

The Parish Church of Saint Leonard, Grendon Underwood, Buckinghamshire

Annual Report 2025

prepared for Annual Parochial Church Meeting 29th April 2026
to be held in the Church following the Meeting of
Parishioners at 7:00pm

All Parishioners welcome to attend both meetings, to elect the Churchwarden(s) in the Meeting of Parishioners and to join in the APCM (but only members of the Electoral Roll may vote in the latter).



Parish Code: 627690 Diocese: Oxford Archdeaconry: Buckingham Deanery: Claydon
Benefice: The Claydons and The Swan (27-121CP)

The Claydons and Swan Team consists of ten churches in North Buckinghamshire. The three churches in the Claydons (Steeple Claydon, East Claydon and Middle Claydon) form one parish and the other seven churches are separate parishes of which St Leonard's, Grendon Underwood, has one of the largest populations.

An era defining moment...

In May we said goodbye to Revd Canon David Hiscock. For nearly 4 decades David has offered his ministry to the parishes in the Swan and latterly Claydon benefices. Whilst he lived in Marsh Gibbon, he was a regular presence in Grendon Underwood – in church and in the community including the school – and provided support to countless families in their key moments of baptisms, weddings and funerals.

At his final service, he was offered a range of gifts of thanks from all those who have benefited from his ministry over the years. St Mary's in Marsh Gibbon was packed with well-wishers and David's legacy will be with us for many years to come. Before this, we celebrated his appointment as an Honorary Canon of the Cathedral with a 'Colin the Cannon' cake!



Clergy

The benefice has a clergy team provision of a Team Rector (leader) and 2 Team Vicars (one full time and one part time). With the retirement of the Revd Canon David Hiscock in late May, there have been no ordained clergy within the benefice. As a result, the style of services has been flexible to accommodate the availability of visiting clergy and this has required a reduction in the offer of Family Communion services to one a month. However, church members and parishioners have been encouraged to join communion services being held in other parts of the benefice if that is their preferred style of worship.

The process of appointing a successor to the post of Team Rector has been lengthy but it has also required more communication and working between lay officers across the benefice. The support of the Parish Development Officer was appreciated in the drawing up of the Benefice profile. The Archdeacon's Office have supported the practical elements of the process. It is with joy that we can report that the Revd David Kaboleh was chosen at interview in early January to fill the vacancy and he has accepted the offer. He will be licensed on 27th April.

We will work with David and other parishes to move forward on the appointments to the remaining 2 vacant clergy posts, one of whom will reside in the Vicarage in Grendon in due course.

We are grateful to the Revd Jim King who made a generous offer during this period of reduced clergy locally to lead a monthly service at St Leonards, alongside other visiting clergy. This was particularly beneficial as it allowed us to arrange a baptism service for 4 parishioners in February 2026. Revd King has indicated that he is willing to continue to visit whilst the full team is assembled.

The PCC has worked hard to ensure that the visible impact of this period of change has been minimised. Every effort has been made to ensure that services and pastoral care continue to be offered in the parish and that the Good News of Jesus Christ has continued to be heard in our community.

Worship

With the reduced availability of ordained leaders for worship we have been flexible in the type of service offered through each month but (apart from the month of August and other moments when Team services have been arranged) we have offered a service in St Leonard's on every Sunday as well as Easter and Christmas.

To achieve this, we have introduced lay led Morning Prayer and Friends and Family services, augmenting the traditional of lay leadership at Reflections over Breakfast. A lay led service was also offered on Easter Sunday and Christmas Day. Whilst we look forward to the arrival of a Team Rector in April, the PCC does not expect that the need for the majority of services

Our average attendance at services during the year was as follows: Weekly Services 20 adults and 2 children. Our special services (i.e. Christmas, Easter, Remembrance and Crib Service) enjoyed wider community engagement and attendance. Numbers have been maintained although different services attract different people.



The PCC chose the theme of Psalm 23 for our Reflections over Breakfast and each month different congregation members offered their thoughts on the relevant verse. In the current year we are focussing on the Fruit of the Spirit. With Friends and Family services lay led during 2025, we focussed on key moments in the church year and we are now asking those who lead to focus on their favourite Bible characters.

We thank all who have led us in our thoughts and prompted us to reflect on such a varied range of topics. We give special thanks to Jane Speak who has taken responsibility for preparing the church for worship and to Geoff Lumley for his oversight of our music both electronic and via our volunteer organists Steve and Matt. We are also grateful to those who welcome people to church; for the flower arrangers; for the bellringers and for Angela Shenstone who finds willing readers for our services. For our Friends & Family services as well as the Reflections over Breakfast those who offer to provide and serve refreshments (and clean afterwards) are also very much appreciated.

We are a worshipping community and this has been shown in the way that so many people have offered to take on a task to ensure that we have maintained a full offer of worship through this last year.

Parochial Church Council

Several key responsibilities are held in parishes by lay people, notably the Church Wardens and members of the Parochial Church Council (PCC), together these have responsibility for the good running of the Church in much the same way as Trustees oversee a Charity. The PCC appoints a Treasurer and other officers and meets several times during the year. In the period of vacancy, the responsibilities of the Churchwardens in particular have increased considerably and we are grateful to Lindsey and Geoff for embracing these tasks with grace.

Since the 2025 APCM the St Leonard's PCC has comprised of the following Lay Members:

Mrs L. Fealey (Churchwarden)
Mr A Howard (Secretary)
Mr G. Lumley (Churchwarden & Deanery Synod member)
Mrs B. Parker
Miss J. Speak (Lay Chair, Safeguarding & Electoral Roll officer)
Mr. K. Shenstone (Treasurer)
Mr D. Woollard [since November 2025)

We have met on five occasions through the year from May 2025 to March 2026. Major items discussed or acted upon during the year will feature later in this report. The work of the Council is supported by a Worship Sub-Committee and a Fabric Sub-Committee.

Regular attendees and others who have a close interest in Church are invited to join the Electoral Roll. This is a public statement of commitment which offers the right to attend and vote at the Annual Meeting. The Roll also shows the wider Church the strength of our church here in Grendon Underwood which is important when decisions are made about the number of clergy who can be allocated to us. A new Electoral Roll was prepared for the 2025 APCM. The names of those who are on the Roll is made public in Church.

2026 is notable for the decision by Keith Shenstone to stand down as Treasurer, a role he has fulfilled admirably for several years. The task of Treasurer is not easy in a small organisation like ours as the legal demands on financial recording and reporting are not proportional to actual turnover. Keith is also responsible for regular tax efficient giving and for the 200 Club and with Peter Hornigold has played a significant role as a member of the Fabric Sub Committee which is working on the vital repairs to the church building. We are grateful to Keith for his commitment and for his willingness to continue in a number of these roles whilst Lesley settles into the role of Treasurer in the year ahead.

Church Building

Parish Churches are legally owned by the incumbent (Team Rector) but held in trust under an Act of Parliament for the benefit of all those who live in the parish or worship in the church. However, the maintenance and upkeep is the responsibility of the PCC. As representatives of the parishioners, the Churchwardens take a lead in the ongoing programme of maintenance required by a Grade II listed medieval building. The Churchwardens cannot do this alone and they are very grateful to all those in the parish who help.

As reported last year, we received a very generous donation from the Trustees of the Chapel in Kingswood. We have worked with our Architect on plans to ensure that repairs to stonework can be completed by the summer of 2026.

Every parish church is required to commission a suitably qualified individual to undertake a survey of the fabric every 5 years and this occurred towards the end of 2025. The PCC has received the report which details works that require attention over the next five years and plans will be drawn up to ensure that we continue to be proper stewards of St Leonard's an historic and future offering to the parish of witness. The Kingswood Chapel legacy will be used to fund these works.

We had our usual two working parties on Spring and Autumn Saturdays when a lot of work was done repairing and improving around the buildings and grounds. Much of the regular maintenance goes unnoticed but it includes ensuring that the building is compliant with relevant Health & Safety legislation and that the facilities within and around it operate effectively. The PCC has appointed Nick Maker as Site Supervisor and has agreed support from Community Enterprises for maintenance work in the churchyard during the 2026 growing season.

Thanks to all those who volunteer to keep the church clean all year around.

Friends



We had two well-supported Saturday working parties during the year, with a lot of equipment appearing in October when a major job was trimming the hedge between the church and Broadway House. Other jobs tackled during the year included repairing the entrance gate and making a start on tidying

and clearing the Vestry - a lot of mice were made homeless!

Lots of work was done around the flower beds and keeping the grounds tidy and we are very indebted to the Friends who turn out week after week to keep the church clean and arrange flowers.

Team/Synod

Several years of discussion came to fruition this year in the Deanery Synod when it was agreed to take advantage of the Diocese's Recovery Plan for Parish Share. Whilst neither St Leonard's nor indeed the Claydon and Swan Team have been behind with payments, that has not been the case across Claydon Deanery. As a result, for three years, there will be a percentage reduction in Parish Share and from now on it will be allocated to the Team not the Parish and, together with the incumbent, the parishes will agree how to allocate the Share between ourselves each year; which might mean helping one parish out in times of difficulty one year and being helped ourselves in another.

The Team meetings have been good-natured affairs as we have learnt together what it means to be without clergy. We are particularly grateful to Tim Freeman of Marsh Gibbon who has taken on the arduous task of trying to find stand-in clergy for services each month. Somehow, between us, we managed not to drop any balls during 2025 even whilst we were also writing the Team Profile (aka job description) for a new Rector. It was a steep learning curve though, with the legal issues around getting banns of marriage read at the right times and in the right places, as well as learning how to arrange baptisms and funerals and keeping all the record books up to date too. Whoever said clergy only work on Sundays should have a go at keeping up with all these things!

Community/Fund Raising

The Spring Fayre was a new initiative for 2025 and was hosted by Grendon Underwood School; we worked together with them (and their FROGS) and other community groups and businesses for a great afternoon of activities, produce stalls and such like. As the school were involved, there was a larger number of attendees at the event of all ages, though only the younger ones took part in



the Fun Run - that said, there was something for all ages and it was a great success and will be repeated on 9th May 2026.

We held several other fund-raising events such as the Barbecue (on a glorious afternoon) although our Quiz Night was postponed to this spring. There was a repeat of Open gardens this year too and we were again impressed by the diverse range of garden creativity there is in our village.



Another new venture for this year was G.U.-Caching, a summer holiday activity hunting messages left by householders across the village.



We began to form an informal group “Friends of St Leonard’s”, members of the community who are happy to be called upon to look after the site and who also now will be pro-active when they notice things that need to be done. The ongoing fabric maintenance and compliance costs are approximately £5500 a year and we are grateful to parishioners for their ongoing support through our calendar of fundraising events.

Finance

The Church of England is more than 500 years old and as a result its funding is complex and often misunderstood.

A parish like Grendon Underwood receives no funds from outside the community (with the exception of grants to major projects for the upkeep of the building, the last of which related to the repair of the roof). The main source of income is the giving of members of the church – regular worshippers usually through the Parish Giving Scheme so that tax can be reclaimed on it – or from parishioners when they attend or through their support of the Church at one of the events held each year.

In 2025, the income received amounted to £33,000 and it was made up from approx. Regular Giving & Fees £20,000; Fundraising £7,000; and Other for Larder £5,000

The main expenditure of the parish is to fund the ministry we receive from our clergy. This is mainly through a payment called 'Parish Share' made to the Diocese of Oxford who pay the stipends of all clergy, as well as maintain the houses and fund the training – both initial and continuing – of all those involved in licensed ministry. This continues during a vacancy. In 2025, Grendon paid £18,000. In addition, there are some local ministry related costs as well like expenses; admin and finance costs; and items for services like candles and communion wine. It is this provision of ministry cost £19,000 which the worshipping community seeks to support through its giving.

The other significant recurring cost of the PCC relates to the maintenance of the building. In 2025, including special projects like inspections, these amounted to £12,000. This included insurance; health & safety costs; routine repairs; heat & light; and grounds upkeep. We are grateful for the generosity of parishioners – through support for our events, giving or legacies - for ensuring that the building can be retained for everyone – whether they worship in it or not.

During 2025 we have begun to request that regular donations are made through the Parish Giving Scheme which, at no cost to our donors or our parish, significantly reduces our administration tasks (see back cover). You can sign up to this at www.tinyurl.com/GivetoStL

We have also successfully introduced an operating card reader which many occasional worshippers and visitors have found useful.

The full report on the financial activities of the PCC (available separately) has been prepared by the Treasurer; approved by the PCC; and will be presented to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

Legacy

During 2025 we were informed that the late Charles Taylor Keene of Kingswood had left a donation to the PCC in his will. In our initial conversations with the executors of the will, we were not aware of the value of the donation but it did include a fine embroidery made by Charles' grandmother who had been a long-time resident and worshipper. It has been on display in church during lent forming the backdrop to one of our Last Sayings of Christ stations of observation and reflection.

As the financial accounts now show, the legacy amounts to £92,000 offering us a significant opportunity to develop aspects of church life.

St Leonard's Larder

Thanks to the ongoing support of customers at The Swan Pub, as well as kind and generous donations from members of the community and other community focussed bodies, the Larder has supported an increasing number of families during the last year.



The larder is regularly re-stocked and holds a selection of non-perishable food and drinks. In addition to the staple everyday items, such as tea, coffee, sugar, long-life milk and bread, soups, porridge and breakfast cereals etc., stock includes tinned meats and fish, rice and pasta and a variety of sauces. Everyone likes a sweet treat and so sweet biscuits and cakes are a popular luxury item. Other non-food items that are a necessity such as cleaning materials, washing powder, loo rolls, deodorants, shampoo, shower gels and sanitary products are also stocked.

Echoing as it does the call of Jesus to 'feed the hungry', the PCC believe it is a privilege to give this resource to local individuals and families that are struggling in these difficult times of high living costs. Unlike most other food banks, no-one has to be referred - it is open to EVERYONE who needs a little extra help with their weekly supplies - in church every day between 9.30am and 4.30pm.

At Easter & Christmas, we worked in partnership with the school to identify families in need and they were provided with a seasonal basket to aid in their celebration of the birth and resurrection of Jesus.

Teas

Church teas once again proved popular throughout the months of May to October.

It was lovely having different people leading each month removing the bu. (made my life easier too).

Introducing the teddy bears picnic into the school holiday was a big hit with parents / grandparents and children – a big thank you to Lindsay for organising.

This year will see the introduction of food safety standards and training to be shared with all that are involved.

Safeguarding

St Leonard's church is committed to fostering a safe and inclusive culture which promotes open communication and addressing any concerns. The PCC reviews and approves the safeguarding policy annually and a copy displayed in church.

The Diocesan Safeguarding dashboard continues to provide a framework to create and manage a St Leonard's Safeguarding Plan, and actions arising from the plan are reviewed and progress updated periodically.

No safeguarding incidents have been reported during the year.



Thank you for giving to St Leonard's

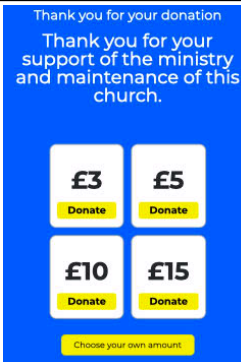


When you give by cash one of us has to

- Count it (a second person checks it)
- Bag it up
- Take it to the Bank
- Record the amount
- File a Gift Aid Return with HMRC so that we can claim refund of your income tax (for gifts below £30 in cash only)

When you give using the card reader one of us has to

- Check the bank account record of payments received
- Record the amount
- File a Gift Aid Return with HMRC so that we can claim refund of your income tax (for gifts below £30 only)



When you give by Standing Order to the Church Bank Account one of us has to

- Check the bank account record of payments received
- Record the amount
- File a Gift Aid Return with HMRC so that we can claim refund of your income tax



When you give using the Parish Giving Scheme we don't have to do anything! - and it doesn't cost us anything either!



To start giving with the Parish Giving Scheme please visit www.tinyurl.com/GivetoStL or scan the QR Code

(alternatively, please ask the Treasurer for a paper form)

You can use the P.G.S. for regular or one-off donations.

Whichever way you give, your money is received with grateful thanks.,