

**The Parish Church of
St Mary the Blessed Virgin
Burley-in-Wharfedale**



**Annual Report
of the Parochial Church Council
for the year ended
31st December 2025**

Vicar
Churchwarden
Treasurer
PCC Secretary
Independent Examiner

Rev. Phil Bishop
Mr. Mark Selby
Mr. John Spencer
Vacant
Mr. John McGhee

Bankers

Virgin Money, 1 Westgate, SHIPLEY

Website:

<http://www.burleyparishchurch.org.uk/>

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Minutes of the APCM held on Sunday 23rd March, 2025

Minutes of the Vestry Meeting

Val Mackenzie stepped down from the role of churchwarden. She was thanked for her contribution in this role over the previous three years with the gift of an olive tree. Val expressed how much she had enjoyed being churchwarden and how it had been a privilege to serve the church.

Vicar Phil Bishop explained that Val's departure means the church is now without a churchwarden. He has met with all deputy churchwardens to discuss the responsibilities, with a view to dividing these among this group. Mike Chambers has joined the group and Mark Selby has agreed to act as 'chief warden' over the forthcoming year and will support at least two group members to take over the churchwarden role in 2026. The aim is to have at least two churchwardens to share the responsibilities that come with the role. Mark was duly elected without objection.

Minutes of the APCM

1. Introduction and prayer

Phil chaired the meeting, opening it with prayers.

2. Present and apologies

50 members of the Electoral Roll were present. Apologies were received from Wendy Bishop, Richard Holdsworth, Val James, Hilary Rhodes and Pam Woffindin.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes from the APCM 2024 were approved unanimously (Mick Smith proposed, Janet Squire seconded).

4. Matters Arising

Nothing to report.

5. The Reports

a. Electoral Roll

Electoral Roll Officer Annette Hattersley informed the meeting that there are currently 105 names on the Roll, 17 of whom are non-residents. There were 6 removals due to death, and 8 removals after individuals left the village. Phil commented that this represents a significant drop from last year, but is unsurprising given that it is a new roll and the first one since the Covid pandemic, and is reflected in the reduction in the number of planned givers during Covid.

b. PCC Report & Activities of the Parish

Phil opened by reflecting on the church statistics report prepared by Val. He observed that since the reduction in church attendance as a result of Covid, attendance has remained relatively consistent. He acknowledged the challenges the church is facing, stating that growth takes time to develop, and stated that, with the PCC, he will continue to address these challenges over the forthcoming year.

c. Annual Financial Report

Treasurer John Spencer presented the Treasurer's Report, highlighting that the church was operating far beyond its means. In 2024, a £19,000 loss was incurred, and the overall balance sheet which includes the church and parish centre has reduced by around £22,000. The projected losses for 2025 are £30,000. While the church has over £200,000 in reserves, the spending is at an unsustainable rate and as a charity, the church should not be losing money. The independent examiner Jon McGhee has questioned the amount of the parish share contribution and recommended a full discussion on the matter of payment of the parish share in 2025.

John invited questions on the report and the accounts.

Janet Squire thanked the church for their contribution to the Burley-Téréli Friendship Trust, and asked why mission giving was included in the church accounts. John explained that some of the church's funds are allocated for mission giving and all donations must go through church accounts to allow the church to claim gift aid.

Sally McGhee stated that as a member of the PCC, she appreciated the value of paying the parish share in full, but given that it was being paid from reserves, we should reconsider paying the full share. She noted that the reserve funds are for the church but are being used to pay the share to the diocese. Phil explained that not paying the full parish share has implications for the appointment of a full time vicar, noting that failure to pay the parish share may mean that a full time role is not offered again in the future. He explained that the PCC is already working on ways to save money, for example, the parish administrator role was not being replaced, and on ways to generate additional income such as the exclusive let of a room in the parish centre.

Fiona Prest drew from her previous experience as Deanery Treasurer to explain that the reasoning behind the parish share was to ensure the Church of England has a presence in every parish in England and Wales, and it is important to remember this as this makes the Church of England distinct. Phil noted that Burley in Wharfedale is among the least deprived areas in the diocese and alongside paying for a full time vicar in this parish, our share contributes to the costs for a vicar elsewhere.

John McGhee acknowledged that paying the parish share is the right thing to do but this should come from income and not reserves. He stressed the real effort required to resolve this situation as we risk not having a church in the next few years if the losses continue at the same rate. He stated that the projected deficit for 2025 is unsustainable and suggested that a committee should be created to explore ideas and possible solutions as a matter of urgency.

Joyce Russell questioned why card sales for Open Door were not included in the annual report. John replied that it is difficult to include all income in detail but will provide the figures separately.

Roger Charnley asked about the calculation of the parish share and whether it was based on the numbers on the electoral roll. John explained that the calculation takes into account the level of deprivation in the parish and the average Sunday attendance, and the diocese limit their request to a maximum of 80% of our total income.

Caroline Bishop reflected on the importance of the parish share and the fact that the diocese is providing a curate, Zoe, who will join St Mary's soon. She suggested we turn our hearts to mission and pray for the financial situation.

Phil thanked John for his work as treasurer, acknowledging that it is his responsibility to keep track of our financial situation, not to fix it.

d. Appointment of Independent Examiner

John McGhee was elected unanimously to continue as Independent Examiner for 2025. Phil thanked him for his continued work in this role.

e. Churchwarden's Report on Fabric

Churchwarden Val Mackenzie summarised the Churchwarden's Report on Fabric. Cameras have been installed at the entrance to church and the PCC has agreed to the installation of a camera at the back of church. Repairs to the clock chime are ongoing and expect to be completed soon. Issues remain with the organ and this will be on the agenda for the forthcoming year. The visitation from the Archdeacon took place in April 2024 and was a positive experience overall. Issues relating to the boundary wall and roof above the vestry are ongoing.

f. Deanery Synod Report

Deanery Synod Representative Frances Robinson provided the Deanery Synod Report. No further comments were added at the meeting.

g. Safeguarding Report

Safeguarding Officer Richard Holdsworth provided the Safeguarding Report. No further comments were added at the meeting. Phil expressed his thanks to Richard for taking on the role and all his work to date.

6. Election of PCC members

Due to the substantial reduction of electoral roll numbers, the number of elected PCC members has reduced to 12. There was therefore only one vacancy for the PCC and one application from Ella Holdsworth, which was approved unanimously. Two applications were received from Lis Merrick and Susan Collins for the Deanery Synod roles. These appointments were approved unanimously. By taking these roles, Lis and Susan will be members of the PCC.

7. Accepting the Annual Report

The Annual Report was approved unanimously.

8. Vicar's Report/Summary

Phil noted that the approach of creating paid positions for roles previously undertaken by volunteers has contributed to the Parish Centre and therefore the Church incurring a financial loss. The Parish Centre Steering Group is working to support the Parish Centre Manager. A Finance Group will be set up to review the Church and Parish Centre Finances which it is hoped will improve the situation.

Phil also informed the meeting that the organ requires major repairs. Initial estimates are that a full refurbishment of the existing organ will cost £50,000, a partial refurbishment will cost £20,000 and a digital organ will cost £10,000 (including installation) [Post meeting note: the organ group have since determined that £35K to £50K is realistic for a good digital organ]. There will be an opportunity to discuss this further before any decision is made.

Phil expressed his gratitude to Lis Merrick for her work arranging the APCM and collating the necessary documents, and to all who have supported him and the work of St Mary's over the past year. He used 1 Corinthians 12:12 to reflect on how we were working together for the glory of God; *'Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.'*

9. Any Other Business / Questions

Mark Selby expressed his thanks to Phil for his service over the past year.

Pam Sowman asked what involvement St Mary's had with Burley Oaks School. Phil stated that there were good existing links. While spiritual support is primarily provided

by the Methodist Church and Fiona, their youth worker, pupils have attended services at St Mary's in the last year. There are plans to begin Open the Book at Burley Oaks.

Gareth Brearley informed the meeting of his hope to be confirmed during the forthcoming year. Phil stated that a confirmation service is being planned.

Karen Selby expressed her thanks to Phil and Caroline, and encouraged everyone to pull together and move forward positively.

10. Closing Prayers

Phil closed the meeting, introducing a Prayer for St Mary's which was distributed to all present, and which he hopes will be included in many of our services and meetings going forward as we intentionally pray for St Mary's and for growth in numbers, in spiritual commitment, and in service to our local community.

Background

The PCC of the Parish Church of St. Mary The Blessed Virgin, Burley in Wharfedale has 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 Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), in accordance with the Church Representation Rules, elects members of the PCC. The following served as members of the PCC from April 2025 to December 2025.

NAME	ROLE	TERM OF OFFICE
Rev Phil Bishop	Vicar	From July 2023
Zoe Smith	Curate	From June 2025
Mark Selby	Church Warden	Annual Appointment
John Spencer	Treasurer	Co-opted until 2026
Sally McGhee	Elected Member	Elected until 2026 AGM
Frances Robinson	Deanery Synod	Elected until 2026 AGM
Mary Brooks	Elected Member	Elected until 2026 AGM
Lis Merrick	Deanery Synod	Resigned September 2025
Karen Selby	Elected Member	Elected until 2026 AGM
Susan Collins	Deanery Synod	Elected until 2026 AGM
Janita Dibb	Elected Member	Elected until 2026 AGM
Val James	Elected Member	Elected until 2027 AGM
Annette Hattersley	Elected Member	Elected until 2027 AGM
Wendy Bishop	Elected Member	Elected until 2027 AGM
Yvonne Nyathi	Elected Member	Elected until 2027 AGM
Ella Holdsworth	Elected Member	Elected until 2028 AGM

Standing Committee

Revd Phil Bishop (Vicar), Mark Selby (Warden), John Spencer (Treasurer), Lis Merrick (PCC Secretary until September 2025), Mary Brooks (Lay Reader), Susan Collins, Revd Zoe Smith (Curate).

Officers of the PCC and Church:

Vice Chair	Church Warden
Treasurer	John Spencer
Secretary	Vacant
Minutes Secretary	Ella Holdsworth
Electoral Roll Officer	Annette Hattersley
Disability and Vulnerable People Rep	Jane Schofield Gurung
Parish Safeguarding Officer	Richard Holdsworth

Electoral Roll

There are 109 people on the Electoral Roll and of those, 92 are residents in the Parish and 17 are non-resident. In 2025, 3 people died who were on the electoral roll.

ANNETTE HATTERSLEY, ELECTORAL ROLL OFFICER

Church Statistics 2025

Figures have been added to the previous years for comparison. These numbers are reported to the diocese each year and make up part of national statistics.

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Baptisms	4	6	11	17	12	0	19	13	17	14	27
Weddings	3	1 + 1 blessing and 1 renewal of vows	1	5	2	3	4	2	11	6 + 2 blessings	4
Funerals	15 11 in church	18 15 in church	15 8 in church	17 15 in church	12 10 in church	18 12 in church	29 18 in church	20 12 in church	19 12 in church	16 11 in church	23 14 in church
Confirmations	1	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	10
Easter Communicants	96	107	96	110	54	0	170	167	204	207	171
Christmas Communicants	108	64	58	46	69	53	124	133	209	179	91
Normal Sunday Attendance – Adults	64	61	69	56	N/A	N/A	97	106	112	107	101
Normal Sunday Attendance – Under 16	3	3	5	11	N/A	N/A	14	15	22	20	28

The Christmas Day communicants include the midnight service, which in 2025 was held jointly with the Methodists at St Mary's.

Annual services, such as the Christmas Carol Service and Christingle Services are not included in the above figures, but their continued success demonstrates how the church is still central to Christmas for a significant number of people in the community who may not otherwise come to church. Likewise, school services result in attendance not only by the children, but include many parents.

It should also be noted that the mid-week (Thursday) service is going strongly with a regular attendance of approximately 20.

MARK SELBY, CHURCH WARDEN

The Reports

Vicar's Report 2025

2025 began with several courses and a focus on training:

- An Alpha Course for those who are exploring questions of faith and meaning was delivered via Zoom.
- Our Lent Course as Churches Together in Burley followed the Lectio Course, helping us to recognise God speaking to us through Scripture.
- The Personal Growth and Leadership Course (PGL) provided by the Diocese's Barnabus team, runs over 6 Saturday morning, one a month. It is designed to boost confidence as leaders (think leadership as influence) and equip us to be more effective in connecting with our wider community. The course was completed by several church members. It runs every year if anyone is interested in attending.
- PGL dovetailed well with the course promoted nationally by the Church of England called "Leading Your Church Into Growth" (LYCIG) which 3 of us attended in February. This helped us to develop a preliminary strategy specifically targeting our growth as a church.

As a result, at last year's APCM, I introduced a prayer to help us pray more intentionally for growth – I hope by now it feels very familiar:

God of Mission,
Who alone brings growth to your Church,
Send your Holy Spirit to give
Vision to our planning,
Wisdom to our actions,
Joy to our worship,
And power to our witness.
Help our church to grow
In numbers,
In spiritual commitment to you, and
In service to our local community,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

As we continue to pray, my hope and my prayer is that numerical growth will flow naturally out of our joy as disciples of Jesus, our worship and love for God, and our deepening spiritual commitment to Him. And I pray that will lead to increased growth

in our service to our community and in greater confidence and effectiveness in our witness.

Prayer underpins everything that we do. It is the engine room of our spiritual life as a church and I encourage you to continue to pray the above prayer and to join in with the different opportunities to pray together, whether in one of our prayer meetings, in small groups, in our prayer walking, in prayer spaces, during Thy Kingdom Come, in our services, and in your own personal times of prayer.

At Easter, unfortunately I finally caught Covid, and I was unable to take services for 3 weeks, and indeed it took until July for me to feel fully well again. It was a time when the depth and breadth of our ministry team became particularly evident, and I would like to thank Mary, Denis and Barry for all their ministry and support throughout the year along with David Robinson and Jane Schofield Gurung who also stepped in to lead services around Easter last year.

Last May, I preached a series of sermons based on the book of Acts, exploring how the Apostles' lives and witness embodied many of the elements of our mission statement:

1. To be a church of missionary disciples.
2. To be a church where we celebrate in different and varied ways.
3. To be a multigenerational and more diverse church.

We unpacked what it means to be "missionary disciples" and how as we seek God in prayer, as we pray for our friends, neighbours and relatives, as we are expectant and looking for opportunities to share the Good News, that God would bless them and draw us all more deeply into a relationship with him.

Following this, we launched two new small groups in addition to the two existing ones. The aim of these is to provide a space for mutual support, prayer and Bible study, and to consider further what it means for each of us to live as "missionary disciples" and how we can support one another in reaching out to those around us. If you are interested in joining a small group do have a word with one of the leaders listed later in this report.

On 28th June, our curate Zoe Smith was ordained Deacon at Wakefield Cathedral, and the following day, we welcomed her and her family to our Sunday services, followed by a wonderful "bring-and-share" lunch. It was a brilliant opportunity to begin to get to know Zoe, Martyn, Elliot, Anna and Ben.

Zoe has been a tremendous blessing to our church, in particular to our work among children and families, and her involvement has been key to the launching of St Mary's@4 in the Parish Centre on the first Sunday of the month, while she has also been growing in her pastoral and priestly gifting.

After the summer, we gave a new look to "Connect Together", now called "All Age Worship", offering the option of discussion groups, craft activities, quiet reflection and a traditional sermon in the church lounge (which proved particularly popular in the cold winter months!). All these are linked to the theme of the service and give opportunity to explore what God is saying to us in different ways, and I hope many of you will experiment with one of the options that perhaps feels less intuitive for you. The "Connect" team continue to provide consistent weekly provision for our children during our 10am services which has been very much appreciated, and is essential in ensuring that children who come to our services feel welcome and included.

Our Food and Fellowship Group also ran several events to encourage deeper fellowship and friendship within and beyond the church family. These have been joyful occasions to share together and build relationships.

The Thursday services and the regular lunches that follow are a popular part of the church's calendar and another important means of mutual support through communal worship and fellowship.

Our pastoral care team has faithfully supported and visited those who are may not be able to attend our services and activities regularly and provided bereavement care.

With the opening of the new Greenholme Care Home, we now provide a monthly communion service both at Greenholme and Burley Hall, as well as spending time afterwards visiting those who are confined to their rooms.

In October, Bishop Toby joined us for a joyful Confirmation Service in which Gareth Brearley and two others from Kildwick were confirmed.

As usual our Christmas were well attended. It is always a joy to see so many from the village at our Carol Service and Christingle Services.

One other theme that has been quite prominent in our thinking over the last year has been our Finances. It became apparent at our last APCM that we could no longer sustain £20-30K losses each year, and after due consideration, the PCC reluctantly made the decision to cease paying our Parish Share in full from August. We now pay what we can afford. As the finance report explains, we paid £71K of our £90.5K share request from the diocese.

We have formed a Finance Group who ran a Stewardship Campaign starting at the end of October. I would like to thank all who give so generously to support the life and worship of this church, and in light of the campaign, all those who committed to giving regularly for the first time, all those who increased their giving, all those who linked their giving to inflation, all those who explored leaving a legacy to St Mary's and all who gave to the Friends of St Mary's Fund. These steps have made a significant

improvement to our financial situation although we still have a long way to go to return to paying our Parish Share in full.

Bishop Toby has taken up the challenge of addressing the wider finances at diocesan level, encouraging all parishes to examine their giving in a response to the abundance of God's generosity to us, and he spoke at the Confirmation Service of his aspiration that the contribution of parishes in areas of low deprivation like Burley will support ministry across the wider diocese.

At the same time, we have continued to support a number of charities through our "coffee money", Coffee & Cake mornings in the Parish Centre, and Mission Giving Grants.

I'd like to conclude by thanking all of you who give and serve in so many different ways in this church. As part of our safeguarding processes, we have put together a list of volunteers and their roles. It's a huge list and still very much a work in progress, but it is evident that the vast majority of church members contribute and volunteer in some way to the life of St Mary's and/or the Parish Centre.

While I find it almost impossible to single anyone out, I would like to thank Mark Selby, for his support in his role as warden, the deputy wardens, and all those who have served on the PCC in what has in many ways been a very challenging year. We are still learning together, but I am encouraged that God is working his purpose out among us, in us and through us.

Our giving flows out of our journey as disciples of Jesus and as an expression of our thanks to God. As we are generous with our time, energy, talents and money, so may we be generous in sowing the Good News of Jesus into our community in word and deed, that we might experience the growth that God longs to give.

REVD PHIL BISHOP

Church Warden's Report on the Fabric of the Church

Although the duties of Church Warden have been shared, I have had the pleasure of being the named Warden for this year. It has certainly been easier (for me) as a lot of work has been done by others, often behind the scenes. The visible part of the role is to assist at services, but this is only part of what goes on. Mick Smith has the unenviable task of trying to coordinate all the volunteers into a rota who make the services happen. Seeing this rota makes me appreciate how much we owe to those who support the services.

A key part of the role is to ensure the Church buildings are in a fit state for use and although the priority is for the parishioners to have somewhere (ideally warm and dry) to worship, there also a legal obligation to answer to the diocese. Every significant job

needs special permission, and architects need to get involved in many cases, even when any decent builder would know how to fix a problem. John Spencer, as our volunteer Clerk of Works, deals with architects and builders. The process is time consuming and slow and can be very frustrating.

We are aware that there is much to do regarding the fabric of the Church and this is mostly in hand. Work not completed this year, despite best efforts, includes improving interior and exterior lighting, fixing the problems with rising damp, clearing the gutters and repairing the roof over the vestry. These projects have taken a lot of time and effort (mainly by John Spencer) and although there is as yet little to see, we hope progress can be made in the coming months.

We have for some time been concerned about the state of the retaining wall supporting the Garden of Rest. The wall remained in the ownership of Bradford Council when the Church acquired the land used for this purpose, but the Council subsequently sold on the neighbouring plot. We have been in correspondence with our neighbours seeking to persuade them to have the wall assessed and repaired, but progress has been slow.

Val James is also working with a team to consider options for the organ; none of these are cheap and any final decision will need to consider long-term legacy and workability.

As part of the safeguarding process led by Richard Holdsworth, I prepared a spreadsheet showing various jobs done by those supporting the Church and Parish Centre, listing the names of those involved. So far, there are 60 names and it is still growing. This demonstrates how almost everyone we see on a Sunday morning is doing something somewhere to make the Church work as a central part of our lives and our community. Thanks.

And, by the way, if anyone wants to do more, please let me know. Our team of wardens needs to grow to lighten the load on those individuals doing so much.

MARK SELBY, CHURCH WARDEN

Treasurer's Report

This is the first year where the Diocesan Share was not paid in full. This decision was made after extensive discussions by the Standing and Finance Committee and the full PCC. The original Parish Share if paid in full would have been round £91,000. However, the final amount paid to the Diocese was around £71,000. This was a substantial reduction, but we felt it was the only way the church could afford its present commitments and have monies available for works to the fabric of the church.

The accounts show a surplus of around £8,500. This was mainly due to an increase in contributions to the Friends Fund and some accrued income that will be expended in the first quarter of 2026. However, the day to day expenditure was basically in balance with income matching expenditure.

Due to the reduction in Parish Share the budgeted loss was substantially reduced. The budget for this year, 2026 has been set with a reduced share of £65,000. This will allow the budget for 2026 to be in balance with the exclusion of any major maintenance work at the church or contributions to the running of the Parish Centre.

At present there is going to have to be some expenditure on the fabric of the church especially in relation to the roof. We are aware of a problem with the roof over the vestry which is now causing damage to the interior and as anyone who has been in church will notice we now have a roof leak in and around the tower. At the time of writing this report the exact cause of the leak has not been found. Until we know where the leak is coming from we cannot know the extent of the bill for the repairs.

The other major expenditure will be around the organ. This is now in a poor state of repair, and we have yet to understand the Diocesan Advisory Committee view on the best way forward for the Organ. Any works in replacing the organ and / or substantial repairs will not be cheap. It is fortunate that people are beginning to contribute to works on the organ before we know the eventual outcome of the discussions.

Can I thank all the people who help me with the finances of the church, to Val McKenzie for the envelopes, for Jason Atkinson for dealing with the collections, petty cash and transferring this to the bank and to Karen Selby for taking on the role of Parish Centre treasurer.

Can I also finally thank everyone who contributes to the ongoing finances of the church, either through individual donations or the Central giving Scheme. I should also mention at this point anyone who has increased their giving due to the stewardship campaign either with individual donations or through the Central giving scheme.

We must also thank our examiner John McGhee who has stepped in to provide the necessary independence to these accounts and to Sally for allowing him.

JOHN SPENCER, TREASURER

Deanery Synod Report

The South Craven and Wharfedale Deanery is a group of 12 churches in the north of the Bradford Diocese. Parishes are spread from Lothersdale and Cowling, in the west, to Menston, in the east. Deanery Synod meetings take place 3 times a year, both on Zoom or in person. Deanery Synod meetings are an opportunity for initiatives in the

diocese to be shared on a local level as well as for Churches to support each other and share ideas.

The first meeting of 2025 was held on Zoom in February. Hilary Davies gave a presentation about her visit to the Middle East with 'The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel' (EAPPI).

In June, the Synod met at St. Andrew's Church, Kildwick, where the Rev. Mike Green spoke about the history of the church and the renovation work which has been carried out on the building. The Revd Canon Sean Robertshaw, the Diocesan Director of Vocations, then gave an interesting presentation about vocations within the Church and pathways towards ordination or becoming an LLM (Licensed Lay Minister).

Our final meeting of 2025 was held in October at St John's Ben Rhydding, when Rev Steve Proudlove, the Director of Ministerial Formation and Development, spoke about training opportunities within the Diocese of Leeds. He explained how these are for both the clergy and the laity.

FRANCES ROBINSON AND SUSAN COLLINS

Safeguarding Report

Since my last report, nine new DBS checks have been completed for everyone who works with children, young people, and vulnerable adults. I have ensured that all necessary training has been completed. This includes my own training as Parish Safeguarding Officer, which must be renewed every three years. Training for PCC members includes Basic Awareness, Foundations, and Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse. The Church Warden also completes training on Safer Recruitment and Leadership in addition to their PCC member training. All those working with children, young people or vulnerable adults are required to complete Basic Awareness and Foundations. I will be running in-person training on Basic Awareness and Foundations at the Parish Centre after Easter 2026 as many of the volunteers' training is up for renewal.

I have continued to meet regularly with Phil, Zoe and Mary to discuss any safeguarding related issues and training needs. I gave a presentation in the 8am and 10am Sunday services on 'Safeguarding Sunday' in November, alongside Zoe. This appeared to be well received by those who attended.

The Parish Safeguarding Dashboard continues to be work in progress. In conjunction with Phil, Zoe and Mary, we are currently updating the requirements of the Safeguarding Hub, which is a companion tool to the Church of England's Parish Safeguarding Dashboard. It is a dedicated online resource providing structured support, tutorials, documents, GDPR information, data-sharing guidance, service agreements, FAQs, and tools. The Hub also includes templates for specific jobs within

the church including all volunteer or paid roles within the church which deal with vulnerable adults or children. We have begun the process of adding all volunteers to the relevant role profile and will continue to do this over the forthcoming year.

RICHARD HOLDSWORTH, PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER

Churches Together in Burley

Churches Together in Burley has continued to flourish with the usual array of services, and the lunches seemingly increasing in popularity. Events in 2025 included:

- The Lent Lectio Course.
- Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Vigil Services
- Thy Kingdom Come Prayer in May.
- Village Prayer Walks.
- a presentation by Hilary Davies about the work of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine & Israel (EAPPI) in July.
- Praise in the Park in August (and we boosted our presence at the festival via a prayer tent on the park for the first time).
- a moving Taizé Prayer Vigil for the Middle East and Gaza in November.
- Our Advent Carol Service.

A couple of challenges towards the end of the year have been that Revd Tim from the Methodist Church has been on long term sick and we continue to pray for him and his recovery, while Revd Jason from Salem URC has also announced that he will be leaving ministry in Burley in May to serve in a wider pastoral role while continuing as the minister at the Bridge in Otley.

We have promoted the Methodist Church's "Slice of Life" pizza outreach project to young people which launched in the Autumn. It is good to know that some from St Mary's have volunteered to support their project.

In September, thanks to Susan Collins' initiative, we and the Methodists took part in the Yorkshire Churches Heritage Day. Footfall was steady but not as high as we'd hoped. However the volunteers gave a warm welcome and it was worthwhile for those who came.

REVD PHIL BISHOP

St Mary's Parish Centre

It has been an eventful year in the Parish Centre.

Carol O'Connor came to the end of her 2 year contract as Parish Centre Manager in November and I'd like to thank her for all her hard work over those 2 years.

My thanks to all the dedicated volunteers including Pearl Jolly, Steven Jolly, Joyce Russell, Linda Nelson, Chris Nelson, Pam Sowman and David Sowman who have worked incredibly hard to keep things running as smoothly as possible, continuing to serve the different groups at the centre and promote the centre across the village.

One particular highlight was the first weekend of the Summer Festival when the Parish Centre was buzzing with activity with taster sessions offered by different groups, an art exhibition and the return of the incredibly popular Pop-Up Café. Events like this help to remind people that in the Parish Centre we have a wonderful facility to offer in the heart of the village.

The Parish Centre's income roughly covers its running costs excluding the staff salaries which are paid by the church. The Steering Group and the PCC explored the possibility of raising about £8-9K a year by means of an exclusive let of one of the rooms. This remains a possibility, but we feel that any new Parish Centre Manager should be given the opportunity to develop ways of increasing revenue through new bookings and grant applications before we take such a step.

So my thanks too, to the Steering Group: Val McKenzie, Susan Collins, Karen Selby and Zoe Smith who worked hard to support Carol and have themselves put in long hours working in the centre. Towards the end of the year, we developed the recruitment process for a new Manager with a view to appointing someone in 2026.

REVD PHIL BISHOP

Open Door

If you remember last year's Open Door report, you will have read that we were planning to move into its 29th year, in spite of all the difficulties, "with a positivity of surviving". To action this statement, the new year began with a training event to ensure our volunteers had revision on aspects of their role and an opportunity to discuss how to deal with difficulties.

A small steering group was set to help develop the management of Open Door and Joyce and Margaret Young committed themselves to research what changes / needs could help the future direction of our mission. Over the year they met up with quite a number of individuals across the area: Love Burley Trustees, Grange Park Social Prescriber, Burley Library, Ilkley Good Neighbour's Befriending Co-ordinator, and Shipley Warden. While making new contacts was very useful, no obvious gaps in provision were revealed. However we will continue talking with them to monitor whether there are any new needs been identified with which we could help. They also know to direct any of their clients that would benefit from what we offer. Most visitors and others were not particularly interested in any suggested activities to be added to our sessions.

While we ended 2025 still struggling to cope with no longer having 'ownership' of a room due to our reduced number of weekly sessions, we were still providing a space for locals to meet up, have a cuppa and a chat. The positive outcome, in spite of volunteers and visitors recognising the rooms were less welcoming than in the past, was that the number attending each session has grown during the year and new visitors have also joined.

As we enter our 30th year, Open Door has survived, and from February 14th we have been able to offer new sessions on the 2nd, 4th and 5th Friday afternoons of the month. In 2026 we plan to celebrate Open Door with a 30th Birthday.

JOYCE RUSSELL

Schools

We continue to maintain good relationships with all three schools in the Parish.

A team of us completed our training for "Open the Book" with a view to delivering Bible Stories in an engaging way to pupils at Burley Oaks and Burley & Woodhead Schools, and we looked forward to starting this early in 2026.

We take specific assemblies at Ghyll Royd for Harvest, Christingle and Easter and welcome them each year into church for their Christmas Carol Concert which is always a joyful occasion.

We maintain links at Burley Oaks through community engagement and intergenerational events that are well attended by church members, or Joyce Russell occasionally arranges for the pupils to come along to Open Door.

Burley & Woodhead Church of England school is understandably where we have most involvement. 4 members of the governing board attend St Mary's Church: Revd Phil, Mark Selby, Mary Brooks and Patrick Dalzell, and are actively involved in the life of the school. In September, Mary stepped down from the governing board, but we are delighted that Fiona Prest has joined as a Foundation Governor bringing her wealth of experience in education.

Each week on a Thursday morning, one of the ministry team, usually Phil, Zoe or Mary, and occasionally Denis, lead an act of Collective worship in the school. This is usually followed by a "Big Question" discussion in class on an ethical issue, although Phil and Zoe ended up in a maths lesson one week helping the pupils to design milk bottles!

We also welcomed the school council to church a couple of times to talk to our Thursday morning congregation.

In 2026, the school expects to have its SIAMS inspection and the staff and governors have spent some time preparing for this, deepening our understanding of the schools Christian values and distinctiveness.

REVD PHIL BISHOP

Burley Cares

Sally and I continue to offer support to those who are bereaved if we are approached, but for personal reasons neither of us has been able to reach out as we might have hoped this year. Moreover, St Mary's has lost some significant members of its congregation during the course of the year. Phil and Zoe along with Mary and our retired clergy, have offered support and understanding to families experiencing loss and helped them through funeral services. Most of the care has come from them. In addition, Phil put together a beautiful quiet and reflective annual bereavement service in June which the congregation of about 30 very much appreciated. Also appreciated was the service in December, Hope in the Bleak Midwinter. This was a gentle service for those living with loss of any sort and gave them an opportunity to draw aside for a time for comfort and reflection. Once again candles were lit and small prayer cards hung on the prayer tree as situations and loved ones were committed into God's hands. This is the first time we have offered a service quite like this. Phil's service perfectly reflected the needs of those who attended, and it was clearly valued.

THE CLERGY, JANET SQUIRE AND SALLY MCGHEE

Music

During the year, the previously named "St Mary's Singers" have transitioned themselves into being 'St Mary's Church Choir' and have supported worship more regularly than before, and their involvement has included singing at funerals and a wedding. I am most grateful to them for the continuing dedication and support.

Unfortunately I have had several months off this year due to a work assignment abroad and then sadly breaking my foot in December. I am therefore very grateful to the visiting organists and musicians who have helped keep things going in my absence.

There are interesting new ventures ahead and I look forward to taking forward the music in church to new levels during the coming year.

As regards the organ, it continues to 'hold up' thanks for the organ tuners and repairers. A more fulsome proposition about the longer term proposals for the organ are with the Diocese, and we await their formal recommendations and advice

ANDREW RADLEY, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Christian Aid

The Burley Christian Aid Committee is an ecumenical group comprising 3 of the 4 the churches in the village, established over 50 years old. We are few in number but continue to support Christian Aid and its work with partners across the world. Set up following the Second World War, the charity aims to eradicate global poverty and injustice, striving for a world where everyone can live a life of dignity, equality and freedom regardless of faith.

We hold 3 main fundraisers every year. We held 2 Lent Lunches during 2025. These are always well received and we raised a total of £442.09 with more given online. During Christian Aid Week in May we held our annual Coffee Morning and there were collections in each of the churches. We know many people give online, which is easy and preferable for many. Even so we raised a total of £800.80 in cash. The Christmas Card boards were well used by friends in the parish and by others now living further afield who wished to send us greetings. Another £160 was sent to Christian Aid in addition to the online gifts which we know were made.

Thank you to everyone who helped at and supported these events. Your support is always generously given and very much appreciated. We know that global need is vast and inequalities are on the increase. Your gifts are as valuable now as they have ever been. Thank you so very much.

JANET SQUIRE, MARY WOOD AND THE BURLEY CHRISTIAN AID COMMITTEE.

Burley-Téréli Friendship Trust

This year we celebrated 25 years of the link with Téréli, and it remains as strong as ever. It has always primarily been a friendship which has grown through trust, and we have been offered both generously from our friends in Mali. Despite their poverty and the impoverished nature of their land they have striven to improve the quality of their lives by working together as a community. As friends, and from a position of comparative wealth, we have tried to support their efforts financially. We have never felt that this has been expected of us. Every penny we send is accounted for and we see the photos of the finished projects.

In 2025, the main project in Téréli has been the building and equipping of a soap making facility. This not only provides employment in a region which has little employment but also manufactures soap in various forms which can be sold in the market; locally produced items which are in demand. We were impressed by how quickly they worked to complete this and put it into operation. Plans soon emerged for another viable project, a sewing workshop. Building work commenced very quickly and by Christmas we were raising money for treadle machines. We have sent money for school equipment, and we also continue to support the funding of some medicines at the dispensary in Téréli to ensure the poorest in the community receive medicines

they need. This has been done through Tenousse, our chief link with Téréli, who is a qualified pharmacist and runs his own business in Bamako, the capital.

We have supported projects in the Dogon and in other rural areas of Mali through the work of the Joliba Trust. These projects are mainly the building of wells for villages that have lost their traditional wells, along with tree planting and environmental projects to improve soil quality and crop production. We hear of the terrible plight of villages that have lost traditional wells where women can spend 6 to 8 hours a day trekking for water. The joy of once again having a well of their own and the freedom it brings the women to give time to their families, to cultivate plots of land and engage in small scale enterprises is humbling.

None of this can be achieved without the wonderful support of generous benefactors. Thank you so much. Be assured that every gift goes to Mali as there are no costs taken by the charity. Among these generous donations have been gifts given in memory of Aafke Clark whose funeral was held in church early in the year. St Mary's, through the PCC has also donated £500 to the charity. This recognition is valued. Thank you. Again, this year the charity has benefitted from the efforts of Chris Inghearn, one of our trustees, who ran the Ilkley half marathon and, along with his running mates, raised an amazing £3,375. During the Burley Festival the Ladies Please choir Sing for Téréli and over £1,000 was raised. Every seat was sold! It was a lovely evening, and our thanks go to the choir and everyone who came. Our annual calendar continues to raise interest, and funds which totalled over £1,300. Donations have been given through talks about the link and awareness raised within the village at Festival and Christmas events. The Burley Arts Festival gave the charity an opportunity to display some of the wonderful artifacts given to us. A very successful Story Bees event at the library brought awareness to younger families too. The Parish Council, through the chair, Steve Goodwill, has been very supportive.

Mali still has a frail economy and the security situation there continues to be of real concern. There have been attacks on some villages and travel between villages and Bamako can be very risky. Through it all, we continue to be in admiration of what the people of Téréli and the Dogon area achieve.

Thank you, 'Birapo', from Téréli and from the BTFT Committee.

JANET SQUIRE AND THE BTFT TRUSTEES

Western Nepal Disability Trust (WNDT)

As always we are grateful for the involvement in, and support of our work by St Mary's, through the PCC and individuals. During 2025 we were able to contribute to the start of a new community development project in the south of the Western Region, which focuses on finding and assessing people with disabilities and other health needs. Some

health services are directly provided, and referrals and resources to access to other services. Support is given for involvement within the local community: e.g. opportunities for education and work. Also, in many countries like Nepal, leprosy is becoming an increasing health problem again, largely due to the reduction/stopping of foreign aid budgets and changing priorities in the provision of health services. The community-based project includes activities to reduce the transmission of leprosy, and to work towards zero disability, and zero stigma and discrimination. These are all crucial factors for leprosy patients, who face exclusion and severe disabilities, so it is very special for us to support this project that specifically includes this marginalised group of people.

We also funded the third Tailoring training course run by our partner organisation, Light of Pokhara, in which 15 women with disabilities or caring for disabled family members received the training to enable them to work from home and have income to support themselves and their families.

We have recently been asked to support a new partner organisation, Centre for Independent Living (CIL), Pokhara, which is run by disabled people, and focusses on advocacy and inclusion. CIL have requested us to fund 2 staff members, who are young people with physical disabilities, to carry out advocacy, lobbying and empowerment activities. This is a new and exciting area for us to support, and is also new for CIL.

So, our current and future fundraising for 2026 will focus on this, and we appreciate your involvement through prayer, donations, and supporting our fundraising events. For more information, please talk with Jane or Prem, or email wndt@btinternet.com

Thank you.

JANE SCHOFIELD GURUNG ON BEHALF OF WNDT TRUSTEES AND PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Katiyo Primary School, Zimbabwe

Thank you again for the support that St Mary's congregation has given to our work with Katiyo Primary School through your mission giving, Coffee and Cake, Sunday morning coffee donations and buying "church biscuits." This support us very valuable to us and much appreciated.

2025 saw the completion of our project to build three nursery classrooms with offices at the school and the children finally able to move into classrooms of their own. We have also provided furniture made local to the school for each of these classrooms.

We have supported programmes to feed children at school who might otherwise not get a meal that day and also improve school attendance. We helped with purchasing paint for brand new playground equipment built by the local community.

It also saw the opening of a brand new Sunbeam, Brownie and Guide group at the school and through the supporters for the Bookmark Project we were able to provide uniforms for all of the girls in the group.

Looking ahead we are hoping this year to help with repairs to classrooms that are now showing their age and also to build a school library and would appreciate your continued support as there are a variety of things the school needs. The 2026 Bookmark Project starts on 5th May and you can check out our bookmarks here:

www.jumblebee.co.uk/bookmarkproject2026

ANNETTE AND SHARON HATTERSLEY ON BEHALF OF KATIYO PRIMARY SCHOOL

Diocesan Link with Sudan

There is still no peace in Sudan — and no real sign of it coming. From time to time there is talk of negotiations, but none of the warring parties appear genuinely interested. Instead, they continue to buy more weapons and strive to get the upper hand. During the first two years of the conflict, heavy fighting devastated Khartoum and other cities along the Nile. That region is now largely quiet, though deeply scarred and heavily militarised. Many schools are still closed.

The violence has increasingly shifted to rural southern Sudan, the dioceses of Kadugli and Heiban, the heartland of much of Sudan's Christian population. As many as 400,000 are now believed to have died in Sudan by being bombed, murdered, starved, or simply deprived of medical aid. The UN says Sudan is the largest humanitarian crisis ever recorded. Across Sudan, 13 million people, half of them children, have been driven from their homes and are living in temporary shelter. Whilst horrors continue to mount in Sudan's war, there is also news of Sudanese standing up at great cost to themselves, working to save their neighbours by sharing food, water and assistance. The warring parties systematically deny access to international relief organisations. Archbishop Ezekiel reports that last year ECS was able to distribute food and help to 28,000 people. This is funded by people like us, channelling support through trusted local church networks, supplying emergency food aid, shelter, and access to medical help. In December 2025, famine conditions were officially identified in Kadugli. With no end to the conflict in sight, the resilience of the Sudanese people is a powerful sign of hope. They continue to call for peace, for basic human rights and dignity, and are doing everything they can to sustain their communities through this devastating war.

In a message to supporters, Archbishop Ezekiel writes: "Sudan doesn't need war, it needs peace. Sudan doesn't need weapons, it needs food. Sudan needs education, health, and clean water. It needs development, agriculture, and infrastructure. People of Sudan don't want to live displaced within their own country, nor do they want to live as refugees in neighbouring countries. They need to be able to return to their

home country and dwell in their houses. People of Sudan need to be able to go back to their business and the children go back to schools. Weapons must be stopped from flowing into Sudan if the war is to end. Let food be flown to Sudan instead of weapons.”

The Diocesan Sudan Link are contributing to an appeal for relief funding for Sudan. In January, a carefully prepared budget for 2026 was received from Sudan requesting £352,000 to enable church operations to continue and provide relief to the parishes most affected. The Sudan Roundtable has met, and Relay Trust has pledged to fund half. The other half needs to come from the Dioceses of Leeds and Salisbury, CASSS, the Anglican Communion Fund, and other partners. The link is working with other organisations to ensure that this request is met. Thank you to all those who keep praying for Sudan, its people, and its church. Many thanks also to all who continue to donate through the Diocesan Link to support relief work done by the Church in Sudan. (From News from Sudan Newsletter)

MARY BROOKS

Mothers' Union

This amazing Church of England Charity continues to thrive throughout the world. In this country, many projects initiated by Mothers' Union have been expanded and taken up by internet based groups which also support marriage, care for all aspects of family life, and support for those in need. In 87 other countries MU continues Literacy, Financial Education and health care schemes, delivered to small groups, often of adults who have had no opportunity for formal education.

In Burley in Wharfedale in 2025 we expanded our knowledge of cultures around the world through speakers who told us about their visits to Vietnam, and 'The Stans of Asia'. We also had updates on the situation in Sudan and Téréli. In January we joined in the M.U. 'Wave of Prayer', linking with the other dioceses in Nigeria, Lesotho, The Solomon Islands and Rwanda. During Lent we meditated on the 23rd Psalm, and in December provided our usual Festive Tea with Christmas readings and carols.

Our meetings in Burley are open to anyone who would like to come. As you can see we have a varied programme. It isn't compulsory to join officially, and men and women of any marital status are welcome. Our subscription paid by full members helps to support MU. The only requirement is to have been baptised in the name of The Holy Trinity.

Our fundraising this year was again through our popular Strawberry Tea which raised £300. And through the government doubling up scheme meant that £600 was allocated to MU projects in our name.

We are grateful for support from our clergy and to have space in St Mary's monthly magazine where you will find updates of forthcoming meetings. For further information about The Mothers' Union please contact Pam Sowman.

PAM SOWMAN

Ladies' Group

Ladies Group continued to meet during 2025, and we had a variety of speakers and entertainments. Our New Year Party in January was cancelled because of the snow, but we enjoyed a 'Show & Tell' evening in February, a Bingo evening with a variety of small prizes in March, and an interesting account of the development of the village Herb Garden by Penny Wright in April. These were followed by our AGM in May and a meal at the Mumbai Village in June before the summer break. In October we had a theatre trip to see the talented youngsters of Stage 84 in 'Beauty and the Beast' and 'Sister Act' at Yeadon, and a visit from Mick Smith to tell us all about the Yorkshire Air Ambulance in November. Our speaker for December was unfortunately indisposed, so we finished the year with a Christmas themed 'Show & Tell' evening. We meet on the first Thursday of the month from October to May, at 7.30pm at the Parish Centre, and visitors and new members are always welcome.

LINDA NELSON

Small Groups

There are 4 Small Groups that meet at different frequencies but are as follows:

Monday afternoon	Caroline Bishop / Denis Tate
Tuesday evening	Mary Brooks / Susan Collins
Thursday afternoon	Margaret Young / Val McKenzie
Book group – Mondays	Ann Haywood / Margaret Young

Monday Afternoon Small Group

This is a new group which has been meeting weekly since September 2025. It has been a great source of encouragement in terms of mutual support, growing together in prayer for each other and intentionally for those we know, as well as seeking to invite and encourage others to join and have social events to connect with others. We have recently completed the "Practising The Way" Discipleship Course which looks at how to be an apprentice and grow as followers of Jesus and we are now seeking to go deeper in prayer and hearing God's voice as we go through the Lectio Course. New members are very welcome.

CAROLINE BISHOP

Tuesday Evening Group

Our group was established in June 2025 and we meet fortnightly on a Tuesday evening. At each meeting, we have reflected on one chapter from the book 'Living Faithfully' by John Pritchard, which has provoked detailed and wide-reaching discussion on a variety of topics. Our group offers an opportunity for fellowship and for the enrichment of our faith in a friendly and relaxed setting. Our membership has remained steady since our inauguration and any new members would be most welcome to join us!

ELLA HOLDSWORTH ON BEHALF OF THE TUESDAY GROUP

Thursday Afternoon Group

The Thursday Group continues to meet fortnightly, we have just finished studying the Gospel of John and after Easter will be exploring the book of Jonah and its message to us.

MARGARET YOUNG

Book Group

The book group has continued to meet approximately every 6-8 weeks. During this year we explored Alister McGrath's series "Christian Belief for Everyone ". These were very readable books that encouraged us to look at our beliefs and faith afresh. In other books, such as Mina Smallman's "A Better Tomorrow" and Chine McDonald's "God is not a White Man", we saw how life's circumstances can challenge and test a person's faith. God is not a White Man aroused many different emotions in me and others which made us look at again at our own attitudes to race.

MARGARET YOUNG ON BEHALF OF THE BOOK GROUP