



## St Mary the Virgin Annual Report Year 2025

### The Rector's Report for The Dever Benefice

This is my second report to the APCMs of the Dever Benefice since becoming its Rector and I continue to give thanks to God for all that is good in these beautiful places, communities and parishes from St Margaret's South Wonston to St James Woodmancote and for Holy Trinity, St Mary & St Michael, St James Hunton, St Mary the Virgin and All Saints' in between.

And there is much to give thanks for. I give thanks for the times that we have gathered to worship together in praise and thanksgiving in our church buildings. Where we have prayed together, heard scripture being read and explored, sung together, broken bread together and enjoyed the fellowship of each other's company.

We have continued to give thanks for the work across the benefice that ministers to children and families. Our Messy Services, Church Clubs and more services that are informal – welcoming people who may have never crossed the threshold of a church before. And, our active contribution to the teaching of RE in our primary schools.

I, with many of you, gathered to celebrate with joy those who were confirmed by the Bishop of Winchester – a marker of faith and a living demonstration through the diversity of candidates that faith in Jesus Christ is so often anything other than linear or automatic. It is indeed, as we heard through testimony and the liturgy of the service, a living and lively faith into which we are all invited.

And in this past year we have journeyed with many couples towards their marriage – a relationship with a church which so often starts as a venue and ends up being a place that becomes a deeply meaningful part of their lives and in their family life. In time, we have seen those married in previous years return when possible and practical with their own children. I give thanks to God when

these couples bring their children forward to be baptised and all who bring their children to be baptised along with the palpable joy that it brings to the church community (who also make promises on the child's behalf) when they do. This past year, we would have all of us, or at least most of us, gathered in our places of worship to mourn, grieve and celebrate the life of someone we loved, who died. It is here in these places of joy, grief, hope and love that we realise and continue to realise that our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is one of community.

Finally, I like many of us, gave thanks to God for the call that He had and continues to have on Claire Bentham's life (and her responding with a resounding YES), as we gathered at Winchester Cathedral for her Ordination to the Diaconate. Her ministry as an Ordinand and now as Assistant Curate, is one that is blessing the Benefice and its people continually from her work with children and parents, to her leadership of the Growing Rural Parishes Project and her continued work as Chair of the Dever Federation of Schools.

But there are many other people for whom I give thanks. Rev'd Jo, as an Assistant Curate for her work across the Benefice and for the role that she plays as the Focal Minister for St Margaret's. Rev'd Dave, for his quiet, often undetected but mission-shaped ministry to older people and the community around Wonston and Sutton Scotney. To all the lay leaders Roland, Ruth, Iain, Neil, James and to the lay leadership team at St Margeret's for leadership in worship, ministry and mission.

And, I give thanks for all musicians (the rarest of all mission leaders) for their skill and willingness to share it as an act of faithful service.

And finally, knowing that I have missed so many people out, I give thanks for our Churchwardens, PCC Secretaries, PCC Treasurers, PCC members and all who volunteer to clean, maintain and enhance our church buildings, offer tea, coffee, welcome and hospitality and to those who pray quietly and earnestly that more people who live and work across The Dever Benefice might come to know Jesus a little more.

Rev'd Dr Robert Rees

March/April 2026  
01<sup>st</sup> April 2026

## Parish Church Committee (PCC) Membership and Officers

During 2025, the following people served as members and/or officers:

Rector and Chairman	Rev'd Dr Rob Rees
Curate	Rev'd Jo Criscenti
Curate in Training	Rev'd Claire Bentham
Churchwarden	Louise Keys
Treasurer	Peter O'Keefe
Winchester Deanery Synod representative	Juliet Pattinson
Elected Members (from April 2024)	
PCC Member + Secretary and Electoral Roll Officer	Charles Holden
PCC Member + Safeguarding	Rob Ironton
PCC Member + Fundraising	Olly Bramley Maurelle D'Agostino
PCC Member + Trees	David Findley
PCC Member	Anita Soar Jan Mason
Independent Examiner of Accounts	Richard Corden
Parish Coordinator	Clare Fancourt

## PCC Meetings

St Mary's PCC met four times during 2025 (2024: four), and the APCM took place in April 2024.

## Objects and Activities

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship God at St Mary's and to become part of our parish community. It is the responsibility of the PCC to cooperate with the Incumbent to promote the mission of the church – pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical - within the Micheldever Parish.

### ***Review of 2025***

## Church Services

There has been a regular pattern of 4 services per month, except in August. We are a rural parish, and members of our congregation have different preferences for worship/liturg. Therefore, we offer a mixture of traditional, modern and family-oriented worship.

The regular service pattern is:

First Sunday	9 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
First Sunday	10 am	Café Church (informal)
Second Sunday	6 pm	Evening Prayer (BCP)
Third Sunday	10 am	Holy Communion (Common Worship)

## *Occasional Services*

<i>Years</i>	<i>Baptisms</i>	<i>Confirmations</i>	<i>Weddings</i>	<i>Funerals</i>
2025	4	4	1	3
2024	2	0	2	4

## Church membership and attendance

As at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025, there were 44 people on the Electoral roll (2024: 44). The church electoral roll is updated every spring.

*The average attendance at standard services was 12. Easter 50 and Christmas 130 (split between Christmas Eve and a 10am Festal service on Christmas Day)*

*Worshipping community is assessed at 20.*

#### Clergy, Readers and Lay Worship Leaders

*In 2025, Rev'd Rob was supported by many stalwarts, including Rev'd Claire Bentham and Curate Rev'd Jo Criscenti. We express our gratitude for their input to the services and church life in Micheldever.*

#### Background support

*As ever, we could not run the church as we do without the very long list of local volunteers who provide support in countless ways including bell ringers, sides persons and readers, our organists, flower arrangers, church cleaners, the Fete and fundraising committee, the churchyard maintenance team, the Parish Coordinator, the lunch club team, our Independent Accounts Examiner and those who assist with the churchyard maintenance. There are always openings for more volunteers.*

Throughout 2025, our finances were significantly affected by costs to cover emergency repairs and maintenance. These included significant repairs and servicing of the organ, a pipe leak to the heating system requiring emergency repairs, and maintenance required for the roof over the chancel and vestry.

On the plus side, fundraising activities such as the Micheldever Church Fête, Safari Supper, a Quiz Night, Plant Sale, plus generous donations from the community, some hard work in seeking and obtaining grants, helped boost the balance sheet.

The St Mary's financial year ended with a small loss, which was supported by our reserves. Regrettably, we were able to provide only half of our Common Mission Fund request (formerly known as Parish Share).

In the spring, we trialled and subsequently purchased a 'Collectin' card reader, which has proved most helpful with digital donations both to specific causes (the Organ and Roof funds) as well as general running expenses.

#### Charitable giving

The plate collection taken at the Remembrance Sunday service was donated to the Royal British Legion. Harvest Festival food donations were donated to the Basics Bank in Winchester. Toys and gifts donated by the congregation in December were donated to Cash for Kids Mission Christmas.

#### Music

We thank Celia Parkes, Belinda Harvey and Colin Harvey, who regularly support us with beautiful organ and piano accompaniment for our various services. We bade farewell to Ian Parker towards the latter part of the year. He supported us for most of the year, playing the organ at numerous services. He spearheaded the Benefice choir that sang at various important services throughout the year.

#### Parish Fundraising

*There were several events held in 2025:*

*Many thanks to the Fete Committee and volunteers for raising a phenomenal sum.*

*We express our thanks to Helen Symes and her team for another successful "Safari Supper" fundraiser, as well as Cynthia & Rutger Huijgens, who hosted the pre-dinner drinks at their home for a second year running.*

*"Cafe church" provides a small income to St Mary's from donations for bacon sandwiches and coffee etc. This is not entered into the church accounts as such but is accounted for by Roger Bramley. The 'catering fund' covered the cost of a new coffee machine and an electric frying pan as well as groceries for breakfasts.*

#### Deanery Synod

*Juliet Pattinson is the PCC's Deanery Synod representative for St Mary's. Both she and Peter O'Keefe attended several meetings throughout the year.*

*The Winchester Deanery Synod is the primary governing body of the diocese. It acts as an intermediary between the parochial church councils of each parish and the Synod of the diocese. Its priorities include Mission Action Planning and the allocation of the "Church Missionary Share" from the deanery to the parishes.*

### Safeguarding

The PCC wishes to create an environment both within the church and the surrounding community where individuals can feel safe and secure and are aware of how to raise concerns if they should arise.

Safeguarding issues connected to the C of E have, unfortunately, continued to feature in the popular media over the last year and the PCC acknowledge the importance of maintaining good practice with respect to training, supervision and vigilance in this area.

Throughout 2025, no new reports of possible safeguarding concerns were received and there are no current or historic cases requiring active management. The PCC recognises that there is no room for complacency, however, and although some identified issues around training and risk assessment have been addressed there is still more to be done. The Parish safeguarding officer (PSO), Robert Ironton is endeavouring to facilitate progress.

Safeguarding remains a standing item on the PCC meeting agenda. The House of Bishop's guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults has been adopted formally by the PCC and their various policies and procedures are clearly displayed both within the church and on the church website. An update of the House of Bishop's guidance is anticipated in the near future, and we will respond to this once it is available.

Clare Bentham (Curate) has initiated regular meetings for all the Dever Benefice PSOs to ensure good practice across the Benefice, to share problems and to discuss other relevant issues including further utilization of the Diocesan Safeguarding Dashboard.

For further information, advice or to report a concern please contact:

Safeguarding.stmarymicheldever@gmail.com or call 07774 113251.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Office can be contacted on: 01 962 737317 or 07921 865374.

### Website and Communications

The Church Warden continues to manage the church website <https://stmarysmicheldever.co.uk/> as well as maintaining entries on the [AChurchNearYou.com](https://www.AChurchNearYou.com) website. She also maintains the church [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/stmarysmich) page and X.com/stmarysmich. We also post on the [Micheldevervillages.org.uk](https://www.Micheldevervillages.org.uk) website and in The Dever magazine.

### Children's Services

Children and families continue to be welcomed at all services, particularly the monthly Café Church where there are now children regularly attending. The morning service on the third Sunday of the month is also being developed to be more informal and inclusive. Children and families are also invited to the monthly Messy Church now happening at St Margaret's South Wonston.

There is a comfortable corner in the church where there are always activities for children during regular services and during larger services (such as Christmas, Easter, Baptisms etc.) families are given packs to support their children in following the service.

### Michldever Primary School

There are around 80 children in the school spread over 4 mixed-age classes. The Christian values of Love, Trust, Hope and Forgiveness are intrinsic to daily life in the school. These values are closely linked to the school's motto of 'Growing, Learning and Succeeding Together. Rev'd Rob Rees and Rev'd Claire Bentham are our two Foundation Governors on the Governing Board, with Rev'd Claire serving as Chair of Governors. Rev'd Claire leads worship in the school at least once a week, and often twice. The school continues to visit the church regularly for special services and for RE lessons.

Over the past year, Rev'd Claire has continued to go into Micheldever Primary School once a week to run "church club" alongside Rev'd Jo and a team of amazing volunteers. This is a lunchtime club where children can choose to do

a craft related to a Bible story and play games together, as well as having plenty of time to chat. Each session ends with a Bible story or theological reflection and a short time of prayer, where children are invited to join in with prayers of their own, and then each child is offered a blessing. All this is entirely optional, but most children choose to receive a blessing and increasing numbers want to add their own prayers. In some sessions, the team has seen as many as 35 children (nearly half the school!) in the room, and over the course of the year, have seen most of the school pop in at least once.

In January Rev'd Claire led the first Micheldever "prayer space", where the school hall was set up with five different activities enabling the children to reflect on the story of Jesus meeting the woman at the well in John 4. This story, and the concept of "water of life", has been central to the school's weekly worship times. The children really enjoyed the prayer space, and there are plans to offer an Easter prayer space at the end of March.

### Growing Rural Parishes

Over this year, The Dever Benefice has been part of a diocesan project called "Growing Rural Parishes" (GRP). The diocese receives national church funding. It has been keen to allocate some of this funding to rural ministry, being aware that most of the research and innovation into church growth comes from urban and suburban contexts. This investment cannot always be translated into the rural context.

A GRP steering group has been established, comprising representatives from each church in the benefice. It is led by Rev'd Claire Bentham. The Micheldever representative is Louise Keys. The group have overseen the expansion of children and families' work in the school at Micheldever, the introduction of ChurchSuite to streamline our communications and make them more secure. It will now be working on establishing a Benefice-wide pastoral visiting team.

### Fabric Report

#### Roof and Rainwater Goods

In late 2025, the entire chancel roof was stripped, the failing battens were replaced, new insulation was laid, and the slats re-laid. Minor repairs were

undertaken to the vestry roof, including the laying of insulation. The gutters and downpipes of the vestry and chancel were cleaned out and redecorated.

#### ORGAN

The organ was overhauled: the bellows were re-leathered, the pipe chest bottom board were re-gasketed and a new blower was fitted.

#### Pathway Lights

The defunct tree lights and bollard lights were removed and replaced with LED lights operational with a motion sensor. New timers were fitted to various interior and exterior lights. New dimmers were fitted to the nave and chancel interior lights. A broken floodlight was replaced. Much of the old and damaged wiring was renewed.

#### Noticeboards

2 new noticeboards were installed in the tower.

#### Fire and Electrical Inspections

The annual inspection of the fire extinguishers was done in January. The last electrical installation condition report and PAT inspection were carried out in January 2024. The rating for the installation was good.

#### Minor Items

Various minor items were addressed during the year, including:-

- 1) Installation of a French drain by the vestry wall.
- 2) New bell ropes fitted to the tenor and treble.
- 3) Annual boiler service

### Health & Safety

There were no reported accidents in 2025; however, there was a request for improved outdoor overhead illumination of the churchyard path for security reasons. This request prompted the replacement and improvement of

overhead sensor lighting within the churchyard. Health and Safety remains on the agenda at every PCC meeting.

Annual Report approved by the Micheldever PCC in April 2025 and signed on their behalf by:

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*Rev'd Rob Rees, Rector-in-Charge*

**Micheldever Parochial Church Council**  
**Statement of Financial Activities**  
**For the period from 01 January 2025 to 31 December 2025**

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Prior year total funds
<b>Total income</b>	51,066.46	-	51,066.46	66,000.91
<b>Total expenditure</b>	54,149.66	924.40	55,074.06	67,006.45
<b>Net income / (expenditure) resources before transfer</b>	(3,083.20)	(924.40)	(4,007.60)	(1,005.54)
<b>Transfers:</b>				
Gross transfers between funds - in	-	-	-	39,619.84
Gross transfers between funds - out	-	-	-	(39,619.84)
<b>Other recognised gains / losses</b>				
Gains/losses on investment assets	-	-	-	-
Gains on revaluation, fixed assets, charity's own use	-	-	-	-
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	(3,083.20)	(924.40)	(4,007.60)	(1,005.54)
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>				
<b>Total funds brought forward</b>	34,677.21	27,361.49	62,038.70	63,044.24
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	31,594.01	26,437.09	58,031.10	62,038.70
<b>Represented by</b>				
Unrestricted				
General Fund	4,221.31	-	4,221.31	(1,830.00)
Designated				
Bell Fund	160.00	-	160.00	160.00
CHURCHYARD	625.00	-	625.00	625.00
Fabric Fund	33,190.62	-	33,190.62	34,637.01
Organ	1,531.21	-	1,531.21	1,085.20
Roof Repairs	(8,134.13)	-	(8,134.13)	-
Restricted				
Fabric Fund	-	26,844.09	26,844.09	26,844.09
Revaluation reserves	-	(407.00)	(407.00)	517.40
<b>Total funds</b>	31,594.01	26,437.09	58,031.10	62,038.70