



# THORNTON, BAGWORTH & STANTON UNDER BARDON

Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council  
for the year:  
**2025**

*Produced for the April 2026 Annual Meeting*



## CONTENTS

	<b>Page Number</b>
<b>Overview</b>	1
<b>PCC Information</b>	
Background	2
Responsibilities	2
Members	2
<b>Agenda for Meeting</b>	3
<b>Official Reports</b>	
Electoral Roll Report	4
St Peter's Church, Thornton	4-5
Warden's report - Bagworth	5
Warden's report – Stanton under Bardon	5-6
Financial reports	6
Deanery Synod	7
<b>Benefice Reports</b>	
Minster Communities	7
J22 Liaison group	8
Safeguarding	8-9
<b>Other reports from Benefice Groups</b>	
Benefice Prayer Group	9-10
Benefice Link Magazine	9-11
Thursday Prayer Group	11
Beta Bible Study	12
Little Angels	12
<b>Other Reports: - Thornton</b>	
Breakfast Church	13
St Peter's Bellringers	13-14
Friends of St Peter's	14-15
<b>Rector's Report</b>	16-17

## OVERVIEW

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the activities and developments within the Parish of Thornton, Bagworth, and Stanton Under Bardon, part of the Diocese of Leicester. It includes detailed reports from various committees and groups, highlighting the efforts and achievements of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) over the past year.

The document serves as a testament to the parish's dedication to its mission, community engagement, and the ongoing maintenance and improvement of church facilities.

# Parochial Church Council Information

## BACKGROUND

The Parish of Thornton, Bagworth and Stanton under Bardon is part of the J22 Benefice in the Diocese of Leicester within the Church of England. The parish includes St Peter's Church and churchyard in Thornton; Holy Rood Churchyard in Bagworth; and St Mary's and All Saints Church and churchyard in Stanton under Bardon.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure, 1956. The PCC is exempted by order from registering with the Charity Commission.

The PCC meets approximately 5 times per year.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

The PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the Incumbent in promoting within the Parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also required to consider all matters properly referred to it, keep the Church fabric and buildings in line with current regulations and provide a channel of communication between the parishioners and the Bishop.

## MEMBERS

Members of the PCC are elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules.

The following served as members of the PCC through the year, with Gillian Maynard serving as Chairman:

Incumbent:	The Reverend Andrew Smith	(ex -officio)
Associate Priest:	The Reverend Pauline Ashby	(ex -officio)
Associate Minister:	Mrs Delia Geary	(ex -officio)
Licensed Lay Minister:	Mr Peter Maynard	<i>RETIRED February 2026</i> (ex -officio)
Churchwarden(s):	Mrs Gillian Maynard	(elected to post 2025 [1yr]; ex -officio member of PCC)
Deanery Synod Reps:	Mrs Avril Evans	(elected to post 2025 [3yr]; ex -officio member of PCC)
	Mrs Delia Geary	(elected to post 2025 [3yr]; ex -officio member of PCC)
Secretary:	<i>vacant</i>	
Treasurer:	Mrs Lis Muller	<i>co-deputy churchwarden</i> (elected 2025)
Electoral Roll Officer:	Mr Dave Robinson	<i>co-deputy churchwarden</i> (elected 2023)
Other Elected Members:	Mrs Shirley Garlick	<i>co-deputy churchwarden</i> (elected 2025)
	Mr Stephen Howe	(elected 2025)
	Mr Dave Morris	(elected 2023)

# Agenda for Meeting of Parishioners & APCM

To be held Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2026 at St Mary's Stanton Under Bardon

## 2.1 Annual Meeting of Parishioners

1. Prayer and Welcome
2. Appointment of Clerk to Meetings
3. Minutes of Annual meeting of Parishioners held on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2025
4. Election of Churchwardens 2026-7

## 2.2 Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Apologies and items for Any Other Business
2. Minutes of APCM held 14<sup>th</sup> May 2025 and Matters Arising
3. Reports
4. Elections of:
  - a. Deputy Churchwardens
  - b. Deanery Synod Representatives
  - c. Members for the PCC
5. Appointments:
  - a. Electoral Roll Officer
  - b. Appointment of Independent Examiner for 2026-7
6. Rector's Report
7. Any Other Business
8. Date of Next PCC meeting
9. Prayer and Close

# OFFICIAL REPORTS

## ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT

*Dave Robinson*

April 2026 saw a revision of the Electoral Roll with the addition of new members, the removal of those no longer able to vote, and any editing of personal details. This was advertised in both Churches in Thornton, Bagworth and Stanton-under-Bardon parish, and in the church website and magazine. The resulting, tidied-up roll now has 40 names on it, compared with 42 from the previous year.

## REPORT – St Peter’s Church, Thornton

*Shirley Garlick, Lis Muller and Dave Robinson*

Despite continuing to face many challenges as a congregation and building, church services have been encouraging, worshipful and joyful, with faith and fellowship at the core. And the growth in attendance has been pleasing to see.

Our ministry team of Reverend Andrew, Reverend Pauline, Peter Maynard, Delia Geary, David Robinson and Adrian Whalley provided us with services and sermons that were encouraging, challenging and inspirational. A huge thank you to the ministry team for this and all you do for the people of our benefice.

We are fortunate to have church services in the village most Sundays. The variety and style of services meant that there was something for everyone, and attracted new people to worship. Services over a month included Community Breakfast, based at Thornton Community Centre and providing breakfasts and crafts, followed by simple worship, Junction 22 worship services, Morning Prayer and Holy Communion.

Though our congregation remains small, we were encouraged to see new families at all the services. As in previous years the Carol service was well attended, and Christingle had standing room only.

A children’s corner has been established; when young children come to church, there is a dedicated corner with suitable activities for them.

We were very grateful to Paul Lazarus who was willing to learn to play the organ and plays for two services a month and to Angie Davey who played for occasional offices when she can - weddings and funerals.

Though we had no Church Warden, as the team of 3 Deputy Church Wardens, Dave, Lis and Shirley, we worked seamlessly together enabling everything to continue as before.

We were very thankful for the team of volunteers that ensured services ran well, and helped everyone to feel welcome and as comfortable as our ancient church would allow. We thank everyone who helped in any way: the sidespersons, the welcome team, the cleaning teams, those helping with refreshments and lesson readers. Especially we thank Sue Bakewell for ensuring the church was well decorated with flowers and arrangements and Eric and his team of bell ringers who regularly rang all 6 bells at church services. We also thank Paul and William for all their help with maintenance work.

It was good to have the primary school hold their Christmas celebration at St Peter’s. Very good relationships between the school and St Peter’s remain, though there were no church visits to the school for various reasons.

Little Angels, a group for children from 0 to school age and, just as importantly, their carers, continued to meet every month during term time in church thanks to Helen and Lis.

All the basic maintenance tasks were carried out as normal: church gutters and down pipes were cleared regularly, the maintenance and servicing of the roof alarm and the Air to Air heating system were carried out, PAT testing was completed successfully. The fire extinguishers were checked.

The churchyard working party, which includes several non-churchgoers committed to the cause, met several times, tidying both churchyards. Thank you. Plans for an area for the interment of ashes and a Garden of Remembrance progressed slowly. In February the soil bank from funerals was moved and the soil was spread out in the lower part of the new churchyard. During 2026 it will be rotavated and reseeded.

The contractor, Danny, employed by the Parish Council, continued to do an excellent job of regularly mowing both churchyards.

The builders were in during August and September; the roof gutter in the gully that lies between the nave and the South Aisle was completely replaced as were the beams supporting this gutter. The external boarding above the chancel roof was repaired and internally plaster was removed from the West wall as one enters the building. The church was placed on the Heritage at Risk register in 2024 because of extensive cracking. As a result, Tell Tales were put in place on either side of the tower columns to monitor any movement. These are being checked regularly by the contractor, Lee Ashby. Three grants and the Friends of St Peter's (FOSP) paid for this work. We must thank the members of FOSP for their fundraising over the year, which helps with projects such as this.

The South Aisle Project (vertical lift and reordering of the South aisle) remains on hold.

Consideration of solar panels continued during 2025, though current advice is that they would not be appropriate; batteries to store the electricity are currently not allowed in church – they pose a fire risk.

Mildew continued to be a problem on the ancient pews. Treatment with a solution of white vinegar and water continued.

Again, a swarm of bees nested on the outer wall above the north door. Though a few found their way into church, they did not cause a big problem.

St Peter's continues to be a lovely place to worship with a real warmth of fellowship. We pray for our church members, church life and the growth of our church family.

## **PARISH WARDEN'S REPORT – Holy Rood Churchyard, Bagworth**

*Gill Maynard*

The churchyard is well maintained, with the Parish Council regularly mowing the grass. Once again, the Remembrance Service held at the War Memorial was well attended.

## **PARISH WARDEN'S REPORT – St Mary & All Saints, Stanton Under Bardon**

*Gill Maynard*

St Mary's church has had no major repairs in 2025, The gutters and downpipes have been cleaned, slipped tiles on the roof repaired and stonework re-pointed. The churchyard is well maintained by Mr Dave Morris, and the Parish Council regularly mow the grass

We still have our regular Sunday Services, the first Sunday of the month is Holy Communion, second Sunday Morning Prayer, the third J22 Worship with Holy Communion, the fourth Something Different Service and when there is a fifth Sunday in the month that would be a Benefice Service. As with a lot of churches our congregation is getting smaller, in the last twelve months two of our congregation have passed away, and one has moved to a care home, and those of us left are mostly over seventy years of age, with age related problems.

Fundraising in 2025 was much curtailed by the lack of people able to help due to ill-health. The Christmas Fayre raised nearly six hundred pounds for the maintenance of the building.

Now I must thank all who make our church so warm and welcoming, those who help clean the church, those who make the coffee and teas after the services, a special thanks to Kate and Dave Morris, for their input in putting together the Something Different Service, and Dave for the music for the services which he provides with the help of his computer. Also, I must thank Peter Massey who for quite a number of years has played the organ at St Mary's for church services, weddings and funerals, and finally I thank Reverend Andrew and Reverend Pauline their pastoral care throughout 2025. Thank You.

## FINANCIAL REPORT - Thornton, Bagworth and Stanton PCC

*Lis Muller*

Despite being careful with our spending, a drop in income (through both giving and Funeral/Wedding fees) has meant that the General fund took a loss of £3796 over the year.

We had increased our Diocesan share by just 2% to £10,375, but with basic heating, water and insurance across the two buildings coming to another £10,140, there was virtually nothing left to spend on any other basics needed to run the churches. This immediately eats into our reserves and we cannot continue to carry such a loss in successive years. As well as praying on this matter and considering our own level of giving, the time has come to think more about fundraising specifically to cover the daily running costs, and perhaps even to actively increase awareness in our villagers of the cost of having a church in the village.

We must thank those who continue to fundraise to maintain both of the church buildings and those who apply for grants; we really could not manage without them to finance vital repairs.

## FINANCIAL REPORT - Administrator Account

*Les Gammon*

This Benefice Account is administered by Copt Oak PCC and pays for the Benefice Administrator.

### Accounts and Balance Sheet:

<b>Income in 2025</b>		<b>Expenditure</b>	
Balance b/f 1/1/25	£9010.34	Salary	£4004.00
		Bank Fees	35.00
<u>Total</u>	<u>9010.34</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>4039.00</u>
		<b><u>Balance c/f 31/12/2025</u></b>	<b><u>£4971.34</u></b>

The accounts for 2025 show a healthy initial balance of £9010.34, due to a very generous donation of £8000 made by an anonymous benefactor during 2024. HSBC charged charitable accounts £5 per month for administration but withdrew this fee from August 2025. There is only sufficient money in the account to pay the Administrators salary until February 2027.

# DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

*Delia Geary*

In 2025, three Deanery Synod meetings were held at various venues. The meetings all included a presentation by a guest speaker, a 'Getting to know the Deanery' session by a representative from a particular church, benefice or Parish and discussions around a standing business agenda.

The three presentations included; 'What do Minster Communities mean for ALL schools' by Tracey Manns who works for Leicester Diocese Board of Education which focussed on how we can engage with all of our schools in a Minster Community; Holy Habits by Liz Rawlings with encouragement to look at our own relationship with God and how we nurture that relationship and how Christians engage with politics and fake news by Florence Gildea – Social Policy Advisor to the Bishop of Leicester.

Rev. Andrew Smith gave a presentation in the March meeting on J22 churches and how we engage with our respective communities together with a review on our congregations and the challenges we face.

The standing business agenda included a review and update on the 'Living in Love and Faith' process which was led by Rev. Matthew Gough, a Diocesan Synod report as relevant and an update on the rollout of Minster Communities with the Deanery split across more than one community.

## **BENEFICE**

### **MINSTER COMMUNITIES**

*Rev Andrew Smith*

Over the past year our Benefice has been involved in what is called the 'Minster communities process', aimed at reordering our Diocese into larger working groups of communities. Several members of our Benefice have taken a role in different areas of this planning process, ensuring that we are visible and well represented within this larger group. In future it has been expected that we may need to operate with more lay led ministry, and over time clergy numbers may see some decline. However, we will have increasing access to shared skill-sets across the Minster group, and have much to look forward to in terms of resources.

After a year of local consultation, a final proposal outlining our shared affinities and desired outcomes will be finalised and at the Archdeacons' office for appraisal in May 2026. This proposal will also be shared with each PCC. Our newly proposed 'yellow group' has yet to adopt an official name, but is set to include J22 Benefice, Newtown Linford, Barlestone, Newbold Verdon, Ratby, Groby, Anstey, Thurcaston with Cropston and Birstall.

Please be praying for all those involved in realising this process, and for the future of our growing community of villages.

## J22 BENEFICE LIAISON GROUP

*Dave Robinson*

There were four meetings of the Junction 22 liaison group in 2025, in January, February, September and October. The purpose of the meetings changed to being an update for any church members in the benefice on the progress of the Minster Community Project in our area. In the meetings we heard about our group and the steps to be taken to collect information about the constituent parishes in the group, the sub-groups that would be working on this and how the Minster Community might affect church life, clergy, finances and mission.

## BENEFICE SAFEGUARDING

*Pat Barnes and Mary Gibson, Benefice Safeguarding Coordinators*

This report is a general update on the current position regarding the work that Pat Barnes and I, as your Benefice Safeguarding Coordinators, have been involved in over the last 12 months.

- 1 In dealing with safeguarding matters all PCCs are required to have due regard to the House of Bishop's 'Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance' which was adopted by PCCs in 2019. Therefore, we would like to encourage you to re-visit this via the following link to ensure you have the most up-to-date information to hand: [Policy and practice guidance | The Church of England](#)

- 2 **Safeguarding Issues:**

There have been two potential safeguarding issues we were made aware of since our last APCM report in 2025, both of which are monitored at the appropriate level.

- 3 **Parish Dashboards Action Plans across the Benefice:**

We are pleased to report that all PCCs in the Benefice are at Level 3 and in the 90% compliance range and we thank you for your support in helping to maintain this. However, there's always ongoing work to be done mainly around online training, and on policies and procedures reviews.

In addition to this a new set of safeguarding standards was introduced in 2024 in addition to existing mandatory requirements. Whereas this will put new responsibilities on PCCs much of the additional work is expected to take place over a 3-year period, not all at once.

- 4 **Benefice Safeguarding Training:**

We must remind you that it's Church of England Policy for all PCC members to undergo Safeguarding training and that anyone who doesn't comply with this may not be a member of the PCC. Therefore, if you haven't already done so you are required to complete the mandatory Basic Awareness and Foundation modules.

As Safeguarding Coordinators, we try to help, support and encourage you with the training. Therefore, if anyone wishes assistance with this, we are happy to arrange training dates on request and will continue to let you know what alternatives are available, such as training sessions being organised by and at St Martins, Leicester.

There are currently 5 PCC members benefice-wide who need to either complete or renew both of the mandatory Basic Awareness and Foundation modules, a great improvement on last year's figure of 17 and we thank you for such a positive response.

There are also 7 PCC members benefice-wide who have yet to complete the Domestic Abuse and Modern Day Slavery modules and, although these are not mandatory, it is recommended by the

Diocesan Office that PCC members do so to widen their understanding of the scope that safeguarding relates to.

Pat and I continue with our training – during the last year we have refreshed our mandatory training and are now due to renew our Leadership training.

**5 Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) Checks:**

These are essential for specific Clergy and Lay posts and we continue to check to ensure all who need these are up to date or are given the procedure for applying online to register or renew their applications.

**6 Safeguarding Co-ordinators' Meetings:**

We continue to hold regular meetings and work to our own Benefice Action plan which informs the work we need to do and evidences that which is complete (this is in addition to the Safeguarding Parish Dashboard version and is for our personal use mainly to keep us on our toes so we don't miss the important stuff)!

Minutes of each meeting are e-mailed to all Benefice PCC secretaries to inform their PCC meetings, which we also attend wherever possible.

**7 Policies and Procedures:**

As always, there will be Safeguarding policies and procedures due for review and we continue to contact individual PCC secretaries accordingly so they can be sent to members prior to meetings to help the decision making process on the day of the meeting.

**8 Minster Communities:**

With the introduction of Minster Communities we have yet to be made aware of any impact of this reorganisation of churches on safeguarding at local level. In the meantime, we will continue with the way in which we currently undertake our safeguarding responsibilities and on our relationship with the Diocesan Office.

In conclusion, we thank you all for your commitment to our Benefice Safeguarding approach and we are happy to assist with any queries you may have at any time.

## **REPORTS FROM OTHER BENEFICE GROUPS**

### **BENEFICE PRAYER GROUP**

*Delia Geary*

The weekly prayer group remains a faithful and valued part of the church's spiritual life, providing a reflective space for intercession, support, and quiet fellowship. Attendance is necessarily variable, as members balance participation with wider commitments, and it has not always been possible to meet every month. When gathered, numbers typically average three to four people, creating an intimate and supportive environment.

The format is simple and accessible, allowing individuals to participate in ways that feel comfortable. Some pray aloud, while others engage through silence and reflection. This flexibility continues to foster a sense of trust, where personal, local, and wider concerns can be shared and held in prayer.

In addition to meeting together at the minister's home, prayer walks have received positive feedback from the wider community. These have provided a visible and outward expression of prayer, helping to strengthen

connections beyond the church itself. As a result, future plans include incorporating more prayer walks into the rhythm of this ministry.

The group regularly prays for members of the congregation, local needs, and national and global situations. It also complements the church's pastoral care by offering a quiet, consistent underpinning of prayer.

Although small in number, the prayer group continues to play an important role in sustaining the spiritual life of the church, offering encouragement, attentiveness, and faithful presence.

## **J22 VILLAGE LINK MAGAZINE**

*Mary Gibson, Editor*

Welcome to the annual report for the Benefice's Junction 22 Village Link Magazine.

### **Producing the magazine:**

Generally speaking, putting the magazine together is relatively straightforward. However, over the last year there have been occasions where articles are either (i) being submitted past the deadline of 10<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to issue date, (ii) having incomplete information or (iii) information relevant to a specific month not being sent at all.

As this all puts extra pressure on getting the first draft of the magazine completed and proof-read in a timely manner to meet the publishers' submission deadline for the final copy it would be helpful if future articles are submitted by the deadline, or at least that I am made aware if this is not possible so that a compromise might be found.

### **Expenditure - Printing:**

We continue to use Norwood Printers of Ellistown to print the magazine each month and they continue to provide a value for money service. Printing expenditure for 2025 was **£1,150** with further admin and resources costs of **£87.47**.

### **Income**

Income receipts for 2025 total **£1652** This is from magazine subscriptions and the income from 7 local businesses who pay to advertise in the magazine.

The annual subscription for 10 editions of the magazine remains at £5 (50p per issue). This compares favourably to other parish magazines, some of which are £1 or more. Although some areas now have a free downloadable magazine online, should we wish to go along this route some of our subscribers do not have internet and would therefore not be able to access ours at all.

We are in credit at the end of the financial year 2025 as shown below:

Income:	<b>£ 1,652.00 -</b>
Expenditure:	<b>£ 1,237.47</b>
<b>Total (Credit):</b>	<b><u>£ 414.53</u></b>

### **Distribution:**

Peter Maynard who, as our main distributor, continues to do a great job collecting the magazine and delivering a total of **340** copies to our local distributors across the Benefice, each of whom has their own round. Not all of these copies are paid for as some are displayed in our churches or are free to local organisations such as schools, pubs and local shops in the hope that they may promote an interest and encourage more people to subscribe.

## J22 Village Link Magazine Sub-Group

The membership and designated roles are:

- Peter Maynard: Distribution and related enquiries, advertising enquiries and revenue;
- Mary Gibson: Editor and editorial enquiries;
- Sue Gammon: Minutes.
- Shirley Garlick: Benefice representative.

Assigning each to a specific role ensures that they will be the go-to person for those enquiries thus saving any confusion from our subscribers, distributors and PCC members, and has enabled the whole process to continue without disruption.

Meetings are held as and when necessary if any issues of concern arise that need discussion and remedy. Updates from any such meetings will be given to the PCCs and J22 Liaison Group. There has been no need for the sub-group to meet meetings during 2025.

### Editorial Team:

The Editorial Team currently consists of three representatives, namely:

**Thornton:** Mary Gibson and Shirley Garlick;

**Copt Oak:** Mary Pepper.

Proof reading and feedback continues to be done via e-mail to enable me to produce the final draft each month ready for printing. I'm grateful for the help and support I get from Shirley and Mary – it makes my job so much easier. However, we would welcome a representative from each of Markfield, Stanton under Bardon, and Bagworth areas to ensure that the magazine is represented across the Benefice. If anyone is interested in joining the Editorial Team as their village's representative, please do contact me to discuss via telephone 01530 231993 or email to: baba.gibson@yahoo.co.uk.

### Format of the Magazine:

The format of the magazine remains the same and there have been no negative comments about any aspect of it thus far.

Finally, a big thank you to everyone across the Benefice who supports my work by sending in articles, events, rotas and service plans, and to our distributors, subscribers and Norwood Press.

At the end of my 14<sup>th</sup> year as editor I am pleased to say I still enjoy being involved in the magazine and it's still fun to do (most of the time)!

## **THURSDAY PRAYER GROUP**

*Reverend Andrew Smith*

Our Thursday prayer group started in Lent of 2025 and, quite unexpectedly continued throughout the year and has remained a part of our weekly calendar. This weekly event is now part of our regular pattern of prayer, and we will be beginning a series of themed meditative prayer evenings as of 16th April 2026. Everyone is welcome to join us at Markfield Rectory for a short time of meditative prayer every Thursday evening from 7pm-7.30pm.

## BETA BIBLE STUDY

*Members of Beta*

Between 8 and 12 of us, a mixed group from across the benefice, meet fortnightly on a Tuesday afternoon at our home in Thornton.

The studies give us a chance to explore and discuss different books of the Bible or various topics. This year has included courses entitled 'Jonah, Joel and Amos', 'Meeting the Spirit', studies on The Letters of James and the new version of The Bible Society's 'The Bible Course'. These have all led to deeper understanding and good stimulating discussions! On alternate weeks, those who can, meet for light-hearted fellowship.

We all value this group greatly and it has become a very important part of our Christian lives. We are always happy to welcome any new member.

## LITTLE ANGELS

*Helen Brown and Lis Muller*

Our Little Angels group continues to meet each 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month during term-time, at 2pm in St Peter's Church, Thornton.

We currently have 10 children (the oldest of whom is only 3, the youngest just 4 months) and their adults on our register. One of our adults has been bringing her grandchildren over the years since the beginning, and we have just welcomed her latest grand-daughter!

For many of them, this is the only church activity they attend, and we feel it is an important part of church life and outreach to the community.

The sessions follow a regular pattern: we light candles for the beginning of the worship time, and sing a few choruses; the children have a chance to choose a favourite song and then we have a Bible story. We finish with another chorus and a prayer, blow out the candles and have time for play and a chat. Our aim is to gently share the simple message of God's love for us all.

The adults who come with their angels have said that they like the group as it is a safe space for them to meet other parents/carers with children of a similar age. They enjoy chatting together and sharing information and ideas of activities.

Some comments:

"Welcoming to all the family; friendly and relaxed with a mix of songs, a story and free play"

"A great way to meet parents and carers with similar-aged little ones in the area"

"A safe space for children to play and adults to meet and talk"

"Bring your child to Little Angels for an hour of fun!"

We are grateful for all the prayers and support from the rest of the benefice. In particular, we would like to thank Kathryn Anderson, Jayne Bullock, Shirley Garlick and Delia Geary for helping out on occasion. We have had children from Markfield, Stanton and Bagworth in the past but, currently, we only have children from Thornton coming regularly. We would love to welcome children from the rest of the benefice – please spread the word!

## OTHER REPORTS - THORNTON

### **BREAKFAST CHURCH**

*Delia Geary*

Breakfast Church continues to develop as an expression of the church's mission and outreach within the local community. Meeting monthly at the Community Centre, it offers a free cooked and continental breakfast followed by a short, informal all-age act of worship.

Attendance remains encouraging, though variable. On average, between 20–25 breakfasts are served each month and, approximately 12–15 people stay for the service, with a gradual increase in participation over recent months. Notably, there has been a growing presence of children and a small number of new families, including individuals who do not usually attend church.

The emphasis on hospitality—particularly the commitment to offering food without charge—continues to be well received. The relaxed setting enables relationship-building and conversation, helping to create an inclusive and welcoming environment.

The ministry is supported by a committed team of volunteers. Two people regularly serve in the kitchen, with additional support available when needed. Two members of the wider community, who usually attend another church, assist with set-up and kitchen duties, and there is a strong shared effort in clearing down at the end of each session. Craft activities are supported by a member of the community alongside a member of the church, reflecting growing collaboration and ownership.

As the ministry develops, practical considerations such as environmental health requirements are introducing a need for more structured record-keeping. These challenges are being addressed as part of ongoing development.

Over the coming year, the focus will be on sharing stories from the Bible—sometimes aligned with the Lectionary and sometimes chosen independently—supported by relevant and engaging activities for all ages. Breakfast Church continues to act as an accessible bridge between church and community, with encouraging signs of growth and engagement.

### **ST PETER'S BELL RINGERS**

*Eric Roberts (Tower Captain)*

#### **Purpose of Bellringing**

The primary purpose of church bellringing is to call people to worship. The sound of the bells serves as an open invitation to all who hear them, encouraging attendance at services, particularly Sunday worship, and acting as a visible and audible presence of the church within the community.

#### **Sunday Ringing**

During the first six months of 2025, we were able to ring regularly for Sunday services, typically with a band of five to six Thornton ringers, including Terry. We were also pleased to welcome occasional visiting ringers who joined us prior to services.

Unfortunately, during the latter six months of the year, Sunday ringing has been far less frequent. This has been due to a combination of serious illness, mobility challenges, and other personal circumstances affecting

members of the team. As a result, our regular Sunday ringing group has been reduced to three ringers: myself, Jo, and Debbie.

### **Recruitment and Future Plans**

To address this decline and ensure the sustainability of bellringing at Thornton, it is hoped that we will organise an open day in the near future. The aim will be to attract new recruits and encourage people to take up the art of campanology (bellringing).

### **Practice Nights**

Monday evening practices continue to go from strength to strength. We now regularly have between 8 and 10 ringers attending, all working to improve their striking and develop their ringing methods.

This group includes:

- Three ringers from Thornton
- Steve and Julie from Ibstock
- Lianne from Ratby
- Steve from Hugglescote
- Helen from Shepshed
- Terry from Markfield

In addition, many of these ringers also practise at Markfield on Thursday evenings. This wider group provides valuable support and ensures that we are able to ring for special occasions such as weddings and funerals.

### **Visitors**

We have welcomed five visiting groups from across the country this year. They greatly appreciated the opportunity to ring our six bells, and their visits contribute positively to the wider bellringing community and the profile of our tower.

### **Bell Fund**

A contribution of £1 per person is collected at each Monday practice towards the Bell Fund. I am pleased to report that the fund currently stands at **£1,294.00**, which will support ongoing maintenance and future needs.

### **Conclusion**

While Sunday ringing has faced challenges in recent months, the strength and growth of our practice nights are very encouraging. With continued effort, particularly in recruitment, we hope to rebuild our Sunday ringing team and maintain a strong and active bellringing presence at Thornton.

## **FRIENDS OF ST PETERS**

*Mary Gibson, Chairperson*

Now in my 8th year as Friends of St Peter's Chairperson I am pleased to be able to say what a great team of Trustees we have.

### **Trustees:**

We have a total of 9 Trustees on the committee, namely: Revd Andrew Smith, Revd Pauline Ashby, Shirley Garlick (Secretary), Eric Roberts (Treasurer), Sue Bakewell, Helen Robinson, Gill Tapping and Adrian Whalley and myself, Mary Gibson as Chairperson.

We continue to be enthusiastic about raising money for the church building. However, we are always looking for enthusiastic volunteers to join us so please do let us know if you are looking for some community involvement. We would love to welcome you.

### **Membership:**

Membership of the Friends of St Peter's is around 45. However, we will have a clearer idea once subscriptions for 2026 are received as the number does sometimes change when some existing subscribers drop out and new subscribers join us. Total subscriptions for 2025: £445.

### **Publicity**

Most of our publicity is dealt with by advertising our events and we thank Lis Muller, Gill Tapping and Amy Bakewell for promoting our events on various local websites.

### **Fund Raising:**

Our fundraising comes from the following events we held throughout the year:

Clear Out Sales; Heritage Weekend; Christmas Craft Fayre; The Festival of Angels

Other fundraising has come from: Donations; Easy Fundraising Donations; Shared profits from a Quiz Night.

Further details on these will be in the FOSP Annual Financial Report.

It has been lovely to see these events so well attended and enjoyed by everyone.

Finally, it is my pleasure to work with such a great team of trustees and makes my role as Chairperson worthwhile. My personal thanks go to you all for all your hard work and commitment throughout the year.

## RECTOR'S REPORT

Every year the church holds an APCM, an annual general meeting, to reflect on the previous year. to go through the accounts, to elect new members of the PCC (Parochial Church Council) and the Vicar is also invited to share something of their vision for the future. As the first piece on this reflection I thought I would share my report with you and hopefully something about me as minister. It's a little long – but stick with it, the vision of how church might be would be wonderful if we are able to see God's will done here in the J22 Benefice.

As I sit down to write this report the children this evening have been back from University, socialising together in the living room. They are able, it seems, to watch what is on telly, play with phones in the room and jump on each other with great hilarity all at the same time and even tease the dogs as well. As I watch them it reminds me of the joy of parenthood and the complexities of nurturing and seeing two young lives grow and the great responsibility this brings to me personally.

In many ways I see my role as a priest and as the vicar at J22 in very much the same way. I believe strongly that God has brought my family and I to this spot over previous years, and we have seen many signs of confirmation of this through things that have happened and the blessings we have seen poured out on us in our congregations. It is a very humbling experience to be able to minister in a place such as this and many of you have welcomed us with open arms and have allowed me to walk with you at some wonderful times but also at some very painful times. All I can say is that I feel very privileged to be here and remain excited and expectant about all that God still has to do both with our churches and in our communities.

We have been very much at the forefront of the Minster Communities process, alongside our friends in neighbouring communities, and have been growing our relationships with local Diocesan structures. It is positive that we are a driving factor in the process, rather than a passenger.

And our relationship with local schools continues to grow year on year. May that continue.

I am certain that God is calling us to look at different ways of worship, not just here in J22, but the church as a whole. I also whole heartedly believe that God is calling us at J22 to be a Church for the whole community. At J22 we are in a unique position to affect how families operate and relate to each other. When I say family I don't just mean children but I mean the whole family unit. We engage children, parents and grandparents, but also brothers and sisters of parents, their children and so, hopefully, the networks and relationships develop and maybe they start to think differently as well. We see in the gospels and in the Acts of the Apostle's family units worshipping together, learning together and living together. It is only our modern western church that has lost the view of the whole family learning and worshipping as one.

In church, we have one of the few opportunities in Western society to be a real all-age community, a community where cerebral learning (head learning) is only one aspect of lifelong maturing. In church, people of all sorts can come together to be vulnerable together and grow together. It's a place where the power balance is turned upside down and the nobodies have as much clout as the somebodies – not because everyone is the same, but because everybody is needed for their differences. Our diversity is something to celebrate. We are gloriously different – and not just in age. So why in church, do we traditionally focus on the difference in age? I believe that through our new service patterns we are starting to explore and embrace what this might mean for us here in J22.

Change can be a difficult thing to embrace. Some will thrive and others will shy away. We will struggle to please everyone and sometimes in trying to do so we end up pleasing no one. Over the last six months I have spoken to many people who are involved in the upfront ministry here at J22. I have given them license to try new things, to experiment a little, to seek where God is. This will no doubt affect our worship and in fact

already has. Sometimes that will be amazing and at other times will feel incredibly uncomfortable, both for you but also for them, and indeed definitely for me! But I urge you, please be quick with your praise and slow with your criticism. We are all children of God and we need to learn to deal with each other, gently, kindly, patiently. In a loving, peaceful way, bearing with one another and measuring our words to bring joy. That sounds like the fruit of the Spirit. A kindly word after a service and a more measured reflection are far more helpful than a quick word and a feeling of regret later. We won't always get it right, but I can almost guarantee we'll know before you that it's not right and what we did wrong and we will be our own greatest critic, we don't need another one. In fact, it could be your word of encouragement afterwards that spurs us on to do better next time, but almost certainly your word of criticism will crush us and we'll be unlikely to try anything again, or at least for a long time. When we do though, when we do get it right, when God meets us, when the Spirit moves, how wonderful that is and those days where it didn't go so well are quickly forgotten, my plea is give us a chance to get there though because when we do, we all see a little bit of heaven.

I would like to finish with a short piece I found recently regarding all-age worship and involvement in church. If J22 were to have a manifesto I hope it would look something like this:

**We believe in God who created us for him and for each other.**

**We believe in Jesus who welcomes young and old without exception.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit who transforms the life of all believers, young and old.**

**We believe in meeting God most intimately in the lives of those who are different from ourselves.**

**We believe in a church which reflects God, the three in one.**

**We believe we grow closer to Jesus as his disciples when we:**

- **worship God in a variety of ways, both familiar and different.**
- **worship in community as well as individually.**
- **worship in a way that encourages everyone to participate.**
- **worship in a way that both enriches and is enriched by our everyday life.**
- **worship God with all that we are.**

*Rev Andrew Smith*