

Welcome to our St Stephen's Year Book 2025

Contained in these pages is information about the life of God's church of St Stephen's in Lindley. It contains official reports, summaries of the life of groups that make up our church community and information about our direction and work over the calendar year of 2025. I invite you to read through this document, prepared and collated by volunteers from our church community, to give you the opportunity to know more about the ministry and mission of our church, and to give thanks to God for this.

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Minutes of the Vestry and Annual Parochial Church Meetings from 18th May 2025

Held at St. Stephen's Church Lindley

The Vestry Meeting

Appointment of Clerk: Revd Abbie Palmer (Priest in Charge) proposed the appointment of Heike Vehling as clerk. Heike was appointed by unanimous vote.

Election of Churchwardens and Deputy Churchwardens

Karen Frank proposed that Rebecca (Becky) Black be elected churchwarden. This was seconded by Vanessa Stewart. Becky was elected unopposed.

There were no other nominations for the post of churchwarden.

Heike Vehling proposed that Suzanne Cunningham be elected deputy churchwarden. This was seconded by David Sargent. Suzanne was elected unopposed.

There were no other nominations for the post of deputy churchwarden.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Present: Fifty-two

Apologies

Apologies were received from Becky Black, Kate Chamberlain, Andrew Tomlinson, Sarah Hutton, Muriel Richardson, Valerie Armitage, Quinton Armitage, Rosemary Ainsworth and Bernard Ainsworth.

Approval of Minutes of the previous APCM & Matters arising

No corrections were offered to the minutes of the previous APCM. The minutes were approved unanimously following proposal by Marion Donaldson, seconded by Michael Leech.

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous APCM.

Churchwardens Remarks

Suzanne Cunningham read out a message from Becky Black:

Becky would like to express her heartfelt gratitude to everyone who supported her this year, acknowledging the efforts of individuals who perform unseen tasks, serve on committees, manage finances, and contribute to the church's worship planning. She highlights the importance of these contributions in making the church a welcoming community.

Lastly, she would like to highlight the collective effort of all and the dedication of all church members in creating a positive environment for all at Stephen's. Let's continue this way of working into this coming year.

Incumbent's Remarks

Revd Abbie Palmer presented her remarks to the meeting, encouraging those present to read the reports in the Yearbook before moving on to looking forward and challenging us to consider how we will progress with living out our Vision statement "St Stephen's aspires to be an inclusive church celebrating and sharing the love of God, connecting with all in our community through living faith in Jesus Christ." as individuals and as a parish community.

Here is the full text:

I give you a new commandment. Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another. This week I heard the following question posed, "can you command love?". Clearly Jesus did. He commanded us to love one another. If we do so we will be known as his disciples. Because we all love one another.

Love does not require us to agree. It does not require us to live in the same house or even to like each other much. But love is patient. Kind. It is not envious, boastful or rude. Love doesn't keep score. Love delights in doing good. All these, and the many other aspects of love which are listed in 1 Corinthians 13 are things God can require, indeed command of us, because He loved us first. Loved us into existence.


Why am I saying this at an Annual Parochial Church Meeting? Because this is worship. This is us coming together before God to acknowledge and appreciate all God is in our lives, to reconnect to this and to be enriched in that connection. Today I hope to encourage you, my siblings in Christ, to be enriched for the whole of the next year, and perhaps longer, in building ourselves up as the body of Christ in love. That is what living faith in Jesus Christ is. And it is through living faith that we will realise our vision.

Some of us have friends here today. Some of us have blood relations here. Today, whether you are here for the first time, occasionally or often, we all have community around us. But perhaps we are separated by our differences, our ages, our life experiences or simply because we haven't got to know each other yet. Hands up who knows me? Why... because I have a particular role within the life of this community for a while. When we offer something of ourselves in community, we become known, and begin to know others, whether they are similar to us or different. We connect and build up the body of Christ.

This week I was away on retreat. During my prayer time I received a fresh image from familiar words. We are vessels of God... references to this are many in the Bible. But the image I received was of blood vessels in the body, pumping blood around to different parts. Fragile, breakable but essential for the health and life of the whole body. Then I saw the brain connections, the synapses, being fired and strengthened and even newly created as we learn and change. These are the vessels God calls us to be. Connecting to each other, giving life and health to one another, and receiving life and health from others.

Celebrating and sharing the love of God. It begins here. And when it is true and real, it spreads out into our community and the world. So this coming year, I sense God's call on our lives to strengthen our bonds of love through each of us sharing of ourselves with the body and being willing to receive more from the body through living faith. Caring for each other. Understanding each others trials and challenges. Reaching out in love. Offering our time and gifts knowing that we will receive just as much as we give if we offer in love.

Last year when we launched this vision, we handed out these little cards. As well as being a reminder of our vision as a church, they offered some challenging questions for each of us as individuals. Now is the time to broaden these questions to us as a community of faith. Are WE living out our faith. Who have WE included/excluded?

<p style="text-align: center;">Our Vision</p> <p>St Stephen's aspires to be an inclusive church celebrating and sharing the love of God, connecting with all in our community through living faith in Jesus Christ.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind... and love your neighbour as yourself." Matthew 22:37-40</small></p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Vision Challenges</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Am I living out my faith in Jesus Christ?2. Whom am I including / have I excluded?3. Am I celebrating and sharing God's love?4. What can I do to help our church be a blessing to others in our community?
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So if you have an idea about how we as a church can offer different or improved opportunities for achieving our vision, please speak to a PCC member.... They are your elected representatives here to help build up the body of Christ. If you want to trial a new initiative, or try being involved in something, speak up. This is our church. We are church. Let us worship God in our lives and shine as a beacon of love and hope in our community. Amen.

Reports and Financial Statements

Revd Abbie Palmer invited comments and questions relating to the reports and financial statement.

Karen Frank commented that she was relieved to be able to present the Financial Statements to the APCM. Glenn Stewart proposed a vote of thanks which was supported by all present.

Revd Dick Swindell asked if the reduced number of people on our electoral roll would result in a reduction of the parish share payable. Revd Abbie Palmer responded that numerous factors define the calculation of the parish share payable, so we would have to await feedback from the Diocese.

Heike Vehling proposed a vote of thanks to the huge amount of work done by the building committee and others in relation to the roof project. Thanks was supported by all present.

No other questions or comments were offered in response to the Reports, Financial Statements, and Trustees' Report for the year ended 31st December 2024.

The meeting accepted the Reports, Financial Statements, and Trustees' Report as true and accurate reports.

Election of Lay PCC Members

Glenn Stewart's term of office had come to an end and he has not stood for re-election. Revd Abbie Palmer thanked Glenn for his many years of service on the PCC. [N.B. Glenn was voted back onto PCC at a meeting on 10 June 2025 for a period of three years].

Emma Drydon proposed Victoria (Vicky) Golding to be elected to the PCC. This was seconded by Charles Smith. Vicky was elected unopposed for a three-year term.

Vanessa Stewart proposed that Brenda Liversidge be elected to the PCC. This was seconded by Victoria Golding. Brenda was elected unopposed for a three-year term.

No other nominations were received.

Election of Deanery Synod Lay Members

No nominations for an additional Deanery Synod Lay Member were received.

Appointment of Independent Examiner

Karen Frank proposed that the West Yorkshire Community Accountancy Service (WYCAS) be appointed. This was carried unanimously.

Any Other Business

There was no other business.

Revd Abbie closed the meeting.

PCC Reports

PCC Review of the Year 2025 (Report by Sylvia Johnson - PCC Secretary since August 2025)

The PCC met nine times since the APCM in 2025. Meetings were usually in Church on Tuesday evenings.

Key items of business for this year have included the Covenant for Clergy Wellbeing, the discussion around Pastoral Reorganisation regarding St Philip's Birchencliffe, reviews of policies (including safeguarding, and Safer Recruitment for Junior Church), the Archdeacon's Visitation, the appointment of a new inspecting architect, the introduction of Cornerstone (a new online learning platform from the Diocese designed to support churches in all aspects of giving and generosity), a change in policy to ensure refreshments are offered freely after services and a review of our church's charitable giving. A new parish administrator was appointed by the PCC on a one year contract and Samantha Johnson began working with us in July 2025.

The PCC is very grateful for all the work of the PCC subcommittees, who have worked tirelessly in the following areas to assist us through extended consideration of the areas delegated to them. These are:

- Buildings Committee
- Communications Subgroup
- Events Subgroup
- Finance Committee
- Standing Committee
- Worship Subgroup

Many members of the above groups are not PCC members, and they give many many hours of support with relevant expertise and interest. The PCC takes this opportunity to sincerely thank them for all their work for St Stephen's and the wider community.

Sylvia Johnson was appointed as PCC Secretary in August 2025 and is not a PCC member.

The PCC maintains a connection with Lindley Church of England Infant School with several PCC members also being Trustees or Members of the Board of the school. In 2025 a joint meeting of the Trustees and PCC was held to share some learning on a common theme.

Special thanks go to Churchwarden Becky Black, and Deputy Churchwarden Suzanne Cunningham for their wonderful efforts to keep everything running smoothly.

The PCC is most grateful to our Treasurer, Deanery Synod representatives, PCC members and subgroup members for their hard work and commitment throughout the past year. We know many others not specifically mentioned here give their time voluntarily to ensure the smooth running of the Parish. The PCC says a very big "thank you" to each and every one of you - you are all valued!

I would also like to record my thanks on behalf of the PCC for all who uphold the life of St. Stephen's Church, Lindley, and express how blessed we are to have Revd Abbie as our Priest-in-Charge.

Brief description of the purpose and objectives of the PCC

The parochial church council (PCC) is the executive committee of a parish and consists of clergy, churchwardens and representatives of the laity. It is responsible for the financial affairs of the parish and

for the maintenance of the church, the churchyard and any other church buildings within the parish. The PCC also assists the clergy in managing church matters and promoting the mission of the church.

The PCC is the decision-making body for a parish. Its function is set out under the Synodical Governance Measure. The PCC is also the employer of anyone employed in the parish such as vergers, youth workers, cleaners or administrators. The Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 sets out the responsibilities and duties of the PCC. PCCs are charities and their members are Charity Trustees, therefore must ensure that the right are in place to ensure good governance and compliance with charity law and ecclesiastical (canon) law which is unique to Church of England churches.

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at St Stephen's church and to become part of our inclusive parish community. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and Scripture, music and sacrament.

The PCC:

- works with the Priest-in-Charge in sharing leadership and ensures legal compliance with charity law and ecclesiastical law, in particular in the areas of safeguarding, finance, employment and appointments;
- cares for the church building and churchyard so that they may be best suited for the purpose of the Church's ministry and mission; and
- is a channel of consultation within the wider Church on matters that affect the Church locally and nationally, through its synodical structures.

PCC members work with the Priest-in-Charge to ensure the effective running of the parish. This involves prayer: members are encouraged to pray for the meetings, other members, and the life of the parish. PCC members attend regular meetings, reading minutes, financial statements and papers before each meeting, so they can consider how best to contribute to the items to be discussed.

Each member of the PCC is valued for what they bring: their gifts, skills, experience, and knowledge. These are offered in service of the aims of the PCC, both in the meetings and in the wider life of the Church. The PCC members attend major activities when they can, not just in the parish, but in the diocese and Deanery, so that they are aware of the broader context in which the Church is situated.

Deanery Synod Report (Report by Marion Donaldson)

The meetings as usual have been held at the Parish church or at St Paul's at Armitage Bridge and Huddersfield is combined with Almondbury.

The churches represented reveal varied views and concerns across the deaneries. We are encouraged to bring our PCC concerns to the floor and we hear pertinent information especially on practical matters such as the parish share, the maintenance collective, solar panels.

On a more spiritual level we share prayers with our wider community.

Finance Report (Report by Karen Frank)

The financial accounts for the year 2025 were issued as a separate document. Below are some explanatory remarks from our treasurer Karen Frank.

When looking at the 2025 accounts it can be difficult to draw a direct comparison with the 2024 accounts given the significant roofing costs which appeared in the 2024 figures. It may be best to concentrate on the unrestricted income and outgoings as this gives a better overall picture of how the PCC is managing its finances. On pages 7 and 15 of the accounts you will see that direct comparisons can be made between the two years for unrestricted income and expenditure. Income increased during 2025 largely due to three generous legacies which were left for the general benefit of St Stephen's. Expenditure for 2025 increased largely as a result of us paying our Parish Share in full which we were unable to achieve during 2024. Overall during 2025 this meant that before any transfers between the accounts, income exceeded expenditure by £5,192 compared to 2024 where income exceeded expenditure by £6,712.

During 2025 we were able to pay the Parish Share of £62,210 in full which is something we should be proud of. It has only been possible to pay the Parish Share through the immense generosity of those who give to church on a regular basis, those who donate and leave legacies and those who support our fund raising activities – thank you all.

The Parish Share is the financial contribution parishes are asked to make to support the mission and ministry of the Church. It primarily covers the costs of clergy, their housing, training and pensions.

The total direct costs in 2024 for one clergy member was calculated at £64k. This is not what the clergy are paid but takes into account the stipend cost, employer's national insurance contribution (15%), the cost of pension provision, housing costs, clergy training and other associated costs.

An explanation of the different types of funds can be found on page 10 of the accounts.

Restricted income and expenditure is generally planned well in advance. Whilst funds may be raised to fund projects over a period of a few years, the expenditure is usually carried out in later years. That has been the case in 2025 with the final roof spend taking place in February 2025 but the income having been raised in 2023/2024. This means that there is technically an overspend of restricted funds for 2025 but this has been funded from the restricted money previously raised which has been sat in the restricted bank account.

During 2025 we have also been pleased to have helped two local families in need through the Vicar's Discretionary Fund. This was money donated anonymously several years ago and held as restricted money for use in times of need.

Charitable Giving Review at St Stephen's for Calendar Year 2026

The PCC have been prayerfully and strategically reviewing our charitable giving as an organisation. A full report of the outcome of this review is available separately to this paper.

Safeguarding Report (Report by Revd Richard Swindell)

Our fairly new (March 2024) Safeguarding Officer The Revd Richard (Dick) Swindell has worked closely with Revd Abbie to ensure that we comply with all the necessary checks for people working in our Church with children, young and vulnerable adults. During the year new Policy Documents and advice has been issued

by the Church of England and we have adopted these Policies and changed our website and church porch notices to reflect these changes. People's training requirements are monitored and updated as necessary. Most Training is done on-line and we are advised when it needs updating.

In March 2026 Dick notified the PCC of his resignation from the post. At present, we have no Parish Safeguarding Officer. If you have any safeguarding concerns, please contact Revd Abbie. Alternatively contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team on 0113 353 0257 or via email at safeguarding@leeds.anglican.org

Electoral Roll Report (Report by Electoral Roll Officer: Heike Vehling)

The electoral roll revision period for this APCM ran from 5th to 25th April 2026. Thanks to everyone who provided updated contact details following house moves. This was an interim year, the next full preparation of a new roll is required in 2031 (interval is now 6 years and last full revision was in 2025).

145 People on were on electoral roll of St Stephen's Lindley at APCM 18th May 2025.

Changes

- + 0 Added
- 1 Removed (died)
- 2 Corrections (removal of duplicates)
- 0 Moved out of area / Asked to be removed

142 Total as of 25th April 2025 (of which 106 are resident within the Parish Boundary)

Please contact Heike at ststephenslindley@gmail.com if you wish to check the information held about you on the electoral roll.

In accordance with our GDPR policy your data will only be used for the purposes you have consented to and it will not otherwise be shared. You can view the GPDR policy on our website under Data Privacy Notice at <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/18029/page/76062/view/> or request a printed copy of the policy in church.

St Stephen's Church Buildings Group & Gardening Team (Report by Graham Large)

The buildings committee and the gardening team exist to support the church warden within the responsibilities of church maintenance, repair and regular inspections. This is both for the building and its fabric, including service utilities, church yard and grounds.

The key instruments used by the buildings committee are the maintenance plan that is mainly an output from Quinquennial Inspections (QI) and the property risk register. The risk register has been developed and now regularly managed by the current committee with particular focus on issues of health and safety.

The start of 2025 was marked by the completion of work to the roof on the south side and the removal of the scaffolding. This work has proved to be successful, significantly improving rain water dispersal and eliminating water damage. Unfortunately, due to vandalism, the porch and kitchen suffered significant rain water ingress. Inspection revealed newly installed roof flashings had been damaged and removed, leading to a lengthy and prolonged discussion with the insurers and builders. This was eventually resolved and repairs were completed satisfactorily.

The heating of the church has been the primary focus for the committee in 2025. A company specialising in building services engineering, LEDA, was engaged to conduct a 'Heat Only Review'. This resulted in an independent and informed report on future heating options, based on current and potential church usage.

In parallel, a visit to St Chad's in Bradford gave first hand experience of Radiant Halo heaters. These are typically installed suspended in the Nave roof space and generate Infra-Red heat from height.

A visit to Christ Church, New Mill in March was made to discuss their heating experience. The church is of same age as St Stephen's, with heating issues not dissimilar. This led to a positive meeting with a local heating engineer who is managing to keep their aging gas boiler working beyond its expected life.

As a conclusion of the above research and investigation, the committee produced a summary paper proposing a strategy and high level costs for the immediate and future heating provision. This was presented to the PCC in September as a precursor to a broader church strategy. The heating strategy is split into four phases, with phase 1 being recommended be done as soon as possible. The PCC were fully supportive of this and agreed a budget for it.

Phase 1 was completed as the first stage to allow for, as a minimum, the capability for future background heating in the community areas and first floor rooms and comprised the following;

- The main boiler was fully serviced and essential spare parts, no longer available commercially, have been sourced and purchased. This has given the boiler an extended life but remains the biggest risk on the register.
- Two condemned boilers on the 2nd floor that ran the community rooms system were removed and the gas supply to same was capped off at ground level.
- Two 22mm valved feeds were fitted to the Nave heating system to allow future connection to the now currently redundant community rooms system via a heat exchanger.

At its November meeting the committee created a property plan which incorporated the heating strategy with a range of works required to address issues of maintenance and the mitigation of known risks. This was presented to the PCC in November to highlight the need for a combined plan that should include the aspirations for developing areas of worship and witness. The PCC and building committee are now planning a joint meeting in March 2026 to develop this strategy and determine a potential priority order whilst bearing in mind the next QI in April and its possible outcomes.

The QI is something all churches must have every 5 years. This is undertaken by a qualified and independent architect. St Stephen's has been supported in this process by One17 architect practice and this year we were given notice of their intention to step back from QI work. This is mainly due to the retirement of Stuart Beaumont who has been One17's architect handling St Stephen's case work for many years. To this end, a small selection panel of Revd Abbie, Becky Black (church warden) and Bernard Ainsworth (buildings cttee) was formed to identify a new architect. From a shortlist and interview process, Daniel Elkington of Donald Insall Associates was appointed.

The first piece of work for Daniel has been to create plans and drawings for the replacement internal doors. The fully glazed doors will provide a much-improved welcoming experience, as well as better access and insulation. Work on this is at an advanced stage following extensive PCC discussion and congregational engagement.

Some other standalone work has been carried out;

- The external floodlights have been upgraded with new fittings and 'Dusk to Dawn' sensors.
- The community room lighting has been upgraded by replacing the obsolete fittings and bulbs with LED sealed units and was fully funded with a grant from the Diocese of Leeds Environment Programme Net Zero Carbon Quick Wins fund. As well as solving the problem of unobtainable bulbs it is a further step on the sustainable church journey. We are hugely grateful to the Diocese for this support.

The enthusiastic and diligent **Gardening Team** have continued to give essential support to the committee. As well as the general work to keep the churchyard neat and tidy they have fulfilled important tasks including clearance of drains, monitoring trees for cracks and damage and also checking boundary walls and gravestones for stability. They are regularly complimented for their work by members of the public who pass through the churchyard or pause on the popular bench.

Communications Sub-Group Report (Report by Heike Vehling)

The communications team did not hold any formal meetings this past year. They have continued to deliver activities within their remit to support the work of St Stephens in the Parish.

Written content: Editing biweekly notices and keeping the website (especially the Services/Events & News sections) up to date in collaboration with Rev'd Abbie and the Parish Administrator. Assisting in the annual preparation of the Yearbook including collation of reports from the numerous contributors and layout/editing.

Noticeboards: Continue to review the use of the noticeboards in the entrance area of the church to keep information clearly displayed and ensure it's current. The team have an informal rolling rota to ensure this. The Parish administrator supports the team in ensuring internal and external noticeboards display up to date information.

Event Publicity/ Additional leaflets: The comms team assist with advertising via our Facebook page, external (e.g. Huddersfield Hub, ...) as well as our website, noticesheet when the need arises. We are grateful for the support from our Parish administrator who has taken over most of this activity. It is worth noting that the production of event posters or other additional leaflets is responsibility of teams / event organisers unless otherwise agreed.

Outreach St Stephens (Report by Rosemary Ainsworth)

Another busy year starting February 15th, 2025, with a wine tasting evening hosted by Ted and Sylvia Johnson. This was followed by our Annual Pancake party which was not as well attended as other years, leading us to consider our pricing for this event. Throughout the year as well as the above we hosted and supported a variety of events.

- A talk by Charlie Smith on the Pubs of Huddersfield, which proved to be very popular.
- Afternoon Tea on August 9th Sandwiches, cake and desserts were up to their usual high standard.
- Heritage Weekend 13th September, many people had come from far afield to explore the Church and other buildings in and around Lindley.

- The Scarecrow Festival was held over the very wet weekend of 3rd to 5th October but the weather did not deter people from visiting the Church to view the many scarecrows and enjoy refreshments prepared by our kitchen team.
- Wreath Making Demonstration, a new event for us. 20 ladies attended and created amazing, varied wreaths under expert tuition and guidance from Hilary Gee and her colleague, Sheila from Huddersfield Flower Club.
- Lindley Open Evening on 2nd December. The main street was closed for this event, and 60 people visited the Church where we served refreshments.
- Christmas Tree Festival, another new event, which was well received with many people asking if this could be an annual event.
- Throughout the year we held a variety of concerts making full use of the marvellous acoustics of the Church: these included HCS Junior Choir; Sundown Swing Choir; 2 Jazz Bands; an Organ Recital; Voces Seraphorum; Gledholt Male Voice Choir; Lindley Band and finally the newly created Huddersfield Male Voices. A marvelous year all round for music.
- We continue to be mindful of the need to ensure the safety of visitors and volunteers. We now plan each event carefully, breaking down each one into stages and staff each stage accordingly to its needs. This is leading us to encourage more people to volunteer their skills and expertise to help us.

All in all, a very successful year with many events that delighted and entertained. We also continue to be open to suggestions for fresh ideas suitable to engage our whole Community.

Worship Committee (Report by Revd Abbie Palmer)

The worship subgroup meets a few times a year. This year we agreed the revision of several orders of service, planned a full year of monthly Sunday afternoon services and arranged for invited preachers to speak around our Vision statement. The worship committee provides the clergy with a broader perspective on our worshipping life. If you are interested in becoming involved, please speak to Revd Abbie.

Other Reports

Junior Church (Report by Megan Barford)

Over the course of 2025, Junior Church welcomed 56 different children and young people, and their families, at St Stephen's. The year saw some pretty big changes: Charlie Smith stepped down after 7 years as Junior Church coordinator, and we are very grateful for his years of ministry with children and young people here. New leaders (Richard Dewar, Helen Hudson and Karen Stuart) and helpers (Opeyemi Bayode, Emma Drydon, Peter Drydon, Vicky Golding and Beatrix Langara) have stepped forward to support Junior Church and the existing team, and Beatrix Langara has taken on the role of Junior Church Coordinator. We have a flourishing team who work in brilliantly creative ways to explore the Bible and think about how we can respond to God in the world today. Highlights of the year included a summer challenge which invited children to notice and take pictures of crosses in their surroundings, creating a beautiful collage backdrop for the church nativity scene, and making Christingles in preparation for our Christmas Eve services. Please do keep the children and young people and their families, and the Junior Church team, in your prayers, as we support children and young people in our community to grow in love for Christ.

Music at St Stephen's (Report by Mark Ellis – Director of Music)

St Stephen's choir leads our worship most Sunday mornings, with hymns and an anthem. I was particularly grateful to our choristers for their dedication in learning my new setting of the Magnificat, which formed part of our Evensong Service in March 2025. For the autumn Choral Evensong Service, we prepared Basil Harewood's Magnificat in A flat. At our Carols by Candlelight service in December, we were joined by singers from other choirs which hopefully generated a particularly festive atmosphere, performing well-known carols and new arrangements. Recently, our choir has been joined by new singers – so we maintain the long tradition of four-part singing (sometimes unaccompanied) – and we are always very pleased to welcome new recruits to the fold.

Our Worship Band plays the hymns for the All-age worship services on the first Sunday of most months (apart from January and August). The hymns are chosen to appeal widely and are supported by flute, clarinets, saxophones and euphonium, with drum kit keeping us all in time.

I am very grateful for the ongoing encouragement for our music making, and also for much support behind the scenes, with members of the various music groups arranging, copying, sorting and filing the music. A big thank you to all singers, instrumentalists, helpers and supporters.

St Stephen's also hosts a variety of other musical events – most notably last year, Sister Act – and there were also lunchtime organ recitals, with visiting soloists, and other concerts which sustain the church's rich musical heritage.

Churches Together in Huddersfield North West (Report by Revd. Abbie Palmer)

This group continues to meet around five times a year to plan shared worship and activities for the churches in our area. In 2025 this included a shared Ash Wednesday service at St Stephen's, shared morning prayer during holy week and the Good Friday Walk of Witness and Good Friday Worship at Lindley Methodist Church. We pray for each other and support each other's initiatives. In October, Revd. Abbie took up the role of Chair of the group and we look forward to some new shared working in 2026.

Bell Ringing

Once a month practices have continued on the third Monday of each month. These have been well attended and useful to many ringers, especially people learning to ring. Once a month Sunday service ringing, normally on the first Sunday of the month, has also been a success.

Five quarter peals have been rung this year. On 8th May we rang to commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE Day. Another peal was rung to celebrate the 43rd wedding anniversary of local ringers Mark and Sue Sheridan.

We are planning to ring two quarter peals, one of them at Lindley, on the afternoon of 7th June 2026 in appreciation of the commitment to ringing of our previous tower captain David Smith, on the occasion of his golden wedding anniversary and 88th birthday.

Parish Lunch *(Report by Revd. Abbie Palmer)*

The Parish Lunch takes place on the second Thursday in the month (except January & August) and is always well attended. You don't need to be a regular church goer. Anyone living in the area and looking for company is welcome.

A wholesome two course meal is served followed by coffee/ tea and mints. Patrons pay £8 which covers the direct and associated costs of putting on the lunch. Specific dietary requirements are catered for including diabetic, gluten-free and dairy allergies. When new people join we ensure they are made welcome. During 2025 we provided over 360 meals and lots of wonderful company. Please speak to Sheila Donkersley or Revd Abbie for more information about this great outreach event.

Open The Book *(Report by Judith Smythe)*

This year our group of around 12 people from St Stephen's and Lindley Methodist Churches have enjoyed presenting a variety of stories from the Old and New Testament to the children of Lindley Infants School. These have included wise and foolish builders, the courage of Ruth living in a foreign land before finding love and Gideon putting his trust in God as well as the Great Church celebrations of Christmas Epiphany, Palm Sunday and Easter. We also put on an outdoor performance of the good Samaritan on Lindley recreation ground during a joint Sunday morning service with Lindley Methodists in July. We are a friendly group who would welcome new members. Great acting skill is not required just enthusiasm and a love of passing on bible stories to the next generation.

Church Cleaning Group *(Report by Sheila Donkersley)*

Our superb cleaning team have worked very hard this year. The building work led to a little bit more work for us all but this seems to have gone well and we still had smiley faces.

We are a small team, meeting up every 2 weeks, on a Wednesday morning, for approx an hour and a half. Additionally, we hold a spring clean during lent where we ask for helpers from the congregation to join us on a Saturday to tackle more tasks and get the church ready for Easter.

We are always open for anyone who would like to come along to help with the vacuuming or a bit of dusting.

Flower Team

This team is led by Hilary Gee and does a wonderful job of arranging flowers in time for each Sunday's service (except Lent & Advent). If you are interested in helping, new volunteers are very welcome.

Flowers are sponsored by many in the congregation which is very much appreciated and enjoyed. On Easter Sunday lilies are sponsored in memory of a loved one or in celebration of a happy event. The team enjoy creating special arrangements to make our church look even more beautiful, following the period of Lent.

We thank this brilliant team for all their hard work and dedication.

Other Volunteers

We would also like to thank the many other volunteers who help to make our parish welcoming (e.g. welcomers, sides people, coffee duty), support the smooth running of worship (e.g. readings, intercessions, altar servers, lay communion ministers) or in some other small or large way help out often behind the scenes (e.g. admin, poster design, linen). More help is always welcome, please speak to Revd Abbie if you are able to help or have a talent you wish to share.

Lindley Community Theatre Company (formerly Lindley Church Amateur Operatic Society)

Prepared on behalf of the LCTC Committee

2025 was an exciting year for the company as we returned to their roots and put on Sister Act: The Musical at St Stephen's Church in June. We performed to packed audiences with very positive feedback on the production. In November, we returned to St Stephen's for a concert celebrating 50 years of the company, performing items from shows that have been performed by the company over that time. We also held several fundraising events through the year and look forward to 2026 when we will be performing Calendar Girls the Musical at Slaithwaite Civic Hall from 16-18 July 2026. We plan to return to St Stephen's in the autumn for another concert of favourite hits.

To enquire about getting involved with this local theatre group, either on stage or off, email info@lindleytheatrecompany.com

Christian African Relief Trust (CART) (Report by G & V Stewart)

Christian African Relief Trust is a UK registered charity started in 1983 and run entirely by unpaid volunteers both in the UK and overseas. It is based here in Huddersfield and serves a variety of destinations across Africa. Founded on Christian principles, the charity serves people of all faiths, regardless of ethnicity, social status, age or gender. Anyone in need can be helped. Running costs are covered by income raised in our Charity shop. No fees or salaries are paid to any of our volunteers.

CART focuses on supporting sustainable development, responding to requests from known and trusted bodies. In the past year we have supported 5 boreholes; skills training for tailoring x2, bakery, bread making, hairdressing x2, entrepreneurship; tree planting, goat rearing, chicken rearing, solar powered irrigation. Also we annually sponsor education of pupils in Kenya and Cameroon. We are always looking for additional sponsors to contribute towards the fees of £500/ pupil in Kenya and £200 in Cameroon...any amount can be combined to cover these costs. Total spend on small grants was £56,000.

40ft containers filled with educational, vocational, medical and personal goods were sent to Zimbabwe, The Gambia, Cameroon, Zambia and Uganda; next one is to Malawi. Total spending on containers was £33,000.

Given that our income from charity shop sales and financial donations has dropped during the past 18 months, we are amazed at what we still manage to achieve. **Thank you** to anyone who has helped by making a purchase, a donation of any kind or by physically helping on site.

Christian African Relief Trust enables St Stephen's community to reach out to people and places in Africa at a village level. Together we can make a big impact demonstrating our Christian values of charitable giving and service. Every penny you donate goes to sending goods or supporting projects. Your generous financial donations are not used for fees, marketing or advertising. You get genuine feedback on how your contribution makes a real difference to people's lives in our newsletter, published twice a year – next edition due for circulation in the next few weeks – should you feel like helping to fill some envelopes!!

All the Trustees are grateful to the St Stephen's church community for choosing to support our mission. Glenn or Vanessa Stewart are Trustees. There are members of our church who are long serving "founding" supporters and donors. Their loyal contributions and yours are highly valued.

Anyone wanting to make a difference is welcome to donate their time, effort or money. Small regular monthly donations are the lifeblood to our projects programme. We are seeking volunteers for half day shifts in our charity shop, based at Lockwood. Packers to sort & to pack goods in our warehouse are welcomed; others help to repair bicycles, computers or electrical goods, and occasionally load a container. Hours and commitment at your own convenience – the labour is worthy and the reward gathered in your heart.

Please talk to Glenn or Vanessa if you would like more details.

Lindley Church of England Infant School

We have had a busy year so far at Lindley CE Infant School, with a very positive SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) inspection, highlighting the following strengths:

- Leaders understand their community well. A clearly articulated Christian vision shapes daily practice and enables pupils and adults to flourish.
- Driven by the Christian vision, the school is highly inclusive. Adults know pupils well and provide timely, appropriate support so that pupils are valued and can thrive.
- Strong, trusting relationships underpin school life. Proactive support at different levels sustains positive mental health and wellbeing for pupils and adults.

We have introduced some exciting new art units and a new English curriculum that focuses on embedding key skills to develop fluency in writing, which is having a positive impact on results!

Children have had lots of enrichment opportunities to extend their learning through Woodland Adventures, Science week activities, World Book Day, Around the World Week, as well as visits to different places of worship, Sealife Centre and sports events.

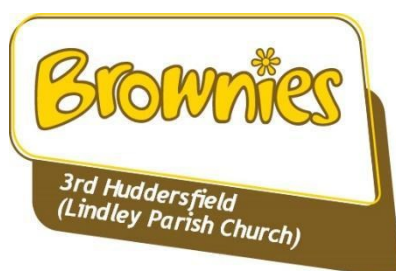
Parents have had many opportunities to be involved in school life, such as Book Cafe, Family Worship, Shining Star Awards and Information sessions for phonics, maths and behaviour.

We still have so much to look forward to this year... trips, vision & values week and the summer spectacular, to name but a few!

Natalie Thompson, Acting Headteacher

www.lindleyinfantschool.org.uk

3rd Huddersfield Rainbows, Brownies & Guides



We continue to proudly support our uniformed groups as a church community, which offer activities, learning and friendship for girls in our community. Rainbows and Brownies meet on Monday evenings in Lindley Infant School and the Guides meet on Friday evenings at St Stephen's during term time. They also supported our Christmas Tree Festival by decorating a beautiful tree.

Space for your own notes: