St Mary's Selly Oak
Parish Reports for January-December 2025

VICAR'S REPORT

I'd like to begin by saying thank you: thank you to every single person who is part of the community that is St Mary's Church Selly Oak. As we continue to grow gently, it simply wouldn't be possible to sustain the mission and ministry of our growing church without the contributions of those who offer their time to serve our church in so many ways. My vision for a Church community is for it to be a place where all are welcome and valued, and where all have something to contribute, and I have so much to be thankful for here at St Mary's because so many people do volunteer to help out in different ways, and without that, much of what we do wouldn't be possible. So thank you.

Change!

2025 was a year of change - within the ministry team, with paid staff, and in key volunteer roles.

(a) In January John Surtees retired as Church Treasurer, a role he had held for many years. We welcomed Allison Tam into the role, with John appointed by the PCC as assistant treasurer for a year to support and mentor Allison. I am grateful to them both for their work in these roles.
(b) Early in 2025 the PCC agreed to appoint a short-term part-time operations co-ordinator to set up administrative systems for the church, create a parish office, and help us to recruit a part-time parish administrator. Adam Bennett was appointed to this role and worked with us for six months, with the outcome that we now have office space in the church hall, and in September 2025 were able to appoint Lorna Green to the role of part-time administrator. The aim was to relieve the Incumbent from much of the day-to-day administration of the parish, freeing up more time and space for the ministry of parish priest.
(c) In June 2025 John Stormont retired from his role as organist and choir master after 34 years in post. We held a celebratory evensong for him on music Sunday, and appointed him organist emeritus, an honorary role in recognition of his outstanding service to St Mary's. The recruitment process for John's successor took place in the autumn, and I am delighted with the appointment of Sarah Marshall as St Mary's new organist and choir director.
(d) Fr Jacob moved on to his first Incumbency in September having successfully completed his three years as Assistant Curate at St Mary's. We were sad to see him go but delighted that he has remained in the Birmingham Diocese as Vicar of St Alban and St Patrick Highgate. A good number of us from St Mary's went along to support Fr Jacob on the Feast of St Michael and All Angels when he was licensed as Vicar of Highgate by Bishop Michael.
(e) We were also sad to say goodbye to Revd Sharon Jones in August. Sharon had worked closely with our church during her time as Chaplain to the University of Birmingham, but after 10 years in post she felt it right for a move and is now vicar of All Saints Emscote (Coventry Diocese).
(f) During 2025 Kate Cheyney took on the important role of Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Vision and Priorities for Mission and Ministry

Within our overall vision statement – 'St Mary's is here to celebrate the love of God for all' – we have continued to work with the priorities for mission and ministry identified for St Mary's during the last Interregnum under the three headings of: 'exploring spirituality', 'creating inclusive community', and 'outreach, particularly to children, families and young people'.

Exploring Spirituality

Opportunities for study and learning during the year included: Lenten discussion groups on 'The Chosen' (a film about the life of Christ); an evening in Holy Week led by Peter Privet who created the 'Garments of Gethsemane' Exhibition that we hosted during Passiontide; 'The Meaning is in the Waiting' during Advent; a preparation morning for those interested in confirmation. It was wonderful to welcome Bishop Michael to a Sunday morning service in November to confirm 4 young people and 6 adults from St Mary's.

Spirituality is nurtured through our regular Eucharistic worship and through other forms of worship offered on an occasional basis. During 2025 these included: evening meditations during Lent, a Taizé service, and a shared Advent carol service at St Faith and St Laurence Harborne. We have continued

to offer prayers for wholeness and healing at the end of the 10am Eucharist on the first Sunday of each month, which is appreciated by a growing number of people. 'The Well', a monthly Sunday evening service organised jointly by St Mary's and the University Chaplaincy, was held at St Mary's during the first half of 2025, but has been paused since the departure of the University Chaplain. There was also another pre-Lent Quiet Morning shared with Revd David Parker and St Faith and St Laurence Harborne and led by Fr. Jacob which was appreciated by those who attended.

Creating Inclusive Community

The social committee continued to offer a varied programme of events throughout the year, providing opportunities for us to get to know one another better and for everyone to be able to enjoy doing various activities together, do see the report of the committee.

During 2025 the PCC agreed to apply for a faculty to make permanent the move of the children/family area from the back of the North Aisle to the front of the South Aisle, making it easier for children to engage with what is happening at the front of church, and to be more included in the liturgy and worship, not just on Sunday mornings, but at school services and during baptisms.

Outreach

After another unsuccessful attempt to recruit someone to lead our work with children and families (it seems there just aren't the people out there to work with churches in this) we again paused whilst focussing on recruitment for the organist/choir director and administrator. Unfortunately we have also had to pause the Wednesday evening Junior Club and 'coffee stop' on Thursday mornings, both of which are not sustainable without a new leader. We are immensely grateful to Gerald Fage and his family for their work in running the Júnior Club over many years.

It has been very good, however, to be able to start 'Youth Church Group' once a month on a Sunday afternoon to offer fun and food and worship for young people in year 6 above. I am grateful to Kate Cheyney, Angela Lidgbird and Isabella Wong who have shared in leading this, as well as to Isabella Wong and Allison Tam and Richard Marshall who continue to lead Junior Church.

Personal

I was very grateful to the PCC and the Bishop for approving my Sabbatical in 2025, giving me three months free of parish responsibilities to focus on replenishing my own spiritual life, through retreats, reading, and a theological conference, as well as having more space to spend with family and friends.

Outside of the parish I relinquished my role in curate training in order to have more time available for the parish, but I have continued to enjoy my role as Bishop's adviser for Spirituality. This includes matching clergy and licensed lay people with spiritual accompaniers, contributing to diocesan training on spirituality, leading a quiet morning for those completing the Growing Gifts course, and being a member of the diocesan clergy wellbeing committee. In September 2025 I was elected to Diocesan Synod which meets on three Saturday mornings each year.

Finally…

… do read all the Annual Reports where you will learn more about everything that goes on at St Mary's and please join me in praying for our church, that we may continue to be a worshipping community where all are welcome and valued, and all may contribute.

Revd Hazel White

OUR WORSHIP

Altar servers, lesson readers, intercessors and lay assistants

Altar Servers: There were ten church members who acted as servers during the year. It has been particularly encouraging to see young people from the new Youth Church group participating and assisting as servers during All-age Worship. We continue to maintain the practice of having two acolytes and one crucifer at the 10:00 service, a pattern that has been well-established over the past year.

Lesson Readers: During 2025, there were twenty-one members of the congregation in total who read the lessons. To ensure a consistent presence at both our Sunday morning services, our team of lesson readers has embraced a more integrated approach, with volunteers from the 10:00 service providing

valuable support to the 8:00 communion service on an occasional rota. This shared commitment ensures that the ministry of the Word continues to be a central and well-supported part of our worship.

Intercessors: There were ten members of the congregation, plus the clergy, who led the intercessions at the 10:00 communion service.

Eucharistic Assistants: There were nine church members licensed to assist with the administration of Holy Communion. One of those members remains authorised by the vicar to support the clergy by taking home communion to the sick and housebound.

Lay Deacon: Two members of the church have assisted the clergy by acting as the deacon at the 10:00 service on Sunday mornings during 2025, an increase of one. This role continues to be a vital part of our liturgy, including the leading of the prayers of preparation and the reading of the gospel.

Summary of Readings for TWS: In addition to the clergy, there were six church members who provided the weekly summary of the readings for inclusion in the TWS sheet.

Isabella Wong

Baptisms

Baptisms in 2025 were again up on the previous year with 15 in total. Of these, 3 were children under 1 year, 3 were children aged 1-4 years, 2 were children aged 5-10 years, 2 were young people aged 11-17 years, and 5 were adults. There has been a noticeable increase in adults, young people and children asking for the rite of baptism for themselves, rather than parents bringing babies for baptism. Not all baptisms took place at 12 noon on the second Sunday of the month (though some did). It was a joy to baptise a family of 3 during our Easter Day Eucharist, a student during our 10am Parish Communion in May, and three young people from the same family during our Parish Eucharist in October. Many of these young people and adults then went on to be confirmed by Bishop Michael in November.

The clergy are grateful to the baptism team who help to prepare the church and welcome guests for baptisms, to June Sutton who distributes cards to mark the anniversary of baptisms, and to Kate Cheyney for organising the rota for those who assist with baptisms.

Revd Hazel White

Bellringers

The Tower was opened for the BUSCR's (Birmingham Universities Society of Change Ringers) 70th Year celebration ringing on 25th January 2025.

We heard of the passing of Alan Westwood on 15th of February 2025. Alan was an experienced member of the band, his humour and recollections of ringing often bringing laughter amongst those who rang with him. A quarter Peal was rung prior to the funeral on 10th March 2025 by Russell Emms, Paul Lindley, George Harrison, Catherine Taylor, Tim Haslam, Philip Haslam, followed by open ringing. Steadman triples were rung after the service followed by call changes.

St Mary's Hand bells were returned to Church; they had been found at the late ringing master's house. They need repair, a bell is missing to complete the set, a replacement will need to be purchased.

I was contacted by the 1st Kings Norton Sea Scouts Group for a taster session on ringing. This was done collaboratively with Northfield on 02nd April 2025, which took place at St Laurence Northfield. The teenagers were given a talk and demonstration on ringing, followed by the opportunity to chime a bell. They were also taken to the belfry to see the bells.

Kirsty and James organised and lead the Bell Sunday Service on 25th May 2025 with a cake sale asking for donations towards the repair to the handbells fund. St Martins guild loaned us a set of hand bells, Alistair, Kirsty and James demonstrated hand bell ringing after the service. Members of the congregation then had the opportunity to go into the Tower for a talk about the art of change ringing and chime a bell. From the cake sale £75.00 was raised towards the handbell repair fund.

Following the opening of the Tower we had interest from a junior member of the congregation he and his friend have started learning to ring, they are almost handling the bell independently.

The band has been able to ring for most Sunday services.

The bells were rung in celebration for all requested Weddings.

The Tower was opened during 2025 for visiting bands, for Peal and quarter peal ringing. On the 05th of July 2025 Birmingham hosted the National Youth Contest. We were asked if the contestants could ring at St Marys prior to the contest taking place.

Ringing for Wednesday practice continues to be well supported. We continue to ring call changes, double method ringing and Plain hunt on 5 & 7. When numbers and skills allow, we have rung grandsire triples, and plain bob minor. Practice in listening and striking is ongoing as is practice in raising and lowering the bells in Peal.

The annual dinner was held at the Peacock Inn on the 20th of March 2025, I would like to thank Gill and David Sanders for making the arrangements. A very pleasant evening was had by ringers, family and friends.

Robyn Tighe and David Ingram arranged the Selly Oak ringers outing on 09th August 2025, we were treated to ringing at the following Towers.

1. St Michaels Sutton Coldfield 8 bells lead by Alistair.
2. St Editha's Tamworth 10 bells Lead by James.
3. St Peters Drayton Bassett 6 Bells Lead by Frank.
4. St Peters Tamworth 8 bells Lead by Kirsty.

A total of 19 ringers from Selly Oak, Moseley, Northfield and ringing friends enjoyed the day ringing call changes, plain hunt and methods during the outing. Thank you to Robyn and David for making the arrangement and thank you to each of the Tower leads for their expertise. I speak for everyone that we had a great day!

Ringing at St Marys Selly oak is successful thanks to all the ringers who ring here, adding their enthusiasm, their experience, respect, and their hunger to learn, teach and do something different.

I especially enjoyed ringing happy birthday for Maggy this year lead by James. A big thank you to each one of them for their weekly commitment to the art of change ringing. They are all gifted and talented individuals.

I thank the clergy Hazel, Jayne, Jacob, and the congregation for their support. We look forward to serving the community of Selly Oak in 2026.

Joanne Goodall

Choir and music

2025 has been a significant year of change for music at St Mary's. We began the year with the announcement that John Stormont would be retiring after 34 years of dedicated service. His contribution to the life of our church has been huge, and the transition period this year has demonstrated a collective commitment to maintaining the high standards he worked so hard to achieve.

Key Events

- On 15th June (Music Sunday), we marked John's retirement with a Festal Choral Evensong. It was a wonderful occasion, attended by many friends and parishioners. The service was sung by a full choir conducted by John and accompanied by Chris Stormont—a memorable event with an exceptionally high standard of music.
- From June to October, a rota of four organists - Cian, Kate, George, and me - ensured that our morning services and Choral Evensongs continued as usual. We worked together to maintain choir practices, and Kate planned the hymns for all services, ensuring our musical tradition continued without interruption. The choir was extremely patient and supportive during this period.
- In September, we held an informal music concert. It was a relaxed and enjoyable evening that allowed various members of the church to perform different styles of music and spoken word, attracting an audience from the congregation and wider community.
- Following a recruitment process in early autumn, I was honoured to be appointed as Organist and Choir Director, starting in November. This led into a busy two months in the lead-up to Christmas, culminating in a successful and well-attended Carol Service. I am very grateful to Kate and Hazel for their detailed planning of the Christmas music, which provided a wonderful head start.

The choir, organ and music library

- The choir has seen some shifts in membership this year. While we have sadly lost a few members due to illness, relocation, and changing circumstances, we have been heartened to gain several new singers - some specifically interested in our Choral Evensong services.
- We have maintained our weekly Friday rehearsals, as well as a short monthly rehearsal specifically for Choral Evensong. While weekly attendance fluctuates, the commitment to major services remains very high.
- We have introduced several new anthems this year which have been well received by the choir. Kate and I have also completed an audit and tidy-up of the music library to ensure our resources are well-organised.
- Since starting the post, I have met monthly with Hazel to discuss music choices, which has been very effective. Kate has also remained a huge support to the choir and to me, covering services and rehearsals in my absence and helping to keep us organised.
- The organ has been kept well maintained, with a couple of issues noted in the tuning book.

Looking ahead

Our goals for the coming year include:

- We are still looking to grow our numbers, if possible. We would be particularly keen to attract singers who could join our alto or bass sections, and hope to encourage some children and young people to sing.
- We will continue to explore and introduce new music for the choir to sing.
- We look forward to collaborating with other musicians within our oversight area for specific events.
- I am personally committed to further developing my own choir directing skills to better support our singers and look forward to completing a choral conducting course shortly.
- I will need to look into when the organ was last tuned and arrange for the next visit to be made at a suitable time.

Acknowledgments

My thanks go to John Stormont for his decades of leadership; to Kate, Cian, and George, who kept the music going during the summer months; to Hazel and the PCC for all the support provided for music in this parish; and finally, to the choir members for their resilience and the warm welcome they have given me since I started the post.

Sarah Marshall

Church flowers

The flower team, consisting of four people, has continued to provide flowers for special occasions, on weeks where there has been a sponsor (16) or funding by a wedding couple. On weeks with no sponsor we have tried to provide at least one arrangement from excess monies in the fund and during the summer months are able to provide flowers from our own gardens. All foliage is provided from our gardens. There was a Christmas tree event again in December.

We continue to work towards sustainability, by not using oasis, reusing all containers/vases and where possible using flowers grown by ourselves or in the UK. The latter is not always possible, especially in the winter months.

We have been encouraged to see that we already have sponsors for some weeks of the current year, including new sponsors.

Kirsty Simms

Deanery Synod

The Warley and Edgbaston Deanery Synod met three times during 2025/26. The areas of interest discussed at each synod are identified below.

5th June 2025 at Christ Church, Summerfield

The synod provided an opportunity for each of the 23 parishes in the deanery to identify items of "Good News" about how God is working among their congregation. St Mary's news concerned (i) the setting up of the Youth Church Group, which meets one Sunday afternoon each month and (ii) how the congregation is becoming a more multicultural and inclusive community as individuals from all ethnic groups take active roles in the services.

8th October at St Hilda's, Warley Woods

Bishop Michael addressed the synod on the Diocesan vision of growing churches and flourishing schools at the heart of each community. The Diocese has received a grant from the Church Commissioners to further this vision, which is based on four strategic points:

- Sustainability
- Leadership
- Parish Growth
- Revitalisation

12th February at St John's, Harborne

There were three main points of discussion at the synod:

- The Church Commissioners are funding a 5-year project on Generosity, which is designed to assist parishes with all aspects of their financial performance and obligations. The leader of this project, Dawn Baker, gave a short presentation and confirmed that the project team would be visiting each of the 146 parishes over the course of the project.
- Parish Partnerships provide an opportunity for two parishes of differing styles, histories and locations to learn from and assist each other to achieve their vision and priorities. St John's, Harborne and St James, Rounds Green have begun such a partnership and clergy from both parishes reflected on the start of their work together.
- The synod concluded with an update on the deanery from Archdeacon Jenny. The People and Places initiative has now concluded and the revised deanery structure, put in place as part of that initiative will continue. The full-time area Dean, Mike Sermon, will be retiring in May and it is expected that his replacement will be also be take on a parish role.

Richard Edmonds

Funeral and Bereavement ministry

Funeral and Bereavement ministry at St Mary's Church continues to be an important part of service within Birmingham Diocese, our local community and in serving God.

We continue to work with local Funeral Directors in South Birmingham officiating for services at St Mary's Church, and in local crematoria and cemeteries.

The funeral directors who work alongside Birmingham Social Services, regularly request clergy from St Mary's Church to officiate for funeral services. These services can be complex and are often for adults who have lived with difficulties and challenges in life, or for those who have no family or friends and have died alone.

Nevertheless, if requested, they have a full Anglican funeral attended by any, e.g. neighbours, who might have known the person who has died. Sadly, at times, no one is present.

This funeral director also collaborates with a maternity unit in a large general hospital in the north of Birmingham and provides funerals for babies, as needed. They regularly request clergy from St Mary's Church to lead a religious service at funerals for these babies, and to care for bereaved families.

Our Bereavement Team continue to telephone bereaved families 5 – 6 weeks after a funeral service, to offer continuity of care and the chance for those who are grieving to talk if they would welcome a time to share how the family is managing. Families often express their gratitude for being remembered during such a tough time; hence these calls can be invaluable.

Our annual "Service of Remembering" saw numbers grow in attendance in 2025. This gentle service usually happens on the final Sunday in October as we enter the Season of Remembering for All Saints

and All Souls. We invite families who have been bereaved during the previous two years, when clergy have taken their loved one's funeral. However, we welcome anyone who would like to attend.

During a service of hymns, readings, poetry, and a short address, the names of those who have died are read aloud reassuring those who grieve that their loved ones are still remembered and prayed for. There is also a chance for anyone who would like to light a candle in memory of their loved one, to do so and to take home a small keepsake to remind them of their time with us at our service and of how valued their loved one has been and always will be.

Members of our bereavement team, if available and willing, also participate in the "Service of Remembering" enabling them to occasionally meet those they have spoken with on the telephone during a bereavement call.

We have two members of our congregation, who are vergers for us at funeral services held in church. Having met with mourners at a funeral, for them to meet again at the "Service of Remembering" can be special and comforting.

This is such a privileged ministry in which to serve, as we journey alongside people during what can be the darkest and most vulnerable time of their life.

I would like to offer my gratitude to Margaret and Michael Charlwood who served as vergers for our Church funerals over many years and have now retired, thank you both for your commitment and dedication.

To those who have now taken over these roles, thank you for being prepared to continue with this ministry, serving those who are often sad and hurting.

To all who serve at any time, in any way as part of our team, please accept my deepest thanks.

Revd. Jayne Adams

Junior Church

Outreach to *Children, Young People and their Families* remains one of the core mission priorities for St Mary's. Junior Church, alongside our newly formed Youth Church Group, makes up a significant aspect of this vital work.

During 2025, we have continued to have the privilege of supporting a faithful group of children and young people. A significant milestone this year was the launch of the Youth Church Group in May 2025. While this is currently a small group, attendance has been regular, and it has been wonderful to see these young people taking on more responsibility, particularly as servers during All-age Worship.

Junior Church continues to operate generally during term time, supported by our committed teams of volunteers. In these sessions, Junior Church follows the lectionary, utilizing crafting, games, and children's songs to facilitate interesting and engaging teaching for the children.

Members of Junior Church and Youth Church have contributed to the Parish Eucharist in various ways. All-age worship has been maintained once a month, incorporating different activities such as prayer stations or crafting for meditation, which have allowed the whole church family to engage in creative reflection. Our young people also participated in the dramatic reading of the Passion on Palm Sunday and the Christmas nativity drama. A particular highlight of the year was the Confirmation service on 15th November 2025, where several of our youth stood before the Bishop to confirm their vows. This remains a very important moment in their journey of faith and discipleship.

The PCC continues to focus on how to sustain this important outreach work. We were sad to see Emma Cartwright, the Children & Families Mission Enabler for the Deanery of Warley & Edgbaston, move on to new things, and we remain grateful for the support she provided. Consequently, it remains the case that Junior Church and Youth Church are run by dedicated volunteers, and without them, this ministry would not happen. St Mary's is incredibly grateful to all the volunteers for the hard work and heart they put into leading sessions on Sunday mornings. We continue to use the comprehensive ROOTS teaching resource, which provides good theologically reflective material for each Sunday. At the end of the academic year in July, Junior Church and the Youth Church group gathered for a joint end-of-term party to enjoy a meal and fellowship together.

I would like to express my personal thanks to the members of Junior Church and Youth Church for their willingness to attend and engage. They are a great gift to our church community, and it is a privilege to support and encourage them as they grow in maturity of faith.

Isabella Wong

Youth Church Group

In January 2025 we invited our young people in school Year 6 and above to have a conversation with Father Jacob about what sort of involvement in church life they would like. We wanted to hear their ideas so that we could offer them a group that would support and encourage them in their life and Christian faith. We heard that they enjoyed games and crafts, and that they would be open to films and discussions. Feedback from parents suggested that late afternoon to early evening on a Sunday would be a good time. Out of this, 'Youth Church Group' was born! Beginning on the second Sunday in May 2025, young people have been invited to the group, which meets in the church hall every second Sunday of the month for different activities, games, crafts, worship – and always food. It is intentionally a 'parent free zone'(!) and is led by a group of DBS checked adults: Fr Jacob when he was with us, Revd Hazel, Kate Cheyney, Angela Lidgbird and Isabella Wong. Although small in number, Youth Church Group has been appreciated by our young people, and we hope we can grow this group, both in numbers and in Christian discipleship.

Revd Hazel White

OUR ORGANISATION

Church Hall

During the year it has been possible to maintain the pre-school group, breakfast club and after-school groups, as well as a church youth group and other outside groups using the Hall in the evening, and ad hoc hirers of the Hall using it for activities over the weekend. This has helped us to be more self-sufficient financially, and this has been maintained through the year.

The Hall continues to be managed on a day-to-day basis. Essential maintenance work continues, including repairs to the roof. This necessitated the rebuilding of displaced bricks on the gable end of the sports hall, and replacement of the fascia board.

The water heater in the Westwood room failed and has been replaced. The heating system continued to require interventions from the engineer, as noted in the previous report. A noticeboard has been donated to the hall and has been put up.

The problem of the toilets backing up every so often persisted. Eventually a company specialising in this work came and passed a flexible fibre scope down the piping to see what and where the problem was. They produced a report indicating the nature of the remedial work considered to be necessary. However, it proved impossible to get a quotation from them for the work to be done, so it was necessary to get another piping engineer to repeat the exercise of passing a fibre scope down the piping. This time, the report suggested that there two or three minor issues which were not a significant problem and could be deferred.

The Management Committee considered their priorities for the year. Apart from the normal maintenance, the priority was to continue with refurbishment. The replacement of the old heaters was considered a high priority. As a result, the heaters have been replaced in the sports hall and parlour with electric radiant heaters, and have proven to be very effective.

The other essential work was to replace the floor in the sports hall which was done in January. To protect the new surface all chairs and tables had the bottom of the legs fitted with protective bungs. To finish off the work on the sports hall, it was necessary to repaint the wall space between the skirting board and the dado, and also a blackout curtain was put up so that the room can be used for film nights and projecting other information on the wall, such as during lectures.

It is the aim of the committee to see that the remainder of the building is refurbished. This is now reduced to the corridor and the parlour. Both require the ceilings covered which will ensure that all asbestos is boxed in. The breeze block walls of the corridor should be skimmed with a suitable

substance and painted. The floor of the corridor needs to be replaced, as has already been done in the parlour.

However, other works have become necessary which have affected the refurbishment work. During the year, the PCC agreed that we should have a church administrator. The consequence of that was that it would be necessary for a room for the person appointed to work in. It was noted that one of the rooms in the hall was primarily used as a storage space and to house all the electrical equipment, and it was agreed that this room could be used for the office. This required a window to be put in, as there was no external light able to enter the room. It also required the walls to be covered, a new ceiling, and to be decorated. A roller blind shutter was also necessary for security. This work was completed during the year so that the office is now in use for its designed purpose.

During the work on the office, when creating the window it was noted that the wall was a cavity wall, confirming what had been found during the rebuilding of the sports hall gable end. As a result, it was agreed that, as part of the commitment to achieving a zero carbon rating, details should be obtained as to the cost of cavity wall insulation, as well as looking into possible funding support for this. Also, it was agreed that we should look at the potential for solar photovoltaic panels on the flat roof. Funding support will be necessary, although there will be considerable cost savings if this is installed.

Other work which became necessary, and had to be prioritised during the year, included upgrading the CCTV system to match that of the church, but with the benefit that the costs of maintenance could be shared over the two sites to the benefit of both. Also, with the installation of the new electric heaters, as well as the office, a new distribution board had to be put in to bring the system up to being compliant with current standards.

With the introduction of the parish office into the building, although it is accessible through the side door, and can be kept isolated from the rest of the building, which is a necessary safeguarding issue in relation to the presence of children in the building during much of the day, it is not possible for disabled access to be made through the side door at present. In discussion with a wheelchair user it has been accepted that there needs to be a new ramp created outside the building which will have a suitable turning circle by the door to facilitate disabled people accessing the office. Quotations for this work are to be obtained.

Another accessibility issue is inside the hall. There are two steps to get from the parlour into the sports hall. Currently there are removeable ramps in site which enable disabled access but the aim is for permanent ramps to be fitted for greater safety, and again quotations for this work are to be obtained.

With the amount of work which has had to be done to the hall, to try and bring it up to a level where it has better disabled access, as well as being more welcoming overall, it has been considered necessary to start looking for external funding and I am grateful to John Surtees (treasurer) and Kate Cheyney (Warden) for the work they have done in relation to this. I remain grateful to Gerald Fage for his services as Hall Manager and continuing supervision of contractors working on the site, to Pat Finney (Secretary) and Kirsty Simms for all the work that they have done to support the work of the committee

George Harrison

Fabric committee

The Fabric Committee has continued to look after the fabric of the church during the year, ensuring that there has been regular internal and external maintenance of the fabric and grounds. Internal work included contracted church cleaning, organ tuning, and servicing of the photocopier, alarm system (which this year also had to have call-outs for repairs to the alarm keypad and to sort out a system fault), fire extinguishers, bells and clock. Volunteers have continued to maintain flowers, floor polishing, silverware, altar dressing and kitchen equipment.

This year PA testing was undertaken on portable electrical items (in house), the lighting conductor was tested (Dawson's Steeplejacks), a quinquennial asbestos survey was performed (BDA Surveying) and a quinquennial electrical components safety check was completed (JPC Electrical).

Externally, the grounds have been maintained by the City Council along with the support of a paid gardener, as described in last year's report as well as intermittent work done by working parties of

members of the congregation. The gutters were checked during the year and have been kept cleaned. Repairs to the church path were made due to root uplift, again done in house.

In the report for 2025, it was noted that a tree growing from the inside of the old boiler house chimney was removed. This growth was causing the upper part of the chimney to come apart and having removed the growth, the top of the chimney was secured with a band. A permanent solution was undertaken for this with repairs to the chimney completed by Midland Conservation Ltd (MCL),

In the report for 2025 it was noted that there was evidence of water ingress on the north aisle wall causing the paint to flake. External assessment noted a crack in the down pipe which was made secure temporarily. The other issue was the north buttress which had been previously repointed with non-lime mortar, potentially causing water retention in the porous stonework. A schedule of work was created to include removal of the old mortar, repointing with lime mortar, defrassing the buttress and adjacent area, for which Archdeacon's List B approval was been obtained.

This work was undertaken by MCL. During the replacement of the old non-lime mortar, at one point having removed the mortar there was a sudden efflux of water, sufficient to make the worker wonder if a pipe had been hit. However, it appeared that this was water which had entered and been sequestered in the buttress. The inside wall has been allowed to dry out and it is planned for the damaged plaster to be repaired in the coming year.

The installation of an upgraded CCTV system was recorded in the previous year's report. However, because of potentially illegal activity taking place in the churchyard, it was noted that there were areas which were potential blind spots, and a further camera was added using extant cabling (Dacota). Extra floodlighting was also added to reduce the areas which were unlit (ABCell).

In the report for 2025 it was reported that we were continuing our aim to reduce carbon emissions. It was noted that there was a draft through the porch door as a result of the door spring not holding the door closed, and that the manufacturer was no longer making replacement parts for the spring. An alternative option was found and a new spring was inserted (Supreme Doors Ltd). Also, as part of this project, the lights in the choir vestry and mezzanine were replaced with LEDs (ABCell).

During the year it was noted that the ceiling of the disabled toilet was leaking, and having obtained Archdeacon's List B approval the roof was replaced completely, as the wood under the felt cover was found to have rotted. This was done by G Kimberley Building and Roofing.

Because of water noted to be coming out of the overflow pipe of the boiler, an inspection was undertaken and the problem resolved with the replacement of a valve, by Dunphy Ecclesiastical. However, as the boiler does not have to be regularly serviced by the fitting company, this work is now undertaken in house by a member of the congregation who is a qualified heating engineer.

There had been complaints made about people driving too quickly in the church drive, and to reduce the incidence of this traffic calming speed bumps were installed in the drive by Highways East Midlands Ltd. At the same time they renewed the road markings for parking areas, non-parking measures and speed limit.

For some time there has been a discussion about the quality of the sound system, which was considered to be inadequate. As a result, different companies were approached to find a suitable supplier, and the work was given to Practical Audio Visual. An initial site survey was made and the system design was presented to the PCC, and approved. Archdeacon's List B approval was obtained and in November a completely upgraded sound system was installed, using analogue components to ensure simplicity of the system. The sound engineers spent a lot of time in ensuring that all was working well, and the system is proving to be successful.

Finally, I would like to give my thanks to all the members of the Fabric Committee who have given freely of their time and knowledge to enable this work to be done, namely Rev Hazel White, Amir Ansari, Kate Cheyney, Angela Lidgbird, Gerald Fage, Richard Lambert, Fr Jacob Pallett (demitted September 2025) and John Surtees (demitted June 2025).

George Harrison

Health and Safety

Accidents or other incidents reported:

- One trip over a protruding tile in main aisle. **Action:** loose and protruding tiles have been reset
- One cut to finger in bell tower. **Action:** minor first aid applied; accident recorded in book

Work regularly carried out to prevent accidents includes:

- Gritting/clearing of paths during icy conditions
- Checking on loose masonry after storms
- Regular fire extinguisher checks
- Loose tiles checked and re-mortared where required (see above)
- PAT testing of electrical equipment in church
- Walk around church at least once (ideally twice) annually by Fabric Committee and health and safety officer, performing overall H and S audit of premises

Other improvements/maintenance:

- Where necessary, Covid Health and Safety risk assessments have continued to take place e.g. Car Boot Sales
- Spring Clean of interior of church – areas tidied for safety as well as appearance
- Further external lighting improvements where necessary
- CCTV system maintained and used to help track drug use as well as other issues. KC has continued to liaise with PCSOs and also school staff to try to curb this activity
- Risk assessments completed for regular events in church (other than services) e.g. school visits, school services, concerts etc.
- KC has renewed first aid training and is a certified first aider for the next three years
- Defibrillator has been purchased and is now located in clergy vestry. Stewarding team are aware of basic use
- KC has worked with JA/HW on Home Visits/Lone Working policy

Future/Ongoing improvements/tasks:

- Trees along church drive to be assessed and pollarded where necessary for safety
- Upper room to be thoroughly tidied for safety as well as appearance
- KC to contact Birmingham Fire Brigade to ask them to come and talk to wardens/stewards about fire safety – and to advise on the best practice for our building (and evacuating it)

Kate Cheyney

PCC secretary

Meetings were held in January, March, May, July, September and November 2025. In January 2025 Allison Ka Ling Tam was co-opted on to the PCC as Treasurer. At the APCM in May 2025 the following members were elected: Susan Hunston, Suzanne Johnson, Richard Lambert and Allison Ka Ling Tam. Kirsty Simms and Gerald Fage left the PCC having completed the maximum permitted term.

The PCC received regular reports on Finance, including Stewardship, Fabric, Church Hall, the Diocese, Deanery and Oversight Area, Eco-church, Safeguarding, Children and Young People, and Health and Safety, as well as a regular report from the ministry team. In November, the PCC welcomed the Head of St Mary's Primary School, who gave a presentation on the school priorities following the SIAMS report and explained the close working relationship between the church and the school.

During the year the PCC agreed proposals for the extension of the Garden of Remembrance and for setting up the Parish Office. A part-time Parish Administrator was appointed. The PCC noted that the welcome increase in numbers in the church meant that responsibilities would need to be shared among more members of the congregation.

Susan Hunston

Safeguarding

Anyone needing to talk to someone about a safeguarding matter may contact the Safeguarding Officer (07736 667468), the Incumbent or the Associate Priest.

Safeguarding is of paramount importance to us at St Mary's. Whilst the safety and wellbeing of our children, young people and vulnerable adults is of course our first concern and motivation, we also recognise that, particularly in the light of all that has *not* been done well at a national level in this area, it is important that we are seen at a parish level to be extremely conscientious in our own safeguarding practice. To this end, for example, you will find the "Safeguarding" link at the very top of our website.

At the start of 2025, Kate Cheyney was officially appointed by the PCC as Safeguarding Officer.

St Mary's continues to follow diocesan safeguarding guidance and procedures in all our parish activities, from recruiting new paid and voluntary workers, hosting one-off children's events or social gatherings, to running our usual services and events.

The parish dashboard, an online software package hosted by the diocese, enables us to track all our events and activities which require risk assessments or other PCC approval/involvement; it also flags up actions which need completing and policies which may need reviewing.

During 2025 one activity was added to the Parish Dashboard – *Youth Church Group* – and one was removed – *Junior Club*.

In addition to this, the dashboard, together with the parish hub, allows the safeguarding officer to keep track of DBS status of anyone requiring DBS checks, as well as to keep a record of training undertaken. All PCC members, as well as Junior Church leaders and others are required to have completed Basic and Foundation Level Safeguarding training, as well as training in Domestic Abuse. We have also asked all our stewards to undertake the Basic Safeguarding training.

Also, during 2025, in order to adhere to Safer Recruitment policy and guidelines, all members involved in interview panels for the appointment of paid employees (administrator, organist) undertook specific Safer Recruitment training. For unpaid volunteers, it has now become formal diocesan policy that newcomers should spend at least three months attending a church before being asked (or accepted) to take on any roles in church life.

Safeguarding is an item on every PCC agenda, during which its members receive regular updates on any developments and are required to approve action plans and any changes to our Dashboard. Anyone wishing to know any more about procedures and practices is welcome to talk to the safeguarding officer.

During 2025 there were no safeguarding concerns reported. However, HW and KC liaise frequently with the diocesan safeguarding team – and even where there are no safeguarding concerns to report, much is still happening confidentially and behind the scenes to ensure everyone's safety.

Kate Cheyney

Stewardship

Parish Giving Scheme

Number of givers at beginning of year	37
Joiners	8
Leavers	1
Number of givers in February	44
Gift-Aided giving	37
Annual inflationary increase	27
Monthly donations	£3,620
Monthly Gift Aid	£816

Standing Orders

Number of givers at beginning of year	12
Joiners	0
Leavers	1
Number of givers in December	11
Gift-aided giving	10
Monthly donation for 2025	£468
Monthly Gift Aid	£92

OUR COMMUNITY

Book group

We enjoyed meeting at Bridgewater Court throughout 2025, hosted firstly by Jojo, the manager, and then after Jojo's departure, by Katherine, who is one of the residents there. Meetings are light-hearted, with plenty of time and space for chat – but we do always get round to talking about the book in the end! Refreshments are provided and I think everyone agrees that, even if they don't always like all the books chosen, it is good to be encouraged to read something different and helps focus the mind when there is so much choice in book shops.

Books read in 2025

January: Orbital by Samantha Harvey

March: Foster by Claire Keegan

May: The Once and Future Witches by Alex E. Harrow

July: Unless by Carol Shields

October: Precipice by Robert Harris

December: Wave Walker by Suzanne Heywood (with Christmas drinks and nibbles)

We are now meeting in the church hall; the day of the week differs, but always at 7.30pm. We are very pleased to welcome new members, and everyone is encouraged to invite friends along.

Kate Cheyney

Coffee mornings

During 2025 a number of coffee mornings were held to raise funds for Christian Aid. These gatherings are held during the week, usually Tuesday or Thursday mornings and have always proven to be very enjoyable social occasions. Thank you to all who have held these events and to those who attended, enabling us to support this worthy cause.

Kids' club

During 2025 St Mary's Kids' Club continued to provide wraparound care for children aged 4-14. The club is open before and after school and during school holidays. As well as indoor craft and play activities, the children enjoy outdoor activities including gardening. Their activities support the inclusive community of the church.

Gerald Fage

Social committee

At St Mary's, we love a social event! Whether it is an organised and specific activity, a cake and fizz get together after a service to celebrate something special, or simply our weekly coffee and biscuits after the Sunday 10am or wine and nibbles after Choral Evensong, we do pride ourselves on being a sociable and hospitable church. We also understand that social events are an excellent way of not only offering each other friendship and support, but also of reaching out to our local community and

hopefully drawing them in to the family of St Mary's. There is something for everyone and one of our most successful (and perhaps unlikely) fixtures on the list of events has become the Church Spring Clean. Who knew that this would turn into a social event, but it seems that, with the lure of fish and chips at the end, it has!

Some of the main events and activities which took place between January and December 2025 were:

March: Pantomime – *Jack and the Beanstalk;* Church Spring Clean

April: *Garments of Gethsemane* Exhibition in Church

May: Car Boot Sale; Ramble

June: Music Sunday with celebration of John Stormont's retirement as Organist

July: Car Boot Sale

August: Parish Train Outing to Worcester

September: Parish Ramble; Informal Concert

October: Car Boot Sale; Bring and Share Multicultural Harvest Lunch; Film Night

November: Quiz Night

December: Violin Concert; Christmas Trees and Open Church; Hazel's Birthday Party

In addition to these events, we welcomed a large number of school-age children to our Easter Activity Afternoon in church in April, and in December hosted even more children at our Christmas children's event, where quizzes, crafting, cake decorating and Santa made for a fantastic afternoon (despite a near conflagration of the Jesus-in-the-Manger cakes!)

Wednesday morning Tea and Toast has continued to thrive and is a growing weekly event; it is a great opportunity for that 10am congregation to catch up and also provides a warm space for anyone who cares to drop in and join them. Monthly coffee mornings, raising money for Christian Aid, continue to be hosted by different members of the congregation. The Knit and Natter Group meet regularly to do just that (whilst also looking out for each other in between meetings!) Book Group meets every couple of months to talk about a very wide variety of books (see separate report.)

We have continued to offer coffee and cake before the half-termly Friday school services, which is a great opportunity to catch up with parents and carers – as well as to touch base with school staff.

In addition to all of this, we toasted a farewell to Sharon Jones, University Chaplain, who has been closely linked to our church and with whom we co-hosted *The Well*. In September, with heavy hearts, we wished Father Jacob well as he completed his curacy and left to take up his new post at St Alban and St Patrick, Highgate. Jacob was a wonderful addition to our church for the three and a bit years we were blessed with him – and he contributed hugely to our social as well as our spiritual life. We celebrated with a cake and fizz farewell after his final service in September and then went on to support his new church with their equally hospitable welcome service and buffet. And on the very last day of the year, Hazel celebrated a special birthday - and invited the congregation (as well as friends and family) to join her for a tea party in the hall. What a great way to end our calendar of social events!

Many, many thanks to all the people who offer their time and talents so willingly to make our social events happen – and to all those who attend and make them such a success.

Kate Cheyney

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST MARY'S, SELLY OAK
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

	Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
Donations and Legacies					
Gift Aid Claimed	13,026.07		1,469.51	14,495.58	19,484.07
Legacies		2,400.00	200.00	2,600.00	312.67
One-off Donations	4,272.37		22,610.84	26,883.21	29,896.72
Open-plate & SumUp Donations	5,685.73		50.00	5,735.73	5,767.01
PGS Donations	41,658.39			41,658.39	39,470.16
Standing Order Donations	7,648.00			7,648.00	8,694.50
Other Incoming Resources	1,639.03		897.19	2,536.22	
Social & Hospitality	759.03			759.03	630.58
Charitable Activities					
PCC Fees Income	5,289.62		580.00	5,869.62	5,820.00
Other Trading Activities					
Fetes, Bazaar, Other Fund-raising Events	2,576.00			2,576.00	3,747.48
Rent for Use of Church	440.00		275.00	715.00	210.00
Rent for Use of Church Hall		22,566.50		22,566.50	22,951.22
Ringers Income					253.00
Investments	8,000.17			8,000.17	9,809.54
Total income and endowments	**90,994.41**	**24,966.50**	**26,082.54**	**142,043.45**	**147,046.95**
Raising Funds	328.14			328.14	280.34
Charitable Activities					
Charity Donation	3,000.00			3,000.00	3,000.00
Church Organisation Costs	24.48			24.48	2,031.13
Church Running Costs					
Bank, SumUp and PGS fees	179.75		4.25	184.00	1,778.67
Church Electricity, Oil & Gas	7,225.96			7,225.96	10,412.91
Church Flowers			1,172.58	1,172.58	1,994.00
Church Grounds Maintenance Costs	30.00		3,374.95	3,404.95	
Church Housekeeping	1,655.11			1,655.11	1,896.93
Church Insurance Costs	8,157.03			8,157.03	7,956.54
Church Printing and Stationery	567.76		9.98	577.74	
Church Repairs and Maintenance	21,357.62	5,763.00	20,253.17	47,373.79	29,461.76
Church Water & Sewage	215.57			215.57	190.64
Churchyard Gardening	824.00			824.00	960.00
Computer Equipment and Software	1,105.10	598.80		1,703.90	
Gifts and Appreciation	274.30		14.50	288.80	
Worship Supplies & Subscriptions	2,020.15		106.95	2,127.10	1,330.01
Clergy Expenses	1,818.70			1,818.70	1,903.40
Curate's Housing	4,730.88			4,730.88	5,164.85
Diocesan Quota	56,004.00			56,004.00	54,000.00
Employee Costs	5,685.86	5,186.23		10,872.09	5,406.00
Hall & Other Buildings Running Costs		25,587.28		25,587.28	22,163.80
Social & Hospitality	487.03		25.78	512.81	538.18
Total expenditure	**115,691.44**	**37,135.31**	**24,962.16**	**177,788.91**	**150,469.16**
Excess of Receipts over Payments	-24,697.03	-12,168.81	1,120.38	-35,745.46	-3,422.21
Transfers between funds	12,609.80		-12,609.80		
Net movement in funds	**-12,087.23**	**-12,168.81**	**-11,489.42**	**-35,745.46**	**-3,422.21**
Funds as at 1 January 2025	298,664.88	112,747.28	56,031.65	467,443.81	470,866.02
Funds as at 31 December 2025	**286,577.65**	**100,578.47**	**44,542.23**	**431,698.35**	**467,443.81**

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST MARY'S, SELLY OAK
STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES
AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2025

		2025 £		2024 £
Fixed Assets				
Church Hall and Contents		267,289.00		267,289.00
Current Assets				
HSBC Current Account	7,280.25		8,811.47	
CCLA Deposit Account	154,000.00		182,000.00	
Church Hall Account	4,798.95		7,819.73	
Ringers Account	0.00	166,079.20	2,486.61	201,117.81
Less: Current Liabilities				
Donations Pending - Acorns	59.85		0.00	
Donations Pending - Christian Aid	0.00		413.00	
Security Deposit Received - Arcadian	250.00		250.00	
Service Fees Received	1,360.00	1,669.85	300.00	963.00
Net Assets		**431,698.35**		**467,443.81**
Unrestricted Funds				
General Fund		286,577.65		298,664.88
Unrestricted Designated Funds				
Legacies & Memorials	95,779.52		104,927.55	
Church Hall	4,798.95	100,578.47	7,819.73	112,747.28
Restricted Funds				
Bereavement	407.43		417.41	
Choir	1,376.14		1,233.37	
Deficit	0.00		4,041.98	
Drive	3,534.28		4,809.23	
Energy Grant	0.00		4,728.57	
Fabric	774.93		3,583.11	
Flower	193.72		0.00	
Organ	24,442.75		23,837.75	
Outreach	0.00		139.25	
Ringers	3,028.61		2,486.61	
Youth	10,784.37	44,542.23	10,754.37	56,031.65
Total Funds		**431,698.35**		**467,443.81**

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on **and signed on its behalf by**

Rev'd Hazel White
Vicar

Kate Cheyney
Churchwarden

PCC

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of	Charity Name PCC ST MARY@S CHURCH SELLY OAK		
On accounts for the year ended	31/12/25	**Charity no (if any)**	1137205
Set out on pages	1 (remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)		

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended DD / MM / YYYY.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (other than that disclosed below *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:	D. A. Loveday	**Date:**	23-02-2026
Name:	David Loveday		
Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):			
Address:	35 Bristol Road South Birmingham B31 2GH		

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STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS
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Flower	193.72		0.00	
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Approved by the Parochial Church Council on **and signed on its behalf by**

Rev'd Hazel White
Vicar

Kate Cheyney
Churchwarden

PCC

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of	Charity Name PCC ST MARY@S CHURCH SELLY OAK		
On accounts for the year ended	31/12/25	**Charity no (if any)**	1137205
Set out on pages	1 (remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)		

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended DD / MM / YYYY.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (other than that disclosed below *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:	D. A. Loveday	**Date:**	23-02-2026
Name:	David Loveday		
Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):			
Address:	35 Bristol Road South Birmingham B31 2GH		