

St Barnabas Church

The parish church for Emmer Green and Caversham Park



Annual Report

2025

Issued by:

St Barnabas: the parish church for Emmer Green and Caversham Park

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Vicar's Report

2025 was my third year here at St Barnabas: this is the point where you feel you have well and truly settled into the church and community. One of the delights of being in Emmer Green and Caversham Park is that I now know so many people and feel the rhythm of the community more.

The first thing I want to say is that we are transforming lives in Emmer Green and Caversham Park. We make a real difference to a lot of people: around 3,000 every year. That's 3,000 individuals for whom the light of Christ is brought into their life through an encounter with our ministry. Many of those encounters are slight, but they are repeated, and some lives are deeply transformed. Amongst those, we brought 15 people to faith this year. God is good and God is at work at St Barnabas!

Amongst the joys of ministry, we must also acknowledge that the world around us is changing. This brings surprising opportunities, especially with young enquirers. It also brings a twofold challenge: an increased demand on our administrative workload; plus social changes which leave people less able to commit time to voluntary work.

Our Priorities

Our three priorities remain, with another shift in emphasis. This year we needed to focus attention on building up our mission capability.

- 1. Build up our mission capability.** This is about our foundation, upon which everything else depends. We continued to make progress: introducing new policies; modernising our tools for managing finance and safeguarding (these enable easier team working); and rebuilding teams where one person is 'holding the fort'. Three key areas emerged: safeguarding, buildings maintenance, and financial control. As we enter 2026, work remains to put processes around our policies; an ongoing challenge is how to resource these three key areas, so that we are safe, legal and compliant.
- 2. Develop our work with families, children and young people.** Our worshipping congregation is again up around 10% on the previous year, largely due to an increase in families. Sadly this year we discontinued Busy Bees due to low numbers, however the Toddler Thursday group is well established. We have a small but steady flow of younger enquirers (from teens to early 20s), who we are discipling.
- 3. Reach out into Caversham Park.** Our regular postcard-drops and litter-picks are good opportunities to make our presence felt (thank-you to those who support these). Our visibility outside church (during school run and the summer "Squash Club" afternoons) prompt regular conversations (with children as well as parents) and I notice a few even coming to church (e.g. at Christmas).

For all of us, continuing to ‘**relentlessly build trusted relationships wherever we go**’ is an activity that bears fruit. Numerous chance encounters with congregation members this year resulted in people coming into church for worship, prayer, a reassuring conversation, baptism request etc. The growing instability in our world is prompting people to explore faith: if they meet us face-to-face, experience shows they are likely to voice that curiosity with us.

Worship

- **Sunday 9:30am worship** continued in its established pattern. For a time the numbers dipped a little but toward the end of the year several new people started to attend regularly.
- **Sunday 11:15am All Age worship** experienced rapid growth in 2024, attendances levelled out in 2025. Attendances on individual Sundays have not grown, however the total worshipping congregation is still strong: people are coming less often (a common pattern among families).
- On Sunday 2nd March, we welcomed Bishop Mary (the new Bishop of Reading) to our morning services.
- **Sunday 8am BCP Holy Communion** once a month, continues with a loyal following.
- **Morning Prayer** (Tues in church, and online Mon/Weds/Thurs) has 4-7 people each day.
- **Wednesday Midweek Communion** has grown slightly (we put out more chairs now), usually 12-15, sometimes higher.
- The monthly service at **St Luke’s** residential home continued.

Life Events

We were pleased to conduct 10 baptisms this year (7 babies/children and 3 adults). We also conducted 3 weddings, 7 funerals, 1 memorial service and 1 burial of ashes.

There is a beneficial synergy between life events and our other activities: the 11:15am service works well for baptism families and there is a similar crossover with Bereavement Café, Living with Loss, Toddler Thursdays and worship (especially All Souls and Blue Christmas). This makes it easier for people outside the regular congregation to benefit from what we offer.

High Days and Holidays

Attendances at Christmas and Easter continue to rise ahead of other attendance stats. Our joint 10am service on Easter Sunday and Christmas Day seems to work well. This year we introduced Messy Christmas which was great fun and much enjoyed by those who came (thank-you Aga and Katie). These annual services require additional effort, but they hold increased significance for many who do not attend weekly.

Prayer and Pastoral

It is encouraging to see the continued development of our **prayer ministry**: through our Prayer Chain, the prayer stations in church (including the space at the back of church, brought back into use this year), our public intercessions list and, of course, prayer in worship. We have not managed to establish **Pastoral Care Assistants** to support our pastoral work, although we did get the policies in place.

In memoriam. Sadly I record that a number of our former congregation members have died this year: Stasha Spoliar, Christine Fuller, Rosemary Fairweather, Linda Dudley, Douglas Rae, Mary Lewis, Chris Suddaby, Doreen Drew, Pat Stevens. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Families, Children and Young People

This was a year of comings and goings. We have welcomed several new families and young adults this year, some are coming regularly, one family has stopped coming, a couple of older teenagers have moved away for education. I try to maintain as much contact in- and out-side of church with the younger generations.

- **School visits and assemblies.** Our contact with Emmer Green Primary and The Hill Primary, plus the preschools, scouts and guides continues. I had an amazing Q&A session with Year 6 at The Hill in April.
- **REinspired** (run by Churches Together in Caversham). Volunteers from St Barnabas join in RE lessons in the local primary schools.
- Wednesday and Thursday **morning school runs** (join me sometime!).
- **Young Adults Discipleship group** meets on alternate Monday evenings: a small but constant group of young men who meet for bible study.

Learning and Discipleship

Lent course (2 sessions/week) was well attended, including some visitors from other churches, on the topic of 'A Christian look at the Environment'. 2025 was the 1700th anniversary of the **Nicene Creed**, so we ran a series of 6 sessions (twice each week) in the autumn, examining this text in close detail. Both courses prompted deep conversation and reflection. Our **Bible Study group** continued fortnightly.

Environment Crisis

A year of mixed success. We installed new windows in the Church Hall thanks to a grant of £9k from the National Lottery Community Fund, making the hall much warmer and draught-free in winter. Our plans for installing solar panels have stalled this year. We were unable to source a contractor who met the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) requirements for independent advice, also the grant we were offered has expired.

Outward Facing Work

Our new noticeboard went up in November, with a revised strapline: 'A place to belong and find the love of Jesus'.

Progress on the **Safe Space** initiative encountered further delays, culminating in a difficult decision to abandon this scheme. The fact-finding stage resulted in a design for youth access to multiple services which relied heavily on professional skills. The knock-on demand for safeguarding processes and funding in excess of £20k p.a. put the scheme beyond our resources. The need remains: we seek other possibilities more within our reach.

Media Appearances

Joy Abel was the subject of an excellent 'God in the Life Of' article in the Diocesan 'Pathways' magazine, which led to her being interviewed by BBC Radio Oxford. Revd Kevin also made an appearance on ITV Meridian 6pm News, talking about our Blue Christmas service.

Behind the Scenes

We made a number of background improvements this year:

We relaunched our website, using a more robust and user friendly editing platform.

Following feedback from our Independent Examiner we adopted an online accounting system. This made a major contribution to our financial controls, allows a team to work on our accounts, and brings PCC and Church Hall finances all on one sheet.

During the year we implemented a Safeguarding Hub: this has revolutionised our ability to ensure our DBS checks and safeguarding training are kept in date.

Thanks to Guy Watt, we have a modernised audio/visual system in church. All is installed and working, the final "go live" will be in 2026.

With help from Chris Fitzsimons we have a full suite of Microsoft products, integrated with our website domain, for Church Officers. This offers security of data and simplifies the handover of information when officers change.

Hong Kong Community

A large community of Hong Kongers have moved to the Reading area in recent years, and are worshipping at Trinity Earley, which is full to overflowing. St Barnabas was approached as the first of four churches where some of the Hong Kong community might relocate and become part of our community here. We began a joint prayer and discernment process in December: during 2026 we look forward to welcoming a group of Hong Kongers to join our congregation.

And Finally

I often say Church is going to change, but I don't know what it will look like. This year I think we began to see how we need to reshape ourselves, as we respond to changes in the world

around us. My prayer is that we stay close to God, following his guidance and trusting in his grace.

To all of you who contribute to bringing God's Kingdom into Caversham Park and Emmer Green: a huge 'thank-you'. I record particular thanks to my warden Louise, treasurer Richard, safeguarding officer Joy and all who serve on PCC.

And thanks be to God, who gives us what we need to continue his work here.

Kevin.

Churchwarden's Report

Overall

It has been a great privilege and a deep delight to have enjoyed the opportunity to be church warden, serving God, the church of St Barnabas and the community of Emmer Green and Caversham Park.

In my first year as a church warden there was much to learn; I would like to give my sincere thanks to the wider congregation, PCC, and to Revd Kevin, for the warmth, care and support shared as I learned the ropes.

Empowering Our Congregation

St. Barnabas has a special depth of fellowship and is uniquely placed at the crossroads where many children, families, students, and adults pass by.

After a good spring clean, we reopened the Prayer Room for private and fellowship prayer ministry and made the beautiful large stained-glass windows more visible. We flung wide the church doors more frequently during the week and put out chalk boards to invite folk to pop in and pray. We were pleasantly surprised by the variety of people, ages and backgrounds who would come in to pray, such as three young teenage boys, one holding a football under his arm while asking if it would be okay if they came in and prayed.

Over the Summertime, prompted by the Holy Spirit, we found ourselves putting tables out by the gates inviting all to stop for free drinks, chats, and prayer. As the weather became hotter, we set up the popular 'Squash club' where folks from our congregation offered free cool squash drinks for thirsty children and students finishing their school day.

A 'Lend a Hand Crew' St Barnabas community WhatsApp group was formed, enabling congregation members to offer their time to support these and other activities, such as Messy Christmas (a big thanks to Aga Faulkner and Katie Nadarajah who led this new event).

A new 'Buildings' Projects' team has been formed, inviting new congregation members to participate in discrete projects; building both fellowship as well as improving and maintaining the buildings themselves!

Health & Safety

This year we looked to review and improve the existing fire, health and safety matters across the Church, Parish Centre and Hall. New fire escape plans were produced, fire risk assessments completed and refreshed training given to Sides people. Quotes are currently being obtained for new fire doors for the Church hall.

Buildings

Various improvements have been made throughout the year, across the Church, Parish Centre and Hall. These range from welding new panels onto the Church Hall, installing easier to press flushing buttons in the Parish Centre toilets, to installing fresh new signage reaching out from the church into the community, while making repairs to boilers, fixing leaks and many more.

There are further significant building projects currently in progress, which look to attend to remaining work items identified in the 2022 Quinquennial inspection (the next is due in 2027). These include repointing various areas around the church, repainting soffits and cupola, as well as finding a solution for the leak in the Parish Centre (outside the Parish Office room) among others. The newly formed 'Buildings' Projects' team are attending to this prioritised list.

My deep thanks to the many people who have supported and been involved across all these various activities. Particularly to Guy Watt, Christine Bartlett, and many others.

I would strongly encourage all to consider the deeply fulfilling role of being a Church Warden; it truly has been a joy to share fellowship and fun with many wonderful people, share the love of Jesus, and to draw ever closer to God.

Church Management

Safeguarding

The Safeguarding team at St Barnabas works to create a safe place for all.

Sandra Rice is taking over as the Safeguarding Officer this year. I will continue as her deputy, working on the Hub to ensure that all who hold a role in our church are appropriately trained and have current DBS checks. Susie Downer has taken over as the Verifier for DBS checks from Debbie Burton, who resigned last autumn.

Whilst there have been no local issues of safeguarding raised, there have been several general alerts from the Diocese. These have been noted but have not affected our community.

In August, we were informed of a data breach via APCS, who managed all our DBS checks. Three members of the PCC were potentially impacted by this. As a result, the PCC will be using a different organisation in 2026.

Appropriate safeguarding training has either been completed, or is in hand, for all who hold a role in our church, whether on the PCC or running a group.

In 2026 we hope to offer Basic Safeguarding training, in house, to other members of the congregation.

Joy Abel

Electoral Roll

The parish church electoral roll is the first building block of the church's governance structure. It is a register of the lay members of the church who are entitled to vote at the APCM. Those on the roll are eligible to be elected to lay representative positions on the PCC and Deanery Synod. Deanery Synod representatives may then be elected to Diocesan Synod and General Synod. The total number on the parish church electoral roll, is an important factor in determining the number of lay representatives that a parish may have. It is only a small component of how the parish share allocation is determined.

(source: Diocese of Oxford website)

The number on our Electoral roll as at 31/12/2025 was 87. In April 2025 a new Electoral Roll was completed and in April 2026 it will be revised with names added and deleted as appropriate.

Christine Bartlett

Hall

Great news – we have lovely double glazed new windows, acquired with a National Lottery grant of £9240 and we have purchased lovely new curtains to go with them. The Hall had a new floor in 2023 and really looks good inside now. The Hall is a great asset to our Church and our community. It's really well used with all sorts of groups and provides a valuable income to our Church.

During 2025, the hall increased its hired income to £22541. We were able to provide £15500 to our Church, which is very important support.

Payment by cash for party hire has been ended. Payment by Bank Transfer is now required. A keysafe using a code is now used to provide more secure access to the hall.

During the year the Hall was hired by 18 community groups, who meet weekly, and by over 54 family children's parties, which contribute a fifth of the income. And of course, our Church uses the Hall for fundraising and social events.

Thank you to all the Groups who use the Hall. The details for each are shown on the "St Barnabas Church Emmer Green" website.

Thank you to our new cleaner, Joanne, who keeps the Hall clean. Thanks to the people in our congregation who help with other maintenance – in particular to Guy Watt and David

Howell, to Bob Abel for accounts & billing, and to Christine, Wendy and Louise for the new curtains, and others for help in many ways.

Jon Barclay, Hall Manager

Worship & Ministry

Choir & Music

We ended 2025 on a high with our service of lessons and carols. We were delighted to welcome a few extra singers, including Kevin and Anita, to our Christmas choir. Sadly, illness stopped Rachel and Roberta singing with us for the service but we enjoyed singing with them in rehearsals.

Over the year we learned several new songs, including some that were inspired by music from the 11:30am services. This will make it easier to worship together when we have joint services or attend a different service from normal.

A huge thank you to everyone who has taken part in the music of the church during 2025, especially to those who are coping with health problems or supporting family members. Your dedication to enriching the worship of our congregation is what enables us to embrace a wide variety of music.

Gail Houghton and Guy Watt have both been a great support to me in leading the music. I'd particularly like to mention Gail's beautiful piano accompaniments and Guy's knowledge of how to keep the organ running smoothly. Once again, I couldn't have got through this year without the support and understanding of all the choir.

After singing with us for around 40 years, Valerie Sansom has taken the decision to retire from the choir. We'll all miss her cheerful approach and look forward to maintaining our friendships as she moves to worship in the congregation. Many thanks for her dedication through her long membership of the choir.

Felicity Chapman

Puppet Ministry

Another year of Puppet Ministry to our local school children. During Christmas alone over 800 children and adults attended church to hear the good news of Jesus' birth. "Jesus is the true present for Christmas".

David Howell

Prayer Chain Ministry

In May 2012 Jean Rae felt guided to start the prayer chain initiative at Saint Barnabas. This she faithfully continued until her death in March 2018. Jean was a very special and talented person whose knowledge and experience I very much appreciated. I am grateful to have known her. I felt her prayer chain to be an important part of our life at Saint Barnabas and

felt compelled to continue with Jean's ministry although anxious about following in such able and learned footsteps. It has been a privilege to do so and I have been encouraged by various comments over the years.

The prayer chain is composed of 18 individuals who have committed to pray for those who have requested prayer. We do not physically meet to do so but pray in private as and when we choose. We pray not only for those mentioned in our church prayers, but also for those who may not wish to be publicly identified but who can be assured that all requests are entirely confidentially treated within the group. There is often more detail given with regard to whatever the situation may be that requires prayer.

We pray for those in distress because of illness, bereavement, life changing events.

We pray for those who have died.

We pray for encouragement and guidance for individuals and events.

We pray with grateful, thankful hearts.

During 2025 we prayed for 23 individuals or situations.

We firmly believe in the power of prayer. We offer ourselves to God in this ministry and we give thanks for the freedom and opportunity to raise our concerns with Him.

If you feel that you may like to become part of this group you will be most welcome, or if you would appreciate prayer for yourself or someone else then please speak to me.

Susie Downer

Eco Church

St Barnabas has silver award status from the environmental charity, A Rocha, The award covers the following areas: worship & teaching, community and global engagement, land, buildings, lifestyle. It would be wonderful to achieve the "gold award level", but without significant changes to our heating systems this will be impossible.

Efforts have been made during the year to start the solar panel process, but unfortunately this has proved rather more complex than we had hoped. However, we enthusiastically continue to do what we can: recycling, sharing information, and keeping in touch with local and national Eco networks (Greenshoots, Green Christian, Reading Fairtrade, Friends of the Earth, Tearfund).

During 2025, we maintained our commitment to be a Fairtrade church, with sales of Fairtrade goods at Easter and Christmas, promoting Fairtrade in our worship and newsletters, plus using Fairtrade tea, coffee and sugar whenever possible.

Thanks to everyone for your support and interest in "all things green!"

Christine Bartlett

Groups & Activities

Parish Centre

The Parish centre is in generally good shape and continues to be utilised by church and non-church groups. We continue to be plagued by the roof leak and the central heating boiler is starting to show its age. Alas, the Safe Space will no longer be happening due to resourcing shortfalls.

Beyond our normal weekly activities there has been an increase in the hiring of the Parish Centre and Church with the following having used the buildings for regular meetings or one-off events:

Dance class mums (Term time only)

SEN (Special Educational Needs) Support Group (Term time only)

CADRA monthly meetings and AGM

CADRA “Have your say” event attended by Matt Rodda MP and the Police

Olly Stephens annual walk

Reading Family Aid AGM

True Foods AGM

Chiltern Court finance planning and Christmas lunch

Bashan Prayer House Christmas Day service

Glass Ensemble concert

Vocalist choir concert

CTC (Caversham Churches Together) leadership lunches

Hong Kong Community service

Hong Kong Leadership retreat

David Howell

Bereavement Support

- **Bereavement Café**

During 2025, 11 new visitors attended the informal Café which takes place on the 1st Friday every month. The average number of individuals per session was 7, and the largest was 11. People find it reassuring to meet others who are experiencing similar feelings of grief and to discover that there is no right or wrong way to cope with bereavement.

- **Living with Loss**

This group meets on the 3rd Friday each month and we talk as a group, whereas there are many different conversations going on at the same time in the Café. 8 new people participated during 2025, with an average attendance of 6, and the largest was 10. There is a core of regulars who find it comforting to be able to talk about

their ongoing grief, and new visitors seem to value group support and go away feeling less alone.

Every new visitor to one of the St Barnabas Bereavement groups comes because someone – and this may be a friend, a family member, or they themselves, feel that “they ought to be over this by now.” The general view in society now seems to be that grief is something you “get over.” By meeting other bereaved people, visitors find that grief does not have any timescale and involves learning to live with loss. We are currently very fortunate to have 3 volunteers for each group.

Gillian Wilson

Thursday Toddlers

Thursday Toddlers was open each Thursday during term time. The number attending varied each week with a bulging 24 children one week. The group is aimed at parents, grandparents and carers many of whom dropped off siblings at Emmer Green Primary school and welcomed a short respite, a cup of coffee and conversation. Many activities were available to keep the wee ones engaged including colouring, puzzles, Play Doh and numerous cars and trains. In the summer we took advantage of the good weather to use the church garden and entertained the children with a bubble machine.

The sessions start at 8.45 and finish at 10am with songs – 10 to 15 minutes of “wheels on the bus go round and round” to the “the wise man built his house on a rock”. Noisy and fun. The sessions are run by Anne Mace, Wendy Moore, Rev’d Kevin and Roger Moore.

Roger Moore

Cleaning

We are a small but very willing team who clean the Church and Parish Centre on Wednesday mornings. We feel that keeping things clean and tidy, is honouring to God and helps everyone who uses the building to feel comfortable. We would always welcome more help, and we can find jobs for all abilities.

Christine Bartlett

Craft Group

Another successful year of knit and natter and friendship. Some ladies have been knitting "Fish & Chip" jumpers and hats for babies in Ghana. Rev’d Heather Turner from Shiplake organises this via her church.

Chiltern Court still "feeds" the group with new members and early this year 1 new member proved a God-send. She knits, sews and bakes. Ask her if she can make a peg bag and next week there are at least 6. The list goes on. She has been a great asset to the group. Many other members knit and sew for our fundraising events which boost the Handicraft stall. Of course, our 2 "Bring & Share" lunches proved as popular as ever. Sadly, one elderly member passed on in January.

Wendy Howell

Friday Fellowship

Everyone is welcome at this group which meets on the second Friday of each month in the Parish Centre. There is cake, tea, scrabble, quizzes and other board games, but above all else, fellowship & friendship.

Mary Cameron

Garden Group

Our small but very dedicated group continued to care for the church grounds and Parish Centre garden throughout the year. Some replanting was done where needed but mostly we just cared for what we already have.

Following a generous donation more decorative bark was bought and a thick layer applied to all the flower beds. This proved to be of great benefit to the plants trapping any moisture in the soil. Nearly all of them survived the high temperatures of the summer with very little watering.

Further work has been done to improve the wild area behind the Church Hall. In February a gift of snowdrops were planted in groups near to the bug house and in May poppies, everlasting primrose, teasels, yellow rattle and ox-eye daisies were added to the grassy area to encourage more insects and pollinators to come and visit.

Juliet and Tony Holland

Men's Breakfast

Men's Breakfast celebrated its tenth anniversary in September. Since the article in the Caversham Bridge highlighting the ten years, we have attracted a further 3 members meaning that the numbers that attend on a regular basis is circa seventeen. It continues to thrive and is a permanent diary entry for so many. Social Prescribers continue to recommend us to older gentlemen to meet other men in the community and additionally men attending the Bereavement Café and Living with Lose are also being referred. The group now consists of more non-congregational members with men from other churches in Caversham/Reading and an increasing number of men that don't attend any form of worship.

David Howell

Communications

Online

We produced a weekly online bulletin and a monthly online newsletter called "Read All About It" which is sent to over 120 people with just a few copies being printed out for those not online. The website is an important "first point of contact" and is kept up to date by Kevin and Felicity. Facebook is used for advertising events and on-line Morning Prayer

Christine Bartlett

Fundraising

We are still fundraising for 2 charities in Africa: Education for Life in Kenya and Masicorp in South Africa. As usual, the 3 main events were the Handyman Sale in May, Garden Party in July and most recently the Christmas Fair. I am ever grateful for all the help and encouragement I receive in organising the events. However, in late autumn, I was joined by Juliet Holland, Christine Bartlett and Marion Morgan (who is involved in Masicorp). A fresh set of ideas resulted in some different stalls and a new layout to the Hall. As Father Christmas was a bit busy this year, he only made a brief visit, but was able to give away a **free gift** to the children, ably assisted by an elf.

Our mascot, Holly Christmas, made an appearance on social media, advertising the various stalls, which appeared to draw in a large crowd and resulted in our biggest amount raised ever. Thanks should also go to the various young men who helped set up and take down tables with great efficiency.

Wendy Howell

The Wider Church

Churches Together in Caversham

We have continued our involvement in CTC this year. There is an annual meeting each April and ministers meet every month. St Barnabas makes an annual financial contribution to the running of CTC activities, members of our church support CTC missional activity across the Caversham area:

- REinspired - delivers RE lessons in primary schools, employing two part-time staff to coordinate and lead this work
- Summer holiday club – for primary school aged children for a week each summer (together with lots of teenage helpers as well as adult leaders)
- Supports a weekly drop-in centre in the Baptist church, now supported by Faith
- Messy Church and All Souls 'Light Party' events, although these have been halted recently
- CTC runs a Good Friday Walk through Caversham centre

Rev'd Kevin is currently co-chair of CTC and Roger Moore serves on the trustees of REinspired.

Rev'd Kevin Lovell

Reading Deanery Synod

Reading Deanery Synod is a place where members can experience fellowship and have missional conversations enabling learning from one another. There is a culture of mutual support. It is a place to influence policy at Diocesan and even national level.

Examples of missional conversations are that in February members discussed how the last year has been, and what is going well and not going well for our church at the moment; Children, Young People & Families, and what links do we have with primary schools and secondary schools; what other missional needs and opportunities are there and what opportunities are there to work with other churches on mission?

Then in April members discussed the Deanery Churches and Young People policy including whether the priorities named in the plan are the right ones for us as a deanery, and what other voices we need to hear as we go forward together.

Then in November there was an Environmental Issues Discussion regarding the environmental priorities in each parish and what issues and questions we would like to raise with our guest speaker from the Diocese at a future synod? Then a discussion on experiences of working with the DAC such as has a parish had experience of using the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) recently, if so, what for, and what was our experience of their service to us.

An example of influencing policy is the Clergy Pension motion passed in April that “Given the increasing sense of anxiety, and in some cases, despair by clergy regarding the adequacy of pension provision, Reading Deanery Synod asks Diocesan Synod to support, as soon as is practicably possible: the restoring of clergy pensions to pre-2011 levels, and the reform of the hitherto disparate organisations making decisions that affect the welfare of retired clergy, especially with regard to the Church's Housing Assistance for the Retired Ministry (CHARM) housing scheme.”

An example of mutual support is that poorer churches are supported by more affluent Parishes through the Parish Share Scheme, the draft of which was agreed in July subject to a review of the Reading Support Allowance (RSA). The RSA was reviewed to amend the Deprivation element to benefit deprived parishes with smaller populations, and the final Parish Share Scheme was approved in November.

In July there was a presentation on the Oxford Diocese Estate Ministry Network, then in September the Estates Ministry Proforma was provided through which churches could map where there are pockets of deprivation in our parishes.

Additional topics were a presentation on Volunteering in April, and the new Associate Archdeacon of Berkshire Paul Cowan introduced himself in September.

Deanery Synod membership lasts for 3 years, and this Triennium ends on 30 June 2026. Please consider if you would stand to become a Reading Deanery Synod member for the next 3 years.

Mark Burton

Oxford Diocesan Synod

At Oxford Diocesan Synod members discussed missional issues and issues affecting the Church today, and made decisions on items of strategic importance for Churches in the Diocese.

A critical event is the retirement of Bishop Steven and the process for appointing a new Bishop of Oxford. Everyone in the Diocese has been invited to participate in a consultation.

In March there was a Safeguarding presentation on the Independent Audit of Safeguarding in Oxford Diocese, followed by group discussions.

There was also an update on the Children and young people strategy and national bid.

In June the main item was on Living in Love and Faith. This was co-facilitated by Bishop Mary and Bishop Dave, who have different positions on the issue. It included presentations, discussion in groups, and questions and comments. It was specifically not a formal debate as this would have meant the Diocese adopting a position on an issue where there are diverse views and often strongly held opposing positions.

The 2026 draft budget, including the Parish Share Scheme allocations to deaneries was also approved. This gives sufficient notice for deaneries to formulate their own Parish Share Schemes.

The November Synod meeting approved the 2026 Budget.

It had an Environment annual update as the main item. The Bishop of Reading, Sophie Orme (Director of Property) and Hannah Mann (Environment Project Manager) gave an update on the Diocese's environmental work. This was followed by questions.

Woodstock Deanery Synod presented a motion on the Diocese providing funding for additional administrative support in benefices with three or more parishes with only one stipendiary priest, so that the priest is freed to fulfil their missional objectives in relation to serving and caring for the people of God. This was not passed, particularly as it would entail substantial cost that would have to be met by other parishes.

The Diocese resolved to enter into the Armed Forces Covenant.

Diocesan Synod also agreed the numbers of elected Lay Representatives on 2026-29 Deanery Synods.

Members have the opportunity to put formal Questions to Diocesan Synod, which then receive a formal response.

In March Questions concerned: Concerns about clergy wellbeing regarding stipends and pensions; withholding parish share relating to positions on Living in Love and Faith; of the churches in this diocese that have had solar panels installed on their roofs, how many of those are listed buildings and how does that compare with data available from other dioceses.

In June, questions concerned: The implications of the UK Supreme Court clarification that "sex" in the Equality Act 2010 means biological sex; Living in Love and Faith (LLF) proposals; Numbers of Ordinands starting training.

Mark Burton

REInspired

REInspired Sessions are delivered in a number of primary schools in Caversham and Emmer Green. It is ecumenical, with people from a wide range of churches participating from producing resources to delivering sessions. It is good that REInspired sessions can be delivered by members of local churches so that children can learn about Christianity from Christians.

More volunteers are required, so please prayerfully consider whether you can support this important work.

There are now two Project Managers, although one of them has to take Maternity Leave.

Mark Burton

Churches Together in Caversham: Holiday Club

CTC Holiday Club again took place at St Anne's RC Primary School. Numbers of children attending were again high. Each year there is a theme through which Bible stories are used to explore Christianity with the children. This year the theme was "Deep Sea Divers".

It is good that we have this opportunity to share the good news of Jesus with children in the Caversham area.

Please prayerfully consider whether you would volunteer for CTC Holiday Club as more volunteers are needed to replace those who are standing down.

Mark Burton

Appendix 1: Administrative information

This report covers the period from 1st January 2025 to 31st December 2025.

The correspondence address of St Barnabas Church is Grove Road, Emmer Green, Reading, Berkshire RG4 8RA

St Barnabas is registered with the Charity Commission, registered charity number 1164759

PCC Members (and date of election) who have served during this period were:

Incumbent	Rev'd Kevin Lovell	Chair
Churchwardens	David Howell (Until Apr 2025)	
	Sandra Rice (Until Apr 2025)	
	Louise Morgan (From April 2025)	Vice Chair
Deanery Synod Reps	Mark Burton (Oct 2023)	
	Roger Moore (Oct 2023)	
Elected Members	Felicity Chapman (Sep 2024)	
	Susie Downer (Sep 2024)	
	Bob Abel (Sep 2024)	
	Joy Abel (co-opted April 2025)	
	Richard Cunningham-Treasurer (Apr 2025)	
	Wendy Howell (Sep 2024)	
	Christine Bartlett (Sep 2024)	
	Awaiz Masih (Apr 2025)	
	Sandra Rice (Apr 2025)	
	Guy Watt (Sep 2024)	
PCC Secretary	Roger Moore (until Apr 2025)	
	Christine Bartlett (from Apr 2025)	

Appendix 2: Structure, Governance and Management

The PCC is a charity governed by the PCC Powers Measure 1956, and the Church Representation Rules 2025).

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. The Council comprises the Incumbent, the Churchwardens, a representative of the Readers, those elected to the Deanery Synod, and other members who are elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, by those on the Electoral Roll. Eligible members of the congregation are always encouraged to join the Electoral Roll, and to consider standing for election to the PCC.

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance in the parish, and for all financial matters. The full PCC met 7 times during the year.

Objectives

The PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting, in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

It has maintenance responsibilities for the Church, Parish Centre, Church Hall and surrounding grounds.

Compliance

The PCC members (the Trustees) of St Barnabas Emmer Green and Caversham Park (charity number 1164759) in agreeing this Annual Report noted that they were fully aware of the Charity Commission guidance on Public Benefit and were of the opinion that the activities of St Barnabas Church met the Charity Commission requirements.

Appendix 3: 2025 Volunteers and Activities

This list shows how many of the activities involved in running and sustaining the church were organised and who as an individual or as a team had responsibility for the various activities in 2025.

Worship & Ministry

Authorised Preachers	Mark Burton, David Howell
Sacristan	Joy Abel
Choir & Music	Felicity Chapman
Intercessions Co-ordinator	Susie Downer
Readers Co-ordinator	Joy Abel
Chalice Rota Co-ordinator	Gail Houghton
Chalice Administrators	Bob Abel, Joy Abel, Christine Bartlett, Mark Burton, Gail Houghton, David Howell, Awaiz Masih, Paul Rice, Rohama Masih, Sandra Rice, Lisa Williams, Matt Williams
AV & Live streaming	Mark Burton
Altar Linen	Christine Bartlett
Flowers	Wendy Howell, Gail Houghton
Sidespeople	week 1: Juliet Holland, Tony Holland week 2 Roger Moore, Wendy Moore week 3 Brian Bartlett, Christine Bartlett week 4: Richard Cunningham, Sandra Rice week 5: Ann Mace, Marion Morgan
Environmental Champion	Christine Bartlett

Safeguarding

Parish Safeguarding Officer	Joy Abel
DBS Verifier	Debbie Burton (until Sep 2025) Susie Downer (from Nov 2025)

Church Hall

Manager	Jon Barclay
Finance	Bob Abel

Church & Parish Centre

Bookings Co-ordinator	David Howell
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Cleaning team Christine Bartlett, Carolyn Weeks, Ann Seaman
Shirley Thompson, Marion Morgan, Juliet Holland.

Garden Team Juliet Holland, Tony Holland, Christine Bartlett,
Brian Bartlett, Margaret Pocock, Michael Pocock
Jane Warren.

Lawns & Hedges Mark Burton, Tony Holland, Guy Watt, Paul Braisher.

Fellowship & Study Groups

Bible Study Group (Mon)	Rev'd Kevin Lovell
Craft Group	Wendy Howell
Toddler Thursday	Roger Moore, Wendy Moore
Bereavement Café	Gillian Wilson
Living with Loss	Gillian Wilson
Friday Fellowship	Mary Cameron

Finance

Treasurer	Richard Cunningham
Finance team	Anna Hall, Brian Bartlett