

# **ANNUAL PARISH CHURCH MEETING 2025 AGENDA**

**Holy Trinity, Walton**

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2025 7pm in the Church**

### **Vestry Meeting 2025**

*This part of the evening can be attended by anyone on the electoral roll or resident in the Parish of Walton.*

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer.
2. Apologies for absence.
3. Minutes of Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024
4. Matters arising.
5. Election of Churchwardens.
6. AOB.

### **Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2025**

*This part of the evening may be attended by members of the electoral roll for the parish.*

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. Minutes of Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024
3. Matters arising
4. Brief reflections on the life of our churches and ministry and mission across the parish
5. Electoral Roll Officer's Report 2024.
6. Re-election of Electoral Roll Officer.
7. Annual Parochial Church Council Report 2024.
8. Treasurer's Report 2024.
9. Appointment of Independent Examiner.
10. Report on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of the Church.  
Election of Parochial Church Council Members 2025/2026 and Deanery Synod representatives  
2025 / 2026.
11. AOB *please let the Rector or the church office know of any items in advance.*
12. Closing Prayer.

**Walton Holy Trinity APCM**  
**15<sup>th</sup> April 2024**  
**7.00pm Held in the Church.**

**Present:** Rev'd Ana Lawrence, Rev'd David Hatrey, Sandra Gristock, Sonia Beaty, Elizabeth Selway, Hilda Grint, Pauline Hatrey, Carol Brewer, Andrew Savage, Jeff Brewer, Gill Attwell, Wendy Devenish.

**Vestry Meeting 2024**

- 1. Welcome:** Rev Ana Lawrence opened the meeting reading James 1 verse 19 followed by a prayer.
- 2. Apologies:** Brenda Stradling, Yvonne Guerin, Edgar and Geraldine Frampton.
- 3. Minutes of Annual Vestry Meeting, Weds 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023:** These were individually read. Proposed by Jeff Brewer, seconded by Elizabeth Selway, they were an accurate record. All agreed.
- 4. Matters Arising:** No matters Arising.
- 5. Election of Church Warden:** Standing, Sandra Gristock. Proposed by Elizabeth Selway, seconded by Hilda Grint. All agreed. Thanks were extended to Sandra Gristock for all her hard work and agreeing to stand for another term, also to Andrew Savage and Elizabeth Selway for supporting her. If necessary an assistant church warden could be co – opted later in the year.
- 6. AOB:** No other business.

**Meeting Closed 7.08pm.**

**Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2024**

- 1. Apologies:** Yvonne Guerin.
- 2. Minutes of Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023:** These were individually read. Proposed by Pauline Hatrey, seconded by Sandra Gristock, as an accurate record. All agreed.
- 3. Matters Arising:** No matters arising.
- 4. Brief reflections of the life of our churches and ministry and mission across the parish:**  
I have written the Rector's annual report which is available in the agenda, minutes and reports document. If you don't have access to this, you can find it on our church website to download or if you need a printed copy, please talk to our benefice office who will print this for you.

Can I warmly encourage you to read both this and the other reports in this document; these have all been written by church members building up a picture of the life and ministry and witness of all our churches. Thank you so much to those who have written reports as part of this document.

What I am going to share with you now are some broader and more personal reflections on the year that has passed and the year ahead.

I have been with you now as your rector for coming up to four years (in August) and I want to say it is such a joy to be here serving in these parishes of Street, Walton and Compton Dundon. I love our churches and I love God's people and am always excited by the endless possibilities there are to serve God in our communities. Sometimes, if I am honest, my energy runs away with me and there always seems to be something on the go, which is exciting.

I was called here to be a minister of the gospel, and this remains my primary calling whatever the outworkings of ministry look like at any given time. Whether in the thin space of being alongside bereaved families or in the thick of children's and school's work or something else – no two days are the same. But this is not just my calling, it's for all of us and I believe we are all here to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world around us.

Our mission statement 'to worship God, love our communities, grow in faith' continues to underpin who we are and what we do as churches together. My written rector's report summarises many of the ways we have worshipped, loved and grown together over the year.

Much of my energy as Area Dean this year has been focused on some tough challenges with a consultation process that ran throughout last year focusing on pastoral reorganisation with a proposal that is now being taken to the Diocese. Whilst the consultation period has now concluded, we are still in the midst of this and my hope and prayer is for a healthy spirit filled deanery that is viable and sustainable in the years to come. The immediate process may not affect us directly, but we have to recognise the realities of less clergy, less money and more pressure for churches across our diocese.

Locally, we also continue to face some big financial challenges - I'm not keen to talk about money here but in order to sustain our ministry costs, we cannot manage without this and going into this current year, there will be some further conversations and consultations about finding ways to increase our revenue, including the introduction of the parish giving scheme.

If you read the national church press, one of the things you may pick up is the narrative of declining and ageing congregations across the Church of England. Our churches have changed considerably over the last 20 – 30 years; sadly, we no longer see children and families coming in good numbers to Sunday services and there are also missing generations. I know this to be true and we have to find ways of engaging with new generations. I have been in dialogue with our local secondary school and without saying too much here, I am hopeful for some plans to be put in place. We continue to find ways of connecting and engaging with those outside the church, to share the Gospel and to meet people where they are. Amidst this national narrative, I am encouraged that our figures show some growth, it's modest but it's real and I would love to see more.

I feel very blessed that we have such a faithful and committed team of ministers, with 2 clergy colleagues, 5 Lay readers, 5 lay worship assistants and others. I was particularly thrilled to welcome our new curate last Summer, Rachel, as I don't think we have had a curate in our churches for a considerable number of years. It's been great to see Rachel integrate so well into our church family life as she continues her vocational journey with us. We look forward to her priesting service in June in Wells Cathedral and to her continued ministry amongst us.

Finally, I really want to take the opportunity to thank people – but I am always concerned in doing this that someone gets missed out – so if I don't mention you personally, please don't take it personally! Thank you to the wardens, treasurers and all those others who help in the running of our services as well as those whose work is often unseen. Thank you to my clergy colleagues, readers, lay worship assistants, PCC members, administrator and caretakers. Thank you to all of you, whether I have mentioned you above or not, for being the church family here at SWCD churches.

Sandra Gristock extended thanks on behalf of everybody to Rev Ana and the clergy team.

**5. Electoral Roll Officers Report:** Sonia Beaty reported that the electoral roll now numbered 30.

**6. Re – election of Electoral Roll Officer:** Thanks were extended to Sonia Beaty for her work and when asked, agreed to stand for another year. Proposed by Jeff Brewer and seconded by Andy Savage.

**7. Annual Parochial Church Council Report 2023:** See attachment. This was individually read with no questions. Signed by Rev'd Ana Lawrence.

**8. Treasurers Report 2023:** The audited accounts had already been approved by the PCC at their last meeting and we now present these to the APCM. Once again audited by E Howells. Sonia Beaty was prepared to answer questions from the floor. She reported that the bank closure had affected the banking which is now done through Lloyds. Our figures are positive. Thanks were extended to her for all her hard work.

**9. Appointment of Independent Examiner:** Edward Howells who has previously provided this service was proposed and Sonia Beaty said he was happy to continue for another year. Proposed by Elizabeth Selway, Seconded by Sonia Beaty.

**10. Report on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of the Church:** It is a legal requirement to include this, see page 15 of attachment. Huge thanks were extended to Andy Savage for the repairs he has been able to complete.

**11. Election of Parochial Church Council Members 2024/2025 and Deanery Synod Representatives 2024/2026:** Two nominations were received for PCC membership. Gill Attwell – Proposed by Sandra Gristock, seconded by Hilda Grint. Edgar Frampton – proposed by Sandra Gristock, seconded by Elizabeth Selway.

Yvonne Guerin has formally stepped down as our Deanery Synod representative and PCC member. Thanks were extended to her. This means we have no vacancies.

**12. AOB:** None.

The meeting closed with a prayer and the saying of the Grace at 7.45pm.

#### **RECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT ON THE BENEFICE 2024**

As I look back on the year that has passed, I continue to be grateful for you all in our three communities and beyond for helping to make our churches the places they are.

I am so grateful to God for sustaining and upholding me in my ministry as we move forward together as partners in the Gospel working to make Jesus known in our respective communities.

My heart and prayer is that our mission statement 'worship God, love our communities, grow in faith' continues to underpin all that we are and do within the life of the benefice of Street, Walton and Compton Dundon.

Reflecting on the past year, I am mindful of the numerical growth we have seen in each of our churches. We have welcomed significant numbers of new people into our worshipping community which has been a joy, a delight and an answer to prayer. The presence of growing numbers of the under 16 age group has been particularly encouraging not least because our outreach to this age group has felt fragile for a number of years. My heart is very much to invest both in our younger people but also to cherish 'what we already have' regardless of chronological age. Swelling numbers has made some things feel and seem far more possible than perhaps in previous years. Our numbers at Christmas show an upward trend in people

attending our Christmas services and this outreach remains a critical part of our ministry and mission within the wider community.

I have heard members of the church family describe SWCD Churches as 'busy', 'there's a lot going on' and yes, there is from week to week. There are many activities across our 3 parishes which broadly reflect aspects of our mission statement. Activity, however, for its own sake has little or no value. Surely, rather, what we should be about as a worshipping Christian community is being active for the gospel, seeking to reach those who don't yet know Jesus.

We do also face challenges in resourcing what we do and there is always more that could be done! Ministry areas require money and people in order to make things happen and these are often in short supply in our church life.

But it's not just about 'activity'. I also sense a growing depth in faith with church family seeking to 'go deeper' in their faith journeys. Two well attended weekly prayer meetings, house groups, Celebrate@6 services are just some examples of this. Let's continue to want to go deeper and see what God will do in our midst.

Finally, are we dreaming dreams for the future? Are these dreams big enough for God or do we need to dream bigger? What this might mean is a conversation for a reflection on the future, but I hope you share with me a desire to do more for God in this place.

Thinking about our church family, as well as welcoming new members, we have also bade some sad farewells as we mourned the deaths of amongst others Delyth Wride (Street), Liz Sowerby (Street), Sheila Taylor (Compton Dundon), Brenda Bergner (Street), Jenny Hall (Street). These faithful Christians will leave a huge gap.

I am grateful to our Parish Safeguarding Officers who undertake an administrative role to ensure that all are both kept safe and up to date with ongoing training requirements. Thanks go to Sonia, our benefice administrator, who works tirelessly, flexibly, and often well beyond her contracted hours.

I want to pay tribute to our wardens, Edd Reeve (Street), Pat King and Gill Williams (Compton Dundon), Sandra Gristock (Walton), our Treasurers, Sonia Beaty (Street and Walton), Julie Gordon (Compton Dundon) and the PCC. A huge 'thank you' to all those who lead and preach at our Sunday and Midweek Services: licenced Readers, Lay Worship Assistants, intercessors, welcomers, and readers. I want to also thank my clergy colleagues, Sister Rachel Pengelly & Rev'd David Hatrey for their support, commitment and partnership as we lead our churches together.

And yes, I know that in writing this last paragraph, inevitably I will have missed someone. I believe that we are all called to serve and so however and wherever you serve, thank you.

Ana Lawrence, Rector

## **2024 APCM REPORTS**

### **BENEFICE REPORTS**

#### **Safeguarding Report**

**Street, Walton and Compton Dundon.**

##### **PSO Meetings:**

The PSOs for Street, Walton & Compton Dundon met regularly this year, continuing our ethos of mutual support and information sharing relative to DBS checks, Dashboards and Safeguarding Hubs. In early 2025 this gave the group an opportunity to say goodbye to Sandra Gristock from the Walton Parish after many years of service in this and related roles. Though this was a sad event for us all, we were very happy to welcome Pauline Hatrey to the group to take on this role at Walton!

Steve is currently investigating the systematic review of church polices held by our Benefice and including them on the swcd-churches website.

##### **Parish Safeguarding Hubs:**

As the Compton Dundon Dashboard has recently been 'promoted' to Level 3, full access to the Parish Hub software has been granted. Steve will trial the 'HR' aspect of the hub that looks at staffing, recruitment and certification in order to report back to Pauline and Jenny.

##### **Safeguarding Focus Service – 23<sup>rd</sup> March:**

As the Safeguarding focus service forecast for December 2024 was postponed by Walton and Street parishes due to a clash with a large Baptism Service, this will now be rescheduled for the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2025.

##### **INEQE audit and the future of Safeguarding within the Church of England:**

There have been various calls made across the Benefice through announcements and publications encouraging our parishioners to complete the on line questionnaires produced by INEQE. We keenly await the Nationwide result of this audit.

With concerns regarding Safeguarding within the Church of England at the highest level, there are moves to allow us to build on the work of parish safeguarding officers, diocesan safeguarding teams, clergy, churchwardens and others. This will take the form of:

1. An independent body to provide scrutiny of the Church of England's safeguarding activities.
2. A scrutineering body which will be governed by an independent board overseen by an independent chair. Its staff will not be employed by the Church of England but will be employees of a separate organisation.

Pauline Hatrey, Sandra Gristock, Jenny Martin, Steve King.

## **Prayer Support Group**

It is a privilege to report on the work of the Prayer Support Group for 2024.

During 2024 the Prayer Support Group has again prayed for over 30 people or situations that have been brought to our attention and where there has been a variety of prayer needs. We have prayed promptly and in the strictest of confidence. We know from various feedback that our prayers have been heard, and that God has stood in those situations to bring comfort and support to those in need.

The Prayer Support Group is composed of a few Church members from across the Benefice who are dedicated to praying for the needs of others. We are not a closed group and would welcome others with a similar heart to join us – if this is an invitation to you, please contact me.

I make a second invitation to the Benefice at large. It is simply this - please do not be shy about bringing your prayer needs to our attention. The words of a hymn encourage us to take everything to the Lord in prayer and the Prayer Support Group is there to help you do that. Your prayer need could be something for yourself, a family member or friend or about a situation. Whatever it may be; it will be treated confidentially – whatever is shared with the Prayer Support Group stays in the Prayer Support Group.

Prayer requests can be made by anyone, and not just by those who make up the group – all you need to do to ask for prayer is to simply email me at [prayers.street@gmail.com](mailto:prayers.street@gmail.com) or telephone me and provide an outline of the particular prayer need you want to share.

Jeff Brewer – February 2025 (mobile: 07970 881779)

## **Coffee, Chat and Snacks.**

Due to a grant from the Parish Council for the running of the building (electricity and heating) and an anonymous donation we have been able to continue our warm space this year. Coffee, chat and snacks has been open to our community throughout the year to anyone who would value a warm space, a hot drink and good conversation from 10.30 - 12noon on Saturday mornings in the Mission Church. From 30th November, there were some changes including the offer of a simple lunch. We have been welcoming on average fifteen guests to our warm space each week. We have our regulars and recently have been able to welcome some new faces during the colder months. We have been building community and friendships and tackling loneliness in our community.

We have had quite the diverse menu from Pasties to pasta! All with a pudding. We have had some wonderful feedback, such as this space is a 'lifeline for us' and 'I would be sat alone on a Saturday morning,' and it is clear that the space has been invaluable to our older members of society. The space has promoted friendships and intergenerational conversations.

During October and November, we had Poppy with us who was working towards her silver Duke Of Edinburgh award, she was an asset to our team and proved that teenagers and our



more senior guests can converse and learn from each other. We have been blessed with piano players to entertain us. In December we enjoyed a Christmas Buffet and carol singing and this was an enjoyable morning for us all.

We have two new volunteers beginning with us in the Spring, we continually ask for your prayers as we continue to grow.

Sister Rachel Pengelly

### **House Group report 2024**

During 2024 there were 3 house groups meeting across the Benefice:

The Explore@Monday evening group which meets at the Mission Church on Monday evenings (the group has 8 members)

The Walton group which meets via Zoom on Tuesday evenings during school term times (the group has 7 members).

The Wednesday evening group which meets at the Mission Church on Wednesday evenings (this group normally has between 8 and 10 members attending)

During 2024 plans were made for a fourth group and that group started in early 2025 (meeting in the Mission Church on Thursday mornings).

All groups are open to anyone from any of the churches in the Benefice. The groups provide a chance for members to socialize together, to study and discuss topics related to our faith, and to pray together. For some parts of the year all the groups studied shared topics which were related to our sermon series (e.g. the "Meals with Jesus" sermon series) or other themes (e.g. friendship in the book "The Best of Friends"). At other times each group chose their own topic or book of the Bible to study.

The contacts for the groups are as follows:

The Explore@Monday evening group – Steve King (Compton Dundon)

The Walton group - Sonia Beaty (Walton)

The Wednesday evening group - Kay Savage (Mission Church) or Vanessa Adams (Walton) or David Hatrey

The Thursday morning group - Mike Bergner (Mission Church)

Ian Jones (Mission Church)

### **Deanery Synod**

The Deanery Synod met 3 times during 2024, in different venues in the Deanery.

Discussion has centred around a range of issues:

#### **Shared local Ministry plan**

This refers to the organisation of parishes and deployment of priests and those involved in lay ministry across the Deanery.

### **Deanery Mission Plan**

The focus up to September 2024 was 'Tend.'

We have heard encouraging examples of how 'Tend' was put into practice across the parishes, including the Saturday Coffee, Chat and Warm Space at the Mission Church in Street.

From September 2024 to September 2025 the focus will be 'Tell.'

Revd Richard Tweedy is the Deanery Champion leading this.

### **Thrive**

This is a collection of resources to enable churches in a multi-parish Benefice to evaluate where they are, and to help them to flourish further.

We were introduced to the Thrive course and materials, with a view to representatives from each Benefice beginning to meet in 2025.

### **Parish Share**

During 2024 there has been a consultation process taking place on the new Parish Share methodology. This will continue in PCC meetings in 2025.

### **Finance**

We thanked Peter Sage for his work as Treasurer over the past 7 years.

Sonia Beaty has kindly offered to be our new Deanery Treasurer.

Online banking has been set up.

### **Personnel**

David MacGeoch has moved to a new position after 14 years as Vicar of Glastonbury.

Ana Lawrence is our Area Dean, with Jane Durham as Assistant Area Dean.

There are still vacancies for Deanery Synod members in our Benefice, and we would love to hear from you if you are interested in being part of the team.

Pat King, Sandra Gristock, Hilda Grint

### **Charitable Giving**

During 2024, SWCD Churches continued its tradition of supporting a range of local, national and international charity partners as recommended by church members and selected by our PCCs. In addition to the ongoing support we also responded to a number of emergencies, as well as holding fund raising events such as a Macmillan coffee morning in Walton and collections at special services such as for the Royal British Legion.

In total, over the year, our three parishes gave nearly £xxx to these organisations, a result of which we can be very proud in the context of the significant financial challenges we face as a church family.

This year, in response to difficulties engaging our congregations with the organisations we support, we reduced the overall number and asked church members from each of our parishes to act as a 'champion' for one of the chosen charities. News from the charities was shared in Life magazine, prayer requests were included in Sunday intercessions and we also welcomed a speaker from Tearfund in January 2024 to our Street churches. We would love to do more to encourage church members to engage with the charities that we support financially.

Our financial challenges in Street during the year forced us to pause our tithed giving. This was a deeply difficult decision and one we hope not to have to repeat in future years.

Kevin Lawrence

### **Alpha Course**

Alpha is a series of group conversations that freely explore the basics of the Christian faith in an open, friendly environment. Everyone's welcome.

Each session covers a different topic of faith, either in a short talk or video. The Alpha episodes are designed to engage and inspire conversation. They're about thirty minutes long and explore the big issues around faith and unpack the basics of Christianity, addressing questions such as Who is Jesus?, How can we have faith? and How does God guide us?

From September to early December, a group of around eleven people met on Monday evenings to share a meal, watch a video and discuss issues of faith. The group comprised people of faith, people new to faith and people exploring faith.

The discussions were wide-ranging, often challenging and sometimes moving, as we shared our experiences of walking with Jesus as well as searching for him. The hard questions were not avoided and we were honest about not having all the answers.

Every session was wrapped in prayer. Those leading the sessions met weekly online to pray for the participants and for the forthcoming session.

The feedback from those who took part was positive. One participant, a regular church attender, enjoyed being able to re-examine the basics of faith and felt free to ask questions in a 'safe space'. Another found it helpful in rediscovering faith and also appreciated being able to explore ideas and issues without fear of judgement or disapproval.

Both participants and leaders found the 11-week course challenging and inspiring and we are particularly thankful for those faithful servants who provided us with such wonderful food each week. Meeting together over a meal provided us with a great time of fellowship and helped us to get to know each other before watching the videos and discussing them each week.

I would encourage anyone curious about Alpha to keep an eye out for the next course and to be prayerfully considering who they could invite along.

Gill Williams, member of the Alpha leadership team

### **School engagement**

During the year, we have worked with a number of our local schools across the benefice.

**Brookside Academy:** Sister Rachel has been regularly supporting the school with RE. She has been in most year groups during their lessons helping to answer some big questions, such as 'did God intend Jesus to die'? It has been wonderful to hear their questions, and they have many! The children are keen to learn and understand how scripture is relevant to life today.

**Compton Dundon School:** the school now has strong links with St Andrew's. They have attended different services, and we have been invited into the school to support the boys. The boys come and help at CAMEO (the village coffee morning) giving them vital life skills in communicating with the public. They also help at the church with basic maintenance such as gardening. We look forward to making our links even stronger.

**Walton VA Primary School:** during the year we have taken whole school collective worship on a number of occasions and continue to support the school through our two foundation governors, Vanessa Adams and Rev David Hatrey, who replaced Kevin Lawrence in September 2024. Growing links have included children performing at the Walton Coffee morning a couple of times a term, more children coming to Messy Church and regular whole school services in Holy Trinity including Christingle which was a particular highlight.

**Elmhurst Junior School:** As well as through RE support and leading a traditional school Remembrance service, Rev Ana Lawrence is involved as a community governor. The school also come to Holy Trinity, Street for Christmas carol services and an Easter event retelling the Easter story.

Ana Lawrence & Rachel Pengelly

### **Open the Book**

We have enjoyed another successful year sharing the Bible stories in the Primary and Junior schools in Street and Walton. We are a dedicated team of nine volunteers who give our time to this important children's outreach and mission.

Within the past year we held a regional training event led by Rachel Cully, the Open the Book lead nationally. It was an enjoyable afternoon which gave us inspirational ideas of how we could deliver the stories as well as ideas for resources. We are now the proud owners of a pop-up tent, complete with teeth, to become the whale in the Jonah story. So exciting because the children playing Jonah can pretend to be inside the whale!

Open the Book volunteers have to update this training every three years, so this year our whole team is up to date with information about protocol as well as safeguarding. With the new system of members registration with Open the Book we are proud to say we are fully paid-up members.

We share the Bible stories in Walton, Elmhurst, Hindhayes and Brookside Schools either weekly or fortnightly depending on the school. Our storytelling sessions are met with real enthusiasm from the school communities, children and adults alike. The children so enjoy dressing up and acting out the story as well as singing the action songs. We have even had a teacher take part this year! The school communities are always very pleased to see us and are very welcoming. We feel it is a real honour to be able to share the Bible stories with the children, who probably would not hear them otherwise. As a team we support each other well with prayer, care and love.

Pauline Hatrey, Open the Book leader Street, Walton and Compton Dundon

### **Bereavement Café**

Bereavement Café continues to meet on the first Sunday of each month in the Mission Church and welcomes all who have been bereaved of a loved one, be that a life partner, husband, wife, friend or family member.

We welcome those looking for regular support and connection with others who have experienced the pain of loss and grief, and also those who visit to explore what might be available.

The Bereavement Café Team aim to facilitate a warm and welcoming space for those who are struggling or searching in their grief. This hospitality allows the Team to reflect the love of Jesus and provide a human connection, which is important as bereavement can be an isolating experience for some.

Due to the vulnerability that may be present for those experiencing grief, there is a regular framework for each session. This gives a familiar feel and sense of safety to sessions.

The Team is dedicated to the provision of a confidential space in which a person can speak freely, and each meeting is facilitated to allow those who attend the opportunity to engage in conversations around their experiences both past (what happened), and present, (how daily life is now managed).

The cakes and beverages, provided for the Café style sessions further extend the sense of hospitality, and thanks go not only to the Team but also those who bake and provide the refreshments.

Special thanks also go to Sue Ripley who, at Christmas, retired from serving with the Bereavement Café Team. Sue was a founder member of the Team and her input over the years has been a blessing to many.

Stephanie Shortland, member of the bereavement café team.

### **Eco Church**

The Group met five times in the year, at least once in each of the four churches helping us to be aware of each situation. Much of our work was centred on working towards Eco Church Silver Awards, reviewing what was happening in our churches and congregations in the five key areas of Worship and Teaching, Buildings, Land, Community and Local Engagement, and lifestyle.

A sermon series in Lent focused on green theology and the importance of being good stewards of creation. Talks at Lent Lunches, a Carbon Fast and Fairtrade presentations complemented this. We contributed regular articles to the parish magazine 'Life' promoting ethical, environmental behaviour.

Parishioners across the Benefice supported the setting up of the Street Repair Café and volunteered at the monthly sessions. In association with this, recycling opportunities have been promoted, this includes electronic devices (phones, tablets etc.) and candle ends. We monitored energy use in the Benefice churches by completing the Church of England's Energy Footprint Tool (EFT) with the aim of reducing our carbon footprint which may have the added benefit of reducing expenditure, compared to what we would be paying at a time of increasing energy costs. We continued to review what was happening in our churchyards and actively participated in management of them in ways relevant to each local situation.

Towards the end of the year completed Eco Church surveys were submitted to A Rocha.

All four Churches in the Benefice were granted Silver Awards. Congratulations and thanks to the members of the group: Trish Cox, Helen Thomas (Compton Dundon), Sandra Gristock, Andy Savage (Walton), Suzie Williams (Street) and to all those contributing to this in any way.

Susan Ripley (Street)

### **Soulful Nature**

Last December's Walk took us back to Ham Wall nature reserve where our walks began in the previous January.

The group initially met in the first session to discuss the chapter of the book we were following for the year, 'Soulful Nature' by Brian Draper and Howard Green. Followed a week later with a walk that followed the chapter. We enjoyed several walks in the local area looking at the big things as well as the little things, like mosses, plants/ferns that blossom in the cracks. We went in search of rare wildflowers and were blessed looking at butterflies. During the walks we had space to slow down, be mindful and pray. We were observing God in nature and the effect on us nature plays. We looked at eco systems, how they worked and what happened when they break down. In the middle of our walks, we decided to put both talk and walk together and rebrand the group with a new title. This was due to low numbers attending but this was a real blessing to those who came.

We learned to saunter with God, and take beautiful photographs along the way. We learned to listen to nature's song and to be part of nature, not above it.

Sister Rachel Pengelly

### **SWCD Book Group 2024**

The Book Group met six times, reading and discussing books that ranged far and wide; we began in fictional Barchester and ended in Bristol, visiting Syria, Afghanistan, the USA, Botswana and occasionally other places in between. Two books were biographies, the others novels in varying styles. Although not everyone read every one, sometimes starting a book and not finishing, sometimes not even starting, all listen and take part in the discussion. We reflect on the message and why we like or dislike a particular book.

The books we read this year were:-

- The Warden by Anthony Trollope
- The Beekeeper of Aleppo by Christy Lefteri
- Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin
- Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus
- How to Raise an Elephant by Alexander McCall-Smith
- The House in South Road by Joyce Storey

Thank you to everyone participating in 2024.

We would be pleased to welcome anyone who wished to join the group and suggestions of books we might read. Susan Ripley (Street)

## **Stewardship**

Money is one of those things that nobody really likes talking about in our culture, but Jesus had plenty to say on the subject and so we too, have not shied away from being open both about the financial pressures that we face as a church family and some of the Biblical teaching about giving and stewardship.

You will find full details of the 2024 financial position for your parish elsewhere in this report. During the year we have tried to keep these issues before the congregation through, for example, articles in 'Life' magazine. During the year we also introduced the 'Parish Giving' scheme and set up all our parishes on 'Easyfundraising,' an online portal that makes free donations when shoppers purchase online. To date, however, take up of these schemes has been limited, despite publicity. Contactless giving machines in three of our churches are increasingly used, despite ongoing technical difficulties! We have also begun to discuss how we can encourage more church members to set up regular giving schemes.

We also, again, sent thank you letters to everyone in the church family for their financial support, which seems to have been appreciated. We also wrote to each member asking them to review their giving in the light of the financial challenges we faced, which encouraged a number of people to respond.

Our finances across the benefice remain under pressure, particularly with ongoing cost increases and a rising Parish Share. In Street, we hit a particular crisis during 2024 with the parish set to run out of money entirely by the end of the year on current trends. In response the PCC organized a series of presentations and requests for response over the summer and, as a result, increased giving dramatically improved the financial situation although we are far from out of the woods.

Kevin Lawrence

## **Communications**

As a people who are called to share good news, we continue to work hard at communicating both internally, to the church family, and externally to the local communities whom we are called to love. Online, our Facebook presence continues to grow with over 290 followers at the end of the year and some posts getting over 1,000 views, whilst our website attracts around 3,000 hits per month. We have also set up an Instagram account but have more work to do to use this well. 'Life', 'Lifeline' and our church notice boards continue to be regular and valued sources of information and news from across the benefice and this year, and we have done particular work on improving the notice boards in the Mission Church, including installing a display screen. In addition, we have:

- Replaced worn out external notice boards at Walton and Street parish church.
- Used joint benefice services to share information about benefice wide ministries.
- Continued to work towards increasing consistency in our messages through using our logo etc.
- Shared events in one church with the others through posters, Life magazine, Facebook etc.

Kevin Lawrence

## **PARISH REPORTS**

### **Churchwarden Report**

As another year had passed we are grateful that Ana, David and Rachel are still able to give each of our Churches weekly services and we thank them for their leadership and teaching. We are grateful to the readers and lay worship assistants for their help too. Also to Hilda and Andy for their musical skills. We are blessed indeed.

As in the past, our Church keeps running quietly with everybody's input in making coffee, washing up, cleaning and flower arranging. Thanks to each one of you. You don't need a nudge, you just jump up and help. My personal thanks to you all and to Andy Savage and Liz Selway for their endless support and work. Our combined thanks go to Adrian Devenish who for many years has been locking and unlocking our Church daily. Due to health struggles Adrian has relinquished this job and we would like to record our gratitude to him for his commitment and help.

As 2025 advanced we face more challenges with our refurbishment plans but together, prayerfully, we will achieve our goal and save this village church for generations to come. Thank you for all the support and care you all give me in my role as Churchwarden. It is an honour and a privilege.

Sandra Gristock

### **Electoral Roll Report**

During 2024 3 people were added to the Electoral Roll, giving a final number at 31st December 2024 of 33.

Sonia Beaty, Electoral Roll Officer

### **PCC Report**

This year has been another busy year for Holy Trinity, Walton .

Again the main cause of concern is the state of the church building. Plans have been drawn up and a consultation afternoon offered for villagers to see, what we hope, will be the future re – ordering of the church. Sadly the timing of this was not good, with low attendance. Originally it was planned to hold another, but due to further deterioration of the roof it was decided nothing can proceed until the roof is watertight. It is proposed that 2025 will see the start of a huge fund raising campaign to fix this, before considering the next stage. General feeling was the village would be more supportive with this, rather than big internal changes at the moment.

We also received a brand new external notice board, courtesy of Mr Adrian Huggett, very much appreciated.

Small repairs have been ongoing with a big thank you to Andy and his “team” for this.

Outreach to the village and school:

The Thursday coffee morning is still a regular event with its popularity growing, even attracting the odd passerby in to join us. A new banner has been purchased as this was felt a valuable asset. On several occasions the school has visited the coffee morning, to entertain us with their singing, a joy to hear their young voices with new songs and some older more familiar ones. A range of events have taken place - quiz, cream tea and village garage sale, to name a few, organised once more by the “Friends of Walton Church”. Thank you all from the PCC.



Messy Church continues to bring youngsters from the school to join us. The success of this, so depends on fliers being put into the children's bags, with numbers varying but it's good to see the enthusiasm of the youngsters and generally numbers are growing. Open the Book has a regular team attending the school, bringing Bible stories into the school. This is in partnership with the Baptist Church.

Our Christmas celebrations, Christingle, Crib Service and Midnight Communion, were once again well supported. Filling the church with praise and anticipation.

School governors, we now have our quota here with David Hatrey agreeing to be a governor joining Vanessa. It is felt his knowledge will be invaluable.

After many years as safeguarding officer, Sandra Gristock has decided to retire, we cannot thank her enough for her dedication to this role. Pauline Hatrey agreed to be our rep on the team.

Once more I would like to thank the PCC and Church members for their support when I have struggled.

Wendy Devenish PCC secretary

### **Walton Coffee Mornings Thursdays 10.30-11.30**

Our Thursday morning meetings continue to be well attended. It gives local people a chance to regularly meet up, hear news and chat, as well as enjoy a drink and biscuits (the best being Liz's home made!). Some members bring cake on their birthdays, which is shared between all whilst we sing 'Happy Birthday'. We have been treated to Walton school children singing at Christmas and this month, which is a great joy. All are welcome to join us - we have even had the pleasure of sharing time with several 'passers by' from elsewhere over the years.

Since Ana joined us, we have a short break in conversations whilst either she, Rachel or Andy give a five minute 'Thought for the Day' talk. This has proved very popular with all, giving us something meaningful to think about as we go home.

With few helpers we enjoy a happy hour.

Brenda Stradling

### **Friends of Walton**

We had a very busy year fundraising actually doing 10 events although still managing to enjoy 2 cream teas and a BBQ during the year. We also managed to support our other churches with their fundraising and support our benefice charities with fundraising.

As always we started with a quiz evening in February.

A very sociable cream tea in April and again in June. Any excuse to eat cake.

We held a fun day in the churchyard in June.

A garage sale in July.

Andy and Louise put on a lovely BBQ in August which was a lovely, relaxing afternoon.

At the village fun day we had a car boot sale while some of our folk helped with the refreshments.

In September we held a very successful coffee morning for Macmillan.

A harvest supper in October was great fun as always.

In November we had 2 craft sales on the same weekend. One supporting the WI and the other Compton Dundon's big breakfast.

A very good year although exhausting.

This year will be a challenge as we aim to raise money for the refurbishment fund as well as day to day running.

A big thank you to the Friends group for their ideas and planning and also to the hard working bakers and food providers, musicians and entertainers. We are so fortunate to have such talent among us.

Sandra Gristock & Liz Selway

### **Reordering**

In January it was decided that an open day would be arranged so that the wider church and the village could see what was being proposed for their church. The open day was held on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> May as Mark Taylor (Architect) was available to attend and explain in detail what was being proposed. As part of this community consultation a questionnaire was produced outlining all the proposed changes and asking for comments and suggestions. The feedback received was very interesting with 100 percent of the returned forms suggesting that the roof must be repaired as a priority. Other parts of the proposed changes were viewed with varying degrees of acceptance. It was suggested that as the sample numbers were quite low, that a second consultation should take place in 2025, a date has not yet been decided.

Following this consultation the PCC approved the creation of two subgroups, one looking at the building headed by Andy Savage, and the other looking at the fund raising headed by Kevin Lawrence.

A dedicated account has been set up for the funds raised for the re-ordering, and a project specific page has also been added to the card machine.

It was suggested that we visit some local churches that have been re-ordered, and Mark Taylor has very kindly supplied some contacts, these will be followed up early in 2025.

Following a PCC meeting planned for early March it is hoped that this project will take a big step forward by the appointment of a Quantity Surveyor to put some detailed costings together, along side plans to approach the DAC (Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches) and also the start of the fundraising campaign.

Andy Savage