



V3 (FINAL)

# St John's Church, Higham

**Annual Report  
and  
Financial Statements  
of the Parochial Church Council  
For the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025**

**Incumbent:**

Revd. Lesley Hinchcliffe

**Treasurer:**

Mr John Shaw

**Independent Examiner:**

Mrs Gemma-Louise Wells CIPFA

**Address for correspondence:**

PCC Secretary

Mr John Loads

29 Acres brook Rd, Higham BB12 9BY

## **An introductory note**

### **Churchwardens' report - Year end 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025**

Having spent my first full year in the post of Churchwarden, it is pleasing to say that last year's APCM brought some stability in the Parochial Church Council (PCC) with most members staying in post, while we welcomed Lindsey Hackett and Carol Jackson onto the PCC.

I would like to thank them all for their hard work in ensuring that the business of the church runs smoothly.

The Fabric committee has met 6 times in the last year, focusing on the upkeep of the building and churchyard. As well as the usual general maintenance to the building we also had to deal with a leak in the heating system, which we were able to correct without too much expenditure.

The Saturday team met 6 times in the last year to keep the churchyard and surroundings in good order. The tasks included leaf and twig removal, epicormic growth removal to the mature trees, gutter clearing and numerous small tasks which enable the building to be maintained in good order. They also met to install and remove the Crib Scene and Advent Star over the Christmas period.

The grass cutting contract was renewed with Pendle Council along with the testing of headstones and monuments within the church yard.

The terrier and logbook have been kept up to date along with Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) and fire extinguishers.

As mentioned in the Incumbent's report, the PCC has started the process of applying for a faculty to enable an extension to the northside of the building to take place. This will hopefully contain disabled access provision and toilet facilities along with a small kitchen and well heated meeting room.

I would like to thank everyone who helps out, not only on the PCC but also at the Saturday Team meetings.

We continue to look at what we can do as a church to improve our environmental footprint and in doing so arranged for a Beehive to be installed in a suitable position within the churchyard. This was only in place for part of the season last year but still managed to produce enough honey for some to be sold within the parish. I would like to thank John Shaw for organising and facilitating this.

The PCC continued to promote the activities of the church within the parish and the wider community via the weekly newsletter but also through direct delivery of cards at Christmas and Easter detailing our services in the weeks leading up to the most important dates in our calendar. We also had a section devoted to church matters in the Higham Spout magazine.

Average attendance on Sundays was: 4 children and 19 adults, which was similar to 2024.

I would like to thank our 'Welcoming' team, the Verger and all of the 'staff' and contributors that make our services run as well as they do – and that includes those on the cleaning rota and those that organise readings and the beautiful flower arrangements, the Readers, those who lead the weekly prayers, and the team providing hot refreshments after the services.

We as a church also continue to support two food banks, Open house and the St Philips Centre - thank you to everyone who contributes.

We are lucky, and grateful, to have a talented choir and organist to lead our worship, and we thank them for their dedication and commitment.

Finally, I'd like to thank Revd Lesley for her guidance, patience and hard work supporting the PCC and delivering God's message here in the Parish of Higham.

**Simon Gilbert**  
Church warden  
10th May 2026

## **Annual report of the PCC for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025**

### **Aims and Purposes**

St John's PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the Incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the church pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the Parish Church building.

### Vision 2026

'St John's embraces Vision 2026 as it seeks to grow healthy churches that will transform communities. The four guiding principles:

1. Making Disciples of Jesus Christ
2. Being Witnesses to Jesus Christ
3. Growing Leaders for Jesus Christ
4. Inspiring Children and Young People

### **Structure, Governance and Management**

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Powers Measure. The PCC is expected by order from the registering with the Charity Commission. The method of appointment of the PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and to stand for election to the PCC.

The PCC meets at least once every two months, usually in church, but occasionally at the Office in the Refectory. The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the

Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

## **PCC Members are:**

### **Ex-officio**

Incumbent: PCC Chair	Revd Lesley Hinchcliffe
Churchwarden	Simon Gilbert
Deanery Synod Representatives	Linda Sharpe and Barbara Shaw

### **Elected Members**

Simon Gilbert  
Gil Gilbert  
John Shaw  
Andrea Johnston  
Ron Smith  
Sam Tomlinson  
Linda Sharpe  
Pam Fitton  
Heather Swindlehurst  
Brian Sutcliffe  
Lindsey Hackett

**Treasurer** John Shaw

**Secretary** John Loads

## **Committees**

The PCC has a Standing committee. This is the only committee required by law. It has the power to transact business of the PCC between meetings, subject to any direction by the Council. The Standing committee comprised of Reverend Lesley Hinchcliffe, a Treasurer, Simon Gilbert, Ron Smith, John Loads.

## **Worship**

Our services were led by the choir with organist and Choirmaster Robert Fergusson. In July 2025 Robert retired and Gil Gilbert took up the role of Choir Leader and Organist. In 2025 we held our usual seasonal services (Ash Wednesday, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Trinity, All Souls, Remembrance, Advent, and Christmas), with an occasional visit from the Deanery choir. The 'Occasional offices' (Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals) were administered - in 2025 there were 3 baptisms, 1 funeral and 1 wedding.

***The following reports have been individually submitted by PCC members: -***

## **Safeguarding Report Year Ending 2025**

At St John's our culture has always been that the safety and well-being of all people, especially children and vulnerable adults, is taken seriously. This year we have continued to hold ourselves to that standard and to prioritise safeguarding.

### **Safeguarding Training**

We have had no changes to the Parish Safeguarding Officer role and our policy and procedures all remain the same. We are grateful for people at St John's who volunteer on our various teams, groups and PCC and who work here. They all have a firm commitment to a safe culture and one way they show this is in their willingness to undertake the appropriate training in which they have been helpful, quick and responsive.

Training is all up to date and the following has taken place:

- DBS updates x3, one currently ongoing.
- Foundation Pathways updates.
- Domestic Abuse updates.

These dates continue to be put into the Parish Dashboard. As we move into 2026/27, we will look at inputting emails into the Hub so gentle reminders can be automatically generated and sent straight to the member who needs the training.

### **Safer Recruitment**

We have a notice board in church, with photographs and names of all our team, to help the congregation identify the team if they need to talk to us about any issues. As we move into 2026/27 these will need to be updated again. We continue to follow correct procedure and policy so that all people are recruited to teams and roles using the official 'Safer Recruitment' procedures.

This year we have recruited a new choir master where safer recruitment steps were followed. As of the 1 June 2026 the new and approved 'Safer Recruitment and People Management Code of practice' will come into force, so the PSO will look for updates/training regarding this. It is currently available on the Church of England website should anyone wish to read it.

### **Incident Reporting**

There were no formal safeguarding incidents in 2025, and we continue to use the Parish Dashboard to track progress, get reports and identify areas to work on. On the 06/12/25 a Delegation by the PCC Members: Reporting of Serious Incidents to the Charity Commission was completed.

## Policy Implementation

St John's continues to follow their safeguarding policies - for both children and adults – which should cover the following:

1. Governance
2. Culture
3. Safeguarding Policy

## Risk Assessment

Risk assessments have continued to be carried out – a more flexible risk assessment has been used for Pizza and Praise whilst building work is ongoing in the village hall.

**Andrea Johnston - Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) - 07/04/26**



## **Financial Review: Treasurer's report for the year ended 31 December 2025**

### Treasurer's Notes to the Financial Statements

#### Accounting Policies

Notes to the Financial Statements: -

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006, using the Receipts and Payments basis.

General funds represent the funds of the PCC that are not subject to any special restrictions regarding their use and are available for application to the general purposes of the PCC. The accounts include monetary transactions, assets and liabilities for which the PCC can be held responsible. The PCC have agreed to hold a restricted fund for the Pendle Deanery, but there are no other accounts of other church groups that owe an affiliation to another body, nor those that are informal gatherings of church members. Receipts and payments include income as received and expenditure when irrevocably paid.

It is PCC policy to try to maintain a balance on unrestricted funds that equates to at least three months of unrestricted payments, this is to smooth out fluctuations in cash flow and to meet emergencies. Based on 2025 normal payments this equates to £6,449. The cash balance at the end of the year was £6,493.37, which together with our deposits with the Diocese of £2070.88 and £130.81, totals £8,695.06.

#### **Receipts**

At the end of the year, there were **27** members using the Standing Order system of donating and there were **12** members of the preferred 'Planned Giving Scheme'.

The fund raising via the 125 Club and the 3 usual annual community events run by the Events Committee was a little less this year (£800). Total receipts were down again, by 5%.

## **Payments**

No exceptional items have been paid this year. The complete payment of the Parish Share was achieved by receipt of a Support Grant of £9,526.

**John Shaw, Treasurer**

## **Electoral Roll**

The Electoral Roll has been reviewed and revised in line with the Church Representation Rules and Regulations 2025. There are currently 40 individuals on roll.

**Rebecca Harrison**

Electoral Roll Officer

## **Fabric Committee**

### **Fabric Committee Report 2025**

St. John's fabric committee met six times during the year. Members were involved with meeting the Diocesan Advisory Committee on May 28<sup>th</sup> to discuss the proposed extension. There have been on-site meetings with Steven Barnes & associates regarding the proposed extension in March, July and November resulting in the Archaeological Survey being carried out and the first plans of the extension drawn up.

Agenda items during the year included:

#### **Church Building:**

Annual Fire Extinguisher Check

P. A. T. of appliances

Upkeep of the church Logbook & files

Cleaning of the building, thanks expressed to our cleaning rota

Heating duties, switching on the heating for all services and frost protection during periods sub-zero temps

Repairs to the leak on the heating pipe by the organ, carried out Sept 4<sup>th</sup>

Raising monies for the building fund, (mainly book sales).

#### **Churchyard & Grounds:**

Arranging the Grounds maintenance Contract

Regular cleaning of Troughing and Gully's

Sweeping of all Paths, steps

Emptying of waste Bins, (thanks to Garth Craven for returning the bins each week)

Leaf clearance of pathways & grass-maintained areas

Pruning of shrubs

Removal of epicormic growth.

Removal of brambles

Erection of Christmas decorations crib, Advent Star, Easter Cross

Observance of Flag Days.

**Memorial Inspections** were undertaken on the 15<sup>th</sup> October.

Summary and report sent to the Diocese. Records updated - SJH/14

Two Memorials sunk into the ground for safety, Pugh 14/11 & Wilson 23/10

Two Failed memorials were encountered - Briggs 21,22/2 re-fix loose granite Cross, and Barrowclough 21/5 made safe with steel supports. These were attended to at the time of inspection by Dave Wharton of Pendle Borough Council. Remedial work to laid down memorials, soiling up around the base.

**Trees Risk Management Survey** - Nov 20<sup>th</sup> report received Dec 2025.

Bowland tree consultancy were employed to undertake an update of the churchyard trees, and their report has been received by the P. C. C. Two lime trees have been identified for felling. Several trees overhanging the Village Hall Car Park are identified for crown lifting.

### **The Bell Installation**

The recently restored bell developed a fault with the sound of the strike being deadened - Lancashire Clock makers were called to inspect and identify the fault, which was found to be caused by the wooden headstock drying, causing some looseness in the securing bolts - these were tightened up, which resolved the problem.

### **Church Records**

Archiving - all P. C. C. Minutes, Annual Reports and Financial & Committee Reports from 1985 to Dec 2025 have been boxed and are ready for deposit at Lancashire Archives.

### **Brain Sutcliffe,**

Fabric Committee Secretary

10/05/2026

## **Faith, Mission & Action**

### **Authorised Lay Ministry (ALM) Report 2025**

In 2025 Revd. Lesley was still the main provider of pastoral care with Linda and John continuing to offer prayer support, primarily within the church family. A person is authorised to serve as an ALM for three years and in September 2025, Linda and John chose not to renew their authorisation. We give sincere and grateful thanks for their ministry.

### **Pizza & Praise**

It was another consistent and successful year for Pizza and Praise in 2025. We continued to reach out to a small group of children in the village, some who we are now seeing more regularly in Sunday church services. The families who attend comment that they feel calm, welcomed and relaxed and that their children enjoy the bond/relationships the children have forged.

We continued to serve the same families and children as in previous years – one of which is being confirmed in 2026. Unfortunately, we had a child leave Pizza and Praise in 2025 due to age and other commitments. But on a more positive note, we have two new families who are regular attendants.

On average we get 8 or 9 children each month. This has increased by 2 from last year's report.

As we move into 2026/27 a more rigorous/electronic register will be kept.

The format for Pizza and Praise remained the same with the quiet, busy, colour and word stations lasting an hour. As we move into 2026/27, we would like to use the outdoor space more, allow children to pick the medium used in the busy area e.g. they love using clay so hopefully some of their creations can be used in church as decoration. We would also like to use more technology/speakers to help us with our singing and backing track as the children report they feel too embarrassed singing out loud when they are unsure of the words and tune.

Safeguarding/Risk Assessment: Risk assessments have continued to be carried out – a more flexible risk assessment was used for Pizza and Praise whilst any building work was ongoing in the village hall. It is available for your records.

**Andrea Johnston - Pizza and Praise Lead/PSO – 07/04/2026**



### **Pendle Deanery Synod**

In the past year we have had great fellowship with some very interesting and stimulating talks. We have continued to be inspired by our speakers, meeting the other Synod Members and hearing of the various projects within the Deanery.

**Linda Sharpe**

Deanery Synod Representative

### **Incumbent's Report for Year ended December 2025**

APCM 10<sup>th</sup> May 2026

St John's, Higham

2025 has been a year where new shoots of growth began to show. It is clear that God desires growth here as many positive things happened in 2025, to demonstrate His blessings.

In 2025 we held special services such as Choral Evensong, 'Thanksgiving for our Church and Community', Harvest Thanksgiving and our first 'Pet Service'. These services were well attended but did not lead to an increase in our regular Sunday worship congregation. We realised that to make disciples we needed a new approach, otherwise we would be in danger of decline. We took a positive 'can do' attitude rather than one of despair.

We embarked on intentional prayer, using the Mission Prayer at every service and also praying for our church and community at the weekly Prayer meetings held on Wednesday mornings at The Refectory, St Anne's. It was and remains encouraging to have people from our congregation/PCC attend these meetings regularly. A greater commitment to discipleship was also seen as people from St John's attended the Bible Study courses.

In March 2025, whilst recovering from my Knee Replacement, I began very focussed prayer for our church. This led me to explore making our church building fit for purpose in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, to be flexible for worship, to be more welcoming to our wider community and to better support our ministry. My prayers led me to believe it was time to do this.

With Simon our Church Warden, we submitted a Faculty to the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC). This was the culmination of years of thought, prayer and hope for an extension to our church building to offer a toilet, kitchen facilities, an accessible entrance and to review our heating and seating in the nave. We were blessed with a local Benefactor who agreed to fund the project. This was truly a rich blessing, as the cost would unlikely have been met by parishioners.

A Faculty is a long process, and in 2025 we started it! Thank you to Simon and Brian for your dedication and time with this.

Our prayers are that our extension and plans come to fruition in 2026/27 leading to increased opportunities to use our space for outreach, Jesus focussed events, similar to what are held in The Refectory at St Anne's.

In May 2025 we added new members to our PCC, including a new Treasurer, Carol Jackson. However, in September, Carol felt unable to continue in this role and I extend huge thanks to John Shaw for taking up the role again. I also wish to thank Carol for her enthusiasm and willingness to give the role a try. As we move forward it is hoped that someone would shadow John with a view to taking on the role.

The blessings continued - in September 2025 the PCC were invited to join the Diocesan Renewal Programme (DRP). This is a 12month programme to equip and assist churches to grow in numbers, to have a powerful witness in the communities they serve and to increase spiritual commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ.

The DRP required commitment from myself, our Church Warden and our PCC. It is a well-structured programme that has proven results in other parishes. Simon, our Church Warden and Gil began to attend monthly meetings with myself, and I as Incumbent attended additional training days. We reported back to our PCC, and mission and outreach were and continue to have, a dedicated 1 hour of our PCC meetings, as it is our priority. We look forward with excitement to the Annual Report for 2026, when we will see the fruits of our labours.

Our mission is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and to bring people to church, to know Him. The Village Community events attract people to our church, which is used to host aspects of these events. Some PCC members also sit on the Village Events Committee. This is a good witness, which we can develop as we move forward into 2026. However, the DRP drew our attention to the fact that at these events, we needed to have some dedicated focus on Jesus, prayer etc. where visitors can access Jesus and His love without formally attending our church services. The support from the DRP team will continue to assist us in this task.

The blessings continued - the DRP support extended to a significant reduction in our Parish Share for 2025. I am immensely grateful for all the support from the Diocese and our PCC as we journey on to build the Kingdom here in this place.

In September 2025, Gil Gilbert became our Choir Leader and Organist. Gil has brought her own style of music and gifts to our worship and additional services. Thank you Gil.

Our relationship with our school was maintained in 2025. There were increased class visits to church, and I have been ably assisted by Gil, who played for us and helped with crafts and refreshments. There is room for more connection with our school, and I pray 2026 will see change. Two Foundation Governors were and continue to be sought, to enable and sustain our connection with school and its Governing Body.

In 2025 Gil was accepted to train as an Authorised Lay Minister (ALM), with a focus on Pastoral Care. ALM's John Shaw and Linda Sharpe stepped down, deciding not to renew their authorisation. Thank you to John and Linda for your work to support ministry at St John's.

The Pizza and Praise group continued to meet monthly on Fridays in the Village Hall and joined with the Friday Faith and Fun group at St Anne's for parties at the end of summer term and Christmas. I extend thanks to Andrea Johnston as leader.

We have been richly blessed in 2025. I encourage us to remain focused on Jesus, committed as a church family and stepping out in faith and trust to tell our own stories of how knowing Jesus helps us live our lives.

Yours in Christ,



Reverend Lesley Hinchcliffe  
4<sup>th</sup> April 2026

**Approved by PCC**

Reverend Lesley Hinchcliffe  
10<sup>th</sup> May 2026