



Westerham PCC Report for 2025 – APCM 2026

Introduction and Overview from Revd Dave

The Five Marks of Mission

The Five Marks provide a framework for how we go about fulfilling our mission to *Serve Christ, Westerham and the Wider World*. They are a widely-used tool encompassing the whole mission of Christ in His Church and the Diocese has shaped its vision, *Called Together*, around them. Our reports have been grouped under the various marks. Sometimes the fit isn't perfect or needs some explanation; one or two don't neatly fit under any marks and are in Section 6.

Although this report only covers 2025, you will find that, in places, it looks ahead. Mission planning is now a standing item on PCC agendas.

1 Proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom

Mission

First, after a long delay, we finally got permission to create the Joint Council that was always envisaged as part of our coming together, to steer and shape our ministry and mission as a Benefice. I'm really looking forward to working with the members of the Council as we start meeting and shaping our vision for the future.

As part of the process leading to that, both PCCs took part in an Appreciative Enquiry exercise. Appreciative Enquiry is a way of planning that focuses on strengths, and draws on the things we want to celebrate and build on as we move forward. It is a contrast to the 'wish list' way of planning that says, 'what would we like (somebody) to do ...' and then has to work out how to do it. It doesn't stop us from identifying and responding to need, but it enables us to do that from our strengths rather than our weaknesses. It is, at least at first, a qualitative rather than quantitative approach.

From those conversations, I used AI to create word clouds. These are what they sound like – a whole bunch of words together – with the words and phrases that cropped up most in our conversations being bigger and having the most emphasis. It was encouraging that both churches picked up on similar themes. I then used the results from each to generate a new word cloud bringing together the findings from both PCCs, and this was discussed at a meeting of both PCCs in the autumn. It is shown below:

Benefice Office rather than the minister living in a particular place, so that we can take make decisions as a team.

As Emma becomes settled in her role, we will be able to think more widely about the shape of God’s ministry in the Benefice as part of shaping a whole-Benefice mission plan.

Worship

I believe that one of the things that enables churches to grow is confidence in how they worship, and it’s been wonderful to see that confidence, and the range of our worship, grow over the years.

The average size of our worshipping community at St Mary’s has been quite stable in recent years.

Average size of regular services (rounded)				
	2022	2023	2024	2025
10.30am	40	39	44	44
8.00am	13	15	13	11
Evensong	53	45	63	57
Total/wk	61	60	61	61

It is sad to see our 8.00am congregation slowly reducing in size. Ill health, moving house and, of course, the deaths of some of our brothers and sisters are behind these changes.

The numbers at Evensong, and the slight growth of the 10.30am service over time, are encouraging, though. Interestingly that service is slightly smaller than the main service at Crockham Hill even though the parish population is close to ten times the size. Crockham Hill’s achievement is remarkable for such a small parish. Easier parking there, and a wider choice of services at St Mary’s, probably have something to do with it, but still, it is a reminder that there is room for growth. In 2019, the last full year before Covid, the average 10.30am congregation was 52 – our aim must be, over time, to return at least to those levels. We’re heading in the right direction, but it will be quite a task.

2nd Sunday

Our regular informal worship ran for its second full year and consolidated its place as part of our main worship offering. It has grown from an average of 30 worshippers in 2023 to 40 in 2025 and, in 2026 so far, continues to grow.

A huge ‘thank you’ is owed to everybody involved in making the service what it is: a special time of interaction with the Gospel and each other; relaxed, encouraging and – we hope – faith strengthening. There are lessons to be learnt from that service, especially about the welcome and hospitality we offer as a Christian community

across everything that we do because people walk into that service and immediately feel part of it. There is also a real sense of the ministry of the whole people of God, and of all ages of worshipper, too.

Seasonal Worship

In common with many churches, our seasonal services grew this year and both in Lent/Easter and Advent/Christmas we saw larger congregations than in any year since 2019.

Comparison of Seasonal Services	(Main Services or Liturgies of the Feast)					
	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Ash Wednesday	24	Covid	27	28	28	9
Mothering Sunday 10.30	56	Covid	34	31	55	46
Palm Sunday 10.30	58	Covid	30	57	41	62
Maundy Thursday	28	Covid	24	30	20	43
Good Friday	58	Covid	34	40	28	44
Easter Day	127	55	108	128	102	90
Total Lent and Easter	351	55	257	314	274	294
Advent Sunday 10.30	65	43	29	24	31	35
Advent Carols	99	22	56	70	66	53
Christmas Carols	201	78	98	101	135	140
Crib Service			70	113	109	125
Christmas Day inc Midnight	156	65	104	141	139	183
St Stephen (boxing day)		17				
Total Advent/Christmas	521	225	357	449	480	536
Totals for the year	872	280	614	763	754	830

These do not include *Come and Sing* or the Christmas Carol Concert because technically, they're not worship; including those would increase the numbers still further.

It's clear, then, that people still value these services. The challenge for us as a church, is how we convert – perhaps literally – these spiritual experiences into living faith and discipleship.

In summary, our seasonal worship is growing, our regular worship is stable or growing. Our challenge is: how do we maintain and ultimately grow, our regular congregation? What does an attractive Gospel need to sound and look like in this place and at this time, for people still in need of the Good News?

Revd Dave

Ordinand's Report

As I write this, I am aware that my time at the Benefice is drawing to a close, and that by the time of the APCM I will be preparing to leave for my ordination and new role as a curate in Tunbridge Wells. Looking back across 2025, it seems that there is much to thank God for: people met, relationships built, and experiences gained. Shifting my benefice days each week enabled me to spend more time in Tuesday Coffee Time while still taking part in Wednesday communions occasionally and dropping in to say hello to those at Jigsaw Group. It's been such a pleasure to chat and get to know people, and to see the church continuing to provide a space in the community where people can meet and be a blessing to one another.

During 2025 I continued to support the Pastoral Care Team which included some visits to Westerham Place. I was also involved in leading and preaching at services across the benefice. It was great to be able to lead a few family services at Holy Trinity, deacon regularly at St Marys and learn to lead Evensong. It was also exciting to be a part of the team which facilitates our informal *2nd Sunday* services. These services have been especially rewarding. In 2025 we saw a steady growth both in numbers attending and members of the congregation using and developing their own gifts to lead worship and prayer, including several young people.

It was also a privilege throughout the year to be able to assist at several funerals and thanksgiving services, to help hold space for grief, and to witness the important role this precious ministry has in the life of our church and community.

For me, some of the highlights in 2025 included walking through the full cycle of the liturgical year with you all. In particular, the activities and worship we shared through Lent, Holy Week and Easter, and the beauty of Ordinary Time - God may be a God of the spectacular, but he's also a God of the ordinary and I believe it is often in the most ordinary moments and places that God works powerfully in us and through us to demonstrate his love in the world! Likewise, various other key days and events, and of course the beautiful Advent and Christmas services. It was also wonderful to proclaim the Christmas story by setting up an Advent Trail in St Mary's churchyard for children and families. We know (via the sticker chart) that a minimum of 25 people took part in this. Looking ahead I will be organising similar trails for Easter at both St Mary's and Holy Trinity.

Throughout 2025 I enjoyed investing in our link with Churchill School in Westerham and working alongside Dave and Judy to deliver collective worship, and termly services in church. How uplifting it was, to send our Year 6s off to secondary school at the end of the school year with the assurance that whatever new places or new challenges they encounter, they have a God who loves them and will walk by their side!

So, as I too get ready to move on, I'd like to thank all of you for your inspiration, support and friendship. Thank you for your grace and kindness - especially in those

moments when perhaps I forgot to collect the offering, sang the wrong preces, was still learning how the tech worked, or locked myself out of the office! St Mary's and Holy Trinity have been a wonderful place for me to learn and grow in a tradition that was less familiar to me before, and I will cherish the time and relationships shared while I have been here.

Jess Spickernell, Ordinand

It seems as though Jess Spickernell has only just joined us and yet she is already in her final preparations for ordination. She has been an immense blessing, bringing wisdom, cheer and creativity to everything she's done in our churches. Jess will be with us until mid-May 2026.

Revd Dave

Choir and Music

Psallam spiritu et mente. I will sing with the spirit and with the understanding also
(1 Corinthians 14:15)

I've been in post as organist and Director of Music for just under three years now. I continue to be struck by how important music is to the life and ministry of St Mary's and how valued it is by all regular members of the congregation as well as members of the wider public.

These past twelve months have been really successful, busy and interesting. We hosted our now annual *Come and Sing* event on Holy Saturday, which last year was the first two parts of Handel's *Messiah*. This was a devotional performance rather than a concert and attracted around 100 singers and a congregation of around 60. I'm extremely grateful to Alex Trigg, our organist and to our wonderful soloists who were all drawn from the choir, as well as all those who put so much effort into making it happen. We are also indebted to the Dronsfield Trust who provide financial support and allow us not to charge singers to take part. This year we will be hosting another *Come and Sing* project which will be Stainer's *Crucifixion*. Please do come along to sing or listen if you possibly can.

Other events have included our now annual Christmas Concert with the Oxted Brass Band, an organ recital in the summer (with many thanks to Chamberlain for his wonderful playing again), Choral Evensong at Rochester Cathedral, Choral Vespers for All Souls Day as well as the usual monthly Choral Evensongs where we have welcomed friends from across the Sevenoaks district to join us. It was a great to play a role in the Flower Festival in the summer and for Oliver and I to give a concert of John Ireland's vocal music to a very appreciative audience. Finally, the choir and I consider it a real privilege to lead the musical worship at the weekly round of choral services and major services at Christmas, Advent, Remembrance, Easter and Harvest.

Much focus this year has been given to the wonderful Lewis organ we have at St Mary's which is clearly in need of remedial work and we are delighted to have a hugely effective Working Group to help bring this project to fruition.

The next twelve months promises to be very busy. We have Choral Evensong at Lancing College Chapel in June and have been asked by the BBC to record and broadcast the annual BBC Radio Kent Carol Service in December.

My thanks go to everyone who supports the musical life of the church and, in particular, to our wonderful choir. We are blessed with a great group of talented and loyal members who give up so much of their time to enhance the ministry at St Mary's. We are always looking for new members so, if you've always wanted to sing in a choir, there's no better time to do it! Please do make contact with me and I'd be delighted to talk with you further about all that we do.

Daniel Eaton,
Organist and Director of Music

Our worship would not be what it is without our Director of Music and Choir and once again, I would like to add my thanks to Dan for his enthusiasm, dedication and good cheer. What a blessing your music ministry is to us, and it's great that we're beginning to see collaboration across the Benefice.

Revd Dave

Organ Working Group

Purpose

Our purpose is to support the PCC in leading the strategy for the fundraising for the important work of preserving our precious instrument and choral tradition for future generations.

About Our Organ

For a long time, it's been believed that our historic organ was built for Wymondham Abbey in Norfolk and later transferred to Westerham. In fact, the organ was commissioned by Colonel Warde of Squerryes for St Mary's and built by the renowned firm of T C Lewis: our Director of Music's research has revealed that it was inaugurated on 25th April 1871 with morning and evening choral services and a lunchtime recital. A very special organ. It was said that people travelled from all over Kent to be part of the inauguration services. The woodwork of the casement is also a precious part of the heritage of the church and the organ.

Organ Working Group Activity 2025 – 2026

We have been fortunate to assemble a Working Group with professional experience of project management, fundraising, commercial business and deep technical knowledge of pipe organs supported by expert financial advice and including both PCC members and members of the choir.

The Organ Working Group was formed during the year 2025/2026 as a coming together of committed volunteers who want to use their professional skills to guide the strategy for the fundraising campaign under the auspices of the PCC. The project involves a significant amount of work which needs focused attention and is helped by the collective capabilities of the group.

The Organ Working Group is deeply appreciative of the generous support from many of you within the church community. A heartfelt thanks to all our individual contributors.

During the year, we have focused on building the strategy for the fundraising and on applications to grant awarding bodies. This work is ongoing and we have shared updates on this with the PCC, including keeping a Risk Register up to date. The preferred contractor to carry out this specialised work has also, with the agreement of the PCC, been selected.

Current Fundraising Status

Funding currently raised amounts to rather more than 30% of the total needed to enable applications to be made to a number of external grant giving bodies including the Benefact Trust, the Garfield Weston Foundation and the National Lottery Heritage Fund and these are now in progress.

Gift Aid on donations from 2024 and 2025 will be added to the amounts above. These are yet to be confirmed.

If anyone would like any further information from the Working Group, please contact Karen Smart.

Karen Smart
Chair, Organ Working Group

Parochial Church Council (PCC) Proceedings

The PCC shares leadership of the church with the Incumbent and continues to share in making decisions enabling the parish to develop in practical and spiritual ways. Members are elected to represent the congregation.

At the end of 2025, the PCC comprised four elected members, one co-opted member, being a clergy member, two officers in attendance (Treasurer and PCC Secretary), two Churchwardens, two Deanery Synod Representatives and one clergy member, who is the Chair.

The 2025 APCM meetings took place in the John Fryth Room on Wednesday 15th May. Ben Preston, Rachel Preston and Jacqueline Willer stepped down as PCC members. Revd Dave thanked them all for their service.

Alyson Coughlan and Karen Smart continued as PCC Secretary and Electoral Roll Officer respectively. Alyson is not a PCC member, but supports its work.

Judy Duffield and Kevin Willcox stood and were duly elected as PCC members. Judy is the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

All PCC meetings in 2025 took place in person and some decisions were made via email or by the Standing Committee between meetings when necessary. Each meeting begins and ends in prayer.

Members continue to review regular matters including safeguarding, health and safety and finance. It also receives minutes from its sub-groups: Standing Committee, Finance Committee, Fabric Committee (including Churchyard), the Social Committee, the Hosey Trust and the North Downs Guild of Music. Eco Church, the Heritage Trust and the governors of Churchill School also submit reports.

A key discussion topic this year has been fundraising for the organ restoration and the Organ Working Group reports to the PCC.

The move towards a Joint Council for the Benefice, supported by respective PCCs has been approved and will be progressed in 2026.

[Alyson Coughlan, PCC Secretary](#)

[Deanery Synod](#)

No Deanery Synod meetings were held in 2025. The meetings are chaired by the Area Dean who has been suffering from ill-health. Additionally, the Deanery Synod currently has no administrative support which has led to logistical difficulties.

[Catharine Boston and Karen Smart](#)

[Bell Ringing](#)

The bellringers have been able to ring for almost every Sunday morning service, and for most Choral Evensong services. We have rung for weddings and tolled a bell at funerals when requested. In addition we have rung the bells before events in the church and on The Green, for instance before the performance of Dickens' 'The Chimes', the Churchill School Christmas service, the May Fair, the VE Day

commemorations, the turning on of the Christmas lights (which coincided with the start of the Christmas Tree Festival) and for the Carols on The Green.

Our 'Open Tower' day, coinciding with the church Christmas Craft Market, was oversubscribed. We are planning another 'Open Tower' event for 2026, as it brings people into the church and raises the understanding of what we do.

In the summer, Nicholson Engineering gave us a free inspection of the bells and belfry. As expected, they proposed an extensive schedule of works. We have consulted other companies and experts, and the works proposed are considered not urgent though they will be necessary in time. We are considering what should be done sooner rather than later.

Elaine Merrylees, Tower Captain

2 Teaching, baptising and nurturing new believers

Schools



Churchill School's theologically-rooted Christian Vision:

Limitless Potential, in God's Image

Hope and a Future for Every Child

Churchill School aims to provide an excellent education for every child, supporting them to achieve their potential and preparing them well for life in all its

fullness.

School life has been very busy throughout the year and as Governors, Revd Dave and I continue to represent St Mary's Church at the range of meetings that are held, as well as carrying out curriculum monitoring duties throughout the year.

There is a dedicated teaching team who ensure all pupils are able to access the curriculum and all those who have diverse needs are served well by a very strong SEND team. The children's wellbeing is carefully monitored. The wraparound element of school, that is the pre-school morning breakfast club and the after-school provision which includes a range of clubs, is very busy.

We continue to lead worship on a regular basis with the Congregational Church and we are extremely fortunate to have input from our Ordinand, Jess. She has brought much to our worship and it's great to have her with us.

Judy Duffield and Revd Dave

Weddings, Baptism and Funerals

Life Events

These are moments when the big questions are writ large in people's minds. I don't think that there is any up-to-date research but, pre-Covid, around 30% of the population's entire experience of church was at weddings and funerals so they are an essential point of contact and ministry to our wider community.

The numbers of all these types of service have gone down across the country in recent years, as people get married at 'venues' and seek alternative funeral arrangements. Our numbers seem to be stable although the number of baptisms is reducing as the number of interments of ashes is increasing. A church with reducing number of baptisms needs to ask itself how well it is proclaiming the Gospel.

Number of Life Events & School Services					
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
School	0	3	4	4	4
Funerals	2	7	6	6	9
Memorials	3	6	1	1	4
Ashes	4	8	10	11	11
Baptisms	5	5	10	5	4
Confirmations			1	0	0
Weddings	8	2	6	4	5
Blessings	1	2	1	2	2
Totals	23	33	39	33	39

Likewise, weddings are times when faith can be ignited and a lasting relationship with the church established. This has happened a number of times. Westerham and Crockham Hill are wonderful places in which to have a wedding, and perhaps we need to think more strategically as a Benefice about how we make the most of our beautiful churches as places in which people can celebrate the best things in life.

Revd Dave

Electoral Roll

The Electoral Roll numbers have remained static over the past year. Sadly, three members of our congregation have died. Three new members have enrolled on the register. The number on the Electoral Roll remains at 102.

Karen Smart, Electoral Roll Officer

3 Responding to human need by loving service

Pastoral Care

The Pastoral Care Team has been able to meet several times this year. We have visited Westerham Place and have held Holy Communion services three times this year; we have also participated in carol singing with the Westerham Singers, and the residents really enjoyed the occasion. We aim to visit every three months to foster a closer connection with the care home. As you know, we are here to help those who are unable to come to church and would like Holy Communion at home, or just a visit. We also pray for people who have asked for our prayers and support. I would like to thank Jess, our Ordinand for all her support with the pastoral care; we wish her the very best in the future. Our Benefice is ever evolving, and parishioners' needs are constantly changing. We have recruited a new member to our team and are hoping to be more proactive in the coming year. Our aim is to reach out in fellowship to them. I want to thank the Pastoral Care team for all their endeavours.

Barbara Humphrey

The Pastoral Care Team has continued to visit and offer care to people in need, especially those who are at home, throughout the Benefice and further afield. Their ministry is part of our Christian devotion as we serve Christ in our friends and neighbours – and strangers. Led by Barbara from Westerham, the team is an essential part of our ministry and deserves our thanks, but they also need new members. If you would be interested in joining the team, please let me know.

Revd Dave

Coffee Time and Jigsaw Group

Tuesday Coffee Time continues to thrive. We have a fairly large group of 'regulars' who attend almost every week and this group is growing. We also have visitors who pop in for coffee after seeing our sign outside the church. Everyone is made welcome and it doesn't take long for them to engage in conversation.

The Wednesday Jigsaw Group is a fairly small group consisting of 3 - 4 people so far. However, those that do come do enjoy it and appreciate companionship, chat and refreshments on a Wednesday.

Christina Cusick

Almshouses

The Almshouses are an important but largely hidden part of our Christian ministry in Westerham. They offer one- and two-person accommodation to people with links to Westerham and Crockham Hill who, for whatever reason, would otherwise be unable to live here. The reasons for that need are many and varied, and potential residents go through an application process before joining a waiting list.

Most of the proceedings of the charity are confidential but as a Trustee, I have been actively involved in the Trust's decision making and have felt especially able to offer pastoral perspectives. As the statutory environment around housing evolves, we have had also had to adapt to ensure compliance with new and stricter rules.

In the summer we once again hosted a successful summer party for the residents.

With social housing in short supply and the ability of the charity to cater for people who would otherwise fall through the cracks in the system, it is an essential and rewarding part of St Mary's ministry and mission.

Revd Dave

Flower Guild

The highlight of this year was a musical themed flower festival held in conjunction with a weekend of music. This event raised £3,853.81 towards the restoration of the Lewis organ.

The Christmas wreath making workshop was fully booked with two sessions and raised £748.50 for Flower Guild funds. A raffle organised by Flower Guild at the Christmas Craft Market raised £252 for church funds. A new notice board at the bottom of the Churchyard, made by Tony York, was funded by the Flower Guild.

We are working towards sustainable flower arrangements following a motion passed by the General Synod. This encourages the use of local, seasonal and fully biodegradable/compostable flowers and foliage. This includes eliminating the use of floral foam and all similar non-biodegradable and non-reusable products.

Yvonne Pomfret
Chair of Flower Guild

Hosey Trust

Westerham Hosey Fund makes grants to help the education of pupils at Churchill School, and the continuing education of previous members up to the age of 25. The members of the Trust Committee usually meet twice a year. There was one successful application in 2025, totalling £568.99. The Trust continues to work closely with the school so that needs can be identified and responded to quickly.

4 Transforming unjust structures of society, challenging violence of every kind and pursuing peace and reconciliation

Safeguarding

St Mary's Westerham is committed to implementing the House of Bishops' safeguarding policies and good practice guidance. Safeguarding appears on every PCC meeting agenda and information regarding the church safeguarding personnel is available around the church on posters. The Diocese Safeguarding Dashboard

helps the Safeguarding team ensure it is considering safeguarding in all aspects of church life through an Action Plan.

The church aims to provide a safe culture and to ensure that people working with children and adults within St Mary's are correctly recruited, trained and vetted. Safeguarding issues will not be ignored and we encourage a culture of caring for both victims and subjects of allegations. We access Basic, Foundation and Leadership training online via The Church of England Safeguarding Training Portal.

The Safeguarding team comprises:

Revd Dave Fox-Branch

Judy Duffield (Parish Safeguarding Officer and Safer Recruitment Officer including DBS administration)

Supported by Alyson Coughlan (records of training attendance).

The team meets regularly to update the Safeguarding register and note the training required and completed by all leaders. As PSO I have completed all training required for this role.

Any safeguarding issues are dealt with speedily and directed to the appropriate authorities where necessary. We are mindful of the specific needs of our congregation and aim to keep them feeling secure and safe in our church community.

Judy Duffield, Parish Safeguarding Officer

[Westerham Foodbank \(Registered Charity 1196367\)](#)

Westerham Foodbank has maintained its links with St Mary's Church and is grateful for their continued support with hosting a collection basket and donating Harvest gifts. A number of the congregation make financial donations or volunteer at the foodbank, which is greatly appreciated.

This last year has continued to be challenging with rising food prices meaning more requests for help. Client referrals are from many sources including social prescribers, school, GP surgery. It works closely with Citizens Advice Edenbridge. Unfortunately, CAB have been unable to meet with clients due to staff shortages, but they are able to hold telephone appointments.

Hero services no longer visit monthly, but are available if needed on an ad hoc basis to help clients with advice on housing, debt advice and fuel costs.

Reasons for referral are many, but include debt, poor health (mental and physical), housing, benefits. Many clients are working but not earning enough to cover their bills.

In November 2025 there were 34 households on the register: 15 single people, 2 couples and 17 families with a total of 44 adults and 36 children. This was a reduction of 14 households from the previous report, but numbers have fluctuated throughout the year.

Some clients have no longer needed support, moved out of the area or have not engaged with the referral process.

The Foodbank is very grateful for all the support it receives from three local supermarkets, five churches, schools, a number of local businesses and many individuals. Special thanks to the Scout group for giving it a base from which to operate.

It has also been successful in applying for grants from various bodies, which enable it to buy in stock to top up the donations received. There are around 40 volunteers who make this possible.

The committee of trustees have continued to change over the years and would welcome anyone interested in becoming a trustee.

Sharon Lord, Foodbank Trustee

5 To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth



Environment

Here in Westerham we all love and appreciate our wonderful countryside and the joy of worship and life in an area of outstanding natural beauty, but did you know that the UK is one of the world's most nature-depleted countries? St Mary's is one of 7,000 churches in the UK signed up and committed to being an Eco Church, which is actively on a mission to restore and protect our wild isles and help people across the nations to access nature. If you are interested look out for our next Eco Church group meeting coming soon or just sign up to the newsletter and look out for regular Eco tips too.



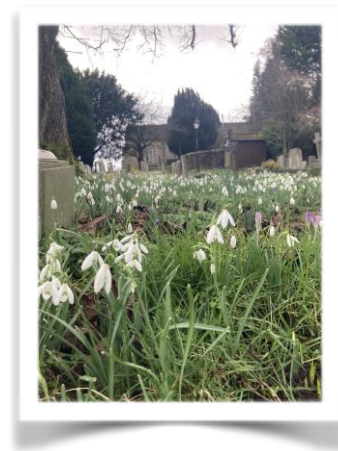
We have work to do this year to progress from our Bronze award! Join us in reaching the Silver Award -

get involved #ecochurch ecochurch.arocha.org

AN A ROCHA UK PROJECT

Achievements in 2025 included:

- LED lighting on a timer
- Continuing to use certified green electricity despite a challenging cost environment.
- Moving to 'green' gas.
 - where possible minimum printing and reusing pew sheets and music
- recycling and compost food waste is ongoing and recycling
- re-wilding of some parts of the churchyard, bulb-planting, tree-planting and 'No Mow May.'
- a single Christmas card is shared for the whole congregation to sign.
- the choir uses a sustainable library of music scores.
- the Flower Guild uses sustainable local grown flowers and foliage and have reduced its use of environmentally detrimental oasis and promoted awareness to the PCC to ban its use especially highlighting the danger of microplastics.
- arranged a meeting with other churches to share sustainable flower arranging tips and awareness.
- free locally-grown seeds given out to promote care for the environment for our pollinators and promote worship and our services
- we celebrate the liturgical season of Creationtide
- eco tips in the newsletter
- we are using more eco-friendly cleaning products
- we promote environmental involvement, for example participation in the Big Plastic Count to raise consciousness of everyday recycling.



Rachel Preston

Report on Fabric, Goods and Ornaments

It is the responsibility of the PCC and its Fabric Committee to work to maintain the church building and churchyard in good order, and to carry out repairs and improvements, as delegated by the PCC.

In late 2024 a Quinquennial report of the condition of the church was carried out by our appointed architect, John Bailey of Thomas Ford & Partners. The previous report from 2019 concluded that, 'The building is in good condition ... there are no significant repair issues.' That essentially remains the position after the 2024 survey, however, we must be mindful with a building of the age of St Mary's that there are a

number of areas of ongoing maintenance and repair that need attending to soon and over the next few years. The Fabric Committee has looked into these and will need to prioritise a programme of works to address them. A year further on means that time is pressing to attend to the most important aspects such as repairs to stonework and gutters along with the need to identify finance necessary for the works to be done.

A number of areas of maintenance are likely to require expenditure for which grant funding will be needed to cover as much of those costs as possible. The cost of repairs and regular maintenance, often by external contractors, remains a cause for concern as increased material and labour costs is likely to mean a need for large-scale expenditure which might only be partially covered by grants.

Fundraising for the organ repairs remains ongoing under the guidance of the Organ Working Group, which reports to the PCC.

The church heating system consisting of two gas fired boilers continues to cause concern in that repairs are becoming more frequent and costly with spare parts becoming less easy to obtain. The timings for the heating have been set to ensure that an efficient use of increasingly costly fuel is made, though at times the temperature in church may have been less than expected due to one boiler being out of operation. Consideration is thus being given to a replacement heating system and the potential to run a heating system by electricity as against gas. Such a system would have the benefits of reducing costs as well as meeting our agreed environmental aim of achieving Net Zero through the Eco Award scheme.

A review of the exterior lighting of the church is due in conjunction with the Town Council with the aim of reducing running costs as well as ensuring that only those areas which require lighting are lit and that light pollution is kept to a minimum.

Part of the Committee's remit is Health and Safety and is a consideration on all aspects to ensure that those volunteering for church activities are kept reasonably safe and that remit is kept under review at all times.

Goods and ornaments, etc

The Property Register as well as the Church Log Book, a record of church additions and amendments will be available for examination at the APCM.

Churchyard

Work on the general maintenance of the churchyard continues both with a contractor for general grass cutting and the excellent assistance of the Probation Service

Community Engagement Team, who provided a voluntary service with work done by people under their supervision.

Work to 're-wild' some areas of the churchyard continues to take place to both encourage wildlife and wildflowers, but also to reduce the need for continual cutting of grass in some areas.

A survey by a qualified arboriculturist of all of the trees in the churchyard to establish their health was carried out, which indicated three trees as being dead. Permission will be sought to have those felled and other works are needed to preserve the life of other trees.

David Booker, Chair of Fabric Committee, Anna Morris, Churchwarden
and Rodney Pomfret, Churchyard Representative

6 Other Reports

Benefice Office

The Benefice Office is the first point of contact for funeral, baptism and wedding enquiries for both parishes. Alyson remains the Parish Administrator for Westerham, and her counterpart in Crockham Hill will be retiring in early 2026.

The day-to-day activities of the Office remain largely the same. These include: acting as the first point of contact for enquiries, updating the electronic diary, dealing with all manner of enquiries, interments of ashes and memorial applications and related administrative arrangements, processing incoming and outgoing invoices and monitoring payments, journalling the bank account data, updating and maintaining churchyard records, coordinating and producing the weekly newsletter and posters, distributing communications, maintaining office equipment and ordering supplies, unlocking and locking the church and dealing with genealogical queries.

The work on the streamlining the filing systems and recording the burial index cards electronically (given the extent of the churchyard and existing records, a long-term project) continues.

The priorities for the coming year are to:

- continue to develop the existing filing systems
- continue to record the burial index cards electronically and align these with the photographic records of the churchyard plans
- identify records to be retained, including the scanning of some items and
- devise systems to ensure the smooth-running of the office during periods of absence.

Alyson Coughlan, Parish Administrator

North Downs Guild of Music

The NDGM has not met this year, nor has a concert or event been organised. It is hoped that an event can be planned for 2026/27.

Finance

Please see the separate financial report for detailed information. Overall, it has been another challenging year, but with some positives.

Legacies

Historically, churches legacies have been a source of irregular but substantial income for parish churches. These days, fewer and fewer people make this provision and that really impacts our long-term financial wellbeing. Please consider leaving a legacy to St Mary's in your Will. No gift is too small to make a difference: legacies help to provide for the life and sustainability of the parish long after we have gone.

Heritage Trust

The Heritage Trust is an independent charity established to raise funds for the maintenance and improvement of St Mary's Church, Westerham.

The funds are raised through a number of specific events held throughout the year. In addition, the Heritage Trust has also received legacies from members.

The Executive Committee meets throughout the year to plan the forthcoming events and to respond to any requests from St Mary's PCC for specific funding assistance. An AGM is held every November to report on the activities of the Trust, to approve the annual accounts and to elect as necessary members of the Executive Committee.

In 2025 the Heritage Trust organised three events: a concert held in the church during the Flower Festival entitled 'The Lennon & McCartney Songbook', raising £3,000. In October a dinner and talk was held entitled 'Murder Most Foul' given by Niall Dickson CBE which raised £1,500. In December the Christmas Tree Festival, ran from 27th November to 7th December. During the Festival there was a performance of Dickens' '*The Chimes*' given by Jonathan Jones. The Christmas Tree Festival was brought to a close by the now traditional singing of Carols on the Green.

Future events are already being planned including a Son et Lumière and a further concert.

The reported accounts presented at the AGM show that the funds held by the Heritage Trust total in excess of £120,000. Since the inauguration of the Trust the amount donated to St Mary's is in excess of £159,000.

At the AGM in November David Griffiths announced that he will be stepping down as Chair during the forthcoming year and a replacement is being sought.

Kevin Willcox, PCC Representative to Heritage Trust

The Vicar's View

2025 was our first full year as a Benefice, united with Crockham Hill. It has been an honour and a privilege to be the Vicar for the Benefice just as it was to be Priest in Charge of Westerham.

Many of the activities of the church, and our worship, have been covered in other reports so I won't go back over them now.

Being a church is different to membership of any other voluntary organisation. Outwardly, we're like other charities, with committees and elections and relatively few people doing the 'official' work but our inner life, which is not so easy to see for outsiders, is one in which everybody has a place and vocation.

Vocations change over time, but they never cease and I hope that you get a sense of them from the reports you have been reading. Flower arrangers, churchwardens, churchyard helpers, PCC members, readers, intercessors, choir members and musicians, safeguarding, schools work, Treasurer, sidespeople everybody deserves thanks but if I try to thank everyone, I will forget somebody and so many of you fill numerous roles both within the church and the wider community. From one day to the next, there never ceases to be somebody at work, doing something to help our mission to make God known in this place, and to turn hearts to Christ. In the name of Christ Jesus, thank you to you all.

As we look to the future, we acknowledge the past and give thanks for everything and everyone who has brought us to this time. We mourn our dead (but with hope) and welcome the newcomer.

What will that future look like? Well, we never know for sure. As I write these words a new chapter is starting in our life together as Jess leaves, Emma settles in and the work of the Joint Council gets underway. But we do not yet know the full story, and how can we? God knows, though.

And perhaps God is calling you, personally, to something new? I would be very happy to chat about your sense of vocation.

Whatever is in store I think, hope and pray that the next few years will be times of blessing and new life for the parishes of Crockham Hill and Westerham.

Revd Dave
May 2026