

St Bartholomew's Church Yarnton



Annual Parish Report 2025

Aims and purposes

St Bartholomew's, Yarnton Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent, the Reverend Oliver Petter, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

Introduction

Thank you to all who have continued to support St Bartholomew's. We are so grateful to all those whose hard work and commitment enabled us to sustain the church's ministry in new as well as familiar ways, and to maintain our central offering of worship and prayer, and pastoral care in our community. We are blessed by all our congregation and friends. Particular thanks must go to our excellent and dedicated PCC led by our churchwardens Paul Tweddle, Assistant Churchwardens Gill Rowbotham and Alison Riggs (also PCC Secretary and Deanery Synod Rep), Treasurer Gary Brewerton, Safeguarding Officer Charlotte Rayner, and our Associate Vicar Rev'd Sue Spankie.

Objectives and activities

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our parish community at St Bartholomew's. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish.

Diocesan and Benefice vision

St Bartholomew's is the only physical Christian presence in our parishes and we welcome all denominations to join our worship. Our tradition is simple, traditional worship, although we are open to change. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament. We try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship and prayer; learning about the Gospel; and developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus.
- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish.
- Missionary and outreach work. We face the challenge of being physically located on the edge of the village which we serve, so there is little visibility of the church for village residents, and we are striving to reach out to all parts of our village through our missionary work.

The PCC has a commitment to the Diocesan Vision, as a helpful overview of our mission. Four points continue to have great resonance.

- To make a bigger difference in the world and serve the poor.
- To share our faith with adults, children and young people and grow the church in every place; rural, urban and suburban.
- To serve every school in our community.
- To put the discipleship of all at the heart of our common life and set God's people free.

To facilitate this work it is important that we maintain the fabric of St Bartholomew's church. This is a major task with our historic building.

PCC

Thank you to all our PCC. PCC members in 2025 were: : Rev. Oliver Petter (Incumbent), Rev'd Sue Spankie (Associate Vicar) Paul Tweddle (Churchwarden), Gary Brewerton (Treasurer), Alison Riggs (Assistant Churchwarden, Secretary, Deanery Synod Rep), Jill Rowbotham (Assistant Churchwarden), Charlotte Rayner (Parish Safeguarding officer), Michael Fogg, Ann Moss, Neil Small, Penny Small, Julie Walters, and Jill Rowbotham.

The PCC met on 5th February, 1st May, 3rd July, 9th October for full meetings with the APCM on 11th May.

Review of 2025 (*Achievements and performance*)

Worship

The heart of our parish life is our worship of Almighty God. We hope to offer beautiful, sincere worship, offering the Sacrament of Holy Communion week by week, with faithful preaching.

The principal pattern of worship continued to be the 8am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer) and Parish Communion with Junior Church at 11am on Sundays. Alongside this we continued to hold a Wednesday morning 9.30am Holy Communion Service.

Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer were said from Monday -Thursday. A regular Sunday night Compline was offered through the summer and autumn months.

Across the year the average number of people worshipping on a Sunday in St Bartholomew's was 50, including 7 children. Alongside this we had a regular gathering of 7 at Wednesday Holy Communion.

Alongside our worship in St Bartholomew's, we had regular monthly congregations at the Sanctuary Residential Care home on Rutten Lane, in Floryn House Residential Care Home, off Sandy Lane, and at Erdington House.

A monthly 5pm Sunday evening service continued through 2025. This had begun as a trial in 2024, envisioning a traditional Eucharist with contemporary worship music. The service was offered by a team drawing together our parish, alongside Wycliffe Hall ordinands and students, and the Yarnton Manor community. The service was marked by a contemplative character and a regular healing ministry was offered.

Through the year

Lent, Holy Week and Easter

Services in Lent , Holy Week and Easter went well, and Easter Sunday showed strong attendance, and were deeply moving to those worshipping, as we drew close to our Lord's sacrifice on the cross, and the wonder of his resurrection.

Palm Sunday 46

Maundy Thursday 19

Good Friday 19

Easter Vigil 6am 24

Easter Day 11am Communion Service 61

Alongside the principal services within our Holy Week Calendar we held a successful Little Sheep Easter session, exploring the Easter story.

St Bartholomew's Day 24th August

St Bartholomew's Day fell on the Sunday this year and we celebrated with a congregational bring and share lunch.

Remembrance Sunday 9th November

A Village Act of Remembrance took place at the Rutten Lane War Memorial. Those in attendance once again represented a cross section of the community, with many children from the uniformed organisations, and wreaths laid by those organisations, as well as the War Memorial Committee WI, Yarnton Blues, Parish Council, Church and Gardening Club. Children and adults from these organisations were involved in giving the readings and prayers. Yarnton Band played as the full band once again which was a great blessing for the Act of Remembrance. Michael Fogg, assisted Oliver in leading the Act of Remembrance as a former serviceman. There were approx. 200 people present, with many young people.

Advent and Christmas

Our Christmas services again went extremely well in 2025 as we celebrated the coming of Emmanuel – “God with us”. We had very full church for the Village Carol Service, and the Crib Service. Yarnton Manor generously offered hospitality after the Carol Service,

The Crib service involved a well rehearsed cast of children telling the Christmas story. Our Christmas Night and Christmas Morning services were both well attended and joyful occasions.

These special services and events were hopeful and joyful, and moments of friendships being formed or renewed.

We were hugely grateful for all the help of our community of volunteers who enabled these acts of worship to take place so well.

Attendance for principal and special services

Sunday 14th December Village Carol Service 150 people

Wednesday 17th December Little Sheep Christingle 49 people

Saturday 20th December Children’s Christingle Service 2pm 27 people

Wednesday 24th December Crib with Yarnton Band 3pm 150 people

11pm ‘Midnight Mass’ 70 people

Thursday 25th December Christmas Day all age Communion 50 people

Occasional Offices in 2025– Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals

Weddings There were no weddings in 2025.

Baptisms We held 5 Baptisms in 2025.

Funerals There were 14 Funerals of parishioners, and a burial of ashes.

Parish Life

Electoral Roll

2025 was a year where we created a fresh Electoral Roll from scratch. 43 were on the roll. This was a drop from 57, although such drops in numbers may take place at the complete revision of the Electoral Roll.

Deanery Synod

Alison Riggs acted as Deanery Synod representative at the APCM in 2025. The Synod provides the PCC with an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the church.

Safeguarding

The PCC adopted the new Safeguarding Policy as we do each year. Members of the PCC completed online safeguarding training as required by the Diocese. The role of Parish Safeguarding Officer is a considerable undertaking with a lot of work. We are extremely grateful to Charlotte Rayner for her continuing work as Safeguarding Officer.

Ministry

Ordained ministry

Alongside the Rector, Rev'd Sue Spankie regularly presided and preached at our I I am Holy Communion, alongside her wider ministry in the Benefice and emerging focus at St Michael's, Begbroke. We are incredibly appreciative of Sue's dedication and pastoral ministry.

We were grateful for the ongoing support of Rev'd Richard Armitage, who presided and preached every month or so at our I I am service, and Canon Barbara Doubtfire for her ongoing ministry at our 8am service. We are grateful for their care and dedication to God and God's people.

Two of the clergy living at Yarnton Manor assisted with Sunday and Festival Worship. Rev'd Dr Lyndon Drake and Rev'd Martha Simpson were involved and we were delighted to build this connection and partnership in ministry.

Remembering Richard Turnbull

Rev'd Dr Richard Turnbull, a resident of Begbroke parish, died in November 2025. He had been a great supporter of the Benefice. Living and serving in Begbroke parish, had taken part very fully in Benefice study and fellowship groups, services and activities. His untimely death from cancer was a shock to many. We are hugely grateful for his ministry in the Benefice from 2019 until his death; for his passionate and clear teaching and preaching, his pastoral ministry and for his friendship.

Lay Ministry

We were thankful for our own Licensed Lay Minister Dr Ben Knighton for his commitment and devotion through the year

Thank you to our regular intercessors and readers, and all who assist with worship for their contribution and to our welcomers. The participation of the whole Body of Christ in our worship is a great gift.

Music

Thank you to Malcolm Hawkins for once again playing for us throughout the year. Malcolm has been incredibly consistent and faithful in playing for us on Sundays and for numerous occasional offices. Brian Taylor also played on occasion and it was good to have extra support.

The question of whether and how we might begin a choir continues to be asked.

Pastoral Care

Rev'd Oliver Petter and Rev'd Sue Spankie visited all church members who requested it, to celebrate communion with them either at their homes or in hospital.

Oliver continued to visit The Sanctuary for a monthly service of Holy Communion for residents. This was offered twice a month until the autumn and we may seek to continue a more frequent service which greatly helps to support faith and pastoral ministry. Oliver continues to be thankful to the Activity co-ordinator at the Sanctuary who facilitates these visits with enthusiasm and faith. A monthly service also continued through the year at both Floryn House residential care home, and at Erdington House. In each of these three Houses, there is a real sense of a small church being established, meeting frequently enough to carry some momentum. The sense of the presence of the risen Christ, and the power of the sacrament are very moving.

Thank you to all our clergy and ministry team for their dedicated pastoral ministry. Thank you also to all within our church family for the ways in which members of our community care for one another and support in pastoral and practical ways.

Mission and Evangelism

Ministry to Children Young People and Families

We are grateful to Rachel for writing this report, and for all her work in supporting our ministry to children, young people and families.



15 People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Luke 18:15-17

Junior Church:

Junior Church has continued this year, welcoming new children and volunteers. We follow the lectionary, meaning that the children take part in song, games, stories and crafts related to the readings heard in the main service. Providing a faithful, reliable and fun provision for children and young people during our 11am Sunday service remains a key element of our offering, and one which is highly valued by those who attend and their families. Highlights this year have included sorting and packing the St Nicholas Day gifts for the Ukrainian soldiers and making Mother's Day posies for the congregation. We have an average attendance of 5-6 children per week (representing 8 families) and since we began Junior Church (in 2022) we have welcomed 47 children from 19 families!



Little Sheep:

Our under 5s stay-and-play session continues to be well attended, with new families joining (and old families returning!) each term. This year we have an average attendance of 10 children each week (representing 11 families). Since 2022 we have welcomed over 50 children from 36 families. Parents particularly value meeting in the village with other local families, and often mention the warm welcome and atmosphere of the group. This year we have visited Erdington House (during church repair works), been hosted at the manor for an end-of-term picnic and enjoyed our usual Christmas Christingle and mini-nativity session.



Preparation for Confirmation:

Throughout the winter and spring, a group of 3 of our young people attended Confirmation classes, which encouraged them to reflect on their faith, relationship with God and the church. We were delighted to celebrate their Confirmation on Easter Sunday!

Seasonal Activities:

St Bartholomew's held our first **Advent Activity Morning** in December 2025. This was modelled after the success of our Lent Activity Morning in the Spring, which was attended by 37 people (19 under 18s). We were delighted to welcome 31 (18 under 18s), to our session where the children made 'Rocky Road to Bethlehem', crafted toilet roll tube angels and followed the nativity story from the point of view of a very grumpy owl! We hope to continue, grow and add to these activities in the coming year.

The **Crib Service** was well attended, as usual. With 14 children taking part in telling the nativity story. This service continues to draw in families from across the village and beyond and provides a fantastic opportunity to share the Good News with our local friends and neighbours.

This year we ran our fourth **Christingle Service** with a record attendance of 49 (24 under 18s). Families sang Christmas carols together and made their own Christingle oranges. The collection for this service raised money and awareness of the work of The Children's Society



Mums' 'Bible OverBrew':

Since October, a group of six local mums of young children have met on Saturday mornings for bible study. The group follow the 'Bible OverBrew' programme, a study guide to reading the bible in a year. This group has proved fruitful for those who attend, providing a calm moment in the week to dedicate to prayer, study and fellowship with fellow Christian mums in the village.

While the numbers are to be celebrated, it is important to remember our focus: to teach, disciple, welcome and care for the children, young people and their families who come through our doors. Showing them the love of Jesus Christ. And this would not be possible without the efforts of our wonderful volunteers. With particular thanks to Veronica, Linda, Angela, Caroline, Lauren, Gill, Charlotte, Emma, Jane, Pauline, Alison and Heather. Here we also particularly give thanks for Heather Armitage, who faithfully supported the Junior Church, where she is very missed.

We continue to ask for your prayers for the children and young people and those who minister to them in this parish.

Learning and Study

We are committed to growing in faith, and learning the way of Christ together. Our study and fellowship groups are important offerings.

Tuesday Evening Study Group

In 2025 we continued to hold our Tuesday evening group most weeks throughout the year. It remained a shared Yarnton and Begbroke group, meeting in Begbroke Village Hall.

The numbers attending ebbed and flowed through the year with typically 12-20 present. The group continued to grow together in faith and fellowship and has developed as a significant presence in our pattern of prayer, learning and formation as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Over 2025 we offered series based on Christian Prayer, a study of the first half of the Acts of the Apostles, and a study of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians.

Special thanks go to our clergy leading sessions, and in particular to those offering hospitality and catering through the year.

Tuesday Lunchtime Study Group

We held a series of Tuesday lunchtime Study and Fellowship groups in Lent and late autumn leading into Advent. These were based in the Rectory (Lent) and then in the Parish Room for autumn and Advent. The groups offer another moment in the week and further sessions were proposed. Typically the group was 4-7 people.

Caring for God's creation

We held our annual Creation Sunday service in September. Apart from this our Eco Action Group had a quiet year, with a desire to re-focus on this part of our church life in 2026. We attained Eco Church Bronze award in spring 2022, and have sought to work towards the silver award. The Eco Church awards set a programme of work to foster a more sustainable church life, working on: worship and teaching, management of church buildings, management of churchyard, community and global engagement, lifestyle. This is in every sense a vital part of our mission.

The church in the community

Alongside our ministry to children, young people and families, we seek to service our community and share the love of Christ within our village. We continued to seek to discern how we were called to do so, and to be open to new opportunities.

Community Drop in

Community Drop in The Community Drop runs every Monday in Yarnton Village Hall, providing tea, cake and good company for many people each week.

Whilst the church was integral to its foundation , it was handed over to an independent committee at the end of 2023. Members of the St Bartholomew's community and friends remain foundational to the drop in.

The aim of the Drop in was to foster good company and friendship in the village No monies were required, rather donations were requested. The drop in raised monies through the year, making a surplus.

Regulars valued the social interaction and warm atmosphere, and many found it to be quite a lifeline in a village where one can feel isolated.

William Fletcher School

William Fletcher School The school visited for their three traditional annual services: Harvest, Christmas and Founder's Day. 2026 will mark the 200th anniversary of the first "Founder's Day" and we are considering how to mark the occasion.

Rev'd Oliver Petter and Rev'd Sue Spankie both led school assemblies in 2025. Oliver continues to serve as a school governor.

Village News

Thank you to Yarnton Village News, who are very generous in publicising church activities throughout the year and in supporting St Bartholomew's.

Church Life

Open church Keeping the church open is an essential part of our ministry. The sanctuary, silence and stillness of our ancient house of prayer is deeply important to many in the village. Thank you to all those who kept the church open, especially to Joanna Bailey, Gary Brewerton and Charlotte Rayner..

Foodbank The Foodbank collection point continued to be heavily used, and we held a special collection for North Oxfordshire Community Foodbank at Harvest. Thank you to those who took our collections to Kidlington each week

Church cleaning We are extremely grateful to all those who assisted with church cleaning during 2024. Thank you to Jill Rowbotham for her help, and for co-ordinating the monthly Saturday morning cleaning session, and the monthly regular helpers.

Tea & coffee We are most grateful to all on our rota of volunteers who served refreshments after Sunday services. This was greatly appreciated by regulars and visitors alike, and is a core part of our hospitality.

Flowers Thank you to Pauline Watt Smith, Sarah Eaton, Joanna Bailey, Jane Black and Julie Walters for their floristry in the church. The beautiful displays are cherished by regular worshippers and by visitors alike.

Fundraising Pauline Franklin once again completed the annual Ride and Stride raising money for St Bartholomew's and for the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust. Pauline has ridden for many years and raised thousands of pounds. 2025 was her final ride. Congratulations to Pauline on this wonderful achievement.

Ordinands in Training The parish remains committed to supporting the learning and formation of future clergy. We were delighted to have members of the community at Yarnton Manor joining in with parish life, within Sunday worship and Junior Church, and at our Tuesday evening study and fellowship groups. Their contribution was excellent.

Sam Haiser finished his weekly placement from October 2024 to March 2025 and was ordained deacon at Pentecost 2025 to serve in the Diocese in Europe in Austria. Former placement student Oliver Wright was also ordained deacon in Christchurch cathedral, prior to serving his curacy in this diocese of Oxford.

In October Anna Cross, and Jacob Wigley both began weekly placements, whilst in their final year at Wycliffe Hall. Both joined in fully with parish life, leading services and preaching. Anna acted effectively co-ordinating the monthly Yarnton Evening Worship team.

The Lanier Theological Foundation at Yarnton Manor

The Library at Yarnton Manor was opened in 2025, completing the major restoration of the Manor site. It is a beautiful place and a full programme of theological study, learning, hospitality and fellowship is offered. We have been pleased to form friendships and connections. The Manor kindly hosted a reception following the Carol Service and invited us to host cake and

coffee during the Open House weekend, drawing huge numbers to the church, and raising valuable funds. Clergy based at the Manor have assisted in worship, and ordinands living on site have joined us on placement. We look forward to continuing to work as neighbours in the service of Christ. As we look ahead to the new housing planned between Yarnton and Begbroke, we hope and pray that all partnerships and friendships will be a vital part of the welcome and outreach to the great numbers of people due to move to the area.

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A prayer for our parish

O God, without whom our labour is but loss, we pray that your blessing may rest upon our parish. Bless our clergy and all who call upon your name in this place. Deepen us in your love and strengthen our desire to serve you, give us faith, love and courage without measure and as we daily offer ourselves to you, so we may all gladly give of what you have given us so may the work of your holy Church go forward and your Kingdom be enlarged through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

a prayer cherished by the late John Appleton