



St Mark's Church, Gillingham

'Living for Jesus, Loving Gillingham, Learning Together'

AGENDA

for the meeting on 17 May 2026

MINUTES

of the last APCM on 18 May 2025

plus

STATUTORY AND ADDITIONAL REPORTS

for the year ended 31 December 2025

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Agenda for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Sunday 17 May 2026

- (1) Prayer
- (2) Meeting of Parishioners for the Choosing of two Churchwardens
- (3) The Annual Parochial Church Meeting of St Mark's Electoral Roll Members
 1. Apologies for Absence and Minutes of the previous year's meeting
 2. Elections
 - a) Appointment of 3 tellers for the election
 - b) Introduction of each candidate standing for election
 - c) Election of Electoral Roll Members to serve on PCC
 - d) Election of Deanery Synod Members.
 3. Report on the financial affairs of the Parish (*2025 Annual Report and Accounts, 2026 budget*)
(GA)
 4. Choosing of an Independent Examiner of the Accounts for the current year (GA)
 5. The following agenda items should all be covered in the Annual Report or the Additional Reports. If not, they will be provided at the meeting by the officer responsible.
 - a) Electoral Roll Officer's Report (*Statutory Reports*)
 - b) Report on the Proceedings of the PCC (*Statutory Reports*)
 - c) Report on Fabric, Goods and Ornaments (*Statutory Reports*)
 - d) Proceedings of Deanery Synod (*Statutory Reports*)
 - e) Receiving the Reports from Church Ministries given in the Additional Reports
 6. Activities Update
 7. Vicar's Update Report/update/vision - Catharina Olsson Gislekog (COG)
 8. Closing Prayer (COG)

Minutes for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting Sunday 18 May 2025

The APCM for 2025 was in church at 12.30 pm on Sunday 18 May 2025.

The meeting was chaired by Revd Catharina Olsson Gisleskog.

(1). Worship

Catharina welcomed attendees and thanked them for their patience following a long service. A prayer was offered, thanking God for His compassion and guidance and asking for wisdom in the election of churchwardens, PCC members, and the conduct of church business.

(2). Meeting of Parishioners for the choosing of two Churchwardens.

It was reported that Karen Dyer and Colette Wentzel had been churchwardens over the past year. Catharina thanked both Karen and Colette for all they had done over the past year.

There were two nomination for the two positions, Karen Dyer and Colette Wentzel. Karen was nominated by Per Olsson and seconded by Jess Mahdavi-Gladwell and Colette was nominated by Karen Dyer and seconded Chris Gadwell.

The meeting unanimously agreed to Colette Wenzel and Karen Dyer being elected as Churchwardens.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting of St Mark's Electoral Roll Members

Attendees were reminded that:

- QR codes were available for those needing access to the annual report online.
- Hard copies could be collected from Denise Young at the back of church.

1. Apologies for Absence and Minutes of the previous year's meeting.

Apologies were received from Mike and Janet Aldington, Phil Gates and Derek and Terry Thom.

The meeting approved unanimously the minutes of last year. No amendments were requested.

Regarding tellers for possible elections of PCC members. Vicky Allen explained that as we had fewer people nominated for positions on the PCC than spaces we would not need to have a ballot, but she thanked those people she had asked to be tellers for their willingness to undertake this task.

2. Elections

Those coming to the end of their term were Promise Anga, Trevor Dyer, Emmanuel Orachir and Pauline Jackson. These were thanked for all they had contributed during their tenure.

a. Election of Electoral Roll Members to serve on PCC

There were the following places: -

4 places for 3 years

1 place for 1 year

Four people had been nominated for PCC. Those people nominated for election or re-election were Promis Anga Trevor Dyer and Pauline Jackson (for re-election), and standing for the first time to the PCC was Benjamin Maskell. Each had been nominated and seconded.

All nominees spoke to the meeting, giving a brief description of their involvement in St Mark's and reasons to consider them for election to the PCC.

The meeting voted and unanimously agreed that Promise Anga, Trevor Dyer, Pauline Jackson and Benjamin Maskell be elected to serve on the PCC for three years.

A query was raised about why Elizabeth Kurperus appeared on the ballot sheet but did not stand. It was explained that although nominated and seconded, she had not yet been on the electoral roll for six months and therefore was unqualified. The forms had been printed before this was noticed.

b. Deanery Synod

There was no election for Deanery Synod this year. Our current Deanery Synod representatives are Glyn Allen, Jess Mahdavi-Gladwell from St Mark's and Sally Bloor from St Mary's Island Church.

3. Report on the financial affairs of the Parish Church (Annual Report)

Attendees were directed to the annual report and Treasurer's summary, available online and in hard copy.

The Treasurer said that this year the year end accounts had been outsourced to Caladine Limited who also conducted the independent examination. The Treasurer said that the transition had required significant reconciliation work, but it was hoped that this will ease in future years. The accounts have been signed off and will be submitted to the Charity Commission.

Highlights of the year:

General Fund	2024	2023
Total Income	£143,973	£149,014
Total Expenditure	£152,125	£149,064
Surplus (Deficit)	(£8,152)	(£50)
Net Surplus after transfers	(£4,225)	£,7072
Budget forecast surplus/deficit	(£10,718)	(£19,195)
Voluntary Giving	£125,339	£127,783

The Treasurer reported that Gift Aid recovered was £25,505. Giving had been slightly lower than 2023 but above budget by £339.

The Treasurer explained that apart from the General Fund we hold other designated funds the largest of these are as follows:

Repair Funds - (held by the Diocese) is the largest after the General Fund
 Pre-school Fund £26,430 (up from £16,370).

Glyn Allen ran through the financial highlights of 2024.

Financial Highlights

- The Major Expenditure was £123,339 spent on the church kitchen project,
- Year-end General Fund net deficit of £4,225 compared to budget forecast deficit of £10,718.
- General Fund Voluntary Giving decreased to £125,339 compared to £127,784 in 2023.
- 87% of General Fund Income came from Voluntary Giving.
- Designated Away Giving maintained at 10% of 2023 Voluntary Giving.
- £25,505 net Gift Aid tax recovered for General Fund, after accrual adjustments. This includes gift aid processed by The Parish Giving Scheme.
- A total of £123,339 was spent on the church kitchen project of which £45,000 was from a grant and legacy and £5,000 transfer from the church repair fund.
- 32 people regularly contributed through The Parish Giving Scheme, donating £53,284 plus Gift Aid.
- Parish Indicative Offer to the Diocese, to cover clergy support was £74,449 with 19.5% met by SMI Church.
- General Fund net current asset at year end was 31.1% of 2025 forecast expenditure with cash reserves also at 31.1%.
- £13,020 rent received for the Garden House.
- The Pre-school Fund balance increased to £26,430 from £16,370 in 2023.

Jane Banner-Martin queried where donations for replacement chairs were recorded. The Treasurer confirmed they are held in the Specific Donation Fund (£8,407), restricted for that purpose.

No further questions were raised.

Budget for 2025

The Treasurer presented the projected 2025 budget. This forecast a deficit of £10,656 based on historical patterns and inflation. He said that the PCC will monitor monthly with the aim of breaking even.

Key points:

- **Income:** 80% from voluntary giving.
- **Expenditure:** Staff, buildings, and diocesan offer remain the three largest costs, totalling **85%** of all expenditure.
- The church can manage the potential deficit from reserves but must continue to spend wisely and encourage regular generous giving.

Ernie Man queried whether the 11% rental income assumed a full year of rent. The Treasurer confirmed it did but noted uncertainty as it might be used by the Diocese for a future curate. If the Garden House is rented on the open market the new legislation (the obsolescence of Section 21) may complicate a tenancy agreement. The estimated annual income for the Garden House is around £13,000, but there is a risk of losing part of this if vacant.

Regarding a possible curate, Catharina told the meeting that the Diocese is actively seeking a curate for St Mark's though this was not likely for September 2025.

Maria O'Hagan asked whether the number of new regular givers had increased. The Treasurer said that there were very few new people signing up to direct debit or The Parish Giving Scheme.

Around ten people a week give via contactless giving. The Treasurer said that we want to encourage people to be regular committed givers. He reminded the meeting of the benefits of The Parish Giving Scheme stating that 32 people give regularly through this scheme.

The benefits are

- that it simplifies accounting.
- Gift Aid is claimed automatically and
- there is no cost to the church to use this scheme.

He encouraged people to consider switching from direct debit to this scheme and those who do not give regularly to consider the Parish Giving Scheme.

The Treasurer wanted thanks to be recorded to all those who help support with the financial tasks within St Mark's. To Mike Young our Gift Aid Secretary and John Townsend the Payroll Management Officer. This is quite a big job, as although we don't employ many staff in St Mark's itself, about ten people are employed for Pre-school. Also thanks to Siobhan Bolton for her office support and to the offering counters and banking volunteers. Thanks also to Paul Curtis and Alastair Williams who manage the Pre-school accounts, and also the PCC and Finance Committee for their guidance. He also thanked all members for their faithful and sacrificial giving.

Catharina thanked the Treasurer for his dedication and faithfulness and accuracy in all his work. She said there are few treasurers who know where every penny, every pound has gone and thanked him for being so thorough.

4. Choosing of an Independent Examiner of the Accounts for the current year

The Treasurer said that he proposed that Caladine Limited be appointed as Independent Examiner for 2025. This was proposed by Jane Banner-Martin and seconded by Anne Townsend. The meeting agreed unanimously.

5. Reports

The following agenda items were all covered in the Annual Report that had been previously available.

- f) Electoral Roll Officer's Report (Statutory Report) - *Report by Denise Young*
- g) Report on the Proceedings of the PCC (Statutory Report) - *Report by Vicky Allen*
- h) Fabric, Goods and Ornaments - (Statutory Report) - *Report by Colette Wenzell*
- i) Proceedings of Deanery Synod - (Statutory Report) - *Report by Glyn Allen*

No questions were raised. The meeting unanimously accepted all four reports.

- j) Other Reports from Church Ministries were included in the Additional Reports and were previously available.

There were no other questions raised about these reports.

6. Vicar's Update

The Vicar led a short prayer of thanksgiving and reviewed the **2024 priorities**:

- **Kitchen Project** Completed and already used for Alpha, Messy Church, breakfasts, and Sunday refreshments. The aim is to expand further use of the kitchen facilities.
- Strong children's team (thanks to Karen and Katie Blewett). There have been occasional cancellations due to safeguarding ratios. Discussions regarding possible use of the premises next to the church on a Sunday morning allowing Children's Church to be closer to the church building did not come to fruition.

- Three youth groups are now running - a monthly social group, monthly Friday faith-based group joint with St Augustine's and a monthly Sunday morning café group.

Catharina said that the priorities for 2025 were:

- **Prayer** as the central priority (10 days of prayer from Ascension to Pentecost).
- **Fellowship:** more social events planned.
- **Discipleship:** stronger pathways for Alpha attendees and small-group integration.
- **Leadership Development:** many volunteers attending training; desire for more structured leadership formation.
- **Eco Church:** progress toward Net Zero 2030; aiming for Bronze Award soon.

Catharina expressed heartfelt thanks for God's provision and guidance, all who pray regularly for the church, the PCC, Churchwardens, staff, leaders of groups and all volunteers. Special thanks were given to Chris Blewett and Emmanuel Orachir who have stepped down from the PCC. Also to Val Flick, who has stepped down as Small Group Co-ordinator after four years, but is continuing in pastoral ministry.

Mayowa Oyinloye congratulated all newly nominated and elected members. She said she wished to clarify to the congregation that she has never said that she is not part of St Mark's Church. Her and her family still attend, still give, and believe they remain on the membership list.

Catharina thanked Mayowa for sharing and responded saying that no one in leadership has ever suggested that the family were not beloved members of St Mark's.

Catharina led the meeting in prayer giving thanks for every member of St Mark's, asking for guidance for the year ahead and praying against division and for unity in the Holy Spirit.

The meeting closed with the Grace at 13.40

PCC Secretary -Vicky Allen

Statutory Reports

Treasurer's Report 2025

For the 2025 financial year the year end accounts have been prepared by the accountancy company Caladine, who is also the independent examiner for our accounts. Although this lessens the workload burden on the church treasurer, there remains significant reconciliation cross checking before publishing the final examined accounts.

For 2025 financial year, we forecast a budget deficit on PCC unrestricted General Fund of £10,656, which included transfers between Repair and Pre-school Funds. The year finished with a deficit of £18,389, albeit this included an income accrual of £1,705 for unclaimed Gift Aid tax. Overall, compared to budget our income was lower by £13,685 and expenditure lower by £5,952. The net deficit to budget was £7,733.

Donations (Voluntary Income) decreased to £115,740 from £125,339 in 2024 being lower than budget by £9,260. This reduction was due to some donors leaving or stopping their donations due to their changed circumstances. Gift Aid tax recovered amounted to £20,986 including the income accrual. Online and contactless realised donations of £6,495, before Gift Aid tax recovery being applied. Income from the Parish Giving Scheme was £47,781 plus Gift Aid.

The Pre-school funds transfer to General Fund, for the daily use of the Vicarage Hall, was £11,500 and is a useful contribution towards the fixed costs for the building. Income continued to be supplemented by rental for the Garden House of £8,820 for the year, paid by the Diocese to provide housing provision for the Medway Campus Chaplain. Payments ceased in August with the departure of the Chaplain. We expect payments to be resumed in 2026 when our new curate takes up residence.

For expenditure, the total running costs for our buildings were lower than budget by £3,630. Youth and children and evangelism costs were both lower than budget. Mission Giving from General Fund was £12,500 and based on 10% of donations received in 2025, our General Fund Away Giving in 2026 will be budgeted at £11,600.

This year the PCC, together with St Mary's Island Church DCC, agreed that the Parish Indicative Offer paid to the Diocese, as a contribution to meet both stipend costs for parish clergy and towards other diocesan support costs, would be £78,464 – a 5.3% increase on 2024. This was apportioned £62,529 for St Mark's and £15,935 for St Mary's Island – I.E., 79.7%/20.3% split.

The General Fund cash at bank and in hand at 31 December 2025 was £33,322. After debtors and creditors adjustment the net current asset was £33,628. This represents a 'reserve' of 20.6% of our 2026 forecast expenditure. The PCC maintained the minimum Reserve Policy for 2025 of £55,000. The Reserve Policy will be reviewed by the PCC annually. Cash reserves are 20.4% of 2026 forecast expenditure.

General Fund Highlights	2025	2024
Donations (Voluntary Income)	£115,740	£125,339
Total Income	£131,005	£143,973
Total Expenditure	£155,477	£152,125
Surplus (Deficit)	(£24,472)	(£8,152)
Net Surplus (Deficit) after transfers	(£18,389)	(£4,225)

Other Funds

For income, expenditure and transfer details for Other Funds, please refer to End of Year Financial Statements.

Fund Balances	Closing 2025	Opening 2025
General Fund	£33,628	£52,017
Development Fund	£11,638	£6,186
Mission Fund	£9,924	£9,277
Repair Funds	£35,883	£29,575
Small Funds	£76	£76
Vicar's Discretionary Fund	£698	£1,205
Pre-school Fund	£11,442	£26,430
HYCFM Fund	£1,250	£1,250
India Fund	£5,457	£9,457
Peace and Hope Fund	£782	£782
Specific Donation Fund	£9,767	£8,407
Strategic Development Fund	£751	£1,661
Community Development Fund	£4,940	£4,940
Legacy Fund	£9,223	£9,223
Ashburnham Fund	£1,050	£0
Net current assets less current liabilities	£136,508	£160,487

The PCC has approved the final General Fund 2026 V4 budget, with a year-end forecast deficit of £27,228 and an assumed voluntary income of £115,000.

I would like to again record thanks to all those who help and support the financial tasks within St Mark's - the Gift Aid Secretary, Payroll Management Officer, Church Administrator, the offering counting team, banking of cash and management of Pre-school accounts. I also thank the PCC and Finance Task Group for their support and guidance throughout the year.

Approximately 88% of our General Fund income is from voluntary giving and we thank God for the sacrificial giving of so many that His work may continue and grow here and beyond.

Glyn Allen - Treasurer

Fabric, Goods and Ornaments

The following buildings, associated land and other related assets are entrusted to us and it is our corporate responsibility to care for their upkeep led by the Churchwardens and PCC. Our responsibility relates to: St Mark's Church, the Old Vicarage, the Vicarage Hall and the Garden House.

The maintenance of the Vicarage is the responsibility of the Diocesan Board of Finance.

2025 Report

Church Building

The gutters, both high and low, will need a full inspection and clearing. A suitable roofer is being sourced.

Repairs of the two free-standing tabletops were completed.

Bollards (KATSU) were installed due to the ongoing safety and access issues entering the church.

Eco actions were initiated to make the church building a more eco-friendly environment. A Bird box, bug hotel and flowers and bulb planting, as well as a compost bin was set up by the eco team.

Church spring clean and garden tending completed in May 2025

The Old Vicarage

The gutters at the Old Vicarage will need a full inspection to eliminate damp issues. This is an ongoing issue, especially on rainy days. A suitable roofer is being sourced.

Vicarage Hall

Whilst pre-school was closed during the summer, the floor in the Vicarage Hall was bond sealed, windows and all radiators were cleaned. Both the toilets and the kitchen were deep cleaned by Flash Cleaning Company. The pre-school office is yet to be redecorated.

There was a wasp nest, and this was dealt with by pest control.

The Garden House

The garden is significantly overgrown and needs attending to. Conversations were held with the Diocese to help cover the cost of clearing the garden, as the property was rented to the Diocese and occupied by the university chaplain.

The chaplain moved out, and the garden house is unoccupied.

In conclusion:

It should be noted that the outstanding essential works as per the quinquennial report 2023 are ongoing, and the Premises Task Group are constantly monitoring and attending to issues that arise.

A big thank you to all those who dedicate their time and effort in maintaining all of St Mark's church buildings.

Colette Wentzel - Premises Chair

Proceedings of the PCC

The PCC usually meet monthly and during the year the meetings were held seven times. The Standing Committee met on the months when there wasn't a full PCC meeting and in October the PCC held an Away Day at St Benedict's Centre West Malling.

The format of the PCC meetings is generally the same, with:

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. Review and approval of the previous month's minutes.
3. Matters Arising.
4. Finance, with a run down on the current financial position and projections going forward.
5. Sub Committees (called Task Groups). Each PCC member is assigned to a Task Group which meet and report back to the PCC meeting. These being:
 - **Human Resources** chaired by Vicky Allen.
 - **Premises** chaired by Colette Wenzel
 - **Finance** chaired by Glyn Allen.
 - **MLTG** also chaired by Glyn Allen.
 - **Pre-school**. The Chair of the Preschool Alastair Willimas gives updates to each PCC meeting.
 - **SMI Church** Carolyn Facey has given updates regarding St Mary's Island Church.
 - **Strategic Development Fund**

Updates from these roles, funded by the Strategic Development Fund, have been received by the PCC and their own reports can be found under Additional Reports.

Community Pastor – Trevor Dyer. This post was reinstated in November 2024 using SDF funding that remained from when Karen Turnbull resigned. This position is now known as Community Pastor/Pioneer Evangelist.

Community Missioner - Christine Curtis. This position terminated in April 2025 and the last report to the PCC for March can be found under Additional Reports. We thank Christie Curtis for all her work during her three years as Community Missioner and wish her well in what lies ahead for her.

Any urgent matters that need to be dealt with between PCC meetings are considered by the Standing Committee, and their recommendations put to the PCC. The Standing Committee is made up of the Vicar, Churchwardens, Treasurer, PCC Secretary, and an elected member from the PCC.

Staffing

Siobhan Bolton has continued as Church Administrator, having taken on an extra ten hours in August 2024 following Eve Martin's resignation as Part-time Administrative Assistant.

PCC business

Some other areas covered during the year:

- Decision to invite people to an online First Aid Awareness Training course for up to 25 people.
- Decision to book Ashburnham Place for 10 –12 April 2026 for a church weekend.
- Agreement to Trevor Dyer and Jess Mahdavi-Gladwell being nominated and supported to study a Lay Ministers Course, following them completing their year studying for the Bishop's Certificate.
- Agreement to installing on the area of the drop curb outside of the church three drop down bollards.
- Agreement to renewing the Foodbank Partnership agreement.

- Agreement to a Quiz Night to raise funds for Dementia Café in October 2025.
- Agreement to accept St Luke's Church allocation of their Foundation Governor position to St Mary's Island Primary school and to re-appoint Matthew Keeler for a further three years.
- Decision to agree to trial period of three months for a Games Afternoon to be held in St Mark's Church.
- Agreement to Vicky Allen be re- appointed for a further three years as the representative from St Mark's Church Gillingham Foundation Governor at StMary's Island Primary School.

In October the PCC held an Away Day at St Benedict Retreat Centre. The Day was split into two parts. In the morning the PCC looked intensively at Safeguarding, introducing the safeguarding team and looking at all areas of Safeguarding.

After lunch the group looked at St Mark's Vision, our existing vision and looking at our priorities going forward with a view to planning a Mission Action Plan for 2026.

The work of the PCC requires commitment from its members of ability and time. All work is undertaken is on a voluntary basis and most people have attended regularly with some not being able to attend a few meetings due to illness or other commitments. However, one member only managed to attend one meeting during the year. I want to thank all members for their commitment and prayerful consideration of all the decisions made.

Vicky Allen – PCC Secretary

Electoral Roll

Electoral Roll Report for St Mark's Parish Gillingham 2026

The Electoral Roll for St Mark's Church Gillingham on 30April 2026 is as follows:

The number on the Electoral Roll is currently 150.

The number on the Electoral Roll in 2025 was 144.

8 people have moved away or moved churches.

1 person has died.

There were 15 new applications this year.

The Electoral Roll for St Mary's Island Church 2026

The revised roll for St Mary's Island 2026 now stands at 65.

The number on the Electoral Roll in 2025 was 58.

There was a total of 202 people on the Electoral Roll in 2025.

There are total of 215 people on the Electoral Roll of St Mark's Parish Gillingham 2026.

This is an increase of 13 on the total roll.

Denise Young - Electoral Roll Officer

Deanery Synod

Gillingham Deanery Synod is convened and normally chaired by the Area Dean, Rev Mike Nelson. It consists of all clergy licensed to a benefice within the deanery and elected lay members. The Deanery Synod's purpose is to discuss key issues within the church's ministry and mission, being an interface between the PCC and Diocesan Synod.

The Gillingham Deanery comprises eight parishes.

St Augustine's

St Barnabas

St Luke's

St Mark's (and St Mary's Island)

St Mary Magdalene

Holy Trinity

St Margaret's

South Gillingham Team Ministry

St Mark's and St Mary's Island currently have three lay representatives (the number is determined by the size of the Electoral Roll). One of these is taken up by a representative of St Mary's Island and the other two are filled by people representing St Mark's. Glyn Allen and Jess Mahdavi-Gladwell represented St Mark's and Sally Bloor St Mary's Island. Glyn is also a member of the Standing Committee. Catharina Olsson Gisleskog was the clergy representative for St Mark's. Gillingham Deanery Synod met three times this year, plus a special meeting on the new Diocesan Vision and Strategy.

It had been agreed that some Deanery Synod discussion subjects would be facilitated going forward by looking at the C of E six Pastoral Principles for living well together and exploring each of these together over the next two years, inviting guest speakers to engage with us in discussion. The Six Pastoral Principles are:
Prejudice, Fear, Silence, Hypocrisy, Ignorance and Power.

March 2025 – Rev Jeremy Bluden

Jeremy Bluden offered reflections on the Pastoral Principles, focusing especially on Acknowledging Ignorance. He highlighted the importance of recognising that racism extends beyond issues of gender or race alone, noting the complexity of diversity, church life, and community life, and the need to engage honestly with that complexity.

May 2025 Special Meeting – Bishop of Rochester

The Bishop of Rochester presented the new Diocesan Vision and Strategy, helping us to see what part we can play in it, especially in the light of £11.1m funding awarded to the Diocese by the Church Commissioners. The key objectives are to grow missional churches, with missional leaders and missional disciples.

June 2025 Rev Ruth Bierbaum – Medway Foundation Trust Lead Chaplain

Ruth Bierbaum offered a thoughtful reflection on Pay Attention to Power from the viewpoint of patients and those who care for them, drawing on the example of Jesus' mindset in Philippians 2. She emphasised the importance of building, not breaking, people's connection with God; the power of truly listening; enabling others to have their voices heard; and recognising the vulnerability of those whose lives we briefly enter. A time of discussion followed, touching on prayer for healing, organ donation, the assisted dying bill, and how we might respond.

November 2025 – Rev Nathan Ward

In the non availability of Zara Rawlinson, Diocesan Racial Justice Officer, Nathan Ward gave a brief update on the recent “let’s talk about the flag” meeting hosted at St Margaret’s Church Rainham. Three local councillors along with Zara Rawlinson from the Diocese, formed the panel, and attendees shared a wide range of reactions to the flags appearing in Medway - from patriotic to threatened, highlighting tensions between social and racial justice. Synod then discussed how the church might respond by creating safe spaces for such conversations, supporting those who feel voiceless, and working for transformation in our communities.

Some of the agenda items at the meetings were:

- Safeguarding.
- Persistent, Unreasonable and/or Vexatious Complaints Policy.
- Finance update.
- Net Zero.

Glyn Allen - Deanery Synod member

Additional Reports

Alpha

St Mark's ran the Alpha course from 22nd February to 3rd May as a breakfast Alpha on Saturday mornings in the Vicarage. We followed the Alpha film series and met for 10 Saturday mornings except Easter Saturday. There were seven participants initially with three leaders, the Vicar, Christina Choudhary and Alick Michael. Five of those who started were able to complete the course.

We had rich conversations and the Holy Spirit Day was powerful. At the end of the course one participant, Ted Lane, wanted to be baptised. He was baptised by full immersion at St Mark's on 15th June. The breakfast Alpha was very well received. Those who attended were mostly young adults or students. It worked well to have coffee and croissants, and some Saturday's eggs and bacon butties. A special thank you goes to Ted Lane for bringing home made croissants and other patisseries. Thank you.

Catharina Olsson-Gisleskog

Audio Visual and Technical Report

The main thing that happened within the tech team this past year was Mic Aldington stepped down and has moved to a different church after being involved in the tech team for many years. We have also had a few extra people join the team.

Another bit that changed was the software we use to display the words etc on the screen. We started using Proclaim towards the beginning of the year.

And as I have requested multiple times before. We would welcome more people to get involved with the sound, projection and streaming. Training can be given to willing volunteers.

Chris Blewett

Byron Lodge

Byron Lodge is a care home for the elderly and numbers among its residents, some with varying degrees of dementia. It is situated on the junction of Byron Road and Rock Avenue and is officially in the St Barnabas part of the Victory Benefice. The previous incumbent, already having a number of care homes in her parish, felt unable to give it the pastoral attention it needed, so agreed with the Revd Amanda Maskell of St Augustine, for her to take it under her care. Amanda, in turn, appealed to Revd Catharina Olsson-Gisleskog for assistance so a team of 6 was ecumenically formed (2 from Gillingham Baptist Church, 1 from the United Reformed Church, and 4 from St Mark's). As of April 2025, we completed two years of monthly ministry there.

Services are monthly in frequency on the fourth Thursday of each month with January, April, July and October being Communion months, two using the Anglican service and two using the free church format alternately. The December service is designated as the Carol Service and is

moveable according to when Christmas occurs during the week. March may be similarly affected by Easter but since we have been there, the necessity to change has not yet arisen. The services are attended by a small core of about 5 or 6 regulars, supplemented by other residents, the occasional family member and trainee staff, so attendance can be as many as 10 or 11 or as few as 2 or 3 in any month.

The ordinary service consists of a simple structure featuring hymns, a Bible reading, a short talk, prayers including the Lords' Prayer. On the Communion months, a briefer version is added with celebrants using individual cups for health reasons.

There are some residents who are not able to join us, so a couple of the team along with the Activities Manager, visit them in their rooms, have a brief chat, pray and read a passage from the Bible or offer them Communion as appropriate.

We have established good relationships both with the residents and the staff, especially the Activities Manager who is our main contact there. Other staff are often within earshot of the service so we pray that they, too, may be touched by what they hear. It is a privilege to bring God's Word to these residents and get to know them and we pray that the Holy Spirit would speak to their deepest needs and that they might find comfort in God's presence and peace. Finally, I am blessed to have such a committed, reliable, dedicated, helpful team which has not changed in the two years (now three, to date) we have been visiting. Life enforces changes to any group, so I am anticipating that eventuality at some future time.

Would Byron Lodge be a possibility in your mind of joining the team to serve Christ by serving the vulnerable? Please speak to me for more information if you feel that nudge.

Graham Davis - Co-ordinator, Team Byron

Catering and Hospitality

As no one has yet come forward to take overall charge of the kitchen, Colette and I, as Churchwardens, have taken on this role.

We have seen the kitchen being used for many activities in the church, including Messy Church, Open Church, Pancakes, Graham Davis's celebration, Dementia Café, Foodbank and the 18-30's Meal, Prayer Course and others.

We also gave the kitchen a deep clean in late spring/ early summer.

We thank all those using the kitchen for cleaning up after themselves.

We are grateful to God that we have been blessed with such a useful kitchen that we can use to bless others.

Karen Dyer

Confirmation

The Denary Confirmation Service this year was held by The Bishop of Rochester, The Rt Reverend Dr Jonathan Gibbs at St Augustine's Church on Sunday 6th July 2025 at 4pm. A total of 23 from different churches in the Deanery were being confirmed. Three candidates were

presented from St Mark's Church: Ted Lane, Tracey Scot, and Emile Hampton. The confirmation preparation course consisted of a few sessions on the Nicene Creed. We followed the booklet produced by the Church of England in memory of the Nicene Creed 1700 years; "We Believe: Exploring the Nicene Creed". The course was led by the Vicar.

Catharina Olsson-Gisleskog

Dementia Cafe

We continue to open on the second and fourth Wednesday of the month between 1 -3 pm in the church.

Our guests number between 10-12, and although it would be lovely to see that figure increase, we are grateful for those that regularly attend who thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to socialise. We provide snacks and hot drinks, quizzes, bingo, singing and have had visits from a trainee nail technician, a rodent and reptile event, while the Admiral Nurse visits occasionally. Easter cards were created with the help of someone who provided all the materials and relevant assistance for guests.

We raised over £440 for the cafe, from a quiz evening at the Vicarage Hall in October which was fun. We hope to repeat this in September this year.

We are awaiting confirmation of bookings for a singing duo to perform 60's and 70's songs and a chair pilate instructor over the next couple of months.

We have a faithful group of volunteers who have formed strong relationships with our guests.

We meet up twice a year to discuss cafe related topics and I hope everyone feels valued.

Paul Harris

Diocesan Synod

The Diocesan Synod is the main policy-making body of the Diocese and the forum for discussion of issues important in diocesan life. It debates matters referred from deaneries, PCCs and individual Synod members and contributes to the General Synod – the policy-making parliament of the Church of England. Each deanery in the diocese elects a number of clergy and lay representatives every three years.

Glyn Allen was elected by Gillingham Deanery Synod in 2020 to fill a casual vacancy, re-elected in 2021 and 2024 for the new triennium. The Synod met three times during the year. From January 2022, Glyn also serves as a member of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) as a Deanery Synod representative. He is also a lay member of the Diocese of Rochester Board of Patronage.

The Bishop of Rochester, Jonathan Gibbs, gave the Presidential address at each of the Synods and re-affirmed the three themes of Change, Grow, Serve which he believes to be important in helping fulfil the Diocesan Called Together vision in the coming years.

Summaries of the addresses are below.

15th March 2025

Bishop Jonathan spoke about the enthusiastic way people have been responding to the refreshed Called Together Vision at the various deanery synods he has been visiting over the last few months, to raise awareness of the strategic plan.

He invited Matthew Girt, Diocesan Secretary, to update Synod on the exciting news that the diocese is to be awarded £11 million to help support mission and ministry on the ground in parishes, as expressed in the vision and strategy.

Bishop Jonathan noted that not every diocese that had applied had been successful, and so the award that Rochester Diocese had received was a sign of the strong confidence of the national church in the plan:

"The success of our bid is a huge vote of confidence in the strategy we have put together and a real endorsement of what was recognised to be a very carefully crafted, and clearly evidence-based approach to growing the Church's mission and ministry in this Diocese."

As part of his Address, Bishop Jonathan also took the opportunity to express concern about the outcome of the national church's Diocesan Finance Review, which formed part of the discussions at General Synod in February. The Review was set up as a result of the major financial difficulties of many dioceses - around three-quarters of which are currently facing significant and unsustainable annual deficits.

5th July 2025

Bishop Jonathan spoke about his recent visit to Harare in Zimbabwe - one of Rochester Diocese's overseas companion link dioceses. He reflected on the huge challenges that are being faced by the people and the church there, and the tragedy of how the many natural resources of the country, such as minerals, are not benefiting the large majority of people in the country.

He underlined how valued the connection between the two dioceses is, and that he is delighted that Bishop Farai, Bishop of Harare, will be coming to Rochester Diocese in November.

"This is and must be very much a two-way relationship, and we have much to learn from our Zimbabwean sisters and brothers, especially with regard to the depth of their faith and their resourcefulness in making the best use of often very limited resources."

Bishop Jonathan went on to speak about the challenges our own diocese is facing in terms of vacancy rates – as is mirrored across the Church of England – and the steps being taken to address this.

Above all, parishes and diocesan support need to work together to overcome the difficulties being faced, and the diocesan vision and strategy offers a clear plan to do this.

8th November 2025

Bishop Jonathan opened Synod at St John's Chatham by celebrating the renewal of the building and the signs of growth in the parish. He then posed a central question: **"What on earth are bishops for?"** His answer was simple and consistent. The primary purpose of bishops is **to pass on the faith** — by proclaiming it, teaching it, and equipping others to do the same.

Drawing on the calling of the first disciples, he reflected on the role of bishops in today's complex world. Against the backdrop of climate crisis, global conflict, political extremism, social media distortion, and the rise of AI, he argued that bishops must speak with hope,

offering “an alternative way of being - rooted in hope through Jesus Christ and not rooted in fear.”

He warned that Western culture’s radical individualism is collapsing, creating both opportunity and risk. In such a moment, the Church must resist the temptation to chase cultural trends and instead remain faithful to its core task - proclaiming Christ and forming disciples.

Bishop Jonathan celebrated signs of new life across the Diocese, especially among young adults coming to faith. “God has got there before us,” he said, urging the Church not to be left behind as God does a new thing.

He welcomed the appointment of Bishop Sarah Mullaly as the next Archbishop of Canterbury, praising her calmness, humility, and commitment to holding the Church together.

He acknowledged the pain and frustration felt by many around the Living in Love and Faith process, noting that expectations had been mishandled and that leaked documents had deepened mistrust. He urged Synod to approach upcoming discussions with prayerfulness and mutual care.

He concluded by returning to his **central theme - the Church’s** calling remains unchanged — **to proclaim the faith, to teach the faith, and to equip the next generation to do the same.** In a time of challenge and opportunity, he prayed for courage, unity, and hope.

The main agenda items during the year were:

- Presidential addresses from The Bishop of Rochester
- Diocesan vision and strategy
- Bishop’s Council reports
- Diocesan budget
- Living in Love and Faith
- General Synod reports
- Safeguarding updates
- Presentation of Annual Reports and Accounts
- The Environment and Sustainability
- Net Zero Action Plan
- Sharing Good News

Glyn Allen - Diocesan Synod Member

Eco- Church

During 2025 an Eco Church Group was formed with the view to review our Eco policies, activities, and strategy, and to apply for the A Rocha (a Christian charity working to protect and restore the natural world and committed to equipping Christians and churches in the UK to care for the environment) Bronze Award.

A group consisting of Kathryn Thom, Trevor Dyer and Revd Catharina was set up in the spring of 2025 and met regularly. Some of the outcomes of our work include:

- We had a sermon series on caring for our creation with guest speakers from Medway Council, and the Diocese.
- We started sharing Eco-tips with the church on a regular basis, in the service and in the newsletter.
- We worked with our Treasurer to establish the current energy use in our buildings.
- We have been improving the use of land with the addition of planters and planting of bulbs.
- The use of eco-friendly products is encouraged.
- We use fair trade coffee and tea and recycling all our buildings.
- We have encouraged the Pre-school to engage with creation. Pre-school has a bug hotel.
- We continue to support Tearfund's Creation care project in India.

We worked throughout the year to prepare and apply for the A Rocha Bronze Eco Award. This was awarded to us on 30th March 2026.

The group will continue to meet regularly to monitor how we care for creation as a church and to encourage us all to grow in our care for creation. We aim to work towards applying for the A Rocha Silver Award next year.

Catharina Olsson Gisleskog

Flower Arrangements and Displays Team

We are a group of ladies who very much enjoy doing the flower arrangements in church. We are aware that each year we are that little bit older, and the aches and pains of old age make it more difficult to climb the stairs into the upstairs storeroom to choose something different.

Several have had their eightieth birthday and one is nearer 90 than 80 years! We cannot go on forever. We would love to see some younger members of the church, men included, volunteer to join our team who we would be pleased to teach. My thanks to Angela who has volunteered during the past year. Her enthusiasm is an encouragement to the rest of the team. Thankyou also to Vicky Onitiri who regularly waters the arrangements to help the greenery remain fresh. We endeavour to do a fresh arrangement every month except during Lent using fresh greenery and silk flowers. I am pleased to be able to report that the Oasis we use is compostable which, although a little bit more expensive than the old Oasis, means we are doing our bit to fight climate change. Every arrangement will be different. Each arranger has their own preferred style of arrangement therefore they will all be different.

The highlights of the year are when we all come together and decorate the church for Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and Harvest. On these occasions we are more than grateful to Ann and John Townsend who come along to clear up behind us and most importantly keep us plied with cups of coffee etc. Back in May 2024 we had the joy of decorating the church for the wedding of Amy and Daniel.

Janet Mann on behalf of Ruth, Pauline, Jane, Janet W, Gaby, Siu King, Vicky, Angela.

Foodbank

Medway Foodbank has been running well over the period of this report, our numbers are slightly down over the last year.

St Marks Foodbanks numbers are slightly higher than last year or though we served less children but more adults.

Here are some brief statistics for St Marks/Medway Foodbank; St Marks Foodbank is one of the nine centres within Medway Foodbank.

Foodbank Centres	No. of Vouchers fulfilled	No. of adults fed	No. of children fed	Total no. fed
Medway Foodbank	3,680	5,419	4,138	9,557
St Marks Foodbank	863: 19%	1,222: 18.4%	804: 16.27%	2,026: 17.49%
Totals	4,543	6,641	4,942	11,583

During this period Medway Foodbank fed 11,583 people in Medway. The number from St Mark's is 17.49% of the total, which makes us the second busiest Foodbank in Medway.

Throughout this period a local organisation offering free food has worked closely together to support those in need in our communities.

Churches are so well placed to offer clients a warm and loving welcome, as well as being able to signpost to activities going on at local churches.

The ability to offer prayer in person is also a vital part of the work of the Foodbanks across Medway and it is a privilege to be able to offer this to people who may have never been in a church before and who may have never had someone pray with them. It underlines the value of each individual and they are valued by God and us, in the midst of their difficulties.

As an organisation, Medway Foodbank remains so grateful for the support from local churches that help us by hosting foodbank centres, by collecting food for us and by donating finances. We are facing huge increases in our overhead costs and it is a struggle to keep stock levels in line with the demand.

Our project manager is working on linking all churches together in Medway in corporate prayer to support and pray for all clients and volunteers.

We look forward to a time when Foodbanks are no longer needed in the UK, but until that time, we will be in our communities working with those in local churches to support those in need.

Ruth Lindsay: Medway Foodbank Project Manager

Paul Smith: St Marks Foodbank Manager

Ladies Group

Ladies Group has been running for approximately Five Years. We meet at 10 am on a Wednesday morning. We finish at 12 mid-day. Tea, Coffee biscuits and cake are all provided. I am adeptly supported every week by Cindy, Vicki, Siobhan, Mandy, Sandy when she can to play for us and Valerie. We are having more people join us and they are a joy. Our numbers have

swelled to up to 16/1, not everyone comes every week as there are family and work commitments. The fourth Wednesday we invite the men to join us. Last year we decided to hold a celebration of Christmas by all going out for lunch, there were 24 who attended, and a super time was had by all. I have already been asked if there will be another and I intend to do so.

We have studied Job, Revelation and currently Luke's Gospel during this time. Participation is lively and we all learn so much together.

So many find this group a source of confidential sharing and admit things never before spoken about. I am honoured each week to be part of this lovely group of women.

Jane Bannar-Martin

Mission Links Task Group (MLTG)

The Mission Links Task Group (MLTG) is a sub-committee of the PCC responsible to oversee support of our Mission Partners through prayer, pastoral care, and financial support. MLTG recommends to the PCC how to allocate our Mission Giving (10% of our previous year's voluntary income), and other mission giving from individuals to the Mission Fund. We continued to meet regularly throughout the year on Zoom.

We have continued to support financially and in prayer:

1. Katy Barnwell (Wycliffe) until September 2025 when Katy was promoted to glory.
2. Tim and Tricia Barrow (SIM). Tim retired in December 2025 and may continue to do some work for SIM as needed.
3. Carrie McFarlane (Nehemiah, Mission India), Carri visited St Mark's in April.
4. Francis and Diane Dognon, (France). We no longer support them financially at their request. They keep us updated about the work in France and we pray for their work.
5. Simeon's Trustees (our Patrons),
6. Tearfund: The Creation Care project, we support TEARFUND regularly from our church away giving and thanks to Colette and her helpers we have had 2 successful additional fundraising events. The sponsored walk raised £974 and The Big Quiz raised £347.
7. The Bishop's Charity Poverty and Hope.
8. The Mike Campbell Foundation.
9. The Fishermen Trust India. We also supported Raj who was Founder and CEO of The Fishermen Trust by contributing financially to his sabbatical.
10. The work of Asha and Nelson Arul in a school in Penang, Malaysia.
11. Family Trust who work in local schools.
12. We supported the "Let Loose Concert" which took place in Gillingham High Street in July 2025.
13. We supported the Medway Night Shelter
14. We gave a donation to Friends of the Holy Land (who support vulnerable Christians in the West Bank, Gaza, Israel and Jordan).
15. We responded to the crisis in Gaza via the DEC fund.
16. We gave a donation to St Mary's Island School who have used it to fund Family Trust activities in school.
17. Chris Redstall came to speak at St Mark's, and we have agreed to contribute financially to his work in Nepal in 2026.
18. We made a donation for the camp that the Williams' are leaders of (Madness & Mayhem).

Denise keeps in contact with all our mission partners during the year and regularly receives news from them. Denise shares the information with MLTG and using 'Prayer and Praise' we have invited the congregation to pray for our mission partners. We are grateful to Kath Burtrand for facilitating prayer through Prayer and Praise. We thank Kath for all her hard work and wish her God's blessing as she steps down from this role.

We can let you know how to receive updates from our mission partners direct, particularly if Home Groups or individuals would like to support a mission partner. There is information and there are links on the church website.

Please continue to pray for our Mission Partners.

There may be less to give away in 2026.

The team in 2025 was:

Glyn Allen (chair), Catharina Olsson Gislekog (Vicar), Jess Mahdavi-Gladwell and Promise Agna (who are also on PCC) Charmaine Jones, Dammy Oyinloye, Denise Young (secretary)

Colette Wentzel stepped down in 2025. We thank her for all her valuable contributions to our discussions.

Denise Young

Music Worship

The members of the music team have continued to lead the church in music worship throughout the year. I want to thank those who lead - Elizabeth and Ben - and all those who faithfully serve week by week - this year particularly Sandi, David, Darren, Andre and Blessing. It has been a joy to also have the young people helping to lead the music for the all-age services, thank you to Elizabeth for taking on the responsibility for facilitating this from me partway through the year. Thank you also to others who contribute - especially to Janet for playing the organ and the Wilkins family for helping to lead us on Christmas Day. We are always happy to have more people join the team; do speak to me if you would like to serve the church in this way.

Kathryn Thom

Open Church

Open Church continues serving the community where people can come regularly on Tuesday mornings between 10.00 am -12.00 noon to have a chat, prayer, tea, coffee and cakes. On a Tuesday the numbers of those attending continues to increase and we now have between 30-35 people who come. We get lots of feedback from both new and existing attendees on how it has blessed them.

We are only a small team, and I would like to thank them all for their dedication and hard work they put in every Tuesday. This last year has seen Karen and I taking on the joint role as the leaders of the team and Open Church. The new St Mark's volunteer's agreements have been introduced to volunteers, and all have completed any required training, DBS (where required).

We now start every session with team prayer before opening the doors at 10.00 am and we also now have 3 team meetings a year to see what we do well, what we do not so well and how we can improve on what we deliver to the community. Any safeguarding concerns raised have all be dealt with swiftly at the time of disclosure and through the correct and required route with our safeguarding leads in St Mark's.

This year see the introduction of a short Service of the Word to have some more faith/gospel input into Open Church, the plan is to start with 3 services a year Easter, Harvest and Christmas at the beginning before serving drinks and food etc. Our first one was a Christmas service held on the 23/12/25 which was very well received and had 35 people attending.

Karen and Trevor Dyer

The Pastoral Team

The Pastoral Team that was set up in 2021 has continued, overseen by Catharina our vicar, who attends meetings and liaises with Denise Young.

The members of the team are now Denise Young, Paul Smith, Valerie Flick, Vicky Onitiri, and Trevor Dyer.

All members of the team had to apply for the role and complete safeguarding training and a DBS check. Most members of the team have also now completed the diocesan Caring Concerns training course.

Each member of the pastoral team has between 2 and 7 contacts.

The initial contact is a confidential phone call monthly to offer a listening ear and prayer. The original vision is that everyone in the church who wishes, would have someone who contacts and prays for them on a regular basis. This can also be via a homegroup and/or the pastoral team.

The team members meet 2/3 times a year to support one another but obviously not to discuss contacts due to confidentiality.

Siobhan Bolton supports with administration. Kath Burtrand still prays for the team.

Val Flick and Graham Davis take communion to members of the church who are housebound. This has very much been appreciated by the recipients.

Regarding pastoral contacts, seventeen are currently active. Seven out of the seventeen contacts are also in a Home Group

Many on the original list of contacts are attending Home Groups and no longer have a pastoral contact as they feel Home Group is enough support.

If you want to contact the Pastoral Team, then please contact us via the church office.

Denise Young

Peace & Hope (formerly Faith & Light)



Peace & Hope is a church community for adults with a learning disability and their families and carers.

As a team we try to share our faith in a relative and multisensory way.

We meet in the Vicarage Hall every other Saturday morning. We take a break at Christmas and in the summer.

This year we have again tried to follow the Sermon series from church adapting to suit everyone's needs. We started the year with a catch up and social and finished the year with a Christmas party. We also joined with church family to host an 80th Birthday party for one of our members.

Karen Dyer and the team

Prayer Ministry Teams

The Prayer Ministry group is running smoothly, without any reports of incidents or complaints.

Everyone has completed their Safeguarding Certificates I am very proud of them all most of us found it challenging but we did it. Everyone seems to get on well and we all have a healthy Christian relationship.

Our Ministry area has improved, we now have two sofas to sit on and awaiting the area to be painted.

We Welcome Blessing Moors to this ministry, she will be starting in June 2026. She has also done her Safeguarding training. I believe we would benefit another male member on our team as this will balance the team, as usual we have too many women. I like to have male and female as a team so the gentlemen in our congregation will feel more at ease to prayer.

Catharina will be leading training for prayer ministry in due course as discussed.

Cindy Reeve-Vigour - Prayer Ministry Leader

Small Groups

Small Groups are at the heart of St Mark's Church. They are a place to learn together, build deep long-lasting friendships, to grow spiritually and to offer pastoral support to one another on a regular basis.

There are Seven Groups running at present:

Peace and Hope meet at the Vicarage Hall on alternate Saturdays from 10.30 am – 12 noon. This group is organised by Karen and Trevor Dyer – see separate report.

Ladies Group meet at the Old Vicarage every Wednesday from 10.00am – 12 noon. This group is led by Jane Bannar-Martin and Sandi Chapman – see separate report.

Junction meet at the Old Vicarage every Wednesday from 7.30 pm – 9.00 pm. Jane and Richard Tolhurst have organised various studies over the year for the group including a 10-week study of the book of Romans with accompanying DVD and study guide. They also arranged an 8-week study of the Bible helping the group to get a grasp of the books of the Bible. Both courses used material from the Bible Society. They have recently finished another study called We Believe which explore the Nicene Creed. As well as study there are regular Prayer and Praise nights where Kathryn Thom plays the guitar, and the group enjoy worship together.

Paul Smith's Home Group meet on zoom every Wednesday from 8.00 pm to 9.30 pm. Paul has led studies from a book written by Penelope Wilcock – 100 standalone bible studies. Some of the people from the Bible they have looked at include Adam, Eve, Abraham, Ruth, Cain, Elijah and Esther. They are a friendly group with lots of laughter and would like to welcome anyone who is looking for a new Home Group.

Kathy and Steve Burtrand's Home Group meet on zoom bi-weekly on Tuesday from 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm. The group who has been meeting together for many years enjoy Bible Study as well as fellowship. They are currently following a study guide where they look at various characters from the Old Testament.

Janet Waters and Frank Howard Home Group meet in person weekly at each other's homes on Tuesday from 8.00 pm-9.30 pm, in Gillingham and Rainham. They have studied the gospels of Luke as well as Acts in detail and are now looking at Paul's letters. If anyone is looking for a face-to-face home group, they have a few spaces available and you would be warmly received into the group.

Mark 2 Home Group – this is a Group led by Jess and Chris Gladwell. They meet once every couple of months, at each other's houses to socialise, enjoying food and fellowship together.

All the Home Groups have organised various social events together at Christmas as well as summer BBQ's, days out and one group has been on a weekend break together.

I know those that are in Home Groups really value their time together however we have a need for more Home Groups especially in Gillingham. After each Alpha course has finished, we would like to be able to offer the participants a Home Group but at present we don't have enough groups to be able to offer this.

Do you feel this might be your calling to lead a Home Group? If you want to discuss the possibility further, Catharina would be happy to chat to you.

I wish to sincerely thank the Home Group Leaders for their efforts.

Siobhan Bolton

Tear Fund



We thank God for His creation and for Tearfund, which does amazing work across the globe and for us as a church to be part of changing lives through prayer and giving.

St Mark's church family have been supporting Tearfund for more than 5 decades. In 2021, the Creation Care Project India was proposed by Tearfund (Sahaara Project India was fully funded at the time) and accepted by PCC.

Will Leaf, from Tearfund UK and International Partnership come to St. Mark's Church on the 25 May 2005 and spoke about Tearfund and gave a sermon on Taking the Gospel to Macedonia & helping the church there. We thank him for sharing the good news at St Mark's.

Fundraising events 2025

Many thanks and appreciation to all our volunteers who joined and assisted in the successful fundraising efforts this year.

Many thanks to our church family members for their donations, and a massive thank you to our participants; without them, this would not have been possible.

Everyone at St Mark's Church was instrumental and helped fundraise an amazing total of **£1530.00 (incl Gift Aid)**.

- ✓ The Creation Care Project Tearfund 5K walk held in Capstone Farm Country Park (13th September 2025) raised a total of **£974** (Gift Aid £167.25)
- ✓ The Big QUIZ night at the Vicarage Hall (15th November 2025) rose **£347.00** (Gift Aid £41.75)

(Tearfund Charity org- Big Quiz Night 2025, churches across the UK raised a total of £129,893) Last update Dec 2025, visit tearfund.org for more up-to-date information).

All cash funds were paid directly into the Tearfund account by bank transfer, and by the JustGiving pages, you can scan the QR codes at the back of the church to see more information about fundraising events.

Moving forward in 2026

Fundraising events to look forward to:

- Christmas card donations

The proposal will be submitted to MLTG for PCC approval within the next few months.

It is a privilege to be part of a church family that is passionate about helping those in need.

Colette Wentzel -Tearfund Ambassador

St. Mark's Pre-School

St Mark's Pre-School remains a vibrant, joyful, and busy heart of our church community. While pupil numbers started the year a little lower than usual, we are delighted to share that the outlook for the rest of the academic year is looking much more positive as we head toward September 2026.

Our Dedicated Team

The Pre-school continues to flourish under the excellent leadership of Jo Tilley, supported by her talented and experienced team of practitioners. Together, they are constantly reflecting on new government policies to ensure we provide the very best care and education for our little ones.

Supporting Every Child

We are particularly proud of our work supporting children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). With a dedicated and skilled SENCo leading the way, we are meeting an increasingly complex range of needs. This vital work ensures that every child, regardless of their starting point, is supported through their developmental milestones and enjoys a confident, positive transition to Primary School.

Church and Community Links

The bond between the Pre-school and the church remains strong, and we are grateful for Catharina's ongoing support in nurturing these links. We also want to extend a huge thank you to the PCC and the wider church family. Your help in making the Vicarage Hall such a warm, welcoming, and well-maintained space is deeply appreciated by the staff and the children alike.

Looking Ahead: A Request for Prayer

The childcare landscape is changing rapidly. With new government funding, many primary schools are opening their own nurseries, which has sadly led to the closure of some independent settings like ours.

Please keep the Pre-school in your prayers:

- **For Wisdom:** As the team navigates changing government policies and increasing demand for spaces.
- **For Reputation:** That St Mark's would remain the "number one choice" for local parents who value the unique, nurturing environment we offer.
- **For Strength:** For Jo and her team as they continue their incredible ministry to the youngest members of our community.

"We are so proud to have such a successful and loving setting within our church family."

Alastair Williams - Chair Preschool Governing Committee

Parent and Toddlers

The Parent and Toddlers group provided an outreach into the community where parents with their children could meet in an informal social atmosphere to enjoy free play with the toys provided, as well as organised craft activities.

The afternoons were led by myself, Chris Curtis and Frank Howard, however Chris departed to pastures new during the year, leaving just Frank and I to run Parent and Toddlers. This left us in a situation which we considered to be unsafe. With Frank in the kitchen providing refreshments, without help from Lynda Smith, Carol Pymm and Nikki Bolton, I would have been left alone in the hall to manage children, parents, craft activities and free play. Also we were not able to manage the heavy work of setting up and clearing up without help. A very big thank you to those named who stepped up to help in the run up to Christmas. Without their input we would not have been able to continue to the end of the year.

Ernie Mann caused much excitement when once more he attended our Christmas party complete with big red suit and curly white beard... thank you so much Ernie

Numbers attending had remained steady through the year, with toddlers leaving us to start school being replaced with an influx of new parents and little ones.

With sadness, we were unable to continue with Parent and Toddlers beyond the end of 2025.

Ruth Howard

Report for Children's ministry

Children's Church

Children's Church this year has been rewarding and challenging at the same time. We could use more volunteers as we struggle to maintain safe ratios, which has meant on some occasions having to cancel. The number of children attending Children's Church still fluctuates from week to week. If every child attended on the same week, we would have 15 - 20 children. As this rarely happens, we usually have between 5 - 14 children each week. Ideally Children's Church would take place in or near the church building - please pray that this will come to fruition. This would increase the confidence of new families to drop their children off and allow us to contact parents more easily if we needed their assistance. When the children are in church we have created activities for them to engage with.

We would like to thank all those who give up their time to bless our church children with their time, experience and enthusiasm.

Karen & Katie Blewett

Youth Group - Social Activities

From age 11-18.

During 2025, St Mark's teamed up as in previous years with St Augustine's Church to offer one social youth outing a month, and one more faith-based youth gathering a month.

Youth Social:

Revd Amanda Maskell, and Revd Catharina Olsson Gislekog with Alastair and Lucy Williams and Caroline Parsons took the youth to trampolining, to bowling, to a day out at Margate, to Ice Skating, and more. In the early autumn Chris Curtis took up the role as Children, Youth and Families worker at St Augustine's and is since leading and co-ordinating this group from St Augustine's.

Youth faith:

Chris Curtis led, together with Siobhan Bolton, St Mark's and St Augustine's once a month discussing faith group. During 2025 the Youth explored a whole range of topics. At the start of 2025 the young people listed what they would like to talk about during the sessions and from these requests the monthly sessions were put together. They included temptation, answering your friend's questions, exploring prayer and caring for God's Earth. We also did an in-depth study of Easter week from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. The Youth enjoyed another in-depth study of Esther during the Autumn of 2025 and decided it would host a Purim meal in March 2026.

Youth on a Sunday morning at St Mark's:

St Mark's also offered a Sunday Morning youth meeting where the three leaders, Damilare Oduntan, Jess Mahdavi-Gladwell, and Siobhan Bolton took secondary school children to Costa Coffee in Gillingham High Street during the Sunday service for a drink, a snack, and a conversation about God. Initially the book The God Story was used as the basis for the conversation. Later themes from life cards – my fish bites such as being accepted, being loved and more were used. This group had 1-5 participants.

Youth 18-35s

In 2025 the 18-35s group met twice.

A BBQ at the Vicarage on 23rd August 2025 attracted 20 young people for an evening of fun, food, and fellowship.

On 7th December the group met again for a Christmas Craft Gathering at church with candle making, card making, cookie making, present production and more.

Please pray for a leader for this group.

Catharina Olsson-Gisleskog

Strategic Development Fund (SDF)

Community Pastor

I continue to attend various activities held during the week at both St Mark's and St Augustine's and have built a lot of new relationships with people attending, please see additional report for Open Church. I investigated doing an Alpha course earlier in the year, but for various reasons this didn't happen, that said we have started planning one to take place the beginning of next year.

I have had various meetings with people throughout the year, such as the local MP, town centre manager on how we as a church can get further involved in meeting the needs of our local community. I have been on the High Street talking and giving out information at numerous events such as, Good Friday, Love Gillingham, turning on of the Christmas lights and have a continued presence on the High Street. Along with a volunteer from St Augustine's as part of the Love Gillingham initiative for churches adopting the planters in the High Street, we spent several days planting 22kg of daffodil bulbs in the grassed area outside of the church. This led to having some great conversations with people in the community as to why we were doing it, with more planned for next year.

I spent numerous days out on the High Street during the month of December personally inviting families to all the Advent and Christmas activities at both churches and giving out leaflets. This

led to speaking to more than a hundred families and seeing some new faces at some of the Advent activities. I attend regular catch-up meeting with Rev Catharina, Helen from the Church Army and steering group meetings with the Archdeacon.

Trevor Dyer

Community Missioner – last report to PCC March 2025

February was a full, and fun month. I ran 3 Messy Churches, two holiday clubs, and a lesson at the preschool about how much God loves us. Valentines Day is a great time to introduce children to the love of God.

I also continued to assist with two parent toddler groups and an afterschool Bible club at Oasis Skinner Street School.

This month I have run two Messy Churches and a preschool lesson on creation, alongside my regular activities.

Attendance for February activities are as follows:

St Mark's Messy Church: 52.

St Mark's Holiday Club: 22.

St Augustine's Messy Church: 32.

St Mary Magdalene Messy Church: 16.

St Barnabas Holiday Club: 42.

March

St Augustine's Messy Church: 30.

St Barnabas Messy Church: 11.

Planning for Easter is ongoing, there will be three Messy Churches, a holiday club, a preschool lesson, and Good Friday activities at St Barnabas.

I have annual leave I need to take so will finish my current role on Good Friday.

As this may be my last PCC report I would like to take this opportunity to thank the PCC for all your support over the past five years, particularly those who have been with me from the beginning. It has been a pleasure working alongside you. I have loved this job and have been richly blessed by the people I have met, and the relationships I have made.

A special thank you to Glyn and Vicky without whom I wouldn't have made it this far. Thank you for your patient and kind instruction when I didn't understand rules and regulations or finances, and for the support and guidance you have always given me.

My prayer is that the PCC will continue to encourage and support Children, Youth and Family ministry and it continues to flourish at St Mark's.

I value your prayers for the next adventure God invites me to be a part of.

As always please contact me if you have any questions.

Christine Curtis

St. Mary's Island Church (SMIC)

Secretary's report - St Mary's Island Church - 2025/2026

Fostering Spiritual Growth, Connection, and Service

Our church presents an inspiring vision of spiritual development, community connection, and service, each expressed in varied and meaningful ways. The church's commitment is evident in its engaging Sunday worship services and distinctive programmes, such as Messy Church, Little Fishes, and the youth group. These initiatives ensure every individual, regardless of age, is appreciated and supported, creating a nurturing environment for all.

Thoughtful Growth and Balance

As our church continues to grow, we remain mindful of expanding activities thoughtfully while preserving what makes our congregation special. It is exciting to witness growth, but it is equally important to maintain the essence and spirit that define our church community.

Creating Spaces for Community Engagement

We hold dear the intention of creating environments where the wider community can encounter Jesus. This mission lies at the heart of our church, as we strive to build a flourishing, God-inspired gathering place for all.

Leadership and Service

Our lay leadership team is steadfast in upholding the vibrant life and work of the church. Many members actively contribute to preparing and delivering weekly services, and we are fortunate to have a talented group of musicians and singers guiding our worship.

Fresh Expressions and Innovative Worship

In keeping with the principles of Fresh Expressions, which encourage leaders to develop innovative forms of worship to reach a broader audience for Christ, our church has embraced diverse approaches. These efforts foster spiritual growth and support each individual's relationship with Jesus.

Children's and Youth Activities

Our Sunday School children have shown great enthusiasm and had eagerly participated in activities prepared by Nickie Forest. Hopefully someone will soon step up to replace her. Messy Church remained a favourite too, attracting not only church and school families but also the broader island community each term. Messy Church can be considered a church service, even if it is only held six times a year. The frequency of gatherings does not necessarily determine whether an event qualifies as a church service; rather, it is the purpose, content, and community aspect that matter. Messy Church typically includes worship, teaching, and fellowship, which are core elements of a church service. Therefore, despite its limited occurrence, it can still be described as a church service within the broader context of church life. The youth group gathers for fellowship and study, with the programme continually adapting to their interests and passions.

Little Fishes and Youth Club

Little Fishes continues to flourish, with more than 150 children registered and over 70 regularly attending Thursday morning sessions. The positive feedback from participants is incredibly encouraging. Some church members also dedicate their time to supporting the Youth Club on Friday nights at the Community Centre, attended by children from the school.

Ladies' Evenings and Community Engagement

Monthly Ladies' Evenings, held on the second Friday, are well attended and filled with engaging activities, complemented by delicious cakes. These gatherings further strengthen the bonds within our church community.

Maintaining Diversity and Warmth

Our church stands as a remarkable community, offering something for everyone. As we continue to expand, we remain committed to preserving the diversity and warmth that set us apart. Our goal is to thoughtfully broaden our activities while safeguarding the heart of our congregation.

Evolving Family and Worship Services

Family services continue to evolve, now led by various members of the congregation. Additionally, a Worship Sunday has been introduced on the fifth Sunday of the months, where the band leads the congregation in a more immersive worship experience.

Sunday Services: The Heart of Church Life

Sundays are when our church truly comes alive. The services are God-inspired, spiritual, and uplifting. We give thanks to the Lord for His goodness and provision, and we pray for His guidance as we thrive as the Church on the Island, creating spaces for our community to encounter Jesus.

Carolyn Facey – Church Secretary

St. Mary's Island School (SMIS)

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul. Hebrews 6:19

St Mary's Island School forms the cornerstone within the community, firmly established upon Christian values, functioning both as an educational institution and a centre for spiritual development. Guided by its vision, the school diligently supports its students and staff to achieve their fullest potential. It is evident that the headteacher and staff demonstrate unwavering commitment to addressing diverse needs whilst upholding exemplary standards of education.

The school's collaboration with St Mary's Island Church and its members lends significant depth to its worship and ethos, thereby fostering a strong sense of faith and community among students and families. The inclusive approach adopted by the school ensures that every child is valued and supported, cultivating an environment in which all may prosper. Through various activities, events, and regular worship, the enduring partnership between the school and church continues to enhance the lives of all those involved.

Carolyn Facey