

# ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI APCM MEETING PACK

26TH APRIL 2026

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# ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISHIONERS AGENDA

**To be held in the St Francis of Assisi Church Hall**

**At 10:45am 26<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Legal Notices
3. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2025
4. To Confirm Two Churchwardens

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISHIONERS HELD ON SUNDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2025

**Present: Rob Smith (Churchwarden & Vice-chairman)**, Sarah Branwhite (PCC Secretary), Carol Jager (Churchwarden), Graham Bloye (Treasurer), Cathy Bloye (Parish Safeguarding Officer), Barbara Pavyer (Electoral Roll Officer), Eric Pavyer, Rowena MacDonald, Clare Smith, Leah Burke, Carole Sharp, Sheila Compton, Rosaline Munro, Pui San Apling, Craig Lowes, Julie Lowes, Alison Daniels, Margaret Hindle, Sally Ewers, Paul Dunstan, Jo Dunstan, Montse Day, Miriam Nendick, Andrew Watkinson, Gavin Johnstone, Margaret Breese, David Hancock, Jennifer Witt, Julie Owen, John Owen, Anthea Salmon, Mary Coxon, Janet Turnbull, David Burling, Lynn Burling, Richard Chamberlain, Tracey Chamberlain, Elizabeth Chamberlain, Keith Crab, Fiona Burke, John Butler, Jan Nafzger

**Apologies for Absence:** Stuart Richardson, Matthew Dunstan, Annabelle Dunstan, Margaret Ryder, Fergus Munro

### 1. Legal Notices

Sarah Branwhite, PCC Secretary, confirmed that all legal notices required had been displayed correctly.

### 2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2024 were proposed as a true record by Craig Lowes and seconded by John Owen. The minutes were duly signed by Rob Smith, Churchwarden

### 3. To Confirm Carol Jager and Rob Smith in their roles as Churchwardens

It was proposed by Paul Dunstan and seconded by Pui San Apling that Carol Jager and Rob Smith be confirmed in their roles as Churchwardens. Those in attendance voted in favour with them continuing in these roles with one abstention.

This would be Carol's third year in post and Rob's fifth.

The meeting attendees thanked Rob and Carol for all their work over the last year.

# ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING AGENDA

**To be held in St Francis of Assisi Church Hall**

**At 11:00am 26<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

1. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2025
2. To Receive a Report of the Numbers on the Electoral Roll
3. To Confirm Assistant Churchwardens
4. To Elect Three Deanery Synod Representatives
5. To Elect Eight Representatives to the Parochial Church Council
6. To Receive the Audited Accounts for the Year Ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025
7. To Appoint the Independent Examiner or Auditor
8. Note Receipt of the Deanery Synod Report
9. To Receive the Annual Report from the Vice-chairman, noting receipt of the Church Group Reports
10. Any Other Business

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING HELD ON SUNDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2025

**Present: Rob Smith (Churchwarden & Vice-chairman)**, Sarah Branwhite (PCC Secretary), Carol Jager (Churchwarden), Graham Bloye (Treasurer), Cathy Bloye (Parish Safeguarding Officer), Barbara Pavyer (Electoral Roll Officer), Eric Pavyer, Rowena MacDonald, Clare Smith, Leah Burke, Carole Sharp, Sheila Compton, Rosaline Munro, Pui San Apling, Craig Lowes, Julie Lowes, Alison Daniels, Margaret Hindle, Sally Ewers, Paul Dunstan, Jo Dunstan, Montse Day, Miriam Nendick, Andrew Watkinson, Gavin Johnstone, Margaret Breese, David Hancock, Jennifer Witt, Julie Owen, John Owen, Anthea Salmon, Mary Coxon, Janet Turnbull, David Burling, Lynn Burling, Richard Chamberlain, Tracey Chamberlain, Elizabeth Chamberlain, Keith Crab, Fiona Burke, John Butler, Jan Nafzger

**Apologies for Absence:** Stuart Richardson, Matthew Dunstan, Annabelle Dunstan, Margaret Ryder, Fergus Munro

### **1. Minutes of the Meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2024**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2023 were proposed as a true record by John Owen and seconded by Craig Lowes. The minutes were duly signed by Rob Smith, Churchwarden

### **2. To Receive a Report on the Numbers Entered on the New Electoral Roll**

This year we have had to prepare a new electoral roll, thank you to Barbara Pavyer our Electoral Roll Officer for overseeing this process and ensuring all the legal notices have been displayed correctly.

The names on the new roll have been on display in church for past 14 days and electronic copy of the roll is held in the Parish Office along with a paper copy if needed.

There are a total of 116 names on the roll, 63 resident and 53 non-residents. All those entered onto the new roll have been verified as eligible to be on there.

Rob Smith thanked Barbara for her report and work during the year.

### **3. To Confirm Assistant Churchwardens**

It was proposed by Sally Ewers and seconded by John Owen that Stuart Richardson be confirmed as Assistant Churchwarden. All those in attendance voted in favour.

Rob Smith thanked him for all his hard work and support, amazed at how much he does, and we wouldn't know what to do without him.

Attendees showed their appreciation with a round of applause.

#### **4. To Elect One Representative to the Deanery Synod**

One candidate was nominated, Jo Dunstan. As there was only one vacancy Jo Dunstan was elected, leaving no unfilled vacancies.

#### **5. To Elect Seven Representatives to the Parochial Church Council**

Five candidates were nominated: Paul Dunstan, Eric Pavyer, Catherine Bloye, Graham Bloye and Montse Day.

As there were seven vacancies these five candidates were elected, leaving two unfilled vacancies.

Rob Smith thanked those who had stood down for all their hard work and commitment over the last three years.

#### **6. To Receive the Audited Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024, and a statement of the funds and property of the Council and approve the Budget for 2025.**

See Annual Report and Financial Statements document.

**The 2024 Accounts** (A copy of the Treasurer's Report has been placed on file with the APCM documents for 2025).

Graham Bloye, Treasurer, started by thanking Sally Ewers, Keith Crabb and Craig Lowes for all their hard work.

Being Treasurer can be an unpopular role and Graham has had to take steps to keep ourselves afloat, when he took over there was a deficit of £47k and our reserves are down to £60k, this would have been zero if the full Parish Share had been paid. A meeting has been arranged with the Archdeacon and Rural Dean for May to discuss the Parish Share as we can't afford to pay the full amount, and we can't run the deficit any higher.

Graham also explained that due to the issues with the roof and the number of claims made, the insurance company will no longer cover the roof. It needs replacing, it is 90 years old.

We changed to the Parish Giving system in September, this has seen giving income go up by 15%, Graham thanked everyone who had been able to increase their giving. Graham explained that the money collected by Parish Giving does not go to the diocese, it comes directly to St Francis, it costs us nothing to be part of this scheme, the costs are covered by the diocese.

First four months of the year have seen our finances just in the black, mainly due to legacies, which has also meant that we have been able to replace the windows in the Clare Chapel. We should just about breakeven at year end.

Unfortunately, we have had to take the difficult decision not to extend our charitable giving as we don't have the finances to do this, as struggling to pay our own bills, but hope to be in a position to review this again later in the year.

There was a question from John Butler about how many of those on the electoral roll were regular givers. Graham explained that there were 54 regular givers but need to remember some give as a couple/family and the 116 on the electoral roll relates to individuals, some of which will be young adults.

Also, some people give in different ways such as volunteering their time. The good news was income from hiring the hall has increased.

John Owen thanked Graham for restoring sense to our financial position and the accounts were accepted.

### **The Budget for 2025**

Graham Bloye gave an overview of the last 12 months, but we still need more financial support, and we need to understand the financial constraints, he asked that the Budget for 2025 should be adopted. There were no questions from those present.

John Butler proposed, and Clare Smith seconded the motion that the 2025 Budget should be adopted. All present were in favour and there were no abstentions.

### **7. Appointment of the Independent Examiner or Auditor**

Graham Bloye also asked that Clare Parker be appointed to continue as the Independent Examiner of the accounts for 2025.

Sally Ewers proposed, and John Owen seconded this proposal. All present were in agreement.

### **7. To Note Receipt of the Deanery Synod Report**

This was noted as received and there were no questions.

### **9. To Receive the Annual Report from the Vice-chairman; Noting Receipt of the Reports from the Various Church Groups**

A copy of the statutory required reports had been put on file on the St Francis Church website and copies had also been available at the back of church.

These included the statement that: the PCC has complied with its duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

The reports were noted as received and Rob Smith thanked all those involved for producing them. He also thanked all the church volunteers, whether that was on PCC, rotas or those organising the rotas, without our volunteers we would struggle to run the church and the time given up is greatly appreciated.

Rob thanked Julie and Craig Lowes for all they have done over the years at St Francis and in particular for organising Thursday Lunches, an important part of our outreach. They have taken the decision to stand down and have handed the baton on to Clare Smith, thank you for taking this on.

Alison Daniels took the opportunity to also thank Craig for setting up the outreach with the Probation Service who help with the general upkeep of the church grounds.

Jan Nafzger also thanked Pui San for all she does in the Parish Office, she does a great job, and it is noticed when she is not there.

## **10. Any other Business**

### **Vacancy**

Rob took the opportunity to use the APCM to update those present on what happens now that we are in vacancy.

Reverend Jenny left last week after 15 years with St Francis and there are a number of challenges ahead, not least finding a new vicar.

The first meeting of the new PCC will be on 12<sup>th</sup> May and a small group will be chosen from the PCC to spearhead producing the Parish Profile which will form the basis for an advert.

There is a meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> May to finalise details of what happens during the vacancy between the Churchwardens, the Rural Dean and Archdeacon. There are a lot of parishes within our diocese that have vacancies and generally across the country not enough vicars are being ordained to fill all of the vacancies. Our new vicar needs to be someone who will be the right fit to match our parish needs and it may take some time to find the right person and it may take more than one cycle.

Julie Lowes asked if the vicarage could be let, yes it can but the income goes to the diocese not us. Utility bills will be claimed back from the diocese on a monthly basis while it is empty. Income from letting the vicarage will go towards future renovations. The diocesan appointed surveyor has inspected the vicarage and whilst it is empty the Churchwardens have to go in twice a week to inspect it.

Montse Day asked what would happen to services, the advice the Churchwardens have received from the Archdeacon is that we don't have to keep all of them, but we will try to as we don't want to have to cancel any. We will be prioritising the 9:15 (10am for festivals) along with the 8am and Sunday evening services. Wednesday morning could be more problematic but looking at alternative ways to make sure this carries on recognising that for some this is the only service they come and is important for outreach.

There is a list in the Parish Office of all of the services, Susan, Sue and Martin are covering a lot of these, but we are reaching out wider for cover. If you know of anyone who may be able to help, please speak to Pui San or the Churchwardens.

Alison Daniels suggested that a worship group made of parishioners could be set up to help with services if there was no vicar available. Rob agreed to look into this as an opportunity for the congregation to be more involved.

Montse Day suggested using the Newsletter as a useful way to communicate with congregation during the vacancy.

Eric Pavyer asked who would be looking after the website as this was done by Jenny. Rob explained that Paul Dunstan had agreed to take this over.

Graham Bloye mentioned Zoom Prayers, these take place on Wednesday evenings at 8pm, if anyone wants details so they can join please contact him.

### **Events**

Rob then took the opportunity to talk about some events that are coming up:

**Art Festival:** this will take place 25<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> September in church, it will be all forms of 2D art, a way to bring people into church who would not ordinarily come in so a good form of outreach, please contact Andrew Watkinson for more details.

**Christmas Tree Festival:** will take place again this year on 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> December, this is one of our main fund-raising events, please contact Graham Bloye for more details.

The meeting closed at 11:50 with a vote of thanks from those in attendance for the team who had been involved with running today's meeting.

# TREASURER'S FINANCIAL REVIEW FOR APCM 2026

In 2024 it was recognized that continuing annual shortfalls were not sustainable and decisive action was required to return the church to a better financial position.

The PCC recommended a budget at the 2025 Annual Parochial Church Meeting which would achieve a near surplus through tight cost controls, income generation and better use of bank deposits. It was also agreed that making charitable donations at a time when the church was not able to meet its financial obligations to the Diocese was inappropriate.

The budgeted shortfall was £3,160; however, I am pleased that we have ended 2025 with a small surplus, and plan to reach a breakeven point also in 2026. Whilst this is a positive outcome, it should be noted that this is due to:

- Paying only 60% of the requested Parish Share (with £41,515 unpaid in 2025, total arrears now stand at £67,943, with a further £34,129 will not be paid in 2026)
- Receipt of 2 legacies (£26,521) and 2 grants (£1,638)
- Minimal maintenance and we still have a large backlog

Our finances remain tight, and regular congregational giving amounted to only £75k in 2025 reflecting the reduction in attendance and some personal choices around giving. To be sustainable, we need to find ways to increase our income by at least 50%. This will be hard in the present economic climate without an increase in membership.

The Christmas Tree Festival and Art Festival generated a £9,270 surplus for the church and allowed us to share £846 with the Isabel Hospice as a donation. Christingles raised £580 for the Children's Society.

We were owed over £6.4k by HMRC for Statutory Adoption Leave in 2025, with a further £4.4k from previous periods. HMRC's policy is to return this by allowing us to net off payments due to HMRC for Employee and Employer National Insurance contributions. Our monthly payments are only around £44, meaning a netting approach would take over 20 years for repayment of the full sum accrued. During 2025, HMRC agreed to repay £3.8k from an earlier period of Statutory Adoption Leave, and a further £5.7k was returned in February 2026. I hope the remaining 2025 payments can be recovered as a lump sum repayment at the end of the tax year, however timescales for this are not guaranteed but I hope that HMRC will be pragmatic and agree to refund.

We incurred unbudgeted legal expenses of £5,400 during the year arising from the need to engage specialist external advice around an employment-related matter.

The new Octopus energy account has been based on estimates due to a damaged electricity meter in the last quarter of 2025 and was charged Climate Change Levy and VAT at incorrect rates. This should be rebated in 2026. We should then see the benefits of the change of supplier.

The maintenance backlog remains a concern, with multiple roof repairs required during 2025. A detailed maintenance plan will be developed, with full costings, so that fund raising, and grant applications can be prioritized.

A new accounting category has been added in 2025 splitting Choir Week out from Outreach Income and Outreach Expenditure where this income and cost has historically been accounted. Any residual income from the church choir’s annual residency at a cathedral is retained in the Restricted – Choir Fund, so accounting for this as Other Income is a fairer representation of the church’s regular income and expenditure. The PCC agreed a definition for the Restricted – Choir Fund as this was the only restricted fund without a clear charitable purpose. It is used for “the advancement of music at St Francis of Assisi Church and support of annual choir weeks”.

It will take some time to return to a more sustainable financial base, but I believe the building blocks are in place.

## 2026 Budget

### Income

Collections at Services	5,000
Fees	2,500
Fundraising Events	12,000
Gift Aid	14,825
Gift Days and Sundry Donations	3,500
Interest	3,000
Other Giving	8,000
Other Income	1,000
Outreach Income	4,800
Rental Income	23,500
Tax Efficient Planned Giving	52,500

<b>Total Income</b>	<b><u>130,625</u></b>
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### Expenditure

Administration	1,500
Bank Charge	276
Choir Pay	1,200
Cleaning	9,000
Disbursement of Fees	2,000
Fundraising Costs	1,500
Hall Running Costs	500
Insurance	3,155

Maintenance	15,000
Music Hire/Purchase	200
Outreach Expenditure	1,800
Parish Share	60,000
Payment Processing Fee	280
Staff Costs	28,120
Upkeep of Services	2,000
Vacancy Costs	2,600
<b>Total Upkeep of Services</b>	<b>3,500</b>
Utility Costs	
Electricity	2,250
Gas	2,500
Telephone and Internet	1,068
Water	1,200
<b>Total Utility Costs</b>	<b>7,018</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>136,1449</b>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<b>-5,524</b>
<b>Other Income</b>	
Exceptional Items – HMRC rebate	6,500
<b>Total Other Income</b>	<b>6,500</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>976</b>

**Graham Bloye**  
**Treasurer**  
**March 2026**

## DEANERY SYNOD REPORT FOR APCM 2026

Paragraph m5(1)(e) of the Church Representation Rules requires the PCC to present a report of the of the proceedings of the deanery synod the APCM. This report aims to fulfil that requirement.

During 2025 the Welwyn Hatfield Deanery Synod met three times: in **March, June and October**. Each meeting included worship, fellowship, and discussion of matters affecting churches across the deanery.

A range of **guest speakers** contributed during the year. These included a presentation from *Single Friendly Churches*, encouraging churches to think about how welcoming and inclusive they are for single people; a talk reflecting on mission in the early church; and a speaker from *Resolve*, highlighting opportunities for fundraising and community engagement.

There were several **clergy changes and pastoral updates** shared across the year, including ordinations, new appointments, departures, and support for churches during vacancies and maternity leave. These updates helped parishes stay informed and pray for one another.

The Synod received updates on **Deanery and Diocesan matters**, including work on a proposed **Deanery Sunday**, the diocesan focus on **Growing Younger and More Diverse**, and progress with the **Alban Way Project** for young people aged 16–35.

Important **diocesan and national issues** were also discussed, such as the process for appointing a new Bishop of St Albans, Parish Share and parish finances, and matters arising from General Synod.

**Safeguarding** remains a key priority. Parishes were reminded to keep safeguarding as a regular PCC agenda item, follow safer recruitment guidance, and ensure good data protection practice.

Overall, Deanery Synod continues to provide a helpful forum for sharing information, supporting parishes, and encouraging collaboration across the deanery.

**John Butler, Pui San Appling and Jo Dunstan**  
**Deanery Synod Representatives**  
**March 2026**

# CHURCH WARDENS' REPORT ON THE FABRIC, GOODS AND ORNAMENTS OF THE CHURCH 2025- 2026

An annual Deanery inspection took place in June 2025 and the report came back positive.

In the gardens we have managed to keep on top of the growth with the support of the probation services who are now helping on a regular basis since March 2024. The pergola in the prayer garden needs some attention and we will see if this can be done as part of the work. The double-glazed unit in the garden door of the parish room was replaced after being accidentally broken by the probation service gardening workers

In the summer months and occasionally in the winter we had a regular female visitor to the prayer garden – she sometimes slept there and would regularly engage with Pui San. Calls were made and local support teams were involved in trying to rehome her.

The suggestion box placed at the back of the church since February 2024 – has not been widely used but it is checked regularly.

## **Events**

Frankies at 5 continues to be popular and Graham & Cathy Bloye and Jo & Paul Dunstan lead on this. Afternoon Tea Party on 6<sup>th</sup> July before Frankie's proved popular.

Our first Art Festival took place in September 2025 – Andrew Watkinson, Andrew Jager, Zoe Jasko, Rob Smith, Craig Lowes. This received positive feedback and will be held again in October 2026

Christmas Tree Festival in December. The community spirit was very heart warming and already talking about 2026. A huge thanks to all volunteers and participants, your commitment was greatly appreciated.

Church quiz on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2025 run by the Dunstan's & 11<sup>th</sup> October 2025 run by Rob & Clare Smith – both were well attended and a good fundraising events

## **St Francis of Assisi Church Maintenance Report**

It was a busy, and expensive, year for premises maintenance.

In January 2025 the water heater for the Hall kitchen was repaired by fitting a new heat exchanger.

In March emergency repairs were carried out to roof tiles and gullies near the bell tower following a major rainwater leak which damaged the South Nave ceiling.

The South Nave ceiling was subsequently redecorated.

Also, in March there was a small rainwater leak into the Hall and a temporary repair was made to seal some cracks in the roof.

The air extractor fan in the Cellar Room became faulty in March, it was not repairable and was replaced by a new unit.

The Clare Chapel project (Faculty ref. 1505) was completed in May by the fitting of replacement double glazed windows in hardwood frames.

The water main stop-tap serving the Hall was replaced in May because it had become seized up and was therefore no longer able to turn off the water supply when required.

The annual Frankies Garden safety check was carried out by ROSPA in May, and a new delivery of play-bark was spread over the area.

In August some rotten woodwork in the canopy over the main entrance to the Church was replaced and the canopy was redecorated resulting in a great improvement in its appearance.

In September a replacement double glazed sealed unit was fitted to the garden door of the Parish Room, following an accidental breakage.

In November the remaining fluorescent tubes lighting the Hall were replaced by LED battens, thus completing the changeout of all lighting to meet our ecological aims. This was funded by a grant from the Diocese.

Towards the end of the year, the Song School roof, which is separate from the main Church roof, started to leak. A temporary patching job using specialist tape failed to solve the problem, so the roof was completely re-felted and the valleys re-sealed.

We are currently looking at whether complete replacement of the main Church and Hall roofs would be a sensible long-term strategy as opposed to spending money on ever increasing repairs. We are also investigating the possibility of applying for grants.

In the gardens we have managed to keep on top of the growth with the support of the probation services who continue to help on a regular basis. The pergola in the prayer garden needs some attention.

Two years ago, a lime tree at our boundary with Guessens Road died and was removed. It was included in the Tree Preservation Order which applies to all the large trees around the Church, and a condition of removal was that it be replaced within two years. This was duly done in November.

The usual annual servicing and safety check of gas appliances was carried out in August, no problems were found. This covers the central heating for the Church, Parish Room, and Hall and the separate water heater for the Hall kitchen sink taps.

The annual Electrical testing of Portable Appliances (PAT testing) was completed in December, no problems were found.

The electric hot water urn in the Hall kitchen was serviced in November.

The annual rainwater guttering check was done in December, including rodding downpipes and removal of moss.

### **Youth and Children's Church 2025/2026**

We continue to have three separate groups held most Sundays and supported by volunteers. As with most groups we struggle to get people to volunteer and rely on the same handful of people each week.

The youngest group held in the hall have all the prepared lessons on the website which Nikki Clare has loaded over the years as a resource. The parents have been using this along with crafts and toys from the cupboards. Their Teaspoon Prayers are given to the Wednesday Zoom prayer group which continues to be a joyful part of their session. Nikki Clare resigned in January 2026 after a period of adoption leave. There are ongoing discussions on how we support this group.

The middle and oldest groups who meet in the parish room and cellar use Roots as a source of material for their discussions along with ideas from the volunteers to keep the topics relevant and relatable. These groups are well attended and continue to be a fun & safe space for children to meet each week.

**Carol Jager and Rob Smith**  
**Churchwardens**

**Stuart Richardson**  
**Assistant Churchwarden**

**March 2026**

# SAFEGUARDING REPORT FOR APCM 2026

St Francis Church endeavours to keep everyone, children and adults, safe and to comply with all relevant laws. The safeguarding group supports the PCC and all the people of St Francis in trying to do this.

The parish is, in turn, supported by the diocesan safeguarding team and the national teams. They provide the opportunity for training and advice on policies. Some policies, processes and training courses are mandatory.

It is important that everyone in our community at St Francis understands their own responsibility and is appropriately trained. Training varies according to role, not only must people be trained but we must keep a record of this training.

The Parish Safeguarding Officer uses the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard to record volunteer roles, training records and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificates.

The Church of England updates their training requirements regularly and you will be notified of any training required by your group leader.

New volunteers for certain roles within the church must complete a 'safer recruitment' process. In some limited cases, if necessary, people need to be checked with the government's Disclosure and Barring Service.

All our safeguarding information including important contacts are available on the Church website. Through the work of the ministry team, PCC and the safeguarding working group the PCC has complied with the duty to have "due regard" to the House of Bishops' guidance in relation to safeguarding.

A huge thank you to Alison Paterson for all she does supporting me with the DBS checks and other Safeguarding issues.

**Cathy Bloye**  
**Parish Safeguarding Officer**  
**March 2026**

# CHOIR REPORT FOR THE APCM 2026

This year has been one of development for the choir. We have continued to expand our repertoire and done more singing outside the church than in previous years while still maintaining our high standard of music at the regular services each week.

Overall numbers in the choir have remained stable, while being fairly volatile week to week. There are currently 13 trebles, 1 probationer, 2 sopranos, 5 altos, 6 tenors and 3 basses that make up our full complement. We are also grateful for help from 7 former choir members who regularly come and sing during the holidays or when they are back from university. We usually number around 25 on any given Sunday, there being many competing demands on our members' time, though almost all choir members have an attendance that numbers over 85%.

I continue to be hugely impressed by the choir's musicianship and sight-reading skills, particularly as applies to the trebles. We are able to get through a huge amount of challenging repertoire, some of which is new to the choir with stunning results given our limited rehearsal schedule, while continuing to maintain our core repertoire. There have also been some excellent solo performances in services from our senior trebles and members of the back row in recent months. The trebles of the choir are now making a unified and confident sound, and I'm very pleased with how the younger members contribute to this and with their appetite to take on solos too. It has also been a pleasure to work more regularly with smaller sections of the choir in trebles only or ATB only services, which not only provide a different challenge to our usual music but help to spread the workload out as well. Navigating the interregnum has brought challenges in leading the choir, but we are committed to working through these to the best of our ability in conjunction with the organs of church governance.

We were privileged in 2025 to sing at the cathedrals in Ely and Bury St Edmunds for our summer choir week. This was very successful, and I would like to thank all those who were involved in the planning and execution of this. In 2026 we are looking forward to our first residential choir week for 4 years at an old favourite destination of Salisbury Cathedral, and by the time this report is published, we will have completed a weekend of singing at Canterbury Cathedral too.

After Easter, and into the new academic year there will be some challenges for us. Because of various reasons such as family relocation, competing sporting interests and postgraduate study, we face the prospect of only having 1 bass in the choir on some Sundays after Easter, and on all Sundays from September. This will quickly severely limit the repertoire that we are able to perform. Additionally in September, our most senior 3 trebles will move to the back row. While with increased outreach to local primary schools through ventures such as our joint service in March and regular contact through assemblies our links to local schools are gradually getting stronger, it remains difficult to recruit children into the choir. Of those who are interested and come to try things out, my experience has been that only 50% stay permanently. This means that we effectively have to recruit twice as many children as we want to add to the choir. The problem in the bass section is even more difficult to address as there is no obvious strategy to do this. We also cannot currently replenish the section from within our own ranks as there are no boys in the front row whose voices are

beginning to change. The problem can be alleviated from time to time through the use of deputies, but this relies on their availability and goodwill, which is not guaranteed. Therefore, please do think about whether you, or someone that you know, be they a potential treble or bass, could join us to help keep our musical ministry at its current high level.

At this point I must thank Michelle for her playing, directing, and vocal teaching in her role as Assistant Director of Music and Organist. We could not perform the same music to the standard that we do without her expertise, which I am incredibly grateful for. With Michelle also now having some regular Sundays off, I must also thank Matthew Porter for his superb playing and directing as our organ scholar, which has helped greatly to cover her planned absences, as well as to thank the choir for tolerating me doing everything on a Sunday morning from time to time when neither of them are available! Another vote of thanks must also go to Rowena Macdonald who continues to be an incredibly diligent and efficient choir librarian.

The organ, while appearing to do its job adequately each Sunday, is nonetheless showing signs of its age and we have had to put up with various problems with it this year. The stability of its tuning suffers with the constant changes of temperature in the church, and there have been intermittent ciphers on the pedals that although fixed periodically by the tuners, continue to return unasked.

I have had on one occasion to manually tune a few pipes that have been unacceptably out, which is not an easy or particularly safe task and not something that I wish to repeat if it can be avoided.

The expression of the instrument in accompaniment and recital is also severely limited by its effective lack of an enclosed division, due to a poorly designed swell shutter control system. These things naturally cost money to rectify, and although the church finances currently prevent progress on these issues, there may be some funding from a legacy dedicated to fixing these issues on the horizon.

It is a privilege for myself, Michelle and the choir to lead the music at St Francis and we hope that this will continue to be the case in the months and years ahead.

**Joel Colyer – Director of Music**  
**07.03.2026**

## ALTAR SERVERS REPORT FOR APCM 2026

Once more this report must highlight the lack of servers, although the number of the younger servers again increased by one when a new server joined us at Easter 2025. At the time of writing another young person has started training and should be serving at Easter 2026. Unfortunately, this is only of short-term benefit since they will leave at the end of the summer term. All the younger servers have other commitments on a Sunday morning, including needing more time for study as they get older.

We have not been able to guarantee a server for every Sunday at 8.00 a.m. since 2022, and since the start of the vacancy this has meant that we have had to rely heavily on the good will of those there to take on extra duties in an effort to ensure there is someone to guide the visiting clergy in the way the service is conducted at St. Francis. We rarely have enough servers for a full team at the 09.15 service now, meaning that the older servers usually have to take several roles, and often there is only one person available. This used to be considered unacceptable at St Francis but has become normal. With the additional need to guide visiting clergy through the way we conduct a service it means that there is so much to do that the server can feel as if the opportunity for worship has passed them by. To provide anything like a full team for the major festivals can be a struggle.

At the time of writing this report St Francis relies on the services of 3 adults at 8.00, 4 adults, 1 teenager and 2 children to cover the duties of four servers at every 09.15 or equivalent weekday evening service, with a further 3 young people occasionally as their other commitments permit. All of these have other commitments outside of St Francis and cannot be there every Sunday. They would like to spend time in the congregation when they can as well, just to be present and concentrate on prayer. This is a situation which cannot be allowed to continue without seriously affecting the type of worship that St. Francis offers. More volunteers are desperately needed.

All our adult and older teenage servers have completed the necessary Church of England Safeguarding and Awareness of Domestic Abuse training.

St Francis has relied on the loyalty of a few adult servers and more heavily on the willing availability of children to help for far too long. The adults continue to grow older, and the children have grown up and left home. As a result, preparing a servers' rota is very difficult without overloading the willing few, and for holiday periods is virtually impossible. The possibility of only one, or on occasion no servers at 09.15, is now a reality that must be faced by the congregation as a whole. St Francis has been in vacancy for a year, with the church relying on a number of visiting clergy to take services. Few of these are used to St. Francis, the way things are done or where things are kept and rely heavily on the altar servers for help and guidance, but we run the risk that there may be none to give it. What will happen then? Yes, they will do their best, but the service won't be exactly what the congregation is used to, and it is possible that essential items will not be to hand when needed. This situation must not be allowed to continue.

Could you help? As you read this report, please ask yourself seriously, is God calling you, or your children, to serve Him at His altar? If you would like to know more, please contact me or one of the other adult servers. Training will be provided, and you won't be asked to do it on your own. What if you make a mistake? Our faith teaches that God is very tolerant, and only He will know for certain.

Please include all of our current serving team and our need for more servers in your prayers.

**Anthony Packer**  
**Head Server**  
**March 2026**

# ST FRANCIS CHURCH GARDENS REPORT FOR THE APCM

The church has four separate areas of garden: the Garden of Remembrance and associated Memorial Pathway; the Car Park area and North side of the church; Fankie's Garden and associated play area; the Prayer Garden. Work to maintain these church gardens has continued over the last year, despite the lack of volunteers to help. The plans produced last year for the maintenance of hedges and grassy areas as well as the pruning of roses, wisteria and other shrubs were implemented, whilst noting the requirements of legislation and good ecological practice.

Once again, we undertook 'No Mow May', thus ensuring that all the lawns' grasses had a chance to flower and seed, helping the wildlife that relies on them for sustenance. Hedge cutting took place outside the Bird Nesting Season of 1<sup>st</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> July, thus ensuring that there was no risk of disturbing a nesting bird, in compliance with legislation. Where trimming was necessary a thorough search was first conducted to ensure there was no nest.

The grassy area of the Car Park and a 1 metre strip around the Garden of Remembrance and the field of Frankie's Garden were left, as in recent years, for wildflowers to develop, blossom and seed for the benefit of the gardens' wild life. As last year, we were greatly helped by teams from the Community Payback Scheme, provided by arrangement with the Probation Office. In addition to lawn mowing and hedge cutting these teams cleared all of the church paths of weeds, trimmed all the lawn edges, cut back the laurels adjacent to Churchfield House, helped with the pruning of shrubs and other plants, and generally ensured that the church grounds were kept neat and tidy, and there have been a number of positive comments from both church members and passers-by as a result. A lot of work was also done in the vicarage garden during the Spring to ready the premises for rental. It is anticipated that a working party may be necessary once we have a date for a new vicar to move in, so that they are not immediately faced with a lot of work in that area.

Two large plant pots were obtained during the summer and located in the Garden of Remembrance and the Memorial Pathway. Further pots were sited beside the new ramp from the St. Clare Chapel emergency exit, and all were planted with border plants and also bulbs for the spring. A further large wooden container to go alongside the exit ramp is under construction, soil for this has been obtained and once in situ will be filled with plants and bulbs.

Of the five bird nesting boxes in place one of these provided a home where a family of blue tits was raised. It is likely that the other boxes were put up too late to be of use, and it is hoped that they will be in use this year. For the fourth year running clear evidence was noted in the summer that the church hedgehog house had provided a snug place for a hedgehog to hibernate over the winter, still in use through the Spring, and initial signs are that it has been occupied again this winter.

In addition to regular weeding (help if you can please) the cross beams of the pergola in the Prayer Garden are now in a precarious state and need replacing

before something falls on someone. Offers of help to effect replacement will be very gratefully received. All offers of help to Anthony Packer please.

**Anthony Packer**  
**March 2026**

# CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL 2025 REPORT FOR THE APCM

After four years, 2025 was my last Christmas Tree Festival as leader, and I was delighted that it was such a great success, particularly after 2024's stormy monsoon. We estimate it brought over 2,000 people into the church and generated good income for both us and the Scouts.

**54** trees were decorated – a little down on last year – but there was some great creativity and visitors seemed to really appreciate the efforts. The winners of each category were:

## **Best decorated:**

- Winner, Crane & Staples for their Wicked-inspired “There's no place like Crane and Staples at Christmas”
- Runner Up, the Basch Family for their Pokémon “I wanna tree the very best”

## **Most creative:**

- Winner, St Francis Choir Trebles for “Can Choristers Sing”
- Runner Up, Whiskers Mouse for “Who's the big cheese?”

## **Most reflective of the 90 theme**

- Winner, Craig Lowes, for his animated aviation “90 years of progress”
- Runner Up, the Agnew family for “When we are 90”

**Total net income to the church was over £6,700 with minimal costs.**

For those who like numbers, here are some highlights:

- 667 entry fees paid
- 111 elf hunts completed
- 1,100 raffle tickets sold
- 1,563 attempts on the Tombola
- £651 of cakes sold
- £771 sold in crafts

It was a great outreach event, and the feedback has been really positive.

I look forward to contributing to next year's event, even if work and travel commitments mean I have had to hang up the Chief Elf hat!!

**Graham Bloye**  
**March 2026**

# COMMUNICATIONS TEAM REPORT FOR THE APCM

Work and other time pressures have prevented the Communications Team from meeting, however, there has been a regular flow of activities including:

- Monthly update of external notice board with current and future activities
- Refresh of social media and regular posts on X, Facebook and Instagram
- Paul continues to do an excellent job producing the newsletter
- Completion of the Parish Profile

Social media remains our biggest external channel, with follower numbers slowly growing, with the exception of X (formerly Twitter) where the global exodus continues, and our reach has fallen to just 85 (from 130 at the start of 2025). Facebook has grown to 627 followers and Instagram to 151. More regular posting is seeing greater activity.

**Graham Bloye**  
**March 2026**

## FLOWER TEAM REPORT FOR THE APCM

We hope you have enjoyed the flowers and foliage in the church during the year, Advent and Lent excepted, by a team of seven volunteers. To us, the flowers symbolise the presence of God and reflect the beauty of his creation. We also hope that they create a welcoming atmosphere to all and signify the keeping of the seasons.

During the year we have enjoyed doing special flowers for the Art Exhibition and for several Baptisms. We continue to use knitted poppies for Remembrance Sunday, and these are always appreciated.

We are very grateful to members of the congregation who faithfully make donations for flowers on specific dates, to celebrate a special occasion or to remember a loved member of their family or friend and we would be greatly encouraged if more members of the congregation would consider giving in this way. There is a donation list on the porch notice board. We receive no allocated money for flowers and without these donations we have to rely on flowers and greenery from our own gardens – very limited in the winter months!

We are very grateful to Julie Lowes and Claire Meola who keep us in order during the year and for the support of Pui San Apling. If anyone would like to join our happy team, we should make you very welcome and promise that you would not be dropped in at the deep end. All help provided. Please think about it.

**The Flower Team**  
**March 2026**

# THE ZOOM PRAYER GROUP REPORT FOR THE APCM

You may have noticed on the pew leaflet that the Zoom Prayer Group meets weekly at 8pm on a Wednesday evening. This has happened since the early months of the pandemic in 2020, initiated by Jenny Fennell and our curate at the time, Rachel Wakefield, and has become so valued that we have continued ever since.

Graham Bloye and I take turns hosting. Each person attending has a chance to say what is on their mind and heart and after everyone has contributed, the host gathers everything together and prays to God on behalf of the others for everything that has been brought to the meeting.

Typically, we pray for world events, for what is happening in the Church and for things that are going on in our personal lives. We find that this is a safe, confidential space in which to speak about our concerns. We loosely follow a format where we pray for people or situations that need God's help, things we are grateful for and also for anything that has caused us to say "Wow!". This last can be of either a positive or negative nature.

The meetings begin promptly at 8pm and last about 45 minutes depending on how many people are attending and how much each has to contribute.

If you are interested and would like to know more about this faithful, caring and supportive group, please speak to me or Graham either before or after the 9:15 service on a Sunday morning.

**Marcia Agnew.**  
**March 2026**

# THE FRIENDS OF ST FRANCIS

The Friends of St Francis is a small independent registered charity that aims to enhance the church through decorations and objects to make it a more welcoming place for all its users, both religious and other.

The Friends, in discussion with the Vicar and PCC, have donated a number of gifts over the years including:

- A new altar cloth
- The notice board in the church car park
- Banners for use at Advent, Easter and Christmas
- Silver for use at the Eucharist
- Hymn books
- The wall panel listing the vicars

The Friends provides an opportunity to contribute for those who wish to enhance the building and its facilities.

Some who may, for various reasons, not wish to join the church itself may find it a way of supporting and enhancing the community facilities that St Francis provides.

**The Friends of St Francis**  
**March 2026**

## COFFEE FOR ALL REPORT FOR THE APCM

Coffee for All continues to run throughout the year as a mid-week meeting place, mainly for St Francis Church members, but also for any member of the public who sees our sign and joins us. This year we have welcomed friends and family members, and the visiting clergy, who have kindly taken the Wednesday Said Communion service.

We serve tea and freshly brewed coffee, along with very nice biscuits from 10.15am in the Parish Room on Wednesday mornings. There are a core group of 10-15 people who attend, enjoying each other's company and conversation. If you are free on Wednesday mornings and would like to join us, please come along.

None of this would be possible without our wonderful helpers, Liz Hyde, Elizabeth Chamberlain, Julie Owen, Christine Phillips, Heather Perrin, and Carole Sharp.

Additionally, we must thank Linda for her delicious donations of Lemon Drizzle cake and shortbread, which we all greatly enjoy.

**Sally Ewers**

**March 2026**

# KNIT, HOOK AND STITCH REPORT FOR THE APCM

Knit, Hook and Stitch, our monthly craft, tea and chat group, has been running for 2 years. We meet in the Parish Room on the third Friday of the month, from 2 to 3.30pm.

We are a small friendly group made up of St Francis Church members, along with some friends and family members. Our craft projects include knitting, crochet, patchwork, embroidery, tapestry and paper crafts. If you would like to join us, you will be very welcome. For more details speak to either Sally Ewers or Elizabeth Chamberlain.

**Sally Ewers**

**March 2026**

## THURSDAY LUNCHES REPORT FOR APCM 2026

We are pleased to report that Thursday Lunches continues to operate well, thanks to the support of our wonderful volunteers and visitors.

Every Thursday lunchtime, we welcome around 15 (sometimes 20) local people to enjoy a hearty and healthy lunch (which is usually soup with bread and cheese, or a cold salad in the summer months), followed by a pudding or cake and a cuppa.

We have recently been blessed by some generous personal donations, and we secured some Council funding from November 2025 until the end of March 2026. These have helped to ensure that we are not short of funds to provide this important service to our local community.

As well as an opening prayer, we have the opportunity to chat, share stories and experiences with visitors who are invariably vulnerable and in some need of support.

Important to mention also that our Christmas Lunch welcomed nearly 35 people and was a great success. Additional thanks go to Sainsbury's who donated all of the turkey crowns and veg!

Our thanks to everyone at St Francis who are involved in supporting this project, and to anyone that would like to get involved in the future!!

PLEASE do ask Rob or Clare Smith if you'd like to find out more!!

**Rob Smith**

**March 2026**

## APPENDIX: PARISH PROFILE



# Parish Profile

**St Francis of Assisi Church, Welwyn Garden City**

# Welcome to St Francis of Assisi Church

We are delighted to welcome you as you prayerfully discern God's call on your next step in ministry. This Parish Profile is the result of a journey of prayer and consultation, and it aims to offer a genuine insight into who we are, who we aspire to be, and how we believe God is calling us forward.

St Francis of Assisi Church has stood at the heart of Welwyn Garden City for over 90 years and we believe it is regarded as a warm, welcoming church with a rich tradition of choral music. Our thriving choir continues to play a vital role in our worship and outreach, regularly travelling outside the parish. In recent years, we have also begun to embrace a wider variety of worship styles, including more contemporary services led by dedicated lay leaders and a talented group of instrumentalists. We see this diversity as a strength - a reflection of the breadth of God's family and a foundation for growth complementing more traditional cathedral-style choral music.

Like our patron saint, we seek to bring the Good News of Jesus to all in our community. We have deep roots in the local area and a strong sense of welcome and belonging. But we are also listening to God's prompting: to reach out further, grow spiritually, and become an increasingly vibrant and inclusive family of faith.

We are looking for a Vicar who will lead us in study, worship, and prayer; who will inspire and challenge us in our faith; and who will nurture the gifts of the whole congregation. We long for someone who can help us grow in confidence and in mission - especially among children, young people and families - and who will encourage the planting of fresh, sustainable expressions of ministry in our changing world.

We are not perfect - but we are prayerful, open, and hopeful. We believe that the building blocks are in place, and that with Spirit-filled and dynamic leadership we can take the next faithful steps on our journey.

## **Might God be calling you to lead us?**

We are praying that God is preparing the right person to lead us into the next chapter of our shared life and ministry.

To find out more about us, please visit [www.stfranciswgc.org.uk](http://www.stfranciswgc.org.uk)



# Our Church (as seen by us!)

We asked members of the congregation to describe St Francis of Assisi Church in a single sentence. The responses varied widely, demonstrating diverse views and a strong sense of a warm, welcoming community.

I get to meet my friends at church that are not at my school

St Francis is a loving, welcoming church with praise for God at its foundation.

**A welcoming home where you can worship, reflect or have a chat with others over a tea or coffee.**

*A welcoming church that appreciates tradition, embraces alternative worship, supports families*

**A place of worship full of music and kindness.**

A CHURCH WITH LOTS OF PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT AGES, LOTS OF DIFFERENT GROUPS FOR CHILDREN AND WE GET TO SOCIALISE TOGETHER AFTER THE SERVICE AS WELL AS AT OTHER SERVICES LIKE FRANKIE'S AT 5

*A welcoming community, united in prayer, where everyone wants to know your name*

A place of united community and lifelong friends

Faith, family and friendly faces - everyone's welcome.

**From the peace of Choral Evensong to the glorious glitter of the Christmas Tree Festival, St Francis provides it all!**

A place with real potential

# Our Challenges and Needs

St Francis of Assisi Church has stood in a prominent place in Welwyn Garden City for over 90 years, as the town has expanded outside the parish and grown significantly. Like so many churches, the pandemic hit hard, and we have struggled to re-establish many of the groups that thrived beforehand, including house groups, Lent activities and bible study, leading to a loss of engagement and a fall in attendance – particularly in the 30-45 age range.

In the vacancy period, we have struggled to run as many activities as we would have liked and are extremely grateful for the help from the local retired clergy who have supported us.

We pray that the minister that God sends us will help us to address some of our challenges, including:

- Bringing diverse perspectives towards a shared vision
- Reinvigoration and growth of the congregation
- Embracing variety (while building on tradition)
- Re-establishing spiritual and social groups
- Proactive community outreach
- Restarting our schools' programme
- Bringing further joy into our worship
- Expanding family work



# Is God calling you to St Francis?

We believe that God has His plan for our church and community and that He will send the right person to minister to us and lead us forward by example. We are excited to follow. We also recognise that whoever is sent will bring their own gifts to us and look forward to exploring the next steps together. We believe God is calling someone who will embrace, celebrate and champion a breadth of worship styles, building from our strong choral tradition to more contemporary expressions, helping people of all ages and backgrounds to encounter God in worship.

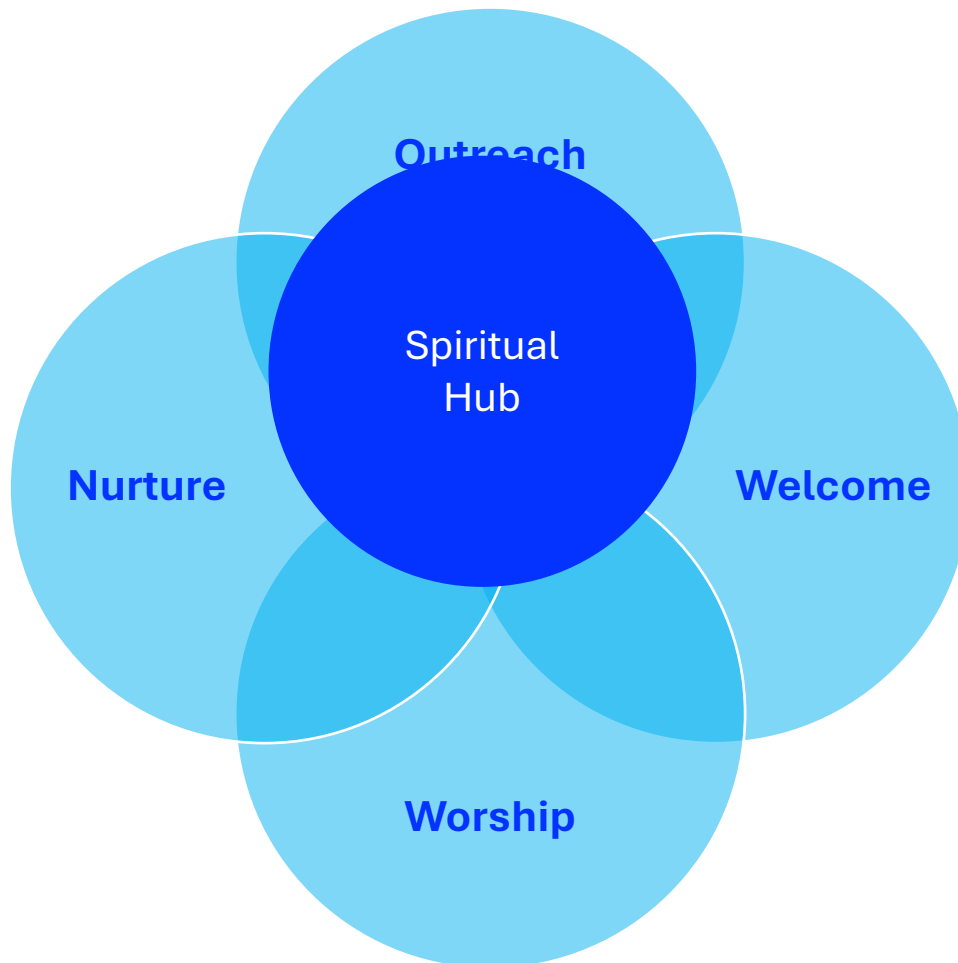
The key things we are praying for in our next leader are:

- Someone who will be a channel of God's love, bringing healing and peace to the church and its parish
- An inspiring preacher, rooted in scripture and led by the Spirit who will unite the church and grow in faith and mission
- A person with a gift for working with children and young people and the ability to create and lead worship which speaks to all ages
- A minister who can delegate, and enable and inspire the people of St Francis to collaborate to use their talents to do God's work and fulfil God's plans
- A prayerful listener who will challenge us to build on the church's great musical and choral traditions whilst looking to the future with excitement
- A visionary who will help the church grow in faith and confidence



# Our Vision

St Francis of Assisi church is in the centre of the parish with open grounds and busy premises. The church's vision was last discussed some years ago and the PCC looks forward to reviewing the current vision statement below in conjunction with our new minister.



**A spiritual hub for the community, making God's love known to all**

## **Outreach**

Seizing opportunities to engage with those around us, following Jesus' example.

## **Welcome**

Providing a place where everyone belongs and feels valued.

## **Nurture**

Transforming lives through developing our relationship with God exploring the Bible and encouraging one another.

## **Worship**

Gathering as a community

# Our Position on Inclusivity

We have been a member of the Inclusive Church Network since September 2020 and proudly display this logo on our website as a sign of our commitment to making our church a welcoming place to people from all backgrounds.

We have adopted this vision statement, and expect our new vicar to share our vision:

We believe in inclusive church - a church which celebrates and affirms every person and does not discriminate on any grounds, including disability, economic power, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity, or sexuality.

We acknowledge that every one of us has sinned and is in need of God's forgiveness, and that none of us is better than another.

We reject the idea that some people are unacceptable to God.

We welcome everyone to come and worship with us, learn about God, grow in their relationship with Him and be part of our church family.

We believe in a church in which the power of the Holy Spirit allows all people to grasp the love of Jesus Christ and to proclaim the Gospel afresh for each generation.



# Our Worship Life

Our current regular weekly services are:

Sundays            8:00am Said Eucharist  
                         9:15am Sung Eucharist  
                         (with Youth and Children's Church, and tea/coffee)

Tuesdays        7:30pm Said Eucharist

Wednesdays    10:30am Said Eucharist  
                         (followed by Coffee For All)

Once a month, we also have **Choral Evensong**, **Wild Church** (often in the woods) and the more contemporary **Frankie's At 5**.

At the main Christian festivals, five times a year, a single all age 10am service is held.

Numbers vary, but typically the main Sunday service is attended by around 75, with an average of eight at other service times. Choral Evensong attracts 50 and Frankie's At 5 around 25. Easter Sunday saw over 180 in the congregation with Harvest and Christmas Day averaging 100. The Christingle service was attended by over 220 children and adults.

The Electoral Roll currently stands at 115, of whom more than half live outside the parish

In addition to regular services, in 2025 there were 2 memorial Services (all at the church), 5 funerals (1 at the church and 4 elsewhere), and 2 Interment of Ashes (all at the church). A prayer group meets on Zoom each Wednesday evening with nine regular attendees and a new Thursday afternoon prayer group has recently started.



# Our Garden City

Welwyn Garden City was the second new town built by Ebenezer Howard after the First World War. Founded in 1920, it has gradually evolved in the intervening period to become a new town with a population of 51,500 at the last census.

The town is on the East Coast Mainline, with frequent services to London Kings Cross and Moorgate, and easy access to mainline services from Stevenage. There are good bus services to Stevenage, St Albans, Hatfield, Watford and Hemel Hempstead.

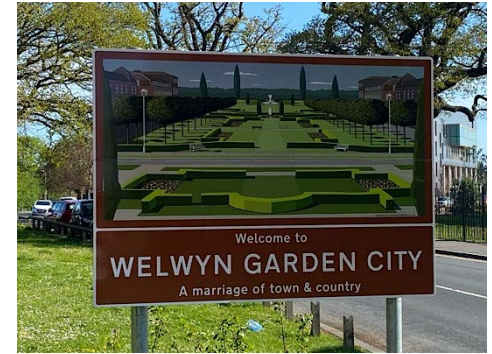
The town has a small hospital with an Urgent Care Centre, while the Lister Hospital in Stevenage is the main acute hospital, approximately 12 miles north.

The Parish of St Francis of Assisi lies to the west of the town, taking in the main shopping area and a compact urban 1.4mile<sup>2</sup> footprint serving a population of 6,930. The area is relatively affluent (in the top 15% on the deprivation index) and disproportionately White British (87.1%) compared to the wider town's demography.

50% of residents are aged 45 or more, with a population density of 2.2 per property. It could be said that the local area is asset rich rather than cash rich, with many properties requiring significant renewal but occupied by long-standing older people. This is very true of the church's congregation living in the parish.

The parish includes several day nurseries, a primary school (3-11; Ofsted: Good), secondary school (Mathematics and Computing academy; 11-18; Ofsted: Good) and a special school (2-19; Ofsted: Outstanding). Oaklands College (16+; Ofsted: Good) lies on the northern border of the parish.

There are plans to expand the town significantly, although none of the current growth plans sit within the parish.



# Our Music

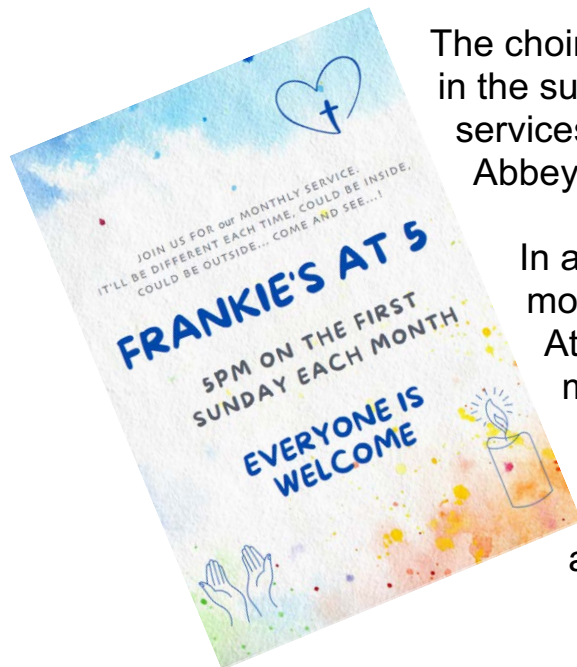
The St Francis of Assisi choir has led worship as a cathedral-style choir since the church was founded. Standards are high and the mixed choir attracts singers from around the parish and beyond, keen to stretch their musical repertoire across a broad range of liturgical music. The choir provides an excellent musical training for children, and helps them develop their social skills as they relate to the wide age range of members.

Led by the Director of Music and Assistant Organist the choir rehearses on a Friday and sings at the main Sunday service and major festivals. A Book of Common Prayer evensong is sung once a month.

The church has a dedicated Song School and music library. There is a pipe organ and grand piano in the church, together with an upright piano. A rehearsal piano is available in the song school.

The choir sings to a very high standard and regularly travels in the summer for "Choir Week", a time when it sings all services in a cathedral. Recent visits include Westminster Abbey, St Pauls Cathedral and Salisbury Cathedral.

In addition to the long-established choral services, a more contemporary service is held once a month – Frankie's At 5. The format for this varies each month, and is led by members of the church. There is no set structure, allowing the service to have a variety of styles over the year. It is aimed at all ages, and lasts around 45 minutes before a time of fellowship over refreshments. Around 25 people attend.



# Our Children and Young People

In addition to children's roles in the choir, the church offers a range of activities for children, young people and their families. Until recently, we employed a part-time Children and Families' Worker and we are currently considering how best to grow our children's activities.

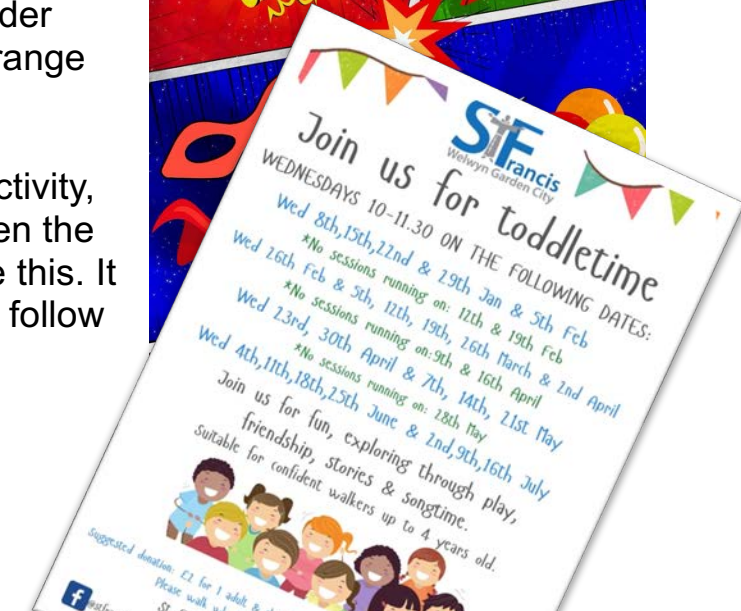
**Youth and Children's Church** serves three age ranges on Sunday mornings in term times. The youngest group meets throughout the service, coming into the church during communion for a blessing. The older groups leave before the readings, returning after the Peace. Typically, they will study age-appropriate material echoing the themes of the readings. Around 25 children attend the older groups. If parents want to remain with younger children during the service, a range of toys and materials are available in the Children's Chapel.



**Wild Church** has been a popular family activity, taking place in woods near the church when the weather is favourable. We hope to resume this. It regularly attracted 10-15 people. Activities follow a theme explored through nature.

Every Wednesday during term times, **Toddletime** meets in the hall. The group attracts a large number of under 4s for 90 minutes of fun involving games, music

and storytelling. The majority of attendees are not regular churchgoers, making this a valuable outreach activity. We can take 30 children and regularly have to turn people away when capacity is reached.



# Our Community Outreach

Whilst Welwyn Garden City is a relatively affluent area, the church has identified the need to offer a range of outreach activities for elderly and vulnerable adults. This is served through two year-round hospitality events and a craft group:

## Thursday Lunches

Every Thursday, a team of volunteers prepares a simple, homely lunch, served in the church hall and open to anyone. This valuable service is offered at no cost and regularly sees 10-15 or more attendees. A more elaborate Christmas lunch is served with turkey and all its trimmings with food donated by members of the congregation and local retailers.

## Coffee For All

Coinciding with the midweek service on a Wednesday morning, Coffee For All attracts 10-15 people for coffee, biscuits and a time of togetherness. The group meets all year.

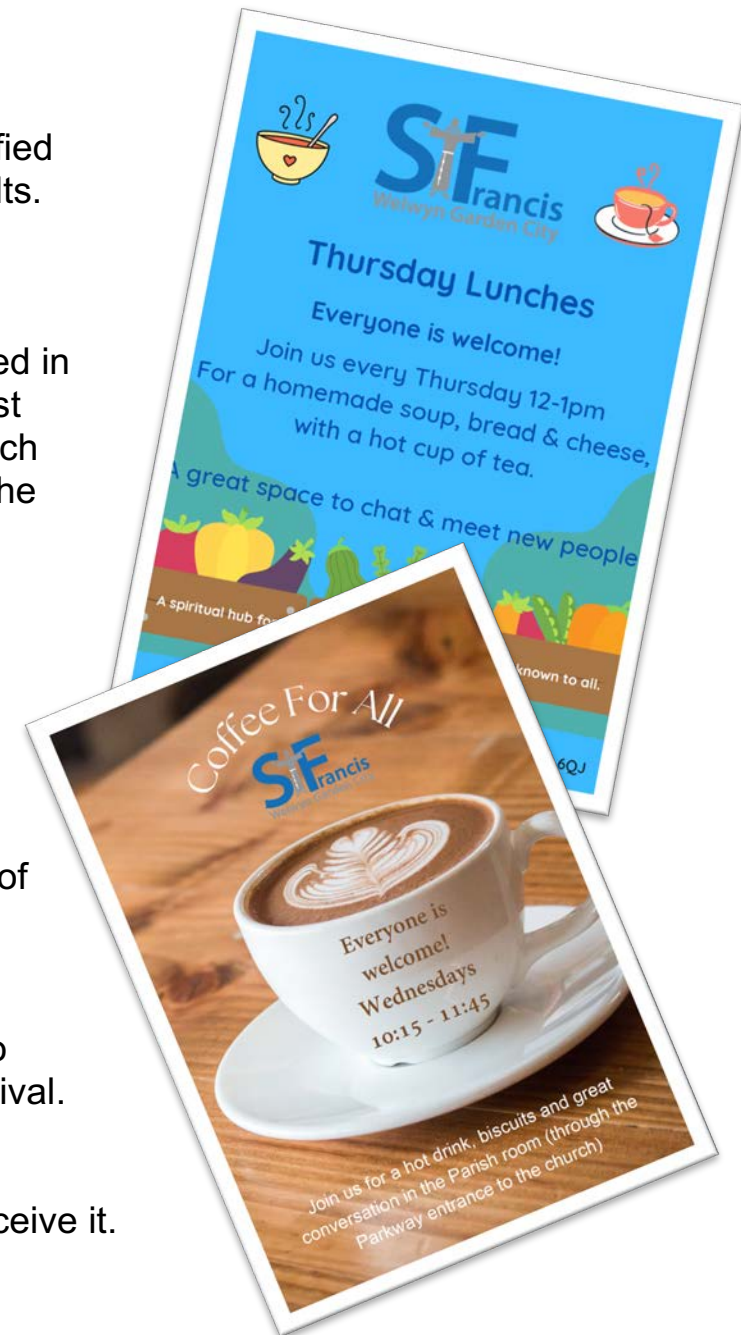


## Knit, Hook and Stitch

This social crafting group brings a range of people together each week to sew and create knitted items or crochet.

They produced a great post box topper to advertise this year's Christmas Tree Festival.

A monthly digital newsletter is delivered to members who have opted in to receive it.



# Our Events

Like many churches, there is a trade-off between maximising premises rental and using the church for our own community and fundraising events. We have an arrangement with the Welwyn Garden City Concert Club, where we rent them the church for their regular concerts and provide the interval refreshments, keeping the income generated.

In addition to our Christmas Tree Festival, covered later, we try to hold a variety of events for all ages.

In recent years, these have included:

- Summer Fete in the garden
- Quiz nights
- Fish and chip supper
- Talent Show
- Afternoon Tea

Whilst fundraising is important, we see these primarily as outreach events and a chance to spend time as a community.

The quizzes have brought in a large number of family and friends and are very popular.

In September 2025, we held our first Art Festival, with artists from all over the area invited to exhibit their work. This was a positive outreach event as well as generating funds for the church and will be repeated in October 2026.



# Our Christmas Tree Festival

The Christmas Tree Festival has been the church's largest fundraising event for over 25 years and sees exhibitors from across the town entering decorated trees for the festival weekend.

Over 50 trees fill the church alongside activities including:

- Raffle
- Tombola
- Cake Stall
- Handicrafts
- Children's Activities

The local Scout group take on the catering, offering jacket potatoes, burgers and cakes.

This is a large undertaking requiring much preparation and planning and involves nearly the whole church volunteering to run the event.

Beyond the fundraising benefit (it contributes around 8% of church annual income) is the unquantifiable community outreach and coverage in the local press.

Children are admitted free. Over 2,000 people visit the church over the festival weekend, and take away a programme including details of Christmas services.

The 2025 event celebrated 90 years since the church opened for worship and generated over £6,800 towards church funds.



# Our Team

The church has a well-equipped office easily accessible from the entrance foyer.

Investment has been made in IT equipment and full colour print capability allowing us to provide printed material at low cost for events and day to day notices. This includes full colour A3 for external advertising

Our highly committed staff team is split between employees, and those paid an honorarium.

The team comprises:

- Parish Administrator
- Children and Families' Worker (currently vacant)
- Director of Music
- Organist

All work part-time hours appropriate for their positions and their pay has recently been reviewed. The musical roles are benchmarked against the Royal School of Church Music recommended pay scales.

All Church Officer roles (Churchwardens, Treasurer, PCC secretary) are filled and the Parish Safeguarding Officer keeps training up to date and there are no outstanding safeguarding issues.

We have a large team of volunteers, including altar servers, a chalice team, sides people, intercessors and lesson readers, ensuring our services are well run and our gardens are maintained.



# Our Premises

St Francis of Assisi Church was built in 1934 and consecrated in May 1935. The original vision was for the church to be constructed in three phases, eventually spanning the whole of what is now the Frankie's Garden play area.

The expansion never progressed, and the church now comprises a wide altar and chancel opening onto a large nave with choir stalls. At either side are smaller chapels, one denoted as the Children's Chapel and one used for midweek services. The St Clare Chapel leads off the main church through a beautifully engraved glass door and is used for smaller services and private prayer.

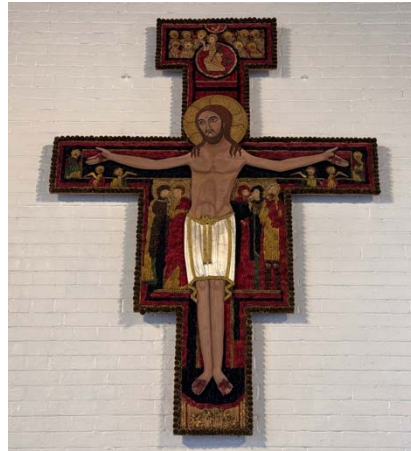
In addition to the worship space which can easily accommodate 300 people, there is a separate Parish Room and Song School to one side, and a large hall area with commercial-grade kitchen and access to the garden area. The ground floor is fully accessible and includes toilets.

The church exterior space to the front includes parking for around 10 vehicles, a garden of remembrance where ashes are interred, and a memorial pathway with gilt engraved inscriptions. To the rear is a prayer garden and Frankie's Garden which is equipped with a large amount of play equipment. The garden area is open to young children and their carers and is enthusiastically used by many local families.

In the basement, the cellar area has been modernised and turned into an airy space used by the older Youth and Children's Church group.

Both the hall and the church are available to rent, either separately or together. The church has a particularly good acoustic and is regularly used for concerts.





# Our Church Life

A few snapshots of life at St Francis of Assisi Church



# Our Facilities

Whilst our church is 90 years old, we are fortunate that its facilities have been expanded and adapted over the years to make it fit for today's congregational worship and for external hires.

The church is equipped with a comprehensive audio visual system supported by screens throughout the building and smaller rooms. Services and events can be recorded or streamed direct to YouTube. A range of wired and radio microphones is available. Various lighting states are pre-programmed to create atmosphere.

Flexible modern cushioned pews and chairs can easily accommodate 200 people, with a further 80-100 in the church hall.

Outside there are three distinct areas:

- Memorial Pathway in the Garden of Remembrance
- Prayer garden
- Children's playground maintained by income from ToddleTime

Tables and chairs are available in the hall and Parish Room, making the church configurable for a wide range of events from a large-scale orchestral concert through to a quiet coffee morning. The hall includes a well-equipped commercial kitchen with serving hatch, whilst the Parish Room has a small kitchen for tea and coffee preparation. All spaces have independent entrances.

There is a car park for around 12 cars with on street weekend and evening parking easily available.



# Our Vicarage

The Vicarage is adjacent to the church at 48 Parkway, with direct access to the vestry. The house was built in the 1930s with a brick construction and will undergo maintenance, including replacement of some windows, during the vacancy period. It is located within the town's Estate Management Scheme (effectively a conservation area protecting the founders' vision for a garden city).

On the ground floor, the property comprises two good sized reception rooms and a large study leading off a central hallway – most church meetings take place in the Parish Rooms in the church. The kitchen opens onto a utility room with easy access to the integral single garage. Upstairs are five bedrooms, a bathroom and WC.

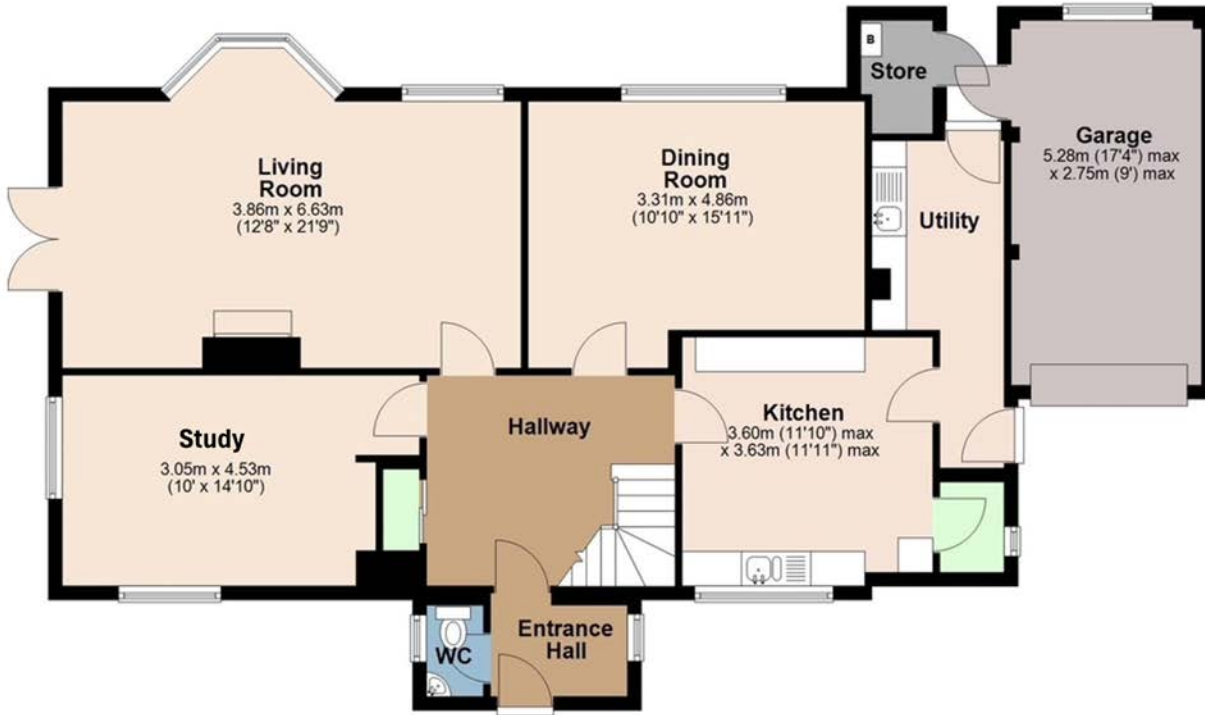


To the front of the house is a lawned garden with established trees and a large hard standing area which can easily accommodate five cars. Resident's parking is also available on Parkway with a permit system operated by the local council. To the side and rear is a further lawned garden enclosed behind a lockable gate with a wooden decked patio and shed.

The house is well-located for the town centre, just 300m from John Lewis and a range of retail outlets, restaurants and coffee shops. The mainline station, serving London Kings Cross is less than 500m away. A good range of schools from pre-school to secondary are within walking distance (all rated Ofsted Good or better). The area is generally considered safe and has a low incidence of crime.

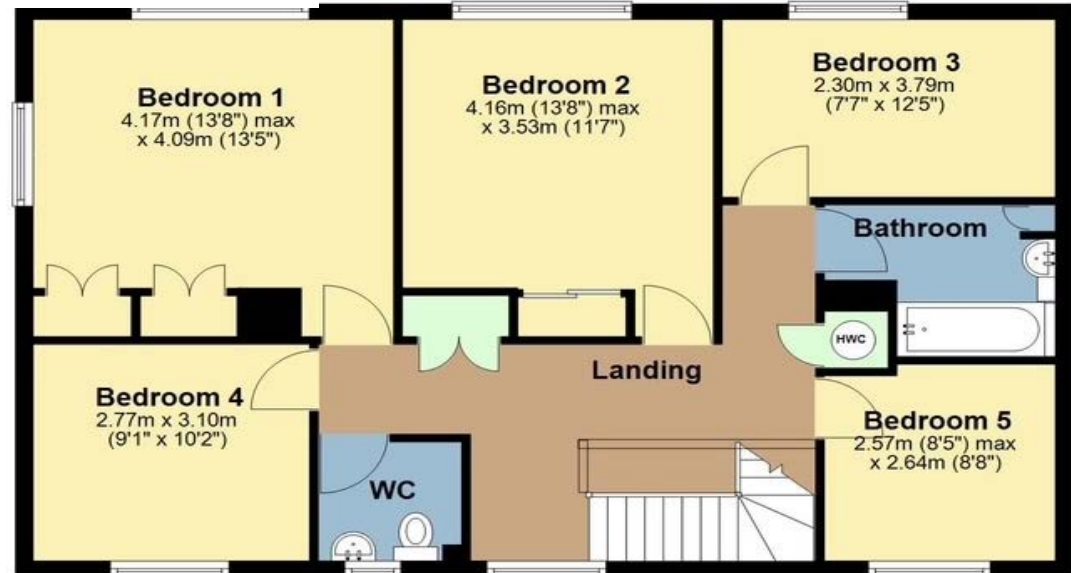
### Ground Floor

Approx. 115.5 sq. metres (1243.0 sq. feet)



### First Floor

Approx. 81.4 sq. metres (876.6 sq. feet)



# Our Environment

The church has a large garden alongside a building built before the environment was valued as much as it is today.

The PCC recognised that we must all play our part in protecting God's creation and committed to a full review of our environmental footprint with a view to being recognised under the A Rocha Eco Church scheme. In 2024, the church was awarded the silver award and continues to improve its environmental impact.

Actions taken include:

- Installation of nesting boxes, bug hotel and a hedgehog house in the gardens
- Greater recycling
- Reduction in paper usage
- Replacement of all lights with LEDs



# Our Finances

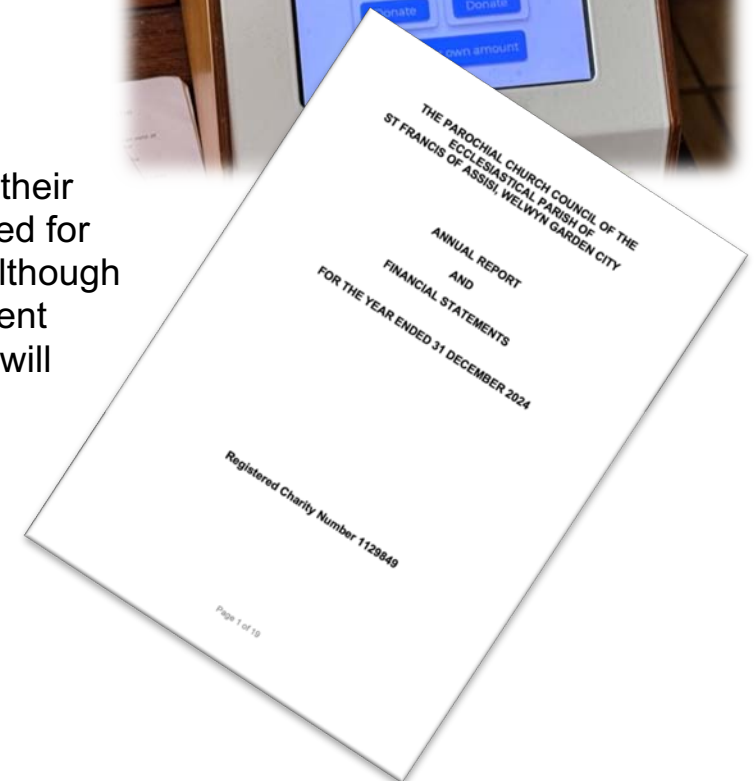
Like many churches, the period since the Covid pandemic has been difficult. The church has seen a fall in income and has operated at a deficit for the last five years.

Steps have been taken to address this, including the successful adoption of Parish Giving, greater use of contactless payments for giving at events, and tighter cost controls. 2025 achieved a small surplus after eight years of sustained deficits, and the budget for 2026 assumes a similar surplus. In 2024 the church agreed a reduced payment towards its Parish Share, and in 2025 has paid £60,000 of the £101,000 requested.

The church building is 90 years old and has extensive maintenance requirements which are in hand. This year, we have carried out further emergency repairs to roofing, and have renewed the windows in the St Clare Chapel (funded by a legacy).

The church tiled roof and flat asphalt hall roof are reaching the ends of their lives, and a project with fundraising and grant applications will be needed for significant repairs/replacement. No timeline has been agreed for this, although regular water damage and the need for urgent temporary repairs in recent years is making this an increasing priority. Initial enquiries suggest this will require £400,000 to be raised.

The Treasurer is confident that the measures being taken will ensure the church's long-term financial viability.



# Our Process

This is the first vacancy at St Francis of Assisi in over 15 years, and we are keen to move quickly, with care, to welcome the person who will lead us on the next stage of our faith journey.

In the first instance, please contact Kate Casey, PA to the Archdeacon of Hertford by email at [archdhertpa@stalbans.anglican.org](mailto:archdhertpa@stalbans.anglican.org) to let us know you are interested, and we will send you our application form. This email address can also be used for any questions you may have during the process.

The interview will be held with the Bishop of Hertford, Archdeacon of Hertford, Rural Dean and two members of the PCC.

We look forward to hearing from you.





St Francis of Assisi Church  
Church Road  
Welwyn Garden City  
AL8 6QJ

Registered Charity Number 1129849

[www.stfranciswgc.org.uk](http://www.stfranciswgc.org.uk)