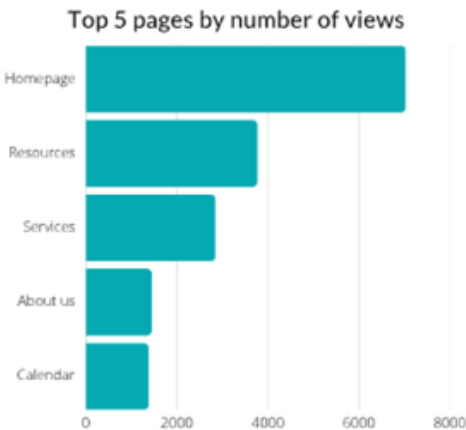
St Matthew's Centre
Google Business Profile



Search views - Number of people that viewed St Matthew's on Google Search using Mobile or Desktop
Maps views - Number of people that viewed St Matthew's on Google Maps using Mobile or Desktop
Total interactions - Number of interactions with the call button, website button, and requests for directions

Website Insights

www.stmatthewswalsall.co.uk



Social Media Insights



Facebook
@stmatthewswalsall



Instagram
@stmatthewswalsall



TikTok
@stmatthewswalsall



YouTube
@stmatthewswalsall



Top 5 videos:

1. Funeral of Nikhat Qureshi | 10.30am | Monday 10th November 2025 (380 views)
2. Weekend Away 2025 Highlights (237 views)
3. Funeral of Marian Masters | 12.30pm | Tuesday 18th November 2025 (226 views)
4. Blue Coat Sunday | 10.45am | Sunday 2nd March 2025 (215 views)
5. Civic Carol Service | 10.45am | Sunday 14th December 2025 (168 views)

* **Views:** The number of times that our content was played or displayed. Content includes reels, posts, stories and ads.
** **Reach:** This metric counts reach from the organic or paid distribution of our Instagram content, including posts and stories that were boosted.

Mailing List Insights



MailChimp
Mailing List Subscribers



WEEKEND AWAY

It's been 10 years since our first Church Weekend Away in its current format (Coalbrookdale YHA 2015 & 2016, The National Forest YHA 2017 and Quinta Christian Centre since 2018).

In 2025, the theme of the Church Weekend Away was Prayer. We had a whopping FOUR guest speakers: Pastor Phil and Pastor Rob from the Cellar Church, Rev Chris Precious and Pastor Debo from Victory Centre for all Nations. There were a range of high quality seminars covering topics including The Lord's Prayer, "what to do when prayer gets boring" and "prayer as a weapon".

It is so special to get away from the rush of daily life here in Walsall and share time together. Our worship times were memorable and we got to know one another much better. As usual, it felt like such a fun holiday with all kinds of activities, socialising and the wonder of nature in the slightly snowy Welsh borders.

We went to Quinta again early in 2026 (details in next year's report) and I would strongly recommend you book on to our next Weekend Away which will take place on 8th-10th January 2027. I'm sure you'll love it!

Ben Butterfield
Weekend Away Organiser



WALSALL TOWN CENTRE MINISTRY



Besides Rev Jim, St Matthews' members of TCM consist of Daniel and Wendy Barker.

Apart from St Matthew's, TCM includes representatives from Central Hall, St Paul's, St Mary's, St John's, Pleck, and the Victory Church in St Michael's Caldmore. Discussions with other local churches to possibly expand the membership will continue this year.

This year for Lent, TCM organised several evening meetings at our Church Centre to hear from representatives of the Manrasa group in Harborne, who led practical interactive talks/sessions on different kinds of prayer. The four gatherings were fairly well attended and largely well received by attendees.

TCM members worked diligently to ensure that this year's Good Friday Walk of Witness went well, dealing with matters such as changing the route to adapt to works in Park Street. Once again, prayers for weather better than the forecasts certainly paid off and there was a great

turnout of people. Following work between the TCM committee and others, the culmination of the Good Friday event flowed well into the following Resurrection drama and celebration. As usual, we will meet again to ensure lessons are learnt and the event continually improves



Daniel Barker
St Matthew's representative for TCM



PARENTS, CARERS & TODDLER GROUPS

I'm employed for eight hours a week in this role. This enables me to run two weekly groups on Thursdays in term time (Stay and Play in the mornings and Sensory Play in the afternoons), and a termly Baby Massage class. The rest of the time is spent on admin and preparation.

The Stay and Play sessions are for children from birth to school age with their parents and carers. We have themed activities in different zones each week and, after drinks and snacks, the children and adults come together for song time. Every half term we also have a Bible story linked to the term's theme and at the end of term we go into church for the Bible story and a linked activity.

The Sensory Play sessions are for babies from birth to one year old and their parents. There are different sensory activities each week such as lights, instruments and feathers plus optional messy play and we finish with an interactive song time learning some baby signing.

Baby Massage is a five-week class which helps babies to relax and bond with their parents, while giving parents an opportunity to spend quality time with their babies and meet other parents.

All the groups are very diverse, and I've been able to build relationships and have conversations about church and faith with some of the parents. I've also invited them to church services, events, and courses like Alpha.

I'm grateful to Karen Dutton, Camila Marticorena and others who are wonderful supports to me at Stay and Play.

Priscilla Trood
Young Children and Families' Sessional Worker



PRAYER DIARY

Prayer is a very important part of St Matthew's life and it is hoped that the Prayer Diary is a useful addition to your daily prayers.

The prayer topics are based around the needs of St Matthew's and our town of Walsall, and include events that the church staff tell us are happening. The prayers cover the church family, (home groups, church staff, Centre, finances), our children, community, (town centre, the church cluster group, the deanery and diocese, our mission giving and the organisations we support). The diary has additional prayers or thoughts each month reminding us of God's creation and our need to look after it. There is a daily request for prayer for those who live in our parish and churches in the Walsall Deanery.

The monthly diary is included in the weekly church bulletin and the daily prayer is emailed out each day to those who have requested it. A great way to start the day in joint prayer for our church family. For those without internet access it is printed to be collected from St Matthew's Church.

Many thanks to Rev Jim and Nancy Candlin, the church and Centre administrator, for updates on events that we can pray for in the coming month.

Patti Lane

On behalf of the Prayer Diary Team



PASTORAL CARE

Pastoral care reflects and strengthens the ministry of care, compassion and inclusion for church members and wider community. The programme is supported by a designated team who aim to:

- Support spiritual, emotional and social wellbeing
- Reduce loneliness and isolation
- Offer practical care and encouragement
- Build strong relationships within the church and community
- Welcome and integrate newcomers
- Maintain confidentiality and safeguarding standards.

Pastoral care is also delivered within a "whole church" context by the many diverse groups who offer their specialist skills to strengthen church ministry whilst nurturing those they work alongside.

Pastoral care at St Matthew's embraces all and is delivered by the "many not the few".

Ros Clewes and the Pastoral Care Team

PLACE OF WELCOME / OPEN CHURCH

Places of Welcome has been open during the day more or less every Tuesday for the year. The team have done their usual marvellous job in welcoming friend and stranger alike, and in providing information and support to those curious about the church.

As ever, we are very grateful to our loyal group of volunteers, who give their time so willingly each month, either morning or afternoon, to keep Places of Welcome open.

If anyone would like to be added to our list of volunteers, to cover illness or holidays, or medical appointments (we're all getting older!), please speak to Nancy in the office, Sara Hartshorne or Pat Blewitt.

Place of Welcome team



OCCASIONAL OFFICES AND ADDITIONAL SERVICES

2025 was a bumper year for baptisms. Over the course of the year, we baptised 18 people (12 children and six adults), with many of these baptisms by immersion. We also had 10 adults reaffirm their baptismal promises by immersion and another thanksgiving service for a new baby.

We were privileged to hold five weddings and one service of prayer and dedication following a civil marriage. The weddings were preceded by marriage preparation events with Rev Jim, where we invited the wedding couples to explore what makes a good marriage as well as talking through the practicalities of planning the wedding service and what to expect. At these Rev Jim is sometimes joined by other local clergy, where weddings are less common, to help them experience wedding preparation and give them more confidence at officiating at weddings for themselves.

This year we also celebrated with services for 10th and a 30th wedding anniversary.



In 2025 the number of funerals where we officiated increased on the previous year. Clergy officiated at 17 funerals at St Matthew's Church, two at the Crematorium and four burials of ashes (some burials of ashes don't require a minister). Officiating at a funeral is always challenging, although it is a privilege to perform this ministry. In 2025 this also included conducting a number of funerals for church members.

As usual we held our Remembering Service in early February 2025, reflecting how this is the time of year when those who have been bereaved seem to be especially affected by grief. Once again this was supported by Dean Harper's Funeral Directors, which greatly increased the numbers attending the service.

The annual Blue Coat Sunday was once again very highly attended with a real sense of celebration for things past and present.

One of the gifts of having such a large church building that can hold over 1000 people is that we often get to host special services and, once again, we were delighted to host the Love Walsall Pentecost service.



In Advent, we held a Civic Carol Service, which was a great success once again. The Advent/Christmas special services continued to increase in attendance although patterns are changing. It seems people are attending fewer services over the Christmas period, but more people in total are attending. This year we had more people at the midnight service than on Christmas day reversing the trend of the last 10 years.

Rev Jim
Rector

OWLS (OUR WAVE LENGTH)

2025 has been another busy year for Owls. We have been entertained by fabulous vocalists, educated by local historians and fascinated by a former Foreign Office diplomat. We got creative in our craft sessions, stretched our bodies in our monthly chair Pilates classes, and stretched our brains with regular quizzes. As if this wasn't enough, we held monthly movie afternoons (with popcorn and choc ices), celebrated many birthdays, had a party for our 9th anniversary and had a fish-and-chip lunch for our Christmas party.



We said a fond farewell to Leanne and Briar in the summer, but wish them lots of luck in their exciting new life in Yorkshire. In October, we held an afternoon of remembrance on the first anniversary of Anne's death. We displayed photographs, shared memories and chatted about our wonderful founder and how special she was. All OWLs agreed that she will be forever missed and never forgotten. We also said a very sad goodbye to one of our longest standing members (and Karaoke King), Jon Wilson, who died suddenly in July.



OWLs is a truly special group, and I feel privileged to be able to join them every Thursday afternoon. They are, without exception, the kindest, most caring and fun people, who never fail to extend a warm welcome to new faces. If you are over 60 and would like to make new friendships, have fun and (most importantly) enjoy chatting over a cup of tea and doughnut, please come and join us on Thursdays from 2pm until 4pm. We are looking forward to meeting you!

Kate Scott
OWLs Organiser

BLUE COAT SCHOOLS

The church links with the Blue Coat schools continue to be strong and thriving. It is encouraging to have so many of our church community and other local churches engaging with the schools, whether it is through being governors, the PTA, doing assemblies, or supporting school events. Recently a few gaps have come up on the governing bodies and if there are any church members who might be interested in this ministry, please do talk to Rev Jim.

The Academy continues to have full school assemblies in the church on Friday mornings and half-school assemblies in church on Tuesday mornings. There are also Academy communion services three times a year for their pupils and, on a personal level, I always enjoy being able to tell people that I had over 1000 people in church for a communion service – there can't be many parish churches where this is the case. Rev Jim also says Morning Prayer with a few school staff at 8am before the Friday Blue Coat Academy assembly and if any members of the church would like to join us, you are welcome.

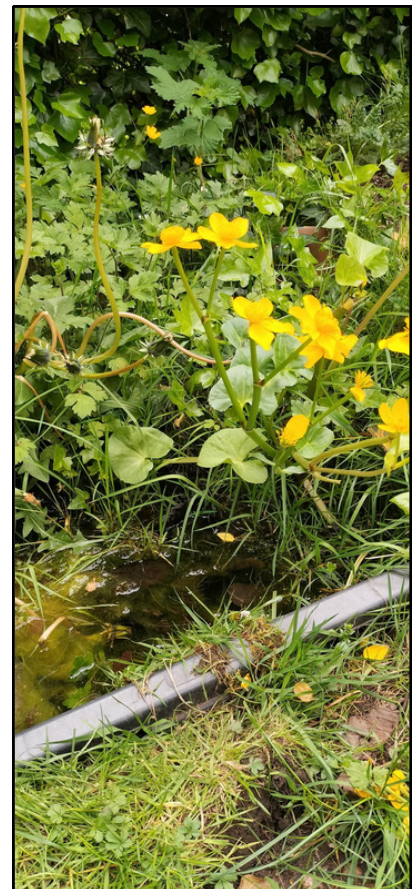
The Federated schools celebrate major festivals with services at the church that are both deeply Christian and deeply moving at the same time. The singing at these services is incredible and something to behold. Rev Jim, along with other church members and representatives and leaders of other local churches, regularly goes into the Infant and Junior Schools to do a weekly assembly.

Our most recent Blue Coat Sunday celebrated 370 years of the school and to have Andy Wolfe, the Chief Executive for Church of England Schools, as our guest speaker was a real treat. Copies of the history book that has been produced for the occasion are still available. (Please speak to Rev Jim if you would like a copy).

Unsurprisingly, the schools are increasingly popular so it is vital that anyone who attends church and wants a place at the school completes a Faith Application Place form and has it countersigned by Rev Jim.

As always, it is truly wonderful to be part of the Blue Coat family.

Rev Jim
Rector



ST MATTHEW'S CENTRE

The last 12 months have allowed us to welcome Chris Boden to the team, and very happy we are to have him, too! He has proved invaluable with work around the Centre: repairing doors, fixing flooring, getting lights to work, sorting taps, unblocking toilets (such a glamorous job!), digging paths and laying slabs is but to mention a minute fraction of the work being done behind the scenes.

There has been a lot of work in the back garden over the last few months, and it is lovely to have the seating ready for summer. Some new flower beds are in place, built from the waste created as Chris digs out a wider path for mobility scooters and wheelchairs (and my moped to park, on rare occasions), as well as two new water butts, and I hope this will be a wonderful summer resource.

As ever, we love having our regular Centre users (JAM, OWLs, Guides, Narcotics Anonymous, Stay and Play, Marketing, to name but a very few), as well as welcoming many new ones (such as fitness groups, reemployment training specialists, and children's drama and art groups).

We've hosted wakes and weddings, naming ceremonies and parties galore. What with many, many balloons and the odd bouncy castle and children's entertainer, I think glitter is a permanent addition to the carpets... The only problem we now have, and it is a nice problem, is that we are so busy it is getting quite tricky to fit the parties in!

Nancy Candlin
Operations Manager



ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

2025 MINUTES

1. Opening Worship

Rev Jim opened by welcoming everyone to the meeting, reminding those present that anyone on the Electoral Roll is eligible to vote at the APCM. It is an important meeting as it has legal standing and offers accountability to the church community for the activities of the Church Council.

The reason for the meeting is to give parish members an opportunity to have a say in the running of the church. Rev Jim explained that the Church of England is governed by a document called Church Representation Rules. The first version was written in 1919 and it is intended to 'simplify local church governance and enable parishes to adapt the rules to best serve ministry and mission in their contexts'. The current version dates from 2022 but a revised edition is due out shortly. Available online, they contain rules governing the formation and revision of the Electoral Roll, minimum qualifying age for election to the Church Council for the Deanery Synod and how to vote.

Rev Jim informed the group that although he is chairing the meeting, he cannot vote on any of the elections as he is a member of the clergy – the meeting is for the church community – and neither can Rev Yemi nor Rev John.

There was then a moment of prayer.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received and accepted.

3. Minutes of APCM 2024

Proposal: to accept the minutes as a true representation of the APCM held on Monday 19th of May 2024.

Proposed: Priscilla Trood

Seconded: Ros Hird

Agreed by all those who voted.

4. Matter Arising

None.

5. Notification of Any Other Business

None.

6. Election of Wardens

Rev Jim explained what is involved in being a Church Council (PCC) member, as outlined in the leaflet written by Lauren Parker called PCC Overview, a copy of which is at the back of the church for people to look at and is also on the church website. On screen was shown a spidergram of the organisation of the church, its Church Council and lines of responsibility, noting that this is not set in stone but can change. Rev Jim reminded attendees that the Church Council is a legal body, as is the Standing Committee.

Rev Jim issued his thanks to those who have served as Wardens and on the Leadership Team over the last year. The Leadership Team shapes the vision for the church, which is then fed through the Church Council for implementation. The Wardens and Deputy Wardens have been working very hard as, for a second year, they have been one Warden down with only three elected rather than four, and so have been very active in supporting and covering for each other, whether it be for funerals, weddings, baptism or other events.

Rev Jim noted that Rev Yemi and Adil Zareen are also on the Church Council in a non-voting capacity, and that other members can be coopted onto the Church Council during the coming year.

Churchwardens are elected annually by the parish and are only allowed to serve for a certain length of time. In St Matthew's it is four years (the maximum is seven years). The Deputy Wardens (currently Paul Davico and John Edlin) are not elected but are approved by the Church Council. Rev Jim also thanked the other stand-in Wardens, Alyson Green and Judith Ridgway for their help during the last year.

One Warden, Patti Lane, is stepping down, however she is happy to continue in a supporting role as stand-in Warden. Judith stood for one year only to ensure there were three Wardens, and her experience and support was invaluable in helping two new Wardens, Ben Butterfield and Daniel Barker, to grow into the role. Rev Jim is eternally thankful to Judith.

There have been two nominations for Warden:

- Ben Butterfield (nominated by Judith Ridgway and seconded by Alyson Green)
- Daniel Barker (nominated by Patti Lane and seconded by Pat Blewitt)

Those present were asked to raise their hands if in favour of both nominations. Both nominations were accepted, and thanks to Ben and Daniel for continuing for another year.

Sadly, this leaves St Matthew's one Churchwarden short. If anyone is interested in the role, please talk to Rev Jim as elections can take place at the next Extraordinary General Meeting. (Rev Jim reminded the gathering that if he were to disappear suddenly, St Matthew's would be unable to get a new rector until there were four Wardens in place.)

Rev Jim then showed attendees a book of Appointments to Churchwardens and Orders in Vestry, a volume begun in 1854. This has been used almost continuously since then to record such appointments, with only a few gaps in the last decade. John Edlin, who safeguards the tome, is aiming to fill in these gaps and to continue the important tradition of using the book in the future. Anyone who is on the Electoral Roll can sign it, if they wish, and the Wardens names will also be entered.

7. Presentation of Electoral Roll – Rev Jim Trood

This has been posted and will reopen after the APCM to new applicants (those who can apply must be over 16, are baptised and live in the parish, or attend church services regularly).

The Electoral Roll is not the same as church participants. Church participants are regular attendees to worship and there are about 250 at the moment. Note, you can be on the Electoral Roll and not attend church. Rev Jim noted that the membership of St Matthew's has changed considerably in the last ten years - the congregation has been getting younger and is ethnically much more diverse with less than 50% now white British.

The 2024 Electoral Roll had 184 members; the 2025 Electoral Roll has 177 but there are some names to be added and so is likely to read 182 after the meeting.

Proposal: To accept the Electoral Roll April 2025.

Proposed: Rev Jim Trood

Seconded: Jimm Rennie

Agreed by all those who voted.

8. Elections: Members of the Church Council

PCC members are elected by the APCM and normally serve a four-year term before stepping down for one year.

Rev Jim expressed his thanks to those PCC members who have been on the Church Council for their input and support over the last year.

There are currently six vacancies:

- one UKME position
- four for three-year position
- Deanery Synod position.

Sue Webster is stepping down from the Deanery Synod after five years, so many thanks to Sue for her longstanding contribution. Rev Jim told the group that the role was varied and interesting, and only involved four or five meetings a year – if anyone thinks they may be interested, they are welcome to attend a meeting to see, or to have a chat with him.

Rev Jim as able to tell the gathering that he had received only one nomination for a Church Council post:

- Ros Clewes for a three-year position.

Those present were asked to vote on this nomination.

Proposal: To accept the nomination of Ros Clewes to the Church Council.

Proposed: Patti Lane

Seconded: Pat Blewitt

Agreed by all those who voted.

As Returning Officer of St Matthew's Walsall, Rev Jim confirmed that all nominations were elected as officers of the Church Council. He also noted that the next Church Council meeting will be shorter than usual and will cover any legal matters and what is expected of Council members. This will take place on 9 June.

One other item for the meeting was to note that the Church Council has agreed that, from May 2025, the Minutes from Church Council meetings and from the Annual Meeting will go onto the St Matthew's website in the 'Resources' section for anyone to read, as well as a hard copy kept at the back of the church.

9. Presentation of Inventory and Terrier

On behalf of John Edlin, Buildings Manager, who is away, Rev Jim explained that the church is governed by the 'Canons of the Church of England', and keeping an Inventory of all things in the church is one of the rules by which St Matthew's must abide. Copies of the Inventory, managed by John Edlin, are kept both online and in written form. There are no changes to the inventory for 2024.

Rev Jim noted that the Inventory is about keeping a physical record of church life and its artefacts. He presented the Terrier and Inventory, noting that it needed to be signed at the end of the meeting and has to be available for inspection by the Diocese. It is recorded electronically with every item in the church pictured and listed or described. Rev Jim offered his thanks to John Edlin for all his work with this.

Proposal: To accept the Inventory and Terrier reports for 2024.

Proposed: Christine Barkley

Seconded: Dave Smith

Agreed by all those who voted.

Rev Jim thanked the wonderful team of people like Paul Barnard and Lewis Beardmore (to name just two of the amazing band of helpers) who give their time so generously to keep the interior and exterior of the building clean, neat and tidy and these crews are always happy to have new volunteers. If anyone is interesting in helping out with buildings and grounds maintenance, contact John Edlin, and for interior cleaning contact Sue Sargent. In fact, some recent research indicates that St Matthew's generates £2.5 million of volunteer work for free.

10. Presentation of Accounts – Treasurer/Rev Jim Trood

Rev Jim reported that, as has happened so many times before, despite Finance Officer Alyson Green preparing and sending the accounts to the Diocese for auditing well before the deadline, they have not yet been signed off and so can't be shown at this meeting. When the Diocese have audited the accounts, they will be signed off at an extraordinary meeting and then go on to the Charities Commission to be published on their website.

Rev Jim reported that, broadly speaking, church income was £188,744 and outgoings £187,725. Rev Jim passed on his huge thanks to Alyson Green for her hard work on the accounts both throughout the year and on the final yearly accounts, and he feels confident that the finances of St Matthew's are robust, transparent and in good shape thanks to the Finance Committee.

11. Annual Report and Rector's Comments

Rev Jim noted that there are hard copies of the Annual Report at the back of the church and that it is available on the St Matthew's website as well. He offered his thanks to Mike Ray and Nancy Candlin for the collation and presentation of the Report. It is a good read and gives great insight into all the activities that go on in St Matthew's.

There will be a new Leadership Team active in 2025, which will look at the future focus of the church for the next five years. Their decisions will be based on the four building blocks of: Worshipping, Equipping, Growing and Serving, which underpin everything St Matthew's strives to do.

Rev Jim finished by saying a really big thank you to the church community – to the volunteers, staff, Church Council members, lay support, etc. He loves being Rector of St Matthew's because of the people: "It is the best parish in the world!" Rev Jim has particularly appreciated the support he receives as, as Acting Archdeacon, 2024 was a very busy and difficult year and the help he found enabled him to carry out both roles in tandem.

12. Any Other Business

Adil Zareen offered thanks on behalf of all who attended for all that Rev Jim does, and how very appreciative they are.

13. Closing Prayers

Rev Jim closed the meeting with a prayer and blessing.

CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP 2025/26

Incumbent: Rev Jim Trood

Wardens:

1. Daniel Barker (elected from APCM 2025 to APCM 2026)
2. Ben Butterfield (elected from APCM 2025 to APCM 2026)

Representatives on the Diocesan Synod:

1. Jimm Rennie (Elected from Deanery Synod)

Representatives on the Deanery Synod:

1. Patti Lane (elected until 2026)
2. Diane Edlin (elected until 2026)

Elected members:

1. Elaine Brookes (elected until 2026)
2. Jose Davenport (elected until 2026)
3. Obumneme Esomchukwu (elected until 2026)
4. Winner Dennigwe-Aggrey (elected until 2026)
5. Christine Barkley (elected until 2027)
6. Uzoamaka Esomchukwu (elected until 2027)
7. Chukwudi Madu (elected until 2027)
8. Lorna Williams (elected until 2028)
9. Ros Clewes (Elected until 2028)
10. Mike Ray (Elected until 2028)
11. Sandra Alleyne (Elected until 2028)
12. Joseph John (Elected until 2028)

Associate members:

N/A

Co-opted members:

John Edlin (non voting)

Treasurer: Alyson Green (from February 2023)

Secretary: Nancy Candlin (from November 2022)

Gift Aid Secretary: Alyson Green (from February 2023)

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING 2026

Sunday 31st May 2026 at 12.30pm in St Matthew's Church

AGENDA

1. Opening prayer
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of APCM 2025
4. Presentation of Electoral Roll – Rev Jim Trood
5. Election of Wardens
6. Elections: members of the Church Council (PCC)
7. Elections: Deanery Synod Representatives
8. Presentation of Inventory and Terrier – John Edlin
9. Presentation of Accounts – Treasurer/Rev Jim Trood
10. Annual report and Rector's comments
11. Any Other Business/Questions to the Rector
12. Closing prayers