Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)

19th April 2026



Parish of St Mary and St John Sandbach

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Contents

Vicar's Report 4

Church Warden Report 7

Safeguarding 12

Enabling All 13

Building Report – St Mary's 15

Financial Report 16

Deanery Synod Report 19

Life of our parish 20

Outreach 20

Music 21

St John's School 22

Bell Tower 24

Thursday Teas 26

Mother's Union 26

Cleaning 27

Bible Study 27

Alpha course 28

St Mary's Social Events and fundraising 29

St John's Socials 30

Tiddlers 30

Baby Bank 31

Appendix A: St Mary's Accounts 2025..... 32

Appendix B: Combined Accounts 2025 – St Mary and St John
..... 32

Vicar's Report

Looking back over the last year an APCM reports is always a really interesting and usually encouraging task. This year I find myself full of joy and positivity. It's not an understatement to say that it has been an incredible year for St Mary's and St John's. Of course, we started the year as two parishes, not deeply connected and finish the year as one. I had a WhatsApp group entitled "two become one" after the well-known song by the Spice Girls to galvanize me. in those moments of anticipated challenge. I can honestly say those moments have been few and far between.

Once all the official paperwork and consultations were completed, all that was left was to carry on that journey of bringing our congregations together in a hope that we might feel like one but retain our distinctive worshipping life in our locations. We were able to bring two PCC's together to function as one across the whole parish, this has worked remarkably well bringing strength and diversity of abilities and knowledge. We are still working on the finer details of administrative processes, websites, e-mail addresses and on the bringing together of our finances. I am so thankful for Helen our treasurer here at St Mary's, expanding her remit with administrative help from the office and Jackie and Janet at St John's. We also take a moment to thank Anthea for all the work she did to enable a smooth transition. It has been wonderful to see subcommittees being formed across the two parishes with support for each other in buildings and fabric, worship, communication and finance. I want to give particular thanks to John and Brian for all their care of the building of St Mary's, that is not an easy job at this time.

We have seen already that we are unquestionably a strong team working together.

What's been wonderful to see, looking back over the last year, is just how much our efforts and prayers have come to fruition. That is through growth and development in many aspects of our church community. Both of our congregations have grown stronger and I'm seeing new people arriving. At St Mary's, we have enjoyed seeing both of our services on a Sunday morning grow younger as well as steadily larger. Easter and Christmas went very well in both of our churches, and we welcomed more people than ever to celebrate with us. We are regularly welcoming wedding couples to take part in our services as well as more baptism families visiting too. The welcome is warm and people are responding.

I think it's true to say but we have had opportunities to grow faith in deeper ways as well. We enjoyed Alpha and had a good attendance which naturally flowed into a new weekly Bible study. It will not be news to you, but this has been a delight, stretching faith, deepening understanding and seeing lives transformed. We were encouraged by a confirmation service with 7 candidates and a sprinkling of adult baptisms through the year. These outward signs of inner grace and transformation is what church life is all about. Baptisms continue to be busy and we have more weddings booked in than previously, so my thanks to Ruth and Kirstie for their support in this ministry.

We have seen more people become involved in serving in the community getting stuck into Baby Bank, Thursday Teas, Tiddlers, the choir and reading in church. There is always a space for people to serve so do let me know if you would like to be more involved.

Due to ill health we had to say goodbye to Sula in the office. I know that she will miss the role as much as we will miss her. After a time of uncertainty, I am delighted that Kirstie has stepped into an administrative role, particularly at a time when we are figuring out what office support is needed in our extended parish. I look forward to her pulling us into shape!

Trevor continues to be a huge asset, not only in the smooth running of the hall but also more widely in church life. I am so grateful for his hard work and willingness to help in all the ways he does, above and beyond what we could ask or expect.

As mentioned before, we have a strong team here in the benefice of Sandbach and The Heath. Rach is a fantastic colleague who works very hard not only in providing worship but also in many unseen ways. I am learning a lot from her as she shows commitment and enthusiasm for the school's work. Sally is stepping into her new position as Ordinand (someone who is in training for ordination) and it good to see her passion and confidence grow. My hope for the next year is that we can build on this strong foundation, not necessarily with new projects or schemes, but with gratitude and care for all that we have and to invest more in our faith and in our community.

It is with sadness that we say goodbye to Kevin in this next year, and we pray that the future holds good things for both him and Anne in this next chapter of their life. We are grateful for all that he as given to the worshipping life of this community. We are committed to carrying on with the great musical tradition that he has led here.

My ministry continues to be fulfilling and stretching with Rural Dean duties and vocations work. The support I receive from our church wardens is greatly valued and appreciated. I wait with anticipation for all that God has for us in the coming year and

pray that we can be open to his leading as we seek to be a beacon of light and hope in our town.

Thank you all for partnering with me in this privileged work.

Revd. Bee Boyde

Church Warden Report

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the mission of the church in the last year; we now have a clear vision for St John's as the process of bringing the two parishes together as one under the new Parish of St Mary and St John Sandbach went live from 1st June, following the receipt of Diocese approval.

It means that this is an Annual Report of two halves, 6 months of the old parish's and 6 months covering the new ones. So, after over 150 years of separation, we are one parish again.

We are one church with two sites, this is proving difficult to accept by some members, thinking will take time to change, and to this end can we encourage members to visit both sites and value a differing worship experience, both have much to give as Christian nourishment.

To this end, St John's services on 3 Sundays a month (1st, 2nd & 4th) are being covered by Bee and Rach, numbers are growing as the congregation enjoys the continuity that this brings. Alan continues to bring us his excellent offer for our 5th Sunday worship and a joint service at St Mary's on the third Sunday, has a regular number of people from the Heath.

The services at St Mary's remain in the same pattern, we have had a few joint services on the Heath and a good number from the town have been present, the overlap of congregation at

these services was good to see. As with all worship groups, the anchorage to a building more so that the mission of Gods church is extremely strong!

From June the two PCC's became one with Bee as chair of PCC. Bee has become Rural Dean this year. Therefore, to reduce workload, Sheenagh and I have been leasing the meetings as Vice Chair. We all must congratulate Bee on this appointment, which comes from Bishops, and is a reflection on how highly they value our vicar. Well, done it's a richly deserved recognition of the work that Bee does.

Moving onto housekeeping issues at St John's. The kitchen and social area it has been used to great effect on many occasions, with the window blind upgrade helping the space to be a more user welcoming setting. It is a great gathering area for not only events but PCC and congregational interacting after church on Sundays, many thanks to all the members and helpers of our Social Committee for their wonderful efforts.

This year has again seen the churchyard in the safe hands of the Probation Service, great work again thanks to all the team, they have also turned their hand to not just keeping the area tidy but, as you will have noticed, that maintenance painting has been added to the work list. We have written to the supervisor expressing our thanks on behalf of the PCC.

St Mary's has major ongoing projects with both lighting and roof repairs, the spends on these are substantial and a fundraising initiative is planned for the roof repairs in 2026. (See Building report below).

Special mention to all the Thursday Teas helpers, you do wonderful work, which is so important financially and from an outreach perspective.

We must bring to your attention the many anonymous helpers who keep the sites clean and tidy both inside and out, feel free to join in. It's very rewarding!

Your wardens take pride in good housekeeping of the parish, and due to the excellent work of all the members of PCC who hold Office, we are professionally managed and responsible in our financial wellbeing. The integration of two long established parish's is proving to be a long and bumpy road, but we will get there, with prayer and the Lord's guidance~~, I'm sure~~.

We would like to thank those people who have prepared reports for our Annual Document and our auditors.

We must just make mention of the very sad passing of our good friend Bernard Sword, Bernard was instrumental in keeping a worship option available during the Covid Pandemic, we thank him for his wonderful spirit and skills. He was truly a gift for God. We wish all the very best to Irene and family.

In conclusion, we would like to thank everyone who has worked so hard to help the leadership team over the last year. Bee and Rach are such an asset to all of us and your work is of the highest quality.

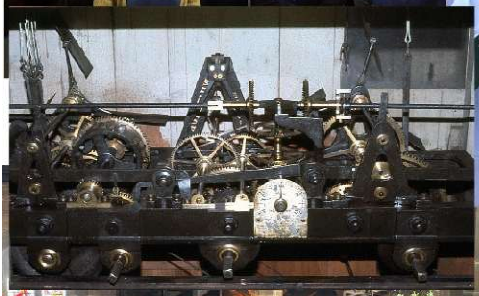
Thank you for your support over this year; it has been much appreciated. Love and prayers.

Sheenagh Ashworth and Gerry Heath, Church Wardens












SANCTA MARIA
IN MEMORIAM RICARDI

Safeguarding

The PCC carries significant responsibilities for safeguarding and ensuring that everyone is safe is a commitment shared by the whole church community. The Church of England's safeguarding policy statement, promoting a Safer Church, states that all church bodies should have a Promoting a Safer Church action plan that sets out how the policy is being put into practice, in line with national and local priorities, and that this plan should be reviewed regularly.

Significant progress has been made this year in strengthening our safeguarding practices. Risk assessments, training, and DBS checks are now well embedded, and compliance in these areas continues to improve. Further development is expected in the coming months, particularly in ensuring that all required first aid training is completed.

With only a small number of exceptions, each of which is currently being addressed, we are now meeting all mandatory requirements for Level 2 safeguarding. This represents a strong collective effort, and sincere thanks are extended to everyone who has undertaken the necessary training and contributed to this progress.

As ever, if you have any safeguarding concerns, you are encouraged to make contact at the earliest opportunity. We aim to be a church family where everyone is welcome and safe, and safeguarding remains vital to sustaining that culture. Your awareness and willingness to speak up play an important part in this shared responsibility.

Safeguarding remains one of the most important responsibilities we hold as a church. Policies, procedures, and action plans only have value when they are actively lived out in

our day-to-day life together. It is essential that we continue to embed safe practices, follow the guidance we have adopted, and remain attentive to the wellbeing of every person who comes through our doors. Creating a culture of safety is not a one-off task but an ongoing commitment, shared by the whole community.

Revd. Rach Pendleton

Enabling All

Over the past twelve months, our church has continued to advance its commitment to being an enabling and inclusive community, welcoming people of all abilities and experiences. My presentation to the PCCs of St John and St Mary during their first joint meeting in September 2025 was well received and encouraged further discussion about inclusion at parish level.

In the autumn of 2025, I assisted the Revd Rach in leading our Disability Awareness Sunday service, which generated thoughtful engagement and positive feedback from five congregation members—responses that are available from me if required.

I have continued to serve actively on the Diocesan Disability Forum, where we have promoted disability and neurodiversity awareness across the diocese. Through-out the year, regular lived-experience stories from individuals with disabilities and neurological differences have featured across the Chester Diocese e-bulletin and social media channels, helping to highlight voices from within our diverse church community.

A key achievement was the completion of the Removing Barriers: Enabling Church Disability Audit in January 2026, undertaken with Sheena Wilson and supported by Through the Roof. This process led to the creation of a small sensory area in the rear of the church and the development of a detailed action

plan to strengthen accessibility. We continue to draw on Through the Roof's training resources to deepen understanding of disability and neurodiversity within our congregation.

I also participated in the national survey and contributed to the preparatory work for the Church of England's national Fearfully and Wonderfully Made report (February 2026). This significant publication—the fifth in the Living Ministry series—recognises the gifts of neurodivergent clergy and lay leaders, celebrating the creativity, empathy, and resilience they bring to ministry. Encouragingly, diocesan and national websites, including "A Church Near You," are being updated to improve accessibility.

Although illness prevented me from delivering my planned presentation to the PCC in January, I am preparing a recorded version and working on a new section of our church website offering resources and guidance for disabled and neurodivergent attendees. These developments embody the message of Psalm 139:14 "fearfully and wonderfully made" and affirm the truth of 1 Corinthians 12:22, that "those parts of the body that seem weaker are indispensable." We remain committed to building a church where everyone belongs and serves together in Christ's body.
Sally Coles-Robertson Ordinand.

Electoral Roll

This year Iris and Eileen have been maintaining our Electoral Roll list, for the St Mary's and St John's. We are very grateful for them maintaining this information. These numbers are reported back to the diocese at the APCM.

We are delighted to report that the numbers have increased a little for both churches. St Mary's is 93 and St John's 40 which gives us a combined number of 133 for the new parish of St Mary and St John Sandbach. Also known as the benefice of Sandbach and the Heath.
Iris and Eileen Electoral Roll officers.

Building Report – St Mary's

Church Roofs
In November, for the second year, temporary sealing was carried out on the worst affected areas of the Bradwall Chapel, Wheelock Chapel and the Choir Vestry roofs to stop water ingress. This proved successful but is only a temporary measure.

Permission in principle was received from the Diocese to cover the roofs of the Bradwall Chapel, Wheelock Chapel and the Choir Vestry with Glass Reinforced Plastic. Quotations for this work were obtained. However, due to objections from agencies during the consultation process, GRP was rejected. The recommendation was to temporarily re-cover the roofs in felt. Quotes are being sort.

The roof gutters are kept clear by biannual maintenance.

Electrical Report and Church Lights
It has been many years since a full electrical inspection of the church was undertaken. It was therefore agreed that a comprehensive inspection should be carried out before any improvements to the church lighting are implemented.
This inspection has been completed and work to remedy the six significant deficiencies reported has been completed.

It was decided to replace all 12 nave lantern lights with LED bulbs and also replace the 2 high-level floodlights in the choir, which have not worked for many years.

A Green energy grant of £3000 has been received and it is hoped this will cover the cost of the project. While awaiting approval from the Diocese, a number of quotations have been obtained.

Church Hall
Work has progressed well on repairing and painting the doors and windows of the hall using volunteer labour. The remaining work scheduled for Spring 2026 includes one large window, six small windows and a small door.

It was agreed to replace the 75 fluorescent tubes, many of which had failed, with LED units.

Church Yard
Minimal maintenance has been carried out in the churchyard, since the introduction of parking fees, as the community pay back minibus has been unable to park following the allocated coned area being subsequently severely reduced. The result is a full bloom of spring bulbs but without a secure resolution to the parking problem the churchyard will remain wild.
The Building Committee

Financial Report

St Mary's and St John's Accounts year ended 31st December 2025

Overview of the financial position

The accounts for the year ended 31 December 2025 are not directly comparable to prior years as they include the financial results of St John's from 1 June 2025.

For the year under review, for information purposes I have included separate receipt and payment statements for each church, however, going forward they will be presented on a combined basis.

At 31 December 2025, the total cash held by the parish of St Mary and St John was £155,127.

St Mary's

The reported result for the year is a deficit of £54,623. This, however, reflects a payment of £31,393 relating to Parish share for 2024 which was paid in February 2025. The actual deficit for the year after adjusting for this timing difference is £23,230.

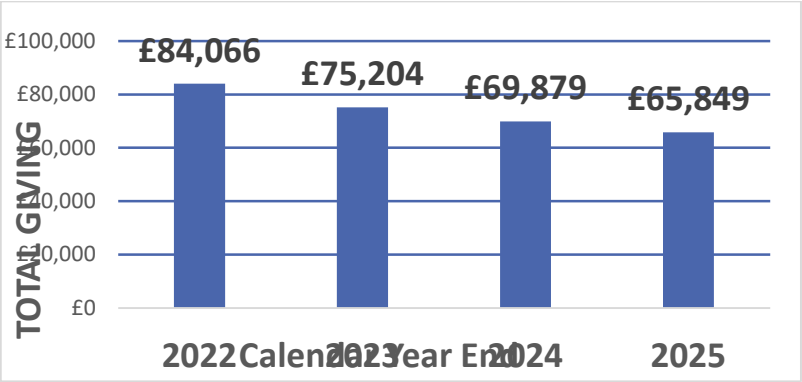
St John's

St John's total deficit for the year amounted to £397.

If the current levels of deficit were to continue year on year, all other things being equal, the parish would run out of funding within six years and that is without any expenditure on the fabric of the buildings or assets such as the organs.

Unfortunately, the deficit is likely to increase as Income is declining whilst costs are rising.

The chart below shows the income generated by St Mary's from standing orders, envelopes, plate, boxed and Gift Aid rebate over the last four years. The values have been adjusted for inflation so all values are relative to 2025 prices.



It is imperative therefore that regular donations are maximised to ensure the sustainability of the Parish into the next decade and that, where available, Gift Aid is claimed on donations.

If you are a taxpayer and make regular donations to either St Mary's or St John's please make sure you have filled in a Gift Aid declaration form and handed it to a member of the PCC. The Parish can claim an extra 25 pence for each £1 donated at no additional cost to the person making the donation.

Staff costs

The Parish is incredibly fortunate to have the support of a Curate, administrator and caretaker. Many Parishes are not able to fund such important roles. The current annual cost of each position is £5,772 (Curate), £7,800 (Administrator) and £4,992 (Caretaker).

Church Hall

Whilst the Church Hall has its own bank account, its results are included within the consolidated accounts. The result for the year ended 31 December 2025 was a surplus of £8,749. Rental income amounted to £15,524 and operating expenses, £6,775.

Parish Magazine
Income raised by the Parish magazine totalled £1,344 including advertising income. We estimate that the profit from the magazine, after printing costs, is approximately £620.

Fundraising events
Income from fundraising events organised by St Johns's are shown separately in the accounts. St Mary's raised the following income from fundraising in the year:

	£
Autumn Fair	1,398
Flower demonstration	793
Strawberry tea	511
Quiz	457
Choir stalls	405
Beetledrive	371
Easy fundraising	77
	4,012

Restricted Funds
Donations for repairs to the roof and windows have been treated as restricted funds as they were given specifically for that purpose. The balance at 31 December 2025 amounted to £7,936.

The restricted funds relating to the organ remain at £5,664.
Helen McCourt Treasurer

Deanery Synod Report

The Deanery Synod continues to meet regularly to support local mission, prayer, and collaboration across our parishes. At our

last meeting, we warmly welcomed Revd Bee Boyde as our new Rural Dean.

We enjoyed a passionate guest talk from a local Tesco manager about living faith at work. Shirley, our loyal secretary announced plans to appoint a new secretary.

We also discussed vision and ways of growing our church through Bishop Mark Tanner's "Growing Disciples" strategy in the Diocese of Chester, which focuses on growing leaders, connections, and communities to reach the 1.6 million people in our diocese.

Sally Coles-Robertson

Deanery Synod & PCC Member

Life of our parish

Outreach

Since the last APCM in 2025, we have supported two main charities with the Alzheimer Society from April to December followed by the COOP Wind Band starting at the beginning of 2026.

The Alzheimer Society is a leading dementia charity that funds research into the cause, cure, care and prevention of dementia. The Society offers grants for dementia research fellowships for projects to be undertaken by clinical and healthcare specialists to help advance dementia studies. With grants up to £550,000 over 5 years countrywide, support is crucial to secure such funding. Thanks to the generous giving throughout 2025 during

coffee after the morning service, we were able to send a cheque for £ 1326.80 to the Society.

The Coop Wind Band is our chosen charity for 2026. There are four bands with three of those bands dealing mainly with young musicians from Sandbach. The organisation allows the beginner to confidently progress playing their chosen instrument. This progress is encouraged with lessons from experts, playing at national festivals, and for some individuals to play in the National Youth Concert Band. Our help is designed to assist with the cost of the extra tutors as well as costs gaining the experience for all members of the band playing at the away festivals.

St Marys also supports the Children's Society through the giving boxes and currently the boxes are still in the process of being collected and their contents counted so a final total is not available for this report.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the funding for our chosen charities and special thanks to Iris Kenilworth who is now managing the coffee routine.
Brian Day

Music

I want to reflect in my last annual report on what a wonderfully productive period it has been in my 15 years leading the music at St Mary's.

I am always mindful to be thankful for all the dedicated singers and musicians that have supported our worship so wonderfully over this period. Many of you won't have experienced the

wonderful fellowship that we have had, which I think is what has made it such a great bunch of people to lead.

Over the years since my appointment, there have been many morning services, the introduction of Choral Evensong, many wonderful Carol Services, Special National services of Remembrance and Celebration. The choir also attended the Diocesan Festival to sing in Chester Cathedral on many occasions. It has also been amazing to have a young treble again for the last few years, breathing so much life into our music.

The one disappointment is that we have unable to replace the organ in my time at St Mary's and sadly there is no more in the organ fund than at this point last year, nor is there likely to be for the next three years.

Finally, I have been hugely grateful for the many supportive comments, and encouragement that we receive week by week. I agree with you, "church music is a precious jewel".

I wish all at St Mary's well for the future as myself and Anne move into a different phase our lives. My music will still be continuing in this major restructure of my work life balance, including my new appointment and new musical projects which will also making more time for us both as a couple.
Kevin Birch

St John's School

Our partnership with St John's School has continued to deepen over the past year, with a wide range of activities helping to strengthen the relationship between church and school life. Regular assemblies have provided ongoing opportunities to share stories of faith, explore Christian values, and support the

spiritual development of the children. Alongside this, after-school clubs and one-off events have offered creative ways for pupils to engage with the church community beyond the classroom.

A particular highlight has been our involvement in the school's ethos day, where we were able to run classes that encouraged deeper reflection on faith, belonging, and the values that shape us. We have also been delighted to welcome children into both churches throughout the year, both for major celebrations such as Christmas and Easter, and for class visits where they can learn about the church building, our traditions, and what Christians believe.

These visits have included some especially memorable moments: celebrating Christmas Heroes during the nativity season, exploring the theme of tasting and seeing at Harvest, and most recently the excitement of receiving a golden ticket at Easter. Each of these experiences has helped the children connect faith with joy, curiosity, and imagination.

St John's as a school has also made great progress over the past year and has begun to grow once again. The new headteacher, Ricky, together with the whole teaching staff, both long-standing and newly appointed, has shown real determination to continue driving positive change and improvement. This renewed energy is being carried forward while maintaining the real family feel that has always been at the heart of the school. Their shared commitment to helping every child "let their light shine" is evident in the care, ambition, and sense of belonging they foster.

Our representation on the governing board remains strong, and we are delighted that this has been further strengthened by Margaret Parry joining the team. Her extensive experience in

secondary education brings valuable insight and will support the continued development of the school.

We look forward to the year ahead as we begin developing a Forest Church and continue strengthening relationships across the whole school community. These new opportunities will help us deepen our engagement with the children and staff, offering fresh ways to explore faith, creation, and belonging. Anyone who would like to be involved in any aspect of this work is warmly encouraged to get in touch.

We would also like to celebrate our continuing activities with Offley Primary School. It has been a joy to sing our way through Harvest and to celebrate Christmas and Easter together once again. A particular highlight was exploring the Trinity with Year 3, complete with falling eggs, some wonderfully dubious acting and of course plenty of balloons.

These moments of shared learning and laughter continue to strengthen our relationship with the school and offer meaningful opportunities to share faith in creative and memorable ways.

Rach Pendleton

Bell Tower

The band at Sandbach has over 14 members and currently 2 learners. Ensuring the continuation of ringing at Sandbach.

In May 2025 we installed new ropes that were purchased from monies raised by the tower in previous years and these were installed; replacing much mended, older ropes. All eight bells had a new rope fitted, with many thanks to our ringers who also assist with our bell tower maintenance.

As well as ringing on a Sunday, the band rang at a few weddings in 2025 and when persons available, we tolled one bell for funerals through-out the year.

We also rang for remembrance of VJ Day and assisted Sandbach Fire Service with access and assistance in setting up a beacon on top of the church and we were one of the many Beacons and Lamp Lights of Peace that were lit across the UK.

We also added a small brass plaque in the ringing room to give thanks and to remember Arthur and Barbara Yorke who between them contributed 93 years of ringing, mostly at St Mary's.

During the latter part of the year, we installed the equipment needed to enable the bells to be rung 'on silent' where the clapper does not strike the bell, but a sensor on the bell sends the movement of the bell to a computer which plays the 'striking' of the bells on a computer in the ringing room. Using this equipment we have been able to have an extra practice night on a Wednesday evening. We welcomed the Cheshire School of Bell Ringers who had asked if they could use our tower on a Saturday for a new class they wanted to set up and with the ability to ring the bells 'on silent', classes started in January 2026.

Towards the end 2025, sadly one of our ringers, John Austin was ill in hospital and sadly passed on 6th February at the age of 81. John was a dedicated bell ringer at St. Mary's for over 30 years and a much valued member who will be greatly missed. We dedicated a Thursday night in memory of John when we were joined by ringers from other towers who knew him and they joined us for an evening of ringing in memory of John.
Angela Burgess, Bell Tower Captain

Thursday Teas

It is encouraging to report that Thursday Teas has had another rewarding year. Many people popping in on a Thursday morning to enjoy meeting up with friends for refreshments and a chat.

We have welcomed new faces together with our regular friends who continue to support us and enjoy the community spirit.

How grateful we are to have such a dedicated team of people who help to organise Thursday Teas either by making cakes or shopping or working in the kitchen.

We are delighted to report that this year we have raised for our Church the sum of £11,250 together with another £300 from the Bric a Brac Book stall.

Marjorie Spence, Thursday Teas Team

Mother's Union

This year Mothers Union celebrations will be taking place for its 150th Birthday. I wonder if its founder Mary Sumner had any idea how the movement she started would grow and transform so many people in so many countries. What a wonderful legacy! St John's branch was formed in 1933.

We will soon be enrolling a new member making a total of twelve; we meet on the third Wednesday of the month, joining Holmes Chapel branch at 2pm. if you would like to know more about meetings and projects please contact Janet.

Janet Warburton

Cleaning

This has been another successful year in the cleaning of St Mary's Church. We meet on the first Thursday morning of each month, which we advertise in the Challenge magazine, as well as on the notice board in Church. There is a small core of volunteers who give of their time, sometimes more, than on other occasions, but always a keen band of helpers. New helpers are always welcome. We dust, polish, vacuum clean, brush, mop and polish brasses. This makes an enormous difference, to keep our ancient church looking cared for and loved, both for our regular congregation as well as the many visitors to our Church. I am sure this is how we all wish it to be. Thank you.

Ruth Filletti

Bible Study

I started coming to bible study about a year ago, shortly after I first moved to Sandbach. I will admit to being nervous at first - I didn't really know anyone and I did feel slightly out of my comfort zone. However, everyone was welcoming and I soon felt comfortable.

We start by looking at, and discussing, a particular Bible passage (currently we in the middle of Romans) and sometimes have a video to watch. Pretty soon though, the discussion can go off in a tangent - and this is where things can get really interesting! What is sin? What does it mean to be forgiven? What happens if we find ourselves distant from God?

It's stretching, stimulating, makes you think and can make you laugh. I would recommend it to anyone!
Bible study attendee

Alpha course

In March last year, a small group of us gathered in church to embark upon an Alpha course. Some of us were exploring faith for the first time, others preparing for baptism and confirmation, others keen to learn more and reignite our relationships with church.

Each session of the course is based around a question, such as 'Who is Jesus' and 'Why and how do I pray?', covering the basics of Christianity. With video clips from Anglican priest Nicky Gumbel to spark off the discussion, each session led to thought provoking conversations about life, faith and spirituality.

As a relatively new member of St Mary's, the Alpha course was a great way to build new relationships and get to know faces. I came to know some lovely people from our church family who made me and my family feel very welcome on Sundays. It's not easy to step into a new church when you feel you aren't known, but Alpha encouraged me to take that step. Of course, sharing a cuppa and a chocolate biscuit is always good for building friendships! We finished with a delicious meal together just before Easter when we celebrated all we had discovered in the passing weeks.

Throughout the course, I learned that it's more than acceptable to ask questions and to explore what our faith means to us.

One of the video clips particularly stuck with me, during which Shane Taylor told his inspirational story. A dangerous criminal who had been imprisoned for attempted murder, he attended an Alpha course in prison and experienced a profound moment of revelation. His life has now taken a very different course - all because he realised that God loved him, even in his broken state. I think Shane's story sums up everything I learned, and continue to learn from Alpha, and from our church life in general: God loves us!
Alpha course member

St Mary's Social Events and fundraising

We have had many social events in 2025 where people have the enjoyment of social company as well as raising money.

- Strawberry and Cream Garden Party
- Steve's Flowers
- Beetle Drive
- Autumn Fair
- Sponsored Bible Reading
- Hot Pot Supper and Quiz

Over the year these events have raised £2564. Many thanks to everyone who has been involved in running and helping with these events. Good friendships are always enhanced by being involved in organising and attending these events. If you wish to be part of this or have any ideas of events please get in touch.
St Mary's Social Committee

St John's Socials

There are many social activities at St John's. There are coffee mornings at the church open to the local community.

This year there has been plant sales and Christmas decoration workshops.
St John's Social Committee

Tiddlers

Last September saw the start of our fourth year of Tiddlers. A number of the children who had been with us from the very beginning left to start at nursery or school. We then welcomed new faces of adults and a number of tots too young to benefit from the toys available, however, the parents enjoyed the opportunity to meet new people and have a cup of tea or coffee together. It is always nice for the team to chat with the people who bring the children, Mums, Dads, Child carers and Grandparents.

We now have a cross section of ages and the larger toys are very much in use. It is so nice to see the youngsters who are not able to reach the pedals on the tractor and then after a break, probably after Christmas they return and some can reach the pedals and propel themselves.

Thanks to Trevor who puts the toys out and back in the right place after the adults and children tidy up. The last fifteen minutes the children get the carpet squares out to sit on whilst enjoying a sing song and making use of the various instruments available.

After washing up, the team of Joyce D, Gabrielle, Joan, Stella and Margaret enjoy the time with the adults and children singing, not forgetting Bee and Rach who always when available, make an appearance to have a word with the adults and children.

Joyce Griffith Tiddlers

Baby Bank

The baby bank opened in 2025. It is held every Monday 9 till 11 am except school holidays and every Thursday 9:30 till 12:30, except the for the first Thursday of the month. It is held in the church hall at St Marys church in Sandbach.

People from local communities kindly donate baby and toddler items such as: Prams, Cots, Clothes, Toys, Games, Books, Nappies, Baby formula, Shoes, Blankets and bedding. Everything you need for your child from birth up to the age of 6. Also, it is a great way of recycling unwanted items. The Facebook page is live, and leaflets are around town. The numbers of people donating and receiving items are at least a hundred.

The next aim is to encourage more people (thousands) to come along and see what we have. It is also a great way to meet other people and form friendships. We need people to spread the word, and more volunteers to run it.

It's a "A shop with no till".

Kirstie Lea

Appendix A: St Mary's Accounts 2025

Appendix B: Combined Accounts 2025 –
St Mary and St John

Combined accounts for the year ended 31 December 2025

	St Mary's	St John's	Total
	£	£	£
Receipts			
Donations and legacies			
Other planned giving	37,368	4,540	41,908
Loose plate collections	16,771	3,395	20,166
Giving through Church boxes	4,509		4,509
Tax recoverable on Gift Aid	10,541	3,575	14,116
	69,189	11,510	80,699
Legacies	613		613
	69,802	11,510	81,312
Income from charitable activities			
Fees for weddings and funerals	13,358	2,748	16,106
Other trading activities			
Parish magazine	1,344		1,344
Investments			
Dividends and bank interest	376	67	443
Other income			
Teas, coffees, Tiddlers	11,716	165	11,881
Fundraising events	4,012	2,346	6,358
Total receipts	100,608	16,836	117,444
Payments			
Parish share	(109,095)	(10,152)	(119,247)
Staff costs	(11,317)		(11,317)
Church running - insurance	(10,794)	(2,516)	(13,310)
Church office expenses	(3,975)	(1,448)	(5,423)
Church utilities	(7,915)	(1,431)	(9,346)
Upkeep of services	(1,893)	(216)	(2,109)
Council tax	(3,370)		(3,370)
Working expenses	(4,678)		(4,678)
Organist fees	(2,400)		(2,400)
Church maintenance	(4,519)		(4,519)
Major repairs	(3,132)		(3,132)
Giving to charities	(1,200)		(1,200)
Total payments	(164,288)	(15,763)	(180,051)
Church net payments	(63,680)	1,073	(62,607)
Church Hall net receipts	8,749		8,749
Net payments/receipts	**(54,931)**	**1,073**	**(53,858)**
Opening balance	166,061	42,616	208,677
Deficit for the year	(54,931)	1,073	(53,858)
Increase in value of investments	308		308
Closing balance	**111,438**	**43,689**	**155,127**

St Mary's Church

Accounts Year Ended 31 December 2025

	2025 £	2024 £
INCOME		
Collections	16,771	20,771
Gift aid	10,541	11,713
Standing order collections	37,368	30,997
Funerals, weddings, baptisms, PCC	13,358	10,169
Donations	4,509	6,415
CBF dividends & interest	376	548
Investment value increase/(decrease)	308	1,223
Church magazine	1,344	1,970
Fundraising	4,012	6,499
Teas, coffees, Tiddlers	11,716	11,323
Legacies	613	2,044
	100,916	103,671
EXPENDITURE		
Parish share	109,095	43,951
Clergy expenses	4,678	4,037
Vicarage expenses	3,370	3,210
Organist Honorarium	2,400	2,400
Heating, lighting & water	7,915	7,901
Insurance	10,794	10,712
Church maintenance & cleaning	2,241	9,871
General administration	15,185	17,734
Charity payments	1,200	2,021
Major repairs	3,132	14,312
Church Hall (surplus)/deficit	(4,471)	(9,039)
St John's (surplus)/deficit	(2,462)	-
	153,077	107,112
Opening net assets	166,061	169,501
St John's accounts at July 2025	37,319	-
Surplus/(deficit)	(52,161)	(3,440)
Closing net assets	151,219	166,061
Church account	59,038	118,440
Church Hall account	27,292	22,821
CBF investment account	14,135	14,302
CBF deposit account	10,973	10,498
St John's accounts	39,781	-
	151,219	166,061
Difference	-	-
Represented by:		
Unrestricted funds	137,619	166,061
Restricted funds	13,600	-
	151,219	166,061
	-	-

We have examined the books and records as provided by St Mary's Church and can confirm that the above accounts are in accordance therewith.

ERThompson

THE RURAL PARTNERSHIP GROUP

For and on behalf of The Rural Partnership Group

14 April 2026