



St John's Colchester

Est. 1863

Looking back on 2025

Annual Ministry Report



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The Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2025 are available separately.

St John's Church Colchester
Annual Parochial Church Meeting
17th May 2026, 12:00pm

AGENDA

Opening Prayer

MEETING OF THE PARISHIONERS

1. Welcome
2. Appointment of Scrutineers
3. Election of Churchwardens

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes from 2025 APCM
3. Matters Arising from last APCM Report
4. Elections / Appointments
 - a. Parochial Church Council
 - b. Deanery Synod
 - c. Appoint Independent Examiner
5. Finance Report
followed by finance questions (submitted in advance)
6. Connect Groups
7. Looking forward: Bubble Church
8. Looking forward: Our buildings
9. Vicar's Report
10. Any questions (submitted in advance)
11. Any Other Business (submitted in advance)
12. Closing Remarks & Prayer

St John's Church Colchester
Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting
18th May 2025

Paul Dever opened the meeting with an overview of the meeting and prayers for the meeting. Paul knows that we all have our traditions and differences and Paul asks for forgiveness when he doesn't know how things are currently run, he wouldn't consciously do things differently. Please feel free to comment or ask questions either now or later, together we can work it out. We pray that we place you God in charge of us your people.

Meeting of the Parishioners

Firstly, welcome to the meeting to appoint scrutineers, and elect the Churchwardens.

1. Viv Whitfield and Peter Cook appointed as Scrutineers.

2. Election of Church Wardens

Paul Morgan and Alex Quayle are stepping down as Churchwardens and Paul Dever thanked them for walking along side him for the time he has been here, with their wisdom, guidance, helping Paul get to grips with details, which is so important as a Churchwarden, hospitality and the trust Paul had in them both, when needed.

Peter Hassard agreed to be Churchwarden – proposed Tina Rose seconded Liz Berry.

Paul asked that we pray and reflect for someone to step forward to be the second Churchwarden.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Apologies for absence

Received from Pauline Lucas, Andrew Tiffin.

2. Minutes from 2024 AVM

Approval of AVM 2024 received and approved by Mark Verlinden seconded by Peter Shelley.

3. Matters arising from the previous minutes

No matters arising.

4. Elections / Appointments

a) Parochial Church Council

- Andrew Tiffin proposed Ruth Ellam seconded Clare Luxton
- Richard Moore proposed Andrew Tiffin seconded Paul Morgan
- Anna Sallis proposed David Cornell seconded Tony Berry
- Clare Luxton proposed Tina Rose seconded Liz Berry
- Kristin Ritchie proposed Liz Berry seconded Mark Verlinden

b) Deanery Synod

No changes.

c) Appointment of Independent Examiner

Larkin Gowan (external) Approved by Rick Moore.

Tony Berry remains the Electoral Roll Officer

Paul gave thanks to David Simcox who is stepping back from the Finance role within the church after serving for 30 years, and Rick Moore who is stepping back from the Finance role on the PCC but will remain a PCC member and Anna Sallis will take over this role in the PCC.

5. Annual Reports:

6. Finance report

Rick Moore gave an update on the financial report and explained that 2024 was a real challenge with the £25K for the loan on the Community Centre which thankfully has now been paid off. We were down to £30K from £40K the previous year but on a positive note we are blessed by the £20K given by the congregation in the first three months, which puts us on the right track moving forward which means 2025 started well. Paul asked that anyone could contact Rick Moore if they have any questions regarding the Finance report for 2024/2025.

Paul also confirmed that Peter and Catherine Theodosius have agreed to be the Giving Officers and will answer any questions asked. Paul confirmed he never knows 'who gives what' with giving as it would be inappropriate. There will be more information to follow.

7. Safeguarding Report

A written report was submitted by the Parish Safeguarding Officer, who sent their apologies for the meeting.

8. Services and Worship report

Ruth works behind the scenes to prepare multi services and sang an amusing song about the arrival of Paul as our new vicar (it can be found on the weekly update on 23rd May 2025).

9. Children and Youth report

Clare gave a visual display of what groups there are with the children and youth of SJC to include: Refresh, Messy Church, Kaleidoscope, children and youth groups, Open the Book at the local school, 14-18-year-olds group on Sunday evenings, Family at Four. The groups are very successful but more volunteers are always needed and appreciated to help with their continued success.

10. Vicar's report

Paul talked to us about the plans and prayers needed for continued growth, preparing the ground and an increase in people's desire to help in the many teams in the church such as - serving refreshments, welcome team, children's work, volunteers for the Pentecost Service coming up and much more. Paul's vision for the future includes a hub for young people, building improvement for the family room and the chapel. Let us open the door to God.

Paul thanked the staff for their team efforts for going above and beyond for the smooth running. Andi, Clare, Rick and Ruth makes the difference with their commitment to SJC.

He also thanked Viv Whitfield for her support with the services, Nicky Sirett for the safeguarding and Mary Anthony for the Pastoral care, Celia Simcox with her wisdom, discernment and guidance in prayer.

Paul asked for volunteers who would like to become an Acting Warden this would entail assisting one Sunday per month with any requirements or actions needed within the service.

Paul's visit to Romania was both amazing and challenging, seeing how our partnership enables Attila and Adele to continue their work. We also welcomed Russell Norton this year when he spoke at SJC.

11. Any questions

- The electoral roll was raised and Tony Berry was able to confirm there are 216 people for 2025.
- An update was asked about Carbon omissions set at net zero by the CofE to achieve by 2030 and what the church was doing in this vital area?
- EFT - energy footprint tools are looked at within the church.
- Andi confirmed every effort is made to save energy by not putting the heating on if there is no one using the church and they use small heaters instead.
- The hot water urn has been replaced as it was not energy affective.
- Working at reducing waste, plans for hand dryers rather than towels.
- Cisterns in community centre being looked at with the environmental group.

13. Closing Remarks & Prayer

Paul spoke of the future of SJC and how we can attract 'out of church' young people, deal with the church building repairs, meet our fire regulations and plans for SJC to be fit for mission and future ministries.

PCC Membership

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church meeting in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. During the year 2025 the following were member of the PCC:

Ex-officio

| | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Priest-in-Charge | Paul Dever | Chair |
| Ordinand | Jonathan Mulvey | |
| Operations Manager | Andi Short | |
| Treasurer | Anna Sallis | |
| Churchwardens | Peter Hassard | |
| | David Gentry | From June 2025 |
| Deanery Synod Reps | Mary Anthony | |
| | Nicky Sirett | |
| | Jane Cornell | |
| Elected Members | Nik Read | |
| | Carol Cockrill | |
| | Peter Theodosius | |
| | Kristin Ritchie | |
| | Tina Rose | |
| | Tony Berry | |
| | Chris Oldham | |
| | Lucie Lovell | |
| | Andrew Tiffin | |
| | Rick Moore | |
| | Clare Luxton | |
| PCC Secretary | Jane Shelley | |

Electoral Roll

There was an Electoral Roll revision in 2026 which resulted in adding 25 people, removing 2 people and a revised total of 239 (216 in 2025).

Vicar's Annual Report

As I sit to write this report, I do so with a deep sense of gratitude and encouragement. This has been a significant and exciting year in the life of our church. We have seen growth across all our congregations—not just in numbers, but in depth, in participation, and in a growing sense of expectation of what God is doing among us.

And alongside that, I find myself deeply thankful—for all that God has done, and for each one of you who plays a part in the life of this church.

A Church Becoming - Vision & Values

Our vision continues to shape us:

“We long to see our lives and our city transformed by the love of Jesus.”

This is more than something we say—it is something we are increasingly seeing lived out among us. Over this past year, our values have helped give that vision real expression. Not perfectly, but genuinely. Let me reflect on each of these briefly.



Everyone is welcome

One of the most encouraging things this year has been the continued sense of openness and welcome.

Almost every week it is so wonderful to be able to welcome visitors into our community - and many comment to me at how welcoming they find St John's.

We have seen this particularly at key moments—Christmas and Easter services, where many have joined us, some exploring faith for the first time, others returning after time away, some just occasional visitors. What a privilege to be able to hold the door of the Kingdom open.

What stands out is not just that people come—but that they are received well. There is a warmth and authenticity here that really matters.



Everyone gets to play

This is an area where we are seeing real encouragement—and where there is more to grow into.

I love seeing those who are deeply committed to the

I love seeing those who are deeply committed to the life of St John's: For example, serving in our worship bands, at Refresh, at Messy Church, through Thursday Generation, in hospitality and refreshments, Welcome, in our children's and youth work, through Eco Church, and in so many other ways. There is something beautiful about people giving themselves in service like this. And at the same time, I have a growing sense that there is more for us as a church.

My hope and prayer for this coming year is that many more of us will discover our unique place of service—that this would increasingly be a church where everyone knows they have a part to play.

I also want to take a moment to say a very heartfelt thank you to the team at St John's—both paid and unpaid. The sacrifice, commitment, and willingness to go far beyond what might reasonably be expected has been truly exceptional, much of what they do goes unseen and I am so grateful for their support we are truly blessed at SJC to have such a talented and gifted Staff team and wider Ministry team.



We Champion the Next Generation

I have been particularly encouraged this year by what we are seeing among children, young people, and families.

It has been a joy to see the life and energy of Messy Church, Kaleidoscope, and of course Big Church—spaces where families are not just attending but exploring faith together. I love seeing families beginning to engage, to ask questions, and to take steps towards Jesus.



I was also hugely encouraged by the Joe Hardy worship night. For me, that evening gave a real taste of what we long to see more at St John's, especially in the evenings: a space where young people and young adults encounter the presence of God, engage deeply in worship, and respond openly to the Spirit. It felt like a glimpse of what could be, and I believe that matters.

Next year my prayer is that we will be able to invest in our youth ministry and at the APCM I will share a little more of our plans.

My hope and prayer is that in this coming year we will grow even further in how we intentionally champion the next generation.

As part of this, we are planning to launch a new congregation after Christmas, particularly aimed at connecting with families with under 7s, called Bubble Church. I'll share more about this at the APCM, but we are excited by the potential this holds as we look to reach and serve young families in our community.



Spirit-Empowered, Authentic & Courageous Disciples

This year, there has been a growing sense of hunger for God among us.

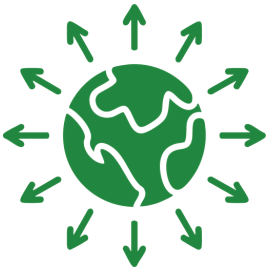
We see it in our worship, in prayer, and in the willingness of people to take steps of faith—sometimes quietly, sometimes more visibly. There is a deepening desire not just to attend church, but to grow as disciples—people whose lives are being shaped by Jesus.

One of the most significant developments this year has been the launch of Connect Groups. It has been so encouraging to see these take shape, and I am hugely grateful to Nicky for the way she has led this. These groups are such an important part of who we are becoming—a place of belonging, of spiritual growth, and of learning to follow Jesus together in everyday life.



Our church weekend away was another real highlight. It was a special time of being together as a community, but also a time where many encountered God in fresh ways and relationships were deepened.

Looking ahead, I am really excited that John and Anne Coles will be joining us for this year's weekend away.



We Exist for Those Beyond Our Doors

This continues to be a central part of who we are—and who we are becoming.

We are seeing encouraging signs of people connecting in through services, events, and relationships. Moments like Christmas, Easter, Alpha, and other gatherings remind us that there is a real openness in our wider community.



Alongside this, it has been a real privilege to deepen our partnership with Attila and Adel in Romania. I had the opportunity this year to see their work first-hand among the Romany people—and it left a deep impression on me. The sacrifice they make, the commitment they show, and the love they carry in often very challenging circumstances is both humbling and inspiring.

As a church, it is a real joy to be able to support them—to pray, to give, and to stand with them in what God is doing. I was particularly encouraged by how we responded this Easter, supporting their work with such a significant donation. That will make a real difference to some of the most vulnerable people.

It reminds us that we are part of a much bigger story. At the same time, this value continues to stretch us. It is so easy for any church to become inward-looking, but the call of Jesus always draws us outward—to those who are not yet here, to those who are exploring, questioning, or simply wondering if there might be more. Our invitation is to keep leaning into this—to be a church that carries an open heart, an open door, and a genuine invitation in all that we do.

Finally, I want to say thank you again.

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly into your church family. It is a real privilege to serve as your vicar and to journey alongside you in all that God is doing among us.

As I look ahead, I find myself genuinely excited about the year to come.

I've hinted at some of the areas we will be focusing on, but one that I am particularly drawn to is the renewal of the Prayer Chapel—not just physically,

but spiritually. My hope is that we might reshape that space to be warm, welcoming, and prayer-filled—a place that helps form a deeper foundation of prayer in the life of our community. Because if we are serious about seeing lives and our city transformed by the love of Jesus, then prayer must sit at the very heart of who we are.

Alongside this, we are continuing conversations with the National Church about what it might look like for St John's to grow into a resource church—serving not just ourselves, but becoming a hub, particularly for young people and young adults across the city. This is an exciting possibility, though there is still much to explore and formalise.

So, we step forward with both expectation and humility.

Trusting God for what is ahead. Playing our part in what He is doing.

And continuing to become the church we long to see.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

Rev Paul Dever
Vicar, St John's Colchester



Everyone is welcome

Safeguarding

A town built on a hill cannot be hidden (Matthew 5:14)

As the Church, we should aspire to be a model for others in how we protect children, young people and vulnerable adults, and how we respond to abuse, and to the misuse of power, and any attempt to use theology to justify such acts. Archbishop of Canterbury February 2026

Key actions since previous APCM

- PCC members and church activity leaders have been advised that they should undertake Church of England domestic abuse awareness training online, as guidance has been updated.
- Nicky Sirett attended the annual safeguarding service at Chelmsford Cathedral, a service that reflects on and recommits the diocese to the priorities of safeguarding.
- The compliance group has met and Clare and Nicky have moved safeguarding training records into Church Suite
- The PCC continues to receive a safeguarding report at every meeting
- St John's is now using the Safeguarding Dashboard to write an action plan for safeguarding improvements, which the PCC will approve annually

Next steps for 2026

- Offer face to face safeguarding training sessions for teams of volunteers
- New volunteers are safely recruited and all training and recruitment is recorded for the church, ensuring GDPR compliance.
- Training for office staff on safer recruitment
- Risk assessments completed and approved by the PCC for all church activities involving children, youth and adults who may be vulnerable

Nicky Sirett

Parish Safeguarding Officer

Buildings, Grounds and Facilities Management

The buildings continue to provide two principal functions:

1. As the home of St John's Church, providing accommodation and facilities for the activities of the church
2. As venues that we can hire to third parties, creating a revenue stream that is used to fund the operational and maintenance costs of the buildings and the wider activities of the church

The buildings have served the church well during the past year. The Quinquennial Inspection took place on 25 Oct 2024, the report identified maintenance requirements and included advise on priorities and timescales, which we are included in the forward plan.

Church Building

In terms of maintenance activities, the moveable wall has been serviced and is in reasonable condition.

Following a Fire Risk Assessment, most of the fire extinguishers needed to be replaced. There are also a few other recommendations to be put into action. Including how we can maximise building occupancy, including a new fire door (outside the toilets) in the church with a door. This is waiting for faculty approval. The recommendations are being developed into our regular maintenance activities and a five-year plan.

The boilers in the church were causing a lot of issues and continually breaking. Contractors have investigated the problems with the manufacturer Rehema and replaced gas valves as per manufacturer's specifications. At present, the boilers are operating well.

A conscious effort has been made to use heating sparingly over winter to reduce overheads and energy consumption, and this approach will continue.

A new internet / Broadband service has been installed in the church which should solve the buffering issues from services as well as improving other work. A VOIP phone system has been installed in the church and Paul's office - improved system of communication, for instance, internal calls and voicemail messages being sent to Office inbox on Outlook.

Community Centre

The Community Centre continues to be well used for church activities, including Kids church, Messy Church, Families at Four, and Kaleidoscope.

In addition, the building is rented to various third parties to generate a revenue stream, including Oaklea pre-school, ABRSM for music exams, Brownies / Guides, Maze, Little City, Tiny Talk, Baby Ballet, Strollercise, Fitsteps, and Colchester Salsa.

In terms of maintenance activities, the moveable wall has been serviced and is in reasonable condition. A plumber attended to resolve a breakdown in the heating & hot water system - initial repairs completed, but further investigation is due to be undertaken to ensure continuous good operation.

Looking forward there is a need to plan deep cleaning particularly to toilets, undertake decorative improvements, and some repairs are required to cubicle partitions in the toilets.

One of the walls in the lobby was painting and new noticeboards purchased. This enabled more advertising space for Oaklea, hirers and for St John's to advertise events.

Church Grounds



The main churchyard is closed, and responsibility for maintenance has passed to Colchester Borough Council. They have cut the hedges and grass, unfortunately they will only be able to do this once a year due to Council budget constraints. A grounds maintenance working group of volunteers has been organized by Olly Snelling and Tony Berry, to cut grass, prune hedges and trees, plant

borders, and generally keep the church yard in an attractive, tidy and well-maintained condition.

In addition to the churchyard, the maintenance team have planted various shrubs and plants around the car park and, and undertake pruning, strimming, and general maintenance of the Community Centre grounds.

Look ahead / forward plan

Initial plans for 2026 are to press ahead with the recommendations of the Quinquennial report. The Buildings Committee is now looking at the rest of the recommendations, including developing a maintenance plan in response to the Quinquennial Report. There is a long-term vision for redeveloping the chapel and the family room to enable us to improve accessibility and usage, and to also honour this part of building.

A plan for making improvements to the chapel, which will also address the repairs to damage caused by damp are developing to enable the long term vision to rejuvenate this part of the building.

Please keep the team in your prayers as they undertake this work, as well as for funding and grants to be available to help cover the costs. The team is small and it is a challenge to turn some of the aspirations into action. If you can or feel called to contribute to managing the buildings and grounds, please speak to Andi.

Finally, thank you to all the volunteers who do an amazing job, and please look out for requests for working parties to undertake maintenance and decorating later in the year.

Andi Short
Executive Assistant and Operations Manager



Everyone gets to play

Church Grounds Maintenance Team

We co-ordinate with the church office in the upkeep and care of the church grounds. The churchyard is closed and Colchester City Council are primarily responsible for maintaining this and the burial areas.

Our activities include weeding, pruning, chopping, cutting hedges, sweeping, and clearing weeds in paving. The brambles are an ongoing problem and threaten to attack anyone walking nearby! Ivy also needs tackling regularly.

Team numbers vary, meeting on Saturday mornings from Spring to Autumn every four to five weeks, finishing with home-made biscuits, and a chance to appreciate our accomplishments.

We continue to improve the flower beds. We are planting ground cover plants to challenge any weeds for space. Some plants suffered in the drought in the summer.

Ecologically we intend a balance between encouraging biodiversity, keeping the grounds attractive, encouraging insects and wildlife, drought and frost tolerance and ease of care. Some churchyard grass is left unmown for “No Mow May.”

There is always more we could do, but we and the team are committed to the challenge! If you would like to join us do speak to Tony who can tell you more.

Olly Snelling and Tony Berry

Pastoral Care Ministry

There are many people at St John’s who offer pastoral care and do so in a very quiet and discreet way. This has included coming alongside people at difficult times for various reasons and with illness or bereavement. Prayer and caring is at the core of what we do and has supported people confidentially, in small groups or on the Prayer app. Additionally, there have also been opportunities for individual Pastoral Prayer Ministry appointments at other times. Lifts have been provided when needed for people to get to church for various groups or services when otherwise they would not have been able to do so.

Holy Communion has been taken to people at home who are unable to attend church. A telephone call, a visit, or an appropriate pastoral card for encouragement and prayer has helped many.

This is a quiet but ongoing ministry by different members in the Pastoral team and others beyond. So thank you to everyone for all that you do.

Some representatives of different aspects of Pastoral Care met during the year for an overview meeting. Please pray for wisdom and discernment for all those involved in this ministry as we move forward.

Mary Anthony

Pastoral Care Co-ordinator and Authorised Pastoral Assistant

Deanery Synod

Lay representatives plus clergy from all the Anglican churches in the Colchester Deanery usually meet three times per year, to hear what's going on in the Diocese and nationally, and to discuss and share ideas about how we can work together more effectively across Colchester. During 2025, however, it was decided that the Synod meeting in October would not take place, as we held our first Deanery Day instead. Please find below a short report on the Deanery Synod Meetings held during 2025.

12th March 2025 – At St. Michael's Church, Myland, Colchester Our speaker for this Synod was Wendy Lidgate, Programme Manager for Colchester Episcopal Area. Wendy introduced herself and explained her role. She also explained the background behind the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMIBB) and how her role fits into it. Wendy's role is to help us all plan how each and every parish can tap into this fund.

18th June 2025 – At St. Peter's Church, Boxted Our speaker for this Synod was Sam Fowler, From Christian Youth Outreach (CYO). Sam started off by introducing himself and a little bit about what CYO do. CYO's vision and aim is for every school in the Colchester area to be regularly prayed for by at least one Colchester Church, and that every Colchester Church will be regularly praying for at least one local Colchester school - at least once every term. Sam stated that at the moment an amazing 45% of schools across Colchester are prayed for by churches. They would like to get this to 100%.

Martin Roscoe

Deanery Synod Secretary



We champion the next generation

Last year in this report I spoke about the importance of relationships to ministry with children, young people and families and in 2025 that continued to be true. Each week at Refresh and every month at Kaleidoscope and Messy Church we are encouraged by the families that return, for whom coming to St John's is part of their regular patterns and priorities. What is also common to all of our activities and services is energetic life, whether it be youth challenging each other, toddlers taking their first steps or children making amazing craft creations.

We have benefitted in 2025 from new team members joining several of our teams, especially Refresh and Messy Church. We are grateful for those who have joined as well as those who faithfully continue to serve. We have many regular families joining us at Refresh and it is fantastic to see them welcome new families each week. The team set a positive pattern of socialising with others and this encourages the parents and carers to do the same. There is a lot of setting up and clearing away involved (you can imagine the mess caused by 25-30 babies and toddlers) and I'm grateful for the time and energy that the team invest. Helen Morgan (with strong support from Paul and Sophie) has continued to lead Messy Church from strength to strength as we have seen higher regular numbers throughout the year and the majority of them returning each month. We have seen particular peaks at Christmas and Easter that have added to the numbers in the following months. In 2025/26 we have followed a theme of The Lord's Prayer which has allowed us to focus on some of the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

In 2025 we chose to pause Families at 4, one of our Sunday afternoon family events, because it seemed a natural moment to do so with families transitioning out of the age bracket and there not necessarily being new families coming from Refresh. Instead in 2026 we used this time slot to start a new group for families, Growing Together, aimed at discipling adults and children within families.

Kaleidoscope, for SEND children and young people with their families, owes much to the hard work and leadership of Laura Martin this year. She has provided the event with creativity and stability whilst encouraging the involvement of an enthusiastic team. We are also grateful for the partnership with United Church with Rev Sarah and Tim Hayward. Whilst the number of families attending is relatively small, they are the same families each week for

whom Kaleidoscope is church and each month there is a strong sense of the Holy Spirit at work. Recently, when her sons were unavailable, one mum came without them which speaks of the community that has been created.

We also introduced several new services and events in 2025, including our new intergenerational monthly service Big Church. Thanks to Mark and Lorraine Verlinden it starts each time with bacon or sausage baps and an opportunity to chat. There is a noisy chaotic beauty about the service and it has been great to see all ages embrace it. In the summer, we had a family activity morning that was particularly well attended by Refresh families who have spoken of the challenging of the long summer holidays with young children.



We held a very successful Light Party in October, which involved a large team from St John's, both buildings, two very large bouncy castles, hot dogs, lots of light theme crafts and over 100 children and their families. At Christmas we hosted Riding Lights Theatre Company and their production of 'Christmas Inn Trouble'. The church was full, we laughed and we've booked their new production for 2026.

We continue to have a strong relationship with St John's School, they visit us at the start of each half-term for a worship service based on the Christian value for that half-term. In 2025 we started to invite parents to join us and have been offering them refreshments and it has been great to have a regular number of parents involved. Our Open the Book team has also grown this year, and under Jane Shelley's leadership they visit the school each month dressed up in converted curtain and bedding fabric to help bring the Bible to life. At Christmas, Easter and Harvest every chair in church is full as we celebrate services with pupils, staff and parents. We also have three church members, including the vicar, as part of the school governing body. We are making efforts to build relationships with other local schools.

In March the youth enjoyed another weekend at Fellowship Afloat as well as the Church Weekend Away in June, at which there were also a large number of families. They also had a sleepover in church in July which included a bouncy castle but not much sleep. Throughout the year the older youth have been attending a fortnightly Connect group and both age groups join together for monthly socials which have included, games in the dark at church, bowling, a visit to Inflatation in Ipswich and Nerf games in the community centre.

The most regular activities are those held each week on a Sunday, during the 10:30am two groups for children and one for youth in year 6 to 9. Then in the evening service at 6:30pm an older youth group for those in year 9 plus. The numbers attending these groups has grown and the youth continue to be the most consistence in attendance. Since September the older youth have been working their way from Genesis looking at 'The Thread' of Jesus running throughout the Bible.



The number of team involved in this area of our churches ministry is incredibly small and a recruitment drive is planned for 2026. Particular thanks goes to Claire Eley, who after a long time leading the younger children's group has stepped down but whose legacy lives on in the faith she has encouraged in so many children.

Helen Morgan, Nicky Sirett, Alison Hopgood, Becky Moore, Julia Hassard and Dan Lovell deserve mention for the number of times they have served this year. For several of them this has been despite other challenges in their lives but their commitment to the children and young people has remained. However the team is not big enough and we regularly have to combine age groups due to a lack of adults.

In 2026 we need to address the lack of team on Sunday mornings or our current provision will not be sustainable. We also need to review our youth provision as we have more joining the groups and the age range is growing but also the challenge for parents having some attending in the evening and siblings in the morning.

Clare Luxton
Children's, Youth and Families Pastor



Spirit-empowered, authentic and courageous disciples

Services and Worship

Among all the other things we do at SJC – we also have services on Sunday's! Often there are four – the 9am, the 10:30 and the 6:30 here in church, and a 4pm family event in the Community Centre.

Big Church started this year on the first Sunday of every month as an intergenerational service – with bacon sandwiches! It has been great to have new ways of worshipping all together.



On Pentecost 2025 we hosted the churches of Colchester at St John's for the evening Pentecost service, with worship led by Equippers. It was great to worship together with other Christians from around Colchester – we even had an overflow section in the Community Centre!

From January to Easter 2026, our 6:30 services became Alpha@6:30, watching the Alpha films and discussing in small groups.

Through our sermon series in 2025 we have cultivated our hunger for God, explored the character of Jesus, expanded our values, and looked at those in the Bible who had a lived out Faith - then started off 2026 with 1 John and the Desert Mothers and Fathers.

Our value of 'building a church where everyone gets to play' is particularly evident in our services – as so many people are involved in making the services happen each week. Whether you are on refreshments or welcome, the tech team on visuals and sound, readers, people who pray in the services but also beforehand in the chapel, preachers, services leaders, musicians and singers... there are so many people 'playing their part' – thank you!

Ruth Ellam
Worship Pastor

Connect Groups

Connect Groups were formally launched in September, building on existing small groups some of whom have met faithfully for several years, whilst others are more recently formed. These small groups enable members of SJC to connect with each other, with Christ and with the local community. Groups mostly meet weekly or fortnightly and there are groups catering for new and mature Christians. The majority of groups follow the resources shared weekly, based on the teaching at the 10.30am service. Some groups choose to use other resources. There are currently twelve groups and about one hundred and thirty members of SJC are in a small group.

Connect groups are an important part of the life of SJC, providing community and encouragement. Our apprenticeship as Christians is lifelong, and Connect Groups are key to the process of connecting more deeply with Jesus, becoming more like Him and actively living out what we believe. There's also a list of our current small groups and a sign up form that you can complete if you are interested in joining a group, via the website or Church Suite.

Nicky Sirett

Connect Group Co-ordinator



We exist for those beyond our doors

Mission Group



In April 2025, 8 of us arrived in Reghin for 4 days of prayer with Attila & Adel Toth, our Mission Partners. It was truly a time of blessing, certainly for us, but for them too, as they were able to share very specific details of individual prayer needs.

We prayed at every part of the project, at the farm, the children's home, Apalina church, and very

specially at the site of a brand new church in Glodeni village, the building of which has now begun! It was also great for Paul to come along and see first hand the work of Attila and Adel and the partnership which has developed over the years. By the time you read this, the 2026 prayer team will have returned from another trip, and a full building trip of 18 people takes place in October. Alongside our annual shoebox project, which again was well supported by local schools, the local community as well as the church community, we ran a successful Christmas Fayre as a fundraising project that also blessed everyone who came.

Following a PCC decision, 2025 saw our support of Russell & Katherine Norton come to an end, following many years of partnership, and although they are no longer receiving financial assistance, a number of people continue to pray for and engage with them. As a church we wish God's special blessing on Russell, Katherine and Lowena.

Nik Read

SJC Community Choir

It has been a fun year again at our SJC Community Choir – we meet every Monday evening 8pm-9:30pm during term time and just have a lovely time singing together – and of course chatting over coffee and chocolate biscuits!

One of the unexpected joys of choir as it has developed over the years has been the link with raising money for Romania, both through a weekly pot we have out for £1 donations, and by having a concert in the summer. This year it was great to have the Eco group at the concert as well selling plants – and ‘Anna & Jack’ adding to the musical entertainment!



In the autumn we sang at the Free Family Fun Festival – and then the run up to our busiest time of year – Christmas! This year we were excited to return to ‘Carols on the Roundabout’ at Avellana Place, as well as the Traditional Carol Service.

We were also invited to sing at one of the St Helena Hospice Light Up a Life Service, which was

especially appropriate this year as we have been honoured to sing at two funerals, and raised money for the hospice to remember another choir member.

We are looking forward now to our next Summer Concert on Saturday 18th July – do come along! Or come along and join us on a Monday evening!

Ruth Ellam

Eco Group



The aim of the Eco Group is to raise awareness, encourage the congregation and explore aspects of Eco Church journey regarding stewardship of creation and the wider implications of climate and sustainability. With this in mind we are excited to take on board La Rocha actions ideas for the year as follows:

- Celebrate new life - Sunflower seed give away at Easter
- Spring clean - Litter pick planned for 16th May
- Pollinators - suggested plant sale late May, if we have enough plants
- Prayer walk - to be arranged for June
- Plant sale for Romania - July (last year we had a plant sale at the choir's summer concert which was very successful)
- Free Family Fun festival - help out at Green Christian stall - September

The wild flower meadow has been moved and we hope it will be more successful this year.

We welcome anyone who would like to get involved.

Brenda Andrews

Residential Care Homes Ministry

A group of us continue to lead a short service at Milton Lodge, St. Fillans and Welshwood Manor during each month except August. Each home has its own identity. We have hymns, visual aids with short talks, Bible readings and prayers. We also try to connect with the residents in conversation afterwards which can be much appreciated by some of those present. There are different people who have said it is the highlight of their month and is a regular occurrence and not just a one off visit.

We have a dedicated team of people from our church, for whom I am very grateful, as they support this Christian outreach into the community and help to share the love of Jesus. It can be a challenging time when visiting, but also be a rewarding one too.

Please have a conversation with me if you would like to know more and possibly join our team at any time to see for yourself. Please pray for ongoing support and guidance for our Church members as we continue to visit and for God's wisdom and discernment for all those involved in this ministry as we move forward.

Mary Anthony
Pastoral Care Co-Ordinator

Thursday Generation

We thank the Lord for the growth and blessing that is the Thursday Generation, and for all those help in setting up, driving, catering and befriending, we welcome any who would like to join our team. Here are some quotes from those who attend:

“Lovely to come out and share a cup of coffee and cake in friendship together.”

“Friendship and Lunch club helped me so much after my husband died.”

“I have made some new friends by coming to Friendship Club.”

”

First Thursday Service

In December Rev Graham & Ruth Hadfield, who had headed up the service for some years, decided the time had come to stand down. We thank them so much for all the thought, love and prayer they put into it. Rev Paul Dever is leading in 2026, with Holy Communion each month. We pray more from Friendship Club will come to faith and join us in worship.



Thursday Lunch Club

A very happy event for up to forty members who in their eighties, nineties and one a hundred mostly live alone. We thank the cook leaders, kitchen helpers, drivers and befrienders. We will be welcoming some new kitchen helpers in 2026.

Discipleship Groups

Two large groups continue to meet each month in church.

Thursday Friendship Club

Our club thrives welcoming about sixty to a happy, relaxed, friendly atmosphere enjoying coffee, tea and delicious homemade cakes! Among the activities include crafts, hand massage, quizzes, Friendly Dogs Charity with lovely dogs who people can stroke and talk to (many can no longer have a dog companion at home). We have an amazing team of helpers who make it all possible. Our aim is to bring the Love of Jesus to all.

Fifth Thursdays

We have three months in the year where we have five Thursdays so we do something different and special on those days including Craft Morning, Afternoon Tea Dance and a film morning.

Financial Review

Total income received in 2025 was £394,421 an increase of £64,868 on the 2024 income of £329,553.

There was a campaign to encourage the congregation to increase their giving this year after finishing 2024 with a deficit and to be able to move forward with the vision of being a welcoming church and increase activities.

One off donations totalled £34,700 and regular giving increased from £150,740 to £178,984.

Total spend increased from £355,658 in 2024 to £367,924 in 2025.

It was agreed with the Diocese board of Finance that we would not pay the full parish share in 2025. This was to allow us to get back on track after the deficit in 2024 and to give us space to be able to continue with the vision for the church.

However, expenditure for the church running expenses doubled and this covered additional expenses on publicity, IT, special services, hospitality and youth and families work.

The year finished with a surplus of £30,178 and the general fund is now £92,150 (2024: £35,885). The restricted funds hold the property fund of £971,140, computers and equipment £6,493 and the Romania mission £8,392. The C7 fund, which was the account the local churches used to fund the Free Family Fun Festival and Pentecost service, was paid to Colchester Baptist Church who are now acting as the bankers for C7.

Full copies of the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2025 are available separately.