



ST PETER'S
ST ALBANS

Yearbook 2026

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ST PETER'S CHURCH ST ALBANS

Our values

- Everyone is included
- Loving and generous service is celebrated
- Faith is nurtured and developed
- Everyone is inspired to reach their God-given potential.



Introduction

2025 was the first full year that the church opened following completion of our building project in May 2024. This project replaced the deficient concrete floor in the nave with a stone floor and replaced the pews with flexible seating. This has allowed us to accommodate a greater range of events both those run by St Peter's and external hirers.

A summary of key achievements and news follows.

Thank you.



Mark Dearnley

Ministry and Worship

During 2025, we continued with our pattern of three weekly Sunday services. These are an 8am communion service following the Book of Common Prayer, a 10am Communion service with an All-Age service usually on the first Sunday of the month and Choral Evensong at 6pm. We have continued to live stream our leading morning service, enabling people to watch live from home or at a later date. Four times during the year, we hold a Mattins service to celebrate special events in the church calendar, including Easter and Christmas. Coffee after the main morning service is served in the chancel, and people appreciate this opportunity to socialise with refreshments. Morning prayer has continued every weekday morning at 9am on Zoom. In addition to our Sunday services, we hold a midweek communion service on Tuesdays at 11am. This is valued by those who attend and is particularly popular when combined with a course, such as Lent courses. Attendees also enjoy time to socialise over tea/coffee following the service.



In July BBC Radio 4 recorded a live broadcast from our morning worship at the start of the International Organ Festival.



Attendance at our Christmas services was higher than the previous year. For the first time in several years, we held a Christingle service and were delighted by the number of people who came to that. Our outside carol singing had to be relocated to church due to rain but that didn't put people off and there were lots of visitors as well as members of our congregation. We had a range of services and events to offer something suitable for everyone. A new activity was a wreath making workshop which was very successful and we plan to repeat it in 2026. For our main Christmas



services, we partnered with Herts Young Homeless to raise funds to support their work to prevent homelessness by supporting young people to make positive informed choices.

An important part of our Sunday offering is Junior Church which runs during our 10am service every Sunday in term time apart from when we have monthly All Age services and during school holidays. We run two weekly groups for babies and toddlers and their carers and have relationships with the three local primary schools in our parish, where we lead assemblies and

pupils sometimes visit St Peter's to learn about aspects relating to the church and Christianity that link to their school curriculum.

Our strong music tradition with excellent choir continues under the leadership of our Director of Music, Nick Robinson. The choir sing at our main morning services and Evensong and our All Age services are accompanied by the All Age band and singers.

During 2025, five couples were married at St Peter's. We also conducted 24 baptisms and had pastoral contact with a further 17 families through conducting funerals or burials of ashes.

Mark Dearnley

Pastoral Ministry

The pastoral work of St. Peter's continues, often unseen by many, because of the nature of the work.

Much of the pastoral work relies on the Pastoral Team, an invaluable role of a continuous gentle oversight of members on their lists.



Tea on Tuesday is still very popular and the Lunch on Tuesday in July, was greatly enjoyed likewise Christmas Treats on Tuesday. The entertainment provided by the children from the City School was very well-received. Again, these events are made possible by the willing help of others, particularly Pam, Lynn, Hilary, Rosemary and Celia who regularly help on Tuesdays as well as all those who contributed salads or puddings to the lunch. The lunch made a useful profit and some of the profits from Tea on Tuesday have been donated to the church. We are pleased to have a Tea on Tuesday chair plaque on a chair in church. At the Shrove Tuesday tea, we raised over £100 for the Food Bank.

The monthly Holy Communion service at Strathmore is always well-attended and seems to be much appreciated by residents (sometimes this entails a room visit) and staff, who join in. I share taking services at Eleanor House and Beaumonts with Maggie Dodd, Anna Chaplain, usually in alternate months. Davis Court also has a monthly Holy Communion Service which has been shared by Daniel Yovan and myself, Peter Curtis helps at all these services and Peter and I also take home Communion to the permanently housebound and to those who are prevented from attending church by a shorter term illness. Peter works more widely, too, as Anna Chaplain.

The Bereavement Team continues to offer support to those who have lost family and the bereaved are particularly remembered in the All Souls' Service and at Christmas. Although Holiday at Home is organised by the Methodist Churches, members of St. Peter's enjoy taking part or helping with that.

In summary, pastoral work at St. Peter's and by St. Peter's is ongoing and- seemingly- flourishing but your help in pointing out any person in need or any area which would merit attention is always appreciated.

Margaret Tinsley

Music

This past year, music at St Peter's has continued to follow a pattern which has been prevalent during the few years since the Covid period and indeed the more recent return to the church following the



extensive building project. Both the choir and the organ continue to benefit from the resultant much improved acoustic!

Each week, a morning and an evening service on a Sunday are worked towards, with differing musical styles maintained as a general rule in the mornings and indeed, relatively speaking, in the evenings too, in and around the standard pattern of Choral

Evensong according to The Book of Common Prayer. New repertoire, within both services, has continued to be managed effectively, in no small measure thanks to the able organists and singers who contribute to the cause readily on a weekly basis. Special services at relevant seasonal times have continued to take place, as has a traditional service of Matins once or twice per term.

The choir enjoyed summer visits to sing Sunday services at both Winchester Cathedral and St Alban's Abbey and will head for Haarlem in The Netherlands to sing on Sunday 19 July.



We had the excitement of preparing for and delivering a live Radio 4 service last July - quite a feat in many ways but especially at a time so early in the morning. We hope to do so again next summer as part of the same event (the opening of the 2027 International Organ Festival). At the time of writing, this is yet to be confirmed but we are hopeful there won't be any changes at either the BBC end or the IOF end in the meantime which might change things! It was a great privilege to have been invited to sing and play at this

event and we were grateful to have received positive feedback from all involved.

The Wednesday lunchtime concerts have continued to feature a string of varied and able performers. Mike Johnson continues to manage these events on the days themselves and Carolyn works hard in

the office from many angles, thus contributing to the considerable success of each series of concerts. The fact that the concerts continue to be booked up very far in advance is testament to the approaches of both Carolyn and Mike.

We have been fortunate to have been able to call on the skills of Tom Winpenny at various times of the year as organist whilst Alex has been managing a time consuming role in Oxford between October and June. I am grateful to both Tom for his willingness to join us and to Alex for his commitment to St Peter's during this particular year whilst being pulled in different directions. We have been thrilled to have been able to hold on to Tomyr as Organ Scholar and are hopeful that this will continue further into next year.

As ever, we remain indebted to unwavering support from Mark and huge help, skill, consideration and dedication from Carolyn, Reg, Tim and many others.

Nick Robinson

Children and Families

We were delighted to see significant attendance by families at the Heritage Open Day in September and a Pumpkin Trail in October. There were crafts, a bouncy castle, music and other activities at these popular community events.



We ran Family Fun Time (replacing Messy Church) at four key times during the year. These included seasonal crafts and activities, refreshments and a story. Family Fun Time is developing with a new team of helpers (14 and counting), this means the activities we are able to offer range from making posies, to woodwork, to planting seeds, decorating eggs, and of course eating seasonal treats.

Our Baby and Toddler groups run on Wednesday and Thursday mornings during term time and provide a chance for parents and carers to socialise while the children play. We have been delighted to see the involvement of these families at Family Fun Time and in exploring baptism.

There is a dedicated team of Junior Church teachers and helpers (10 in total), who meet regularly to plan together. The topics for Junior Church are now organised on a series basis and we have enjoyed looking at (amongst others) the Parables that Jesus told, and the fruit of the spirit.



We run Junior Church every Sunday during term time apart from All Age services. This has created an increased sense of belonging amongst the children and an enthusiasm to attend on Sundays. During Sunday services the children's area at the side of church is well used and the toys and activity sheets are enjoyed by the children. We have also added an area during an all age service to the front of church so children are more able to see and engage with what is going on.

We are continuing to build our relationships with local primary schools who visit church to learn about aspects of Christianity and the church that relate to their curriculum.

Thank you to everyone who supports this important area of ministry. Without the involvement of people helping run crafts and activities at Family Fun Time, teaching and helping at Junior church, making coffee and setting up for Baby and Toddler groups our ability to serve our community in this way would be impoverished.

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage us all to pray for our children and families, their involvement at St Peter's and their growth in faith.

Em Coley

Church Building



Given that the main busy period of reordering has been completed, the past year has been one mainly of consolidation in which the committee has met less frequently than in recent years. However, the glazing of the inner South Door was completed having a welcome effect of making the church feel much more open to all. The nave was redecorated in January 2025 which gave it a cleaner, brighter look and the Manders organ was stripped down and thoroughly cleaned. This was a significant project which took 6 weeks.

A number of minor works were also completed or are under way. One of these is a reredos (a professionally designed oak wall panel behind an altar) which will be installed in the Strong Chapel. It has also been necessary to keep pace with necessary church maintenance and so we discussed tasks including renewing lead work on the roof. This work will be undertaken in the year to come.

Since Christmas the committee has met more frequently as we have been pursuing competitive quotations from contractors for works which were previously set aside because of financial constraints. It has taken longer than expected to acquire these quotations via our architects who communicate with contractors for us. The projects which we are now pursuing via these quotations (and subject to our latest financial position) include making a start on improvements to the car park (a medium-term, staged project) and approach to the South Door. Another project is for an

ingeniously designed 'fold away' kitchenette to be constructed and fitted at the West end of the nave. This project requires a drainage connection to the main drains in the roadway just beyond the curtilage of the churchyard. Once completed this new kitchenette should make it much easier to provide hospitality at the end of services and events in the nave: something that we can also market to those who wish to hire the church for events.

Under instruction from us, our architects have been designing and exploring the engineering feasibility of creating and installing a large and beautiful stained glass hanging which may be installed in the region of the crossing in the nave. The engineering aspects are quite challenging as a hanging feature of this kind must be strong, stable and safe. Assuming that this feature can be created and successfully installed, it will provide a striking piece of artwork for the church. To summarise, now that the main period of reordering is complete, and subject to finance being available and successful fundraising, we are pursuing various projects to further enhance the church's facilities and aesthetic appeal.



Den Parker

Events



2025 was a busy year with a large number of events at St Peter's, as it was our first full year since the church reopened following completion of our building project. The year started with 3 performances of Amahl and the Night Visitors by St Albans Chamber Opera at the start of January.

Having a large clear space in the nave allowed us to host a child's bouncy castle party in the church as well as running two Family Mornings in church during the summer holidays with bouncy castles.



Our annual quiz and curry night, which is organised and run by the choir, took place in church allowing us to accommodate more people. We celebrated the 80th anniversary of VE Day with a street party style afternoon tea and the church decorated with bunting crisscrossed from the pillars. This was attended by over 50 people and our bellringers rang the church bells at the same time as churches across the country.

As part of Heritage Open Days we offered historical reenactments by actors from Breakaway Theatre, tower tours, children's crafts, history trails, refreshments and a bouncy castle. This was a very well attended community event and we welcomed lots of visitors into St Peter's.



Other events included a community barn dance in church, a wedding reception, black tie dinner and Pumpkin Trail. During 3 weeks of August we hosted an art exhibition called 'Letters to Forever'. This multisensory exhibition was curated by local artist Natalia Millman and featured over 200 personal letters written about grief and reflection. The exhibition was attended by over 2,000 visitors.

Many of the above events were only possible due to the refurbished flexible space we now have in church.

In addition to the events run by St Peter's we also hosted many external events including 21 concerts, a children's Christmas Fair, the International Organ Festival, a school drama production and we were the starting point for the Alban Pilgrimage which takes place in June with a procession telling the



story of Saint Alban leading down to the Cathedral. For the second year Cards for Good Causes sold charity Christmas cards and gifts from St Peter's in the run up to Christmas.



Looking ahead to 2026 we are keen to continue to explore further opportunities for community engagement and to continue to utilise the large, flexible space we have available.

Carolyn Alexander

The St. Peter's Book Group, which now meets in the church library, had a thriving year, with new members joining our discussions. We meet every other month, usually on Friday afternoons, and start our meetings with coffee or tea before we discuss the book, which had been chosen at the previous meeting. In 2025 we read *Murder before Evensong*, *The Island of Missing Trees*, *Alchemy*, *The Glassmaker*, *The Murder at the Vicarage* and *Still Life*, a real variety of authors and genres. New members are always welcome on a regular or occasional basis; details of what is planned are in the Friday email and on the leaflets in church.

Theatre trips continue to be well-supported. 2025 began with a very amusing performance of *The Importance of being Earnest* at the ever-popular National Theatre where we also enjoyed *Hamlet*. At the Barbican Theatre we laughed throughout *Twelfth Night* and other Shakespeare plays, *Richard II* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* took us to the Bridge Theatre. We have also been to the Hampstead Theatre and have had some excellent value group bookings at commercial theatres, the best

attended of which was *Mrs Warren's Profession*. Matinee performances seem very popular so they now figure largely.

The first Themed Evensong of 2025 was on E Nesbit, the second on Lewis Carroll. In June, the Themed Evensong was of more musical interest: Orlando Gibbon, to mark the 400th anniversary of his death. This followed tea for Organ Festival performers and hosts and attracted a very large congregation. In September the subject was the life and works of Jane Austen and the service on Remembrance Sunday remembered war in many parts of the world. As ever, there was wine or fruit juice available after these services.

Lunchtime concerts have been well-attended, with the audience enjoying a wide range and high standard of music from a variety of different performers and instruments. Many of the audience also enjoyed refreshments in the Octagon after the concert.

Concerts and Evensongs are advertised in the weekly bulletin but I am always pleased to add more names to the emails sent out about theatre trips and to hear of interest in the Book Group.

Margaret Tinsley

Mission and Outreach

During 2025 St Peters continued to support the following charities:

Rennie Grove Hospice Care, £12000 by concert goers donations. The loyal band of supporters and refreshment providers all enjoyed excellent concerts and conviviality.

At Christmas we partnered with Herts Young Homeless to raise funds to support their work to prevent youth homelessness in Hertfordshire. From collections during our Christmas services we were able to donate £1,600 to them.

Youth Talk, £500.00. There is much local evidence of youth of today struggling with the stress of daily life at home, school, or in training leading to jobs.

Stop the Traffic, £250.00. A continuing problem of people trafficking, not only to the UK but across the world. Have you been concerned enough to ask a worker about their employment position?

Anna Chaplains, £750.00. Seniors in society also need support at home or in care.

Project 267, £250.00. Encourages youth to come to terms with 'who we are' and 'what we do'.

Others as required. Bishops Harvest Appeal. Winter beds via open door. Individual needs budget.

Which still leaves some £8000 to be dispensed – Any ideas?

Is St Peters supporting the right charities that reflect our mission?

Have your say and come and join the small team dispersing agreed budgets for 2026.

If you wish to champion a local charity and would like St Peters to support, then please contact me.

Peter Court

PCC Secretary's Report

Composition of Parochial Church Council

Vicar: Revd Mark Dearnley

Ministry team (readers): Richard Butler, Margaret Tinsley, Margaret Blake

Church wardens: Hayley Harrison, Mark Waller, Lisa Williams

Deanery Synod Representatives: Anna Davies, Steve Sollis

Elected lay members: Kalpana Block, Suzanne Bryant, Lee Coley, Peter Court, Sally Fisher, David Harrison, Alan Herbert, Graham Jones, Patti Seabright

Co-opted lay members: Rebecca Coady, Katharine Goddard

Review of past year

Since our last Annual Meeting, the PCC has met six times. The meetings all took place on Wednesday evenings in the Octagon. In addition, there was a 'PCC Away Morning' held on Saturday 8th November.

Proceedings of the PCC

The focus for the PCC this year was approving the completion of the quinquennial work on the church whilst improving financial reserves and planning for future fundraising for additional projects. We also looked at promoting a safer church through safeguarding and awareness; growing the church community and encouraging people both within the congregation and outside the church community to take part; and increasing charitable giving. Additional items discussed were hearing about Church Lands Trust and looking for a new Chair, promoting the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS), and initiating talks regarding the radio transmitter on the church tower.

Vision for the future

In 2026/7 the PCC will look at retrieving the vicarage repair fund, appointing a new Associate Priest, planning the submission of an application to the national heritage lottery fund to secure the church's heritage and reducing the church's energy footprint.

The work of the PCC is supported by the Church Office and the administrative team. Without them we would not be as effective as we are, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them.

Katharine Goddard



