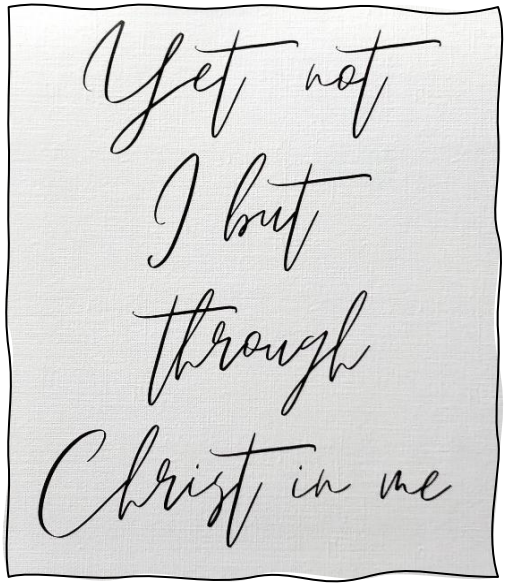
St Alban's Church

Annual Report 2025-26



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Deanery Synod

As referred to in last year's report, the first meeting of the Wulfrun Deanery Synod was a prayer service held at St Marys Church, Bushbury on 25th February 2025.

A Sunday evening service for the Deanery Synod was hosted by the Church of the Epiphany at Oxley on 23rd March 2025.

An ordinary Synod meeting took place at Emmanuel Church, Bentley, Willenhall on 22nd May 2025.

A Synod Meeting was hosted by Holy Trinity Church, Short Heath, Willenhall on 26th November 2025. Bishop Tim attended and talked of his vision for mission outreach in the community. The assembled representatives were divided into groups of three churches - St Albans were placed with Holy Trinity attendees. St Thomas' Church, Wednesfield, were also placed in this group, but no representatives were present. The two churches in our group gave details of their own outreach, St Alban's mentioning Children's and Families Work, and the fortnightly Pop-In breakfast and bargain community event. A Prayer Station was established from time to time in the shopping precinct opposite the church.

Brian Daybell and Margaret O'Callaghan
(St Alban's Deanery Synod Representatives)

Lay Reader's report

It has been a real privilege to serve as Lay Reader at St Alban's over the past year, and I am very grateful to God for the opportunity to share in the life and ministry of this church family. It has been six years since my licensing at Lichfield Cathedral, time seems to pass so quickly.

It has been a challenging year for me personally. The fact that Rev. Tom retired just one year ago has obviously had implications for me and, of course, the church. I had always worked closely with Tom, and his leaving obviously left a void. I felt isolated at times, but I was grateful for the leadership team and their support for me, as well as the support and encouragement I have constantly received from the congregation.

As most of you know, I had to take a break from church for the first part of this year. I describe it as me having 'hit the buffers'. I needed rest and refreshment, and I was so grateful to everyone who both recognised what I was saying and gave such loving and protective support to me. A major issue for me was the amount of roles I had 'gathered' during the past six years. I am now going to address that issue, but I am clear that my ministry role is always my main focus.

Over the course of the year, I have been glad to play my part in preaching and leading worship, officiating at funerals and supporting the wider ministry of the church where I have been able. Each of these responsibilities is important to me.

One of the things I value most about lay ministry is the opportunity to help people connect faith with everyday life. Preaching and leading worship are never just duties to be carried out; they are opportunities to share in the work God is already doing among us. I have tried, in my small way, to encourage, support, and bring something of God's word into the ordinary experiences, struggles, and hopes that shape our daily lives.

This past year has brought both encouragements and challenges, as most years do but perhaps we have felt them more acutely in the absence of a vicar. Through it all, I have been reminded that the strength of a church comes not only from the activities at the front but also from the quiet faithfulness of its people — in prayer, in kindness, in perseverance, and in their willingness to keep showing up for God and one another.

I have also appreciated the many quieter conversations that happen around church life — the moments of encouragement, concern, reflection, and prayer which may never appear in a formal report, but which are such an important part of ministry.

These often are the places where people most honestly live out their faith, and I consider it a privilege to share in those moments.

As you are aware I set up a bereavement support group. This group has been a joy to me. Stories told, sadness shared, tears and laughter in equal measure. Sadly, I have paused this group during my break, but I hope to begin again soon. I want to thank all of you that have supported me through a difficult time, I have felt loved and I no-one could ask for anything more, thank you.

As we look ahead, my prayer is that St Alban's will grow not only in numbers, but in depth of faith, in love for one another, and in confidence in the calling God has given us. I pray we will be a church that is prayerful, welcoming, compassionate, and rooted in Christ.

Please continue to pray for me, as I pray for you all, that together we may serve God faithfully in the year to come.

Terry Braithwaite - Lay Reader

Fabric of the Church Building

It has been a challenging time for us all here at St Albans, being in an interregnum, with much of the responsibility going to Terry, with the Leadership team helping where possible.

I would like to say thank you to Terry and Sam for Leading our Sunday Services, and indeed anyone who has helped in any way.

Our Parish profile is now completed, and we will soon be able to move onto the next phase.

Fabric wise, there have been no big issues with our church building. The fence at the back of the memorial garden has been replaced, which I think was our biggest outlay.

Thank you to every member of our congregation for your continued support while we look for a new Vicar. God is good and I am sure big things are in store for us all.

Sue Cope – Church Warden

Finance / Treasurer's report

2025 was my 9th year in the role of St Albans Treasurer.

I would like to again thank everyone who contributed in any way towards church finances and Gods work here and in the community in the past year.

Our finances have now been online via MyFund Accounting for 5 full years and this continues to be a huge help in maintaining a more accurate picture of our financial position.

The Financial Review included with the Annual report gives more detailed information on our Income and Expenditure, but briefly – our Unrestricted Income in 2024 was £59.997 and Expenditure £57,384.

Congregational Giving (including valuable Gift-Aid Tax returns) amounted to £26,920 and Hall-Hire £11,073. Rental Income from the Community Project (Land next door) was substantially down on 2024 due to lengthy delays in contracts, planning and establishing C.I.C. instead of Charity status.

We were very fortunate in December to receive substantial Member donations which enabled us to complete full payment of £38.200 to diocese for their 2025 Common Fund requests.

We are expecting a difficult 2026 and continue to pay a reduced Common Fund although hope to make a small additional payment end of each quarter.

We are very grateful for those who have increased their giving in the past year. This has helped considerably but we still need to increase Income to cover our costs and meet diocese payments.

My thanks again to Brian for handling Gift-Aid and banking, and to the money-counting team for dealing with Weekly donations.

In conclusion in 2026 we will do our very best to remain financially viable to continue God's work in this church and community, with His and your help.

Barry Bishop - Treasurer

Gift Aid report

I would like to thank all who open the envelopes and count the money after the Sunday service. We have neither gained nor lost gift-aiders during this year.

If anyone is interested in becoming a gift-aider or requires more information (which is confidential of course), or any of the current gift-aiders would prefer to use a bankers' order and not envelopes, please contact Barry Bishop (Treasurer) or me, Gift Aid Secretary. We will let you have the information required for your bank.

The amount to be claimed back from the tax office for this year will be approximately £3900. I would urge anyone who gives a donation to the church if you are a taxpayer, to please gift-aid it. For every £1 donated we can claim 25p from the tax office.

In addition to the above gift-aid, there is a scheme which began in the 2013/2014 tax year known as GADS (Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme). This is a tax relief on loose plate giving and non-gift-aid envelope monies. Non-gift-aid envelope money and small cash donations of up to £30 maximum are acceptable, but not cheques. This is without the need for a gift-aid declaration. The maximum loose cash we can claim against has been increased to £8000. This would give a possible tax return of £2000.

Our tax relief will be slightly down this year.

Please stay safe!

Brian Daybell - Gift Aid Secretary

Electoral Roll

There are 56 people on the Electoral Roll for St Alban's District, 10 of whom live outside the Parish. The total is five down on last year.

Brian Daybell - Electoral Roll Officer

DCC Secretary's report

The DCC meets bi-monthly. There has been a total of twelve meetings, with an average 76% attendance rate.

DCC members: Barry Bishop (Chair), Terry Braithwaite, Tony Beardsmore, Sue Cope, Dave Craddock, Sam Crosby, Brian Daybell, Margaret O'Callaghan, Arch Palmer, Mandy Pugh, Tracy Yates, John Billau, Katie Hart (DCC Secretary), as well as attendance from Rev Kate Tingle following her maternity leave. There were three resignation from the DCC due to personal reasons. An invitation to each meeting is extended to Clive Postle, Parish Warden at St Thomas's Church. St Thomas's reciprocates the invitation to include the Parish Warden at St Alban's Church.

The DCC Treasurer has consistently presented a verbal report on Income and Expenditure, supplemented by a simple information sheet detailing the "headline" data; the full Balance Sheets and a Fund Movement Summary are available upon request for those interested. Verbal reports are given by the Wardens (which includes buildings & maintenance, Health & Safety; Fire Safety), Ministry Team (Plans for Sunday Worship, Children's & Families Ministry – the DCC has been particularly encouraged to receive reports on the strengthening of links with local Schools) - Deanery Synod Representatives and Vicar; Safeguarding is a standing agenda items at each meeting.

Topics for discussion and resolution have included the memorial garden replacement of fences; The St Alban's Community Project/Caring Hearts; Anonymous donations and where to allocate these funds; Council bin contract; Hall hire and more.

Katie Hart – DCC Secretary

Worship and Teaching

Worship Music

Following Tom's departure in Spring 2025, the music group continued with John, Barry, Kemsie and OJ. Sadly, the Okeke Family have now moved to the USA leaving John and I (Barry) as our 'Worship Music Group'.

I choose hymns and songs each week, based on the Gospel reading, Sermon Theme and Holy Time (Easter, Christmas etc). We have 127 songs and hymns in our St Albans SING HOLY songbook , which can be found on the Bible Trolley if you haven't already seen it. However, I have added more hymns from the green 'Hymns Old and New' book so we have a spreadsheet with a current 180 choices. I try hard to incorporate both traditional hymns and more recent modern songs already known to us, but would very much welcome other requests for songs or hymns you might feel should be included.

Following the failure of our Organ, John is playing the keyboard but we are looking at the possibility of replacing the church electronic organ with a similar one, subject to cost.

I hope you enjoy music worship at St Albans but I'm happy to hear any suggestions (or complaints!) for possible improvement.

Barry Bishop

Sound and Vision

Current team: John Billau, Michael Hart, Dave Craddock

Sadly, Ral left us in December to move to the USA with her family.

The purpose of the team is:

- to make all aspects of the service comfortably audible, via the speakers and the hearing aid loop
- to operate the slide shows on the projectors
- to support the people who run other activities to use a microphone and/or play recorded music through the speakers.

...so that the system serves the church and facilitates doing the work of God.

We've continued to enjoy the ease of use and vastly improved quality of the new sound system; as we've learned more about it, we are still finding simpler and better ways to do things.

We have done some basic training so that as many people as possible know how to set up the system and get the mics etc working, plus more in-depth training for anyone who wants to go deeper into the technical side of it. The current members of the team know how to run it during a service – the intermediate level of training – but if you'd like to join the team, please speak to one of us and we'll fix up a time to introduce you to it. We hope you are also benefitting from the larger, brighter projectors after the old ones came to the end of their natural life.

Sound and Vision Team

Facebook

St Alban's Facebook page now has 968 followers (up from 925 last year). Total views for the year is 53,888, with 320 engagement. Our top post for the year was an advert for Ashmore Park Foodbank donation appeal at 4,147 views. Our second most popular post was an advert for foodbank volunteers at 2,827. Our third most popular post was an advert for the St Albans Christmas Card Competition at 2,118 views.

Breaking the followers down more, we can see that females are our main followers at 84%, where males were 16% - which is the same percentage as last years report. Also followers in the 35-44 age bracket are our top followers as shown in the table. There is a slight change from last years 'followers by age' where followers aged 55-64 topped followers '25-34' (swapped places).

HIGHEST TO LOWEST FOLLOWERS BY AGE
35-44 (27.9%)
65+ (19.8%)
45-54 (19.3%)
55-64 (15.9%)
25-34 (14.9%)
18-24 (2.2%)

Looking at locations of our followers we can see that we are actually reaching people in 9 other countries apart from the United Kingdom; including the United States of America, Italy, Canada and even Australia!

Our Facebook page is updated weekly by Katie Hart and others to publicise events and other notices, make suggestions for Foodbank donations, advertise our prayer areas etc.

Katie Hart – Church Administrator

Pop In

It's been a challenging year for Pop-in with lower numbers coming through the doors. This may be down to the increased cost of living, but the volunteers still turn up every fortnight with a smile.

At the moment we're not able to offer a fully working kitchen, with just tea coffee and toast available.

A big thankyou to Wendy Robert Jenny Gladys Rose and Josie for all their hard work and dedication.

Sue Cope – Church Warden

Summer and Christmas Fayres

In 2025, Mandy and I again took on responsibility for organising our two main fayres. The Summer Fayre raised £815 but we received a very generous donation of £185 to take us to £1000. The Christmas Fayre raised £673 but again we received a donation of £1000 taking our annual fayres income to £2673. Both fayres were well attended and there was a tremendous community spirit felt at both events.

At Christmas we again had Father Christmas in his grotto (thanks to all who helped build this) and the kids loved it! We again had a Giant Tombola instead of a raffle and smaller tombola, and this was a particular success with a huge number of prize donations helping keep this going. My thanks to everyone who helped in any way at these events.

Barry Bishop and Mandy Bishop

Children and families/

St Alban's Youth Group

This year has been a meaningful period for the youth group at St Alban's Church. We have continued to provide a welcoming and supportive environment for young people to grow in faith, friendship and confidence.

Some highlights from the last 12 months are bringing back All Age services where there our youth group are having a role in the planning of the services. Personally I loved our Harvest and Christingle services, the drama pieces were lovely and our youth worked hard. We have had amazing feedback from people about both services.

Unfortunately, numbers are varied at the moment. While we have a committed core group, there is a clean opportunity to grow and reach more young people in our community.

Messy Church

Due to many of our Messy Church children now busy on Saturdays we decided to move Messy Church to a Monday evening – the last Monday of the month. This has seen numbers grow.

We have a varied age range from 2 – 12 years old.

TLC

TLC is still going strong. We have an average 14/16 families each week. TLC is honestly a lovely group; many friendships have been formed with children and adults alike. I want to thank the lovely ladies Pat, Marg, and Vonnie for their continued support, keeping us all supplied with tea, toast and biscuits. A big thank you to Robert and Ruben for setting up and putting away all the toys and activities we have each week. Also, to Tony, for keeping the little ones distracted so their adults can have a few moments to have a hot drink!

Sam Crosby

School Links

As part of my role as Children and Families worker I have continued to strengthen relationships with local schools. These visits have provided valuable opportunities to engage with children, support the school communities, and build a visible and trusted presence on behalf of the church.

I have regularly visited St Alban's Academy, Oak Meadow, and Perry Hall. During these visits, I have been involved in a variety of active ties including assemblies, classroom support, and informal interactions with both pupils and staff. There engagements have helped foster positive connections, allowing the church to contribute meaningfully to the spiritual, social and emotional development of the children.

In addition, links have been formed at Coppice. This relationship has developed

positively, with openness from school to continued partnership and involvement.

These connections are encouraging and provide a solid foundation for further work, including potential collective worship, seasonal events, and pastoral care. Overall, these school visits have been an important part of outreach, helping to strengthen community ties and create ongoing opportunities for engagement. The relationships built so far are promising and will continue to be nurtured in the coming months.

Sam Crosby

Ashmore Park Foodbank

Over the last few months we have lost a lot of our regular donors, but our client base is growing, we need some sort of drive to bring doners back. I have spoken to Rev. Kate Tingle at St Thomas's and she has collected a large donation for us; but we need to get regular donors on board. Thank you.

Sue Kennedy

Mission Partnership

Our Mission Partnership St Christopher's School, Uzuakole, Nigeria.

We have continued to support St Christopher's School financially. Over the past five years we have been able to help the community build a borehole to source clean water, which has helped them to grow their own crops and start a fish farm. From those beginnings, we have contributed to providing computers for the school, helped provide more secure accommodation for the children, and more recently helped to create a science laboratory, which brings the school up to required standard. The school is not state supported and although the school comes under the Methodist Church of Nigeria, they don't receive any financial support from the church.

Terry and Mavoureen are in regular contact with Rev Lambert Onoh who is the Principal of the school. Direct contact through Terry and Mavoureen's visits to Nigeria guarantee that any donated money is used appropriately.

Terry and Mavoureen Braithwaite