

Alcester Minster Parishes

Alcester Minster Office, Church House, 17 Butter Street, Alcester, B49 5AL

Website: www.alcesterminster.org



The Parish of St Nicholas Alcester

Address for Correspondence:

PCC Secretary, 32-34 Henley Street

Alcester Warwickshire B49 5QY

Annual Report and Financial Statement of the Parochial Church Council

**For the year ended
31 December 2025**

**Rector:
Reverend Katie L Cross**

**Bankers
Lloyds Bank, Swan Street, Alcester**

**Independent Examiner:
R L Cox, 28 Rope Walk, Alcester, Warwickshire B49 5DD**

Our Website: www.Alcesterminster.org

The Parochial Church Council is an Excepted Charity 1164101

Contents

	Pages
2025 Annual Report	3-6
Appendix 1: Rectors Report	7-8
Appendix 2: Minster Reports	9-15
Appendix 3: Church Officers reports – Eco /Environmental Report	16-19
Appendix 4: Arden Food Bank Report	20-22
Addendum:	
● 2025 Financial Accounts for St Nicholas organisations	
Attachments:	
● Independent Examiner’s Report	

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2025

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF St Nicholas ALCESTER

Administrative Information

The Church is situated in Butter Street Alcester Warwickshire B49 5AL and is part of Alcester Deanery in the Diocese of Coventry.

Andrew Deeks, the PCC Secretary can be contacted at 32-34 Henley Street, Alcester Warwickshire B49 5QY

The PCC is a body corporate (PCC Powers Measure 1956, Church Representation Rules 2025) and is a charity registered with the Charity Commission

PCC members who have served from 1st January 2025, except as noted, until the date this report was approved are:

EX Officio members:

Rector:	Revd Katie Louise Cross	Chair
Associate Minister:	Revd Daniel Corlett	
Associate Curate	Revd Julie Lindsay	Vice-chair

Churchwarden: Florence Wright

Deanery Synod Rep: Christopher Wright

Elected Members:

Sally Bayley (until 16 th July)	
Andrew Deeks	(Secretary & Treasurer)
Elizabeth Humphrey	(Safeguarding Officer)
Caroline Newey (from 9 th April)	
Michael Newey (from 9 th April)	
Peter Tugwell (until 9 th April)	
Denise Crook (from 16 th July)	(Electoral Roll Officer)
April Rogers-Steele (from 15 th October)	

Approved by the PCC onand signed on its behalf by:

.....

Revd Katie L Cross [Chairman]

.....

Revd J Lindsay [Vice-chair]

Structure, Governance and Management

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. The membership of the above PCC consists of the Incumbent, the Churchwardens, those elected to the Deanery Synod and other members elected at the Annual Parochial Church meeting by those persons named on the electoral roll.

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance in the parish for the church buildings and financial matters and they are also responsible for the maintenance of its own church. The Benefice as a whole, undertakes joint work through Minster Council with membership comprising members from each PCC. They report back to Parochial Church Councils with minutes of their meetings.

Each PCC contributes to the joint costs of the Benefice via a joint agreement in which all five PCCs share running costs proportionately.

The PCC has held 11 meetings during the year with a further 2 meetings of the Standing Committee

There are 121 parishioners on the church electoral roll of whom 22 are not resident within the parish.

Safeguarding

The PCC has complied with their duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have due regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults). The safeguarding officer's report is in Appendix 3.

Aim and Purpose

This PCC works to consult and co-operate with the minister, to enable God's mission and to care for the people, buildings and churchyard of the local community within the compliance of the law.

Objectives and Activities

Alcester Minster has adopted a vision of L.I.F.E. which compliments the Diocesan vision and strategy, to shape its objectives and activities.

L – Loving God wholeheartedly

I - Investing in our Christian journey

F - Flourishing in our community

E -Everyone is welcome

Jesus said, "I come to give life—life in all its fullness." John10:10 NCV

Achievements and Performance

During 2025 we have concentrated on:

- Involvement in the local community through the schools, town organisations including local charities and trusts, events such as the Food Festivals and Street Market and representation in other committees e.g. Town Hall, Alcester Churches Together. The church is open every day from 8 a.m. until dusk with times when there is a welcome presence from members of the church family. The "Warm Hub" hosted in Church House by volunteers ran every Wednesday during the year to provide warmth, food, company and shelter.
- Safeguarding of our clergy, workers, congregation and visitors. This is an item on every PCC agenda.
- Wellbeing of the clergy as well as more vulnerable members of the congregation. This is an item on every PCC agenda.

- Church buildings upkeep. The fabric of the church, Church House and Verger's Lodge has been maintained with fundraising and resources being allocated as necessary.
- Net Zero carbon (NZC) objective. The Church of England's NZC 2030 objective is being met with energy conservation measures taken. The NZC sub-committee reports into each PCC meeting
- The joint PCC project progressed further during the year culminating in the establishment of the Alcester Minster Joint Church Council (abbreviated to JCC) in January 2026.
- Communications. The monthly online magazine, Around the Minster (ATM) is supplemented by a weekly newsletter emailed to an agreed congregation list. Hard copies of the ATM are distributed for a small sum to those without online access.
- The organ and sound system faculties were withdrawn following objections from the DAC. Alternative plans for the existing pipe organ are being developed and a new faculty for a revised sound system was being progressed during the year.

For more information, please refer to the reports that follow.

Deanery Synod

One of the PCC sits on Alcester Deanery Synod. This provides the PCC with a link with the churches around us, and also with the Diocese as a whole. It also received reports from the Diocesan and General Synod. For more information about the business of the Deanery Synod please see the synopsis at Appendix 2.

Volunteers

The members of the PCC would like to thank all the volunteers throughout the Alcester Minister Benefice who work tirelessly to make our churches lively and vibrant communities. For more information please see the synopsis at Appendix 3.

Treasurer's Report

The general well-being of the Church in terms of cash and investments is satisfactory. 2025 has seen growth in its total assets from £193,787 (December 2024) to £216,354 (December 2025).

This growth is largely the result of the fees received for the filming in Church House (net £15,401) and funds from Churchwomen's Guild (£3,595) and the Flower Committee (£1,552) which have been incorporated into the Church accounts but retained as designated funds. There was a reduction in Church expenses from last year but this reflected the purchase of the electronic organ in 2024. Planned giving was largely unchanged with individuals' giving showing an increase but offset by the withdrawal of others due to their demise or their moving away. These increases were offset by a reduction in the value of investments because of the adverse movement of the financial markets year on year. Funerals and weddings generated income of £10,989 in 2025 which was an increase of £2,337 over 2024.

Payments were lower owing to a £3,443 reduction in the parish share payment which was redirected to YoungMinster funding (shown as Minster Support), plus a small reduction in operating expenses. Expenditure on Verger's Lodge was largely unchanged and the increases in Church House expenses were mostly due to the filming costs. However Church House benefited as a result from the replacement of the double glazing which cost was borne by the film company.

During the year we were pleased to make donations to Lifespace Trust through the efforts of the Charity Lunch organisers, helpers and donors. This charity supports the mental health and wellbeing of young people locally. This was in addition to our usual annual donation of £1,200 to our Supported Charities.

Note: Attached to this Financial Statement is the summary sheet of Other Church Organisations whose work supports the Church and for which we are very grateful.

Reserves Policy

It is PCC policy to maintain a balance on unrestricted funds, which equates to two months' unrestricted payments, to cover liabilities and emergency situations that may arise from time to time. It is our policy to invest with the CBF Church of England Deposit Fund.

Financial Statements

Annual Accounts for 2025 attached

Independent Examiner's Report-Attached

Andrew Deeks Treasurer.

The Parish of St Nicholas Alcester

Rector's Report 2025



2025 has been a year of **faithfulness** on the journey.

Our regular service pattern has continued, thinking across the year about our Inheritance in Christ and the ways in which we can share this treasured gift with others. We are still welcoming more new people walking through our doors. We have continued to reach out to our local communities, and although most of our churches have seen a reduction in overall attendance, Alcester has remained stable and Great Alne has grown. This year we were able to plant a New Worshipping Community at **Great Alne Park** with a monthly communion service, on a Thursday. The community are meeting weekly, for study, fellowship and prayer and has been the catalyst for the significant growth at Great Alne. They have also been reaching out to their community with pastoral care, Songs on Sunday and a place at the table for Sunday Lunch. We have begun the process of appointing an Anna Chaplain. We continued to engage with families through **St Nicks@9** and **Messy Church**, with some of our regulars are now making significant new steps in faith. **Breathing Space**, a reflective Christian meditation at Weethley, continues to provide opportunities for spiritual encounter and the new seasonal walks are also proving popular. We ran a whole weekend of spiritual activities at Coughton over **Mothering Sunday** weekend, inviting visitors to the Court to interact with Prayer Stations and join us for one of the multiple 15 minutes services. We began **Encounter**, our contemporary music and prayer evening, which multiplied to twice a month. In September we joined with churches around the nation and globe to share in the **Prayer Week**, transforming the lady chapel into an interactive prayer space.

We were able to run two **ALPHA** courses this year, resulting in several people joining our Church family. We enjoyed watching the first season of **The Chosen** during Lent, led by the former Sing Inn Praise team. We have increased the number of our **LIFE Groups**, especially following the Alpha course and in the Autumn ran The **Bible Course**. The monthly Youth Group **RARA** continues to provide a safe and fun place for teenagers, and the team have been growing in their confidence, including developing some young leaders.

We have built on the **connections** within our local communities, offering Civic and Court Leet services, services around VE Day, Remembrance where we were joined by BBC Midlands today, and the Silent Sentinel standing at Arrow. We partnered for coffee mornings and wonderful events such as the Haselor Plant Sale, Wings over Weethley, Alcester Food Festival and the Summer fetes. We welcomed the BBC to Alcester to film their new drama 'The Hairdresser Mysteries'. We continue to support those who are unwell or bereaved through our wonderful **Pastoral Care Team** and regularly attend Meadow View to offer a service. We welcomed over 3500 people into our churches to share the joy of Christmas, which is an increase on last year by over 1,000, including a new **Service of Light** at Arrow.

Our local **primary schools** have continued to benefit from our support over this year, particularly our Children and Families worker Jen Hopkins. *See Jen's report for information about all the projects and people she has been working with over the year.* We have led **Collective Worship** and services for the schools in churches and St Nicholas Primary school sent children from each year group to engage more deeply with their R.E. topics in the church building. Our **Open the Book** team have been sharing Bible stories with the children. We have delivered Experience Easter and Harvest, transition lessons with year six pupils, including a poignant leavers event with **Prayer Stations** at Coughton. We have led an **Experience Church** event for Haselor school, and invited **ISingPop** to lead workshops in Coughton Primary school culminating in three performances in December. Our Church of England Primary schools continue to be well supported by our foundation governors, who give their time and expertise willingly.

The **Rural Mission Hub** continues to offer support and training across our area, hosting events and gatherings, including training as well as offering advice and ideas for those seeking to do new things. This year we were also invited to lead a workshop at the Love Rural national conference. *See Daniel's report for more details.*

We supported Julie as she continued her training as a **curate** and celebrated with her as she took early retirement from her work in the Ministry of Justice. We continue to look forward to her monthly reflections in our magazine. During the year, I participated in the National Equipped to Lead: Children, young people and family's course, Daniel attended the **Growing Faith** Programme and Jen completed the Children and Young Families Diocesan Pathway. We affirmed our team of lay preachers and welcomed Judith Cox into the team as a Licensed Lay Minister. We celebrated with Rev Julian Davey, marking his significant ministry amongst us, as he moved more intentionally into his retirement. We have partnered with **Alcester Churches Together** to walk on Good Friday, join the World Day of Prayer, as well as send Christmas greetings to the community.

We have celebrated with twelve couples getting **married**, including our extra special Messy Wedding. We gave thanks as eleven people were **baptised**, and two were **confirmed**, and we **comforted** and supported over forty-eight families as they faced the death of a loved one.

We welcomed **Bishop Sophie** as she began her ministry as our new Diocesan Bishop.

We had many poignant deaths this year, as some dear minster friends reached their eternal home.

We finally realised our ambition towards establishing a **Joint Council** with the Minster Council being wound up on 31st December.

As ever, our **buildings** continue to be a source of delight and frustration with growing maintenance needs and limited resources. We continue to move towards becoming net zero carbon in our churches.

We continue with our **Vision of L.I.F.E.** using it as a foundation for our meetings and decision making at PCC.

It is testament to God's blessing on us that all our parishes have been able to pay their **Parish Share in full**, as well as their contribution to the Minster pot and general running costs.

I would finally like to say a huge **thank you** to all the volunteers and staff we have working across our Minster Churches, especially during my sabbatical in the Autumn. We are so grateful to our churchwardens who keep things moving on the ground, our diligent treasurers, secretaries, PCC members, and all those who offer music, prayer, leading worship, preaching, flowers and cleaning, ringing bells and pastoral visiting in our localities, amongst many other roles. So many of you give so much in time energy and financially, that we really couldn't continue without you. I am also so grateful for your prayers of support, Daniel's family in particular, have been held this year through quite difficult circumstances.

I am **encouraged** that God is working in our midst and give thanks for his many blessings and are ever thankful for his grace to us this past year. Let us be hopeful for all that is ahead, the new people we are ready to welcome and the old friends we continue to journey with.

Rev Katie Cross Rector

Minster Reports:

Alcester Deanery Report 2025

In 2025, the Alcester Deanery, part of the Diocese of Coventry, has been active with community gatherings, ministry, and strategic planning, including a notable festival day, with focus on rural ministry and visitation by Bishop Sophie.

Key Events & News 2025

- **Deanery Synod:** Presentations from Rev Jo Parker about her role to support ministry amongst older people and Anna Chaplaincy. Rev Cath Rindl talked about the support she is hoping to offer to those working with children on Tuesday 4th March 2025
- **Prayer Focus:** The Diocesan Prayer Diary focused on the Alcester Deanery in April 2025.
- **Alcester Deanery Festival:** Gathered in Henley-in-Arden on Saturday, 5th July 2025, to celebrate faith, fellowship, and future vision.
- **Bishop Visit:** Bishop Sophie visited the Alcester Deanery on Tuesday, 25th November 2025.
- **Deanery Synod:** Bishop Sophie addressed the synod and spoke about her visit to the Deanery. 25th November 2025, at the Church of the Holy Ascension.
- **Rural Mission Hub:** Events for the Greenhouse Rural project, including Alcester Deanery churches.

Alcester Deanery Festival.

Under blue skies and the warmth of summer sunshine, members of the Alcester Deanery gathered in Henley for a joyful and inspiring Festival Day on Saturday, 5th July 2025.

The day began with uplifting worship and a keynote message from renowned Christian composer and speaker Roger Jones, whose words set a hopeful and energising tone. Attendees were then invited to take part in a range of workshops led by deanery leaders, focusing on key areas such as ministry among older people, children and families, rural mission, and nurturing faith.

Bishop of Coventry Alcester Deanery Introduction & Visitation Day

Alcester Deanery welcomed Bishop Sophie on Tuesday 25th November as part of her tour of the Diocese and getting to meet people. Bishop Sophie was accompanied by Jacqueline Ladds, the Diocesan Secretary, Rev Katie Cross the Area Dean, and Rev Daniel Corlett, the Rural Mission Hub Minister on a whirlwind tour of part of the Deanery. The group visited Coughton Primary school for an 'I Sing Pop' workshop, met parishioners at the Wolverton Warm hub, visited Wolverton Church and had a short tour of Dorothy and David Mann's farm where +Sophie met some lovely cows.

They travelled on to Snitterfield where they were introduced to knitters and crocheters who had contributed to the poppy cascade and joined them for a celebration lunch. During the afternoon +Sophie met folk from the Henley area at their memory café and helped to make decorations for their Christmas tree. The group briefly touched base with heads of schools from the Arden Forest MAT, hearing about the challenges and joys of rural schools.

Tea was with the Deanery Chapter clergy, then the 'greater chapter' and Churchwardens had the opportunity to ask questions before the day concluded with a bumper attendance at Deanery Synod where those gathered heard some of Bishop Sophie's story. It was a truly special day, punctuated by cake and conversation.

Children and Families Ministry 2025

2025 has been another full and encouraging year for children and families across the Minster. There has been much to celebrate as children, young people, and their families have encountered God, grown in confidence, and had more opportunities to engage with our church communities.

Messy Church

Last year I reported a drop in the number of regular attendees at Messy Church. I am pleased to report that we are now welcoming more families again, including some who had previously stopped coming and have since returned following our move to the Eric Payne Centre.

This location change was initially made out of necessity and intended to be temporary while Church House was being used by a film crew. However, it very quickly became clear that there were significant benefits to using the Eric Payne Centre as a long-term venue. Families and volunteers alike reported feeling safer, calmer, and more comfortable in the enclosed space, and it was unanimously agreed that the move should be made permanent.

The Eric Payne Centre offers several practical advantages. The kitchen and toilets are within the same space, which reduces risk and improves safeguarding. Most significantly, the room can be divided into two distinct areas. This has enabled us to create a clear and intentional worship space that families move into after the craft activities, helping children and adults alike to recognise and engage more fully with the worship element of Messy Church.

The primary disadvantage is the cost of hiring the Eric Payne Centre (£48 per month) however, when offset against the cost of heating St Nicholas Church and the utility costs of using Church House, it is saving St Nicholas Church so there is benefit to their budget. At present, I am also able to offset some of these costs through a generous donation from Waitrose who, earlier this year, visited Messy Church and presented us with a cheque for £2,500 to support children's activities.

St Nick's at Nine

St Nick's at Nine held its final service in January 2026, concluding a two-year journey. Attendance declined over time, largely due to the service time and the fact that it took place only once a month.

While it is sad that some families moved on, it is encouraging to know that some have continued their faith journeys elsewhere. We can take comfort in knowing that seeds were sown and that God continues His work beyond our own setting.

The style of SN@9 was warmly received by those who attended and, over the past two years, the team grew not only in number but also in experience, confidence, and skill. Although the decision to cease the service was difficult, the team remains hopeful that the creativity, accessibility, and hands-on elements developed through SN@9 will now be incorporated into the 1st and 3rd Sunday Morning Worship services at St Nicholas Church. This offers an opportunity to make these services more welcoming to families and more accessible to people of all ages and stages of faith.

I would measure the success of SN@9 not by attendance figures but by its impact on participation. It provided a valuable platform for young Christians – and others – to share their faith by planning and leading services, reading, performing dramatisations and leading prayers. Our hope is that this culture of involvement will continue within Morning Worship, with people of mixed ages and experience contributing to planning and delivery as we shape the future of our worship together.

Both Rev Daniel thanked the entire SN@9 team for their commitment over the last two years and said that we have learned a great deal from this journey with them. Particularly about encouraging wider participation and shared ownership of church life.

Children & Families in our more rural churches.

To support families in our smaller, more rural churches, I created a number of faith-based activity packs to enable children to remain within worship rather than requiring a separate children's space. These packs offer engaging, age-appropriate activities that encourage learning and reflection while supporting a welcoming and inclusive environment for visiting families.

My intention is that, as these resources are used and feedback received, I will continue developing further themed packs (Baptism, Communion etc...) creating a sustainable and growing resource for each church that allows for variety and deeper engagement, particularly for families who attend more regularly.

I would like to commend Haselor Church for their efforts in creating a space that visually says “we welcome families”. Their introduction of boxes with age-appropriate and church-suitable toys for visiting families to use during services, in addition to their introduction of regular family services, has been well received by the local community and demonstrates a growing openness to more inclusive and family-friendly worship styles.

Schools

2025 was a particularly positive year for building and deepening our relationships with local schools. Through these connections we have continued to share our faith, encourage curiosity, and support young people as they explore their own spiritual questions and beliefs.

As in previous years, our main points of contact have been Collective Worship, Open the Book, lessons in church, and school-led services. In the latter part of 2025, I was also able to expand what we offer by developing and delivering additional Experience learning opportunities.

Alongside our established Experience sessions for Easter and Harvest at St Nicholas Primary School; this year saw the introduction of an Experience Advent lesson for Year 3 pupils at Coughton Primary in St Peter’s Church, and an Experience Church lesson for Class 4 at Haselor School in Haselor Church. These sessions are designed to encourage deeper understanding through interactive, sensory, and hands-on learning and pupils work in small groups at six different learning stations set up around the church. Each station is led by volunteers from the church community.

These Experiences not only enhance learning about the Bible but also help to strengthen relationships between churches and schools. It was a particular joy this year to welcome three members of our RARA, Youth Alpha, and SN@9 community to support these sessions. Following their Experience Church visit, Haselor Primary is now planning to hold a full-school Easter service in church for pupils and families.

In December, Coughton Primary welcomed iSingPop into school. iSingPop is a Christian charity working with primary-aged children to promote spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development through modern pop songs with Christian lyrics. Over three days, pupils participated in workshops focused on the Christmas story before taking part in three concerts for families in St Peter’s Church. This was a significant achievement that brought together church, school, and families in a shared act of worship centred on Jesus.

We have continued to welcome each year group from St Nicholas Primary into church for learning visits, as well as delivering lessons at Coughton Primary for Easter and Christingle. Thanks to Arrow Church’s generous decision to move their outdoors Christingle service to a place where we could have more reach, I was able to adapt their Christingle materials into a lesson format and spend a full afternoon with Key Stage 2 pupils at St Nicholas Primary. All eight classes learned about the history and meaning of Christingle, made their own, and then led an assembly to share what they had learned with their families.

This opportunity enabled us to reach 250 children and almost 100 parents and was another strong example of how placing children, young people, and families at the heart of our ministry – and intentionally connecting church, school, and home – can bear fruit. This approach aligns closely with the Growing Faith principles encouraged by the wider Church.

Alongside this, I continue to champion positive relationships through social media. By tagging schools in posts, commenting on their posts and publicly celebrating our partnerships, we show our support for all local schools – primary, secondary, church, community, SEND, and Catholic. This visibility helps demonstrate our mission and allows the church to shine a light within the community we serve.

Looking Ahead

I end this report much as I did last year. With so much already happening, it can feel challenging to imagine what more might be possible. However, as we look to 2026, I am exploring how we can continue to develop our provision for families across the Minster, offering more opportunities for them to connect with God. While SN@9 has come to an end, there are hopeful plans to integrate the team and their skills into the 11am Morning Worship services.

I would also like to create consistent spaces on Sunday mornings where families can receive a warm welcome every week, and where – on some weeks – children will have the option to engage in age-appropriate learning in a different space while their adults listen to the sermon in church.

I am close to launching St Nick's with Bricks – the Lego is ready – but this will require additional volunteers who can offer an hour or two once a month. The more people who can support our children and families' ministry; the lighter the commitment becomes for each individual. With a few more volunteers I could create teams meaning that volunteers would not need to be involved every month.

We are in a significant and hopeful season in the life of our Churches as we continue to invest in children and families. This investment is not only financial, but also expressed through the generous offering of time, flexibility and a willingness to adapt as we respond to those God is calling into our communities.

As we seek to be a church where children and families feel a genuine sense of belonging and are excited to be part of our shared future, there is an ongoing opportunity to reflect on our service patterns and to create worship spaces where all ages can gather together. In doing so, we encourage faith to be nurtured across generations, allow learning to flow both ways and enabling people of all ages to draw closer to Jesus as part of one whole, inclusive church community.

Jen Hopkins – Children and Families Worker

Open the Book

We are a part of the Minster team who visit the schools. A team of 6 people from across the Alcester Minster Churches visit the 4 local primary schools. Our purpose is to tell some of the well-known stories in the Bible through a simple drama and to encourage the children to consider the point of the stories in their daily lives.

We visit approximately once a month, 8 times a year as part of the four schools' collective worship. What used to be known as 'Assembly'.

In 2025 we took the following stories into school: The master inviting people to a Great Banquet; Jesus cleansing the Temple; Jesus' arrest and trial; the tax collector Zacchaeus; Jonah, the reluctant missionary, and the parable of the wise and foolish builders.

We always finish our visits with a prayer and a time of reflection and at St Nicholas C of E Primary School we also share together the Lord's Prayer. We encourage all the schools to finish by singing a song of their choosing.

I am delighted to say that all 4 schools seem to look forward to our visits, especially the children. Usually, a few volunteer children help us to tell the stories. There is never a shortage of children volunteering to help.

Tricia Berry

Alcester Churches Together (ACT)

Tricia Berry chaired our meetings through 2025

Pulpit Swap The local priests/ministers of the churches of ACT did a pulpit swap in January instead of holding a Unity service. The pulpit swap was very well received by all the churches.

World Day of Prayer service was held at the Baptist Church in March.

Monthly prayer meetings. At the beginning of the year, we planned to have a prayer/drop-in meeting, every month, using a different church for the venue. Unfortunately, it was not supported so it only took place for a few months, but we will re-visit the idea later in 2026.

A **Walk of Witness** took place on Good Friday morning stopping at all the churches and other significant places around the town.

An **ACT Christmas card** was delivered to the Alcester residents by volunteers from all the churches. A Christmas message and Christmas services information for each church was put in the card.

Carols by the gate of St Nicholas took place on the last Saturday before Christmas. It was well supported and some people passing by came and joined us.

ACT have taken their prayer/reflection gazebo to town events such as St Nicholas night, the food markets and street markets.

Warm Hubs/spaces were provided by three of the churches during some of the year.

Alcester Churches Together's mission statement is:

'Affirm one another in the Christian faith, care for the community in which we worship, take the gospel to the Alcester area.'

Tina Bennett

Rural Mission Hub report

The Rural Mission Hub's purpose is to enable missional growth in the Minster, across our deanery, and in rural multi-parish ministry across the diocese.

Operational since summer 2022, the Hub has now worked with 50 churches across the Diocese.

In Alcester Minster benefice in 2025, we have:

- established a **New Worshipping Community** at Great Alne Park, with regular services and an active fellowship providing a welcome and pastoral ministry to the residents.
- completed the work of creating a new **Joint Council** for the Minster.
- facilitated the development of **new forms of worship**, including the Service of Light in Arrow, an Easter Forest Church event in the Alcester Community Orchard, Encounter worship nights, and a Christingle in St Nicholas School.
- trialed a **Prayer Room**, open throughout the National Week of Prayer.

In the Deanery (our local group of 6 benefices), we have:

- worked with new clergy colleagues to establish their specialisms (notably in children's ministry and ministry to older people) in which they provide support to other parishes in these areas.
- coordinated the tour of the Deanery by our new Diocesan Bishop, Sophie.
- convened a **Deanery Festival** day with training and sharing of expertise.

Across the Diocese, we have:

- continued the **Ideas Exchange** gatherings, hosting three of these including sessions introducing churches to Ember (a programme for exploring church closure) and Thrive (CPAS's materials to support multi-parish benefices).
- convened the **Rural Clergy Prayer Network** which continues to be a valuable place of meeting, sharing and supporting colleagues.
- issued regular **newsletters**, enabling lay and ordained leaders to be aware of events, resources, and examples of innovative practice.
- trained curates with an introduction to rural ministry

- represented rural churches in key decision-making bodies including the Diocesan Advisory Committee (buildings), Diocesan Synod and Bishop's Council
- provided a **training placement** to an ordinand interested in rural ministry

Nationally, we have:

- Given a seminar at the **Love Rural Conference**
- Taken part in the **Equipping the Leaders** programme (Katie) and **Growing Faith Strategic Leaders Programme** (Daniel) to learn and contribute to best practice around schools, children and families work - aiming to double the number of children and young people in our churches by 2030
- Worked with Rural Ministries, Arthur Rank Centre and other organisations to share knowledge and disseminate

Daniel Corlett, Mission Hub Associate

Work and ministry with Youth across the Minster



RARA Youth Club Report – 2025

Throughout the year, RARA has welcomed around ten young people aged 11–18, with an average regular attendance of approximately six. The group continues to provide a safe, supportive and welcoming environment in which young people can build friendships, explore faith and grow in confidence.

The monthly sessions follow a consistent and effective structure, beginning with games and activities, followed by a time of worship and prayer. Snacks and drinks are available throughout the evening, helping to create a relaxed and inclusive atmosphere.

For the main teaching element this year, we used *Six Beats One Story* by the Bible Society. This resource guided the group through the whole Bible using a wide range of interactive learning approaches. The young people particularly valued the variety of activities, including drama, video, art and quizzes, which helped to engage different learning styles and encourage participation.

All members received Easter and Christmas gifts, and a number of New Century Version Youth Bibles were purchased for use during sessions. This is a well-regarded Bible for teenagers, and we were able to source several second-hand copies in excellent condition.

A Christmas party was held during the December session and included an evaluation activity to ensure that the voices of the young people were heard. The feedback was extremely positive, with participants expressing enjoyment of almost all aspects of the programme and offering only minor suggestions for improvement. This feedback has directly shaped our planning for the future and led to the selection of a new course for 2026, *The Armour of God*. This programme reflects the learning styles the young people have said they enjoy and focuses each month on a specific piece of God's armour and its relevance to everyday life.

The leadership team continues to work well together, dedicating time to both careful session planning and reflective debriefing. This approach enables the team to remain flexible, responsive and attentive to the needs of the young people. One member of the team is currently undertaking the diocesan *Pathway for Young People* training and has been sharing her learning with the rest of the team, helping to strengthen both our planning and leadership. A key area of learning has been the importance of ensuring that young people have a voice within the life of the church. In response to this, St Nicholas PCC invited RARA members to propose charities for the PCC's annual charitable giving, which was greatly appreciated by the young people. We continue to explore further opportunities for young people to be involved in influencing and contributing to decision-making in the wider church.

RARA is promoted in local schools and through Minster communications, helping to maintain awareness within the wider community.

Towards the end of the year, the team also began planning a new Youth Alpha programme, to begin in January 2026.

Reverend Julie Lindsay

Reports of Church Officers:

Appendix 3

The Church buildings, Activities and Churchyard Report

It has been yet another year without a second church warden to share the load. However I am most grateful to Denise, Andy, Marion and Ruth for volunteering to share the service rota with me. Also, grateful thanks must go to our team of servers at the communion services, Andrew, Caroline, Gill, Doug and Lizzy (who recently joined the group), readers and those who kindly do the intercessions.

It has once again been a very busy year with all the various services, concerts, school visits etc. Throughout the year we do have many people from all around the world visit our lovely church and they are always impressed with the building. A lot of thanks must go to our large band of volunteers who tirelessly work behind the scenes arranging flowers, cleaning brasses, cleaning the church, meeting and greeting visitors, upkeeping the gardens (so they can be enjoyed by the town's folk), ringing the bells etc.. Without these volunteers our church would just not function in the manner it does.

We started the year with the first of the town services, the High Bailiff's service in January which was well attended and in July we had the Town Council civic service. November saw the memorial service especially for the those in the town who lost loved ones during the year or anyone who wanted to remember a deceased family member.

There was a total of 7 baptisms, 7 weddings and a marriage blessing, 12 funerals and 13 school visits. Unfortunately during the year we lost several members of our congregation: Bob Allard, Anne Tugwell, Sally Bailey a valued member of our PCC, Nicholas Daniel and Gabrielle and Rev. David Eve. These members have all been greatly missed. St. Nicks at 9 continued to meet until the end of the year when it was decided because of lack of support from families to end it for the meantime. Messy church continued to meet in church for the majority of the year but now they have moved to the Eric Payne Centre which is working out much better for all concerned.

On a more positive note we had a new informal modern service, accompanied by a band, known as Encounter which initially started with one service in the month but now meet twice a month on the 2nd and 4th Sunday at 7 o'clock and in February we started a Compline service which is held every 4th Friday of the month at 5 o'clock with a regular congregation of around 20 plus people.

Our regular services also include our well attended Wednesday morning said communion which sees congregations between 40 to 50 each week.

Once a month we have our 8 o'clock BCP holy communion service which again has its own regular congregation.

In March April and Roger Steele made history in our church by having the first Messy Wedding. This was a joyous occasion and attended by all their family and new Christian friends. Mothering Sunday was acknowledged with the ladies all receiving a beautifully presented Primula plant.

During Lent we had the film Chosen shown on a Saturday evening in church which was most interesting and well attended. Over the Easter weekend we had our usual Easter services; Maundy Thursday Holy Communion with feet washing, Good Friday ACT walk of witness ending at St. Nicholas where the Mothers Union as usual served hot cross buns and refreshments to all the walkers. Easter Sunday had the St. Nicks at 9 service followed by a communion service at 11am. June saw the start of a Holy Communion Service taking place on a 2 monthly basis at Meadow View which would be a very welcome service to the elderly residents who can no longer get out to church. Trinity Sunday saw our minster service move to an outdoor venue at Arrow. This proved to be popular and well attended.

In September we acknowledged the National weeklong prayer space and duly decorated the lady Chapel to make it inviting to all. September also saw the start of a course in church run by Judith and Peter Cox on the history of the Bible. Again, it was well attended and most interesting. We ran a very successful Alpha during the year.

We were very fortunate to have a film company approach us for the use of Church House as a venue for their filming. This proved to provide a good financial income, an answer to prayer, and the local Holy Bush Inn very kindly provided

refreshments after our Wednesday communion services when required.

We held Spring and Christmas coffee mornings to again help boost our income, both of which were most successful. Other fund-raising events were summer and winter concerts presented by the Bel Canto Singers from Redditch who freely gave of their time to entertain and help us boost our funds. The Saunders family also gave a musical lunchtime concert.

Our bell ringers too were kept busy with various quarter peals for different occasions and also we had a number of groups visiting from places such as Oxford to ring our bells. We also had a competition in September with ringers including our own performing and St Nicholas bellringers were well placed in the competition. That same weekend the church and church house were open for Heritage weekend.

The British Legion held their VJ Day service on the Church Green in August and the Remembrance Day service was conducted from the Church Green to the large crowd out on the street as was the Armistice service.

Alcester Victoria silver band also held their own concert in church and a second one for British Legion funds. The church is also rented out to Alcester Singers twice a year.

Christmas as usual was very busy with a wide range of services including school services. In December we had St. Nicks night where the boy bishop led the service to a packed congregation. It was followed by the town carol service, the crib service on Christmas Eve, Midnight communion and Christmas morning communion service for the whole minster.

Maintenance of the church included the gutters and downward drains being cleared twice a year, the fire extinguishers and outside clock being serviced each year, and the organ and piano being tuned twice a year. A special thanks must go to Richard Osborne for overseeing the Church heating and maintenance of the boilers during the year.

The successful faculty was the replacement of the gardeners shed and the disposal of the old ones. As a result of us not obtaining permission to install the electric organ we had to sell it on to someone else. Due to Stratford District Council not granting permission, because of the Church's location in the conservation zone, the faculty and planning application, for solar panels, was removed. In September we replaced one of the lapel microphones of the sound system, and resulting from a complaint regarding our hearing loop we had it tested by a sound engineer who identified its limitations. We also had further quotes for an updated sound system.

We were able to replace our outside notice boards, had them built by a local joiner and paid for by Moor-Fields charity. The job of painting and mounting is currently being undertaken by volunteers.

All in all, it has been a very busy but enjoyable and exciting year in the life of St. Nicholas Church.

Florence Wright - Churchwarden

Safeguarding Report

During 2025 I did 10 DBS checks. During the year the Diocese changed their agent to thirtyoneight. This has proved to be more difficult to use but we are getting used to it.

The training requirements remain the same and twelve people have either done Basic Awareness for the first time or updated their training as needed. Similarly nine people have done Foundation stage training. It is important for you to remember when to update and not rely on me discovering you are out of date. Please remember to send me a copy of any training certificate for the Minster records. These are stored securely in the Office.

I continue to update the dashboards, a system which the Diocese use to see our progress and which reminds us, the PCC when we need to update policies, risk assessments, discuss safeguarding topics etc.

The Minster PSOs met three times this year. We find these meetings really helpful and a chance to discuss any concerns we have. This might be re training, DBS checks, Dashboards etc. We are always very grateful for the input of any clergy present and their support.

Elizabeth Humphrey – Safeguarding Officer

Church House Management Committee – 2025 Report

Church House, has continued its established range of regular weekly and occasional hirings which help to provide our income. This year we were sorry to lose the Thursday evening Art Group which had been meeting in the hall weekly since 2014 but has now disbanded. The hall was also well used throughout the week with Church meetings and other Minster events.

The Church House Management Committee met on two occasions, firstly in February and then in September. The committee comprises Pam Boswell, Gwyneth and Richard Osborne and the undersigned, who were joined by Florence Wright (Churchwarden) and Andrew Deeks (Treasurer) for both meetings, but as usual many discussions and actions continue throughout the year. The committee would welcome new members who are interested in the activities of Church House.

As costs were continuing to rise at the beginning of the year, the decision was made to increase fees for hirers by 10% from April 2025.

During 2025, money was requested from the Centenary Fund to pay for replacement lighting in the kitchen, as by then two of the fittings had failed. A complete set of LED units were obtained for the kitchen, and to complete the job, we also replaced the few remaining non-LED fittings that remained elsewhere in the building. Special thanks go to Kath and Ian Whitlock who run the Centenary Fund and organise the quarterly draw, and thanks also to Ron Cox who continues to look after the accounts.

There was great excitement during the summer months when the possibility of using Church House, and many other properties in the town and surrounding area for filming were on offer. Church House became the “Hairdressing Salon” for the production and was suitably fitted out during filming sessions which took place from September to the end of November. This opportunity provided a significant contribution to St Nicholas funds, and Julie and I were considered as honorary crew members by the end. Church House itself benefitted from having the “cloudy” Heritage double glazed windows replaced in the Main Hall, as the crew needed to film through the windows from outside.

Our thanks go to Pam Boswell and the Open House team for providing and operating the Open House coffee fund. This fund is used to contribute towards the provision of refreshments, cleaning materials and kitchenware replacements. Wednesday morning coffee is very well supported, as is the coffee served after Sunday services.

I would also like to offer a personal thank you to all those who help with all the maintenance that we are able to do ourselves. These are normally jobs like cleaning windows, weeding the yard, and wiping over paintwork. Thank you also to those who come along to help when we hold a ‘Spring Clean’, and to those who if they see a job needing doing, will let us know, or do it themselves. I will soon be compiling a new list of outstanding jobs that need attention.

Income and expenditure for 2025 is shown in the Treasurer’s accounts, The bonus which came to the parish this year was when Church House became involved in the filming, and even without that income we would have almost covered our operating costs from hirings and other benefits and grants (-£155.01) to support its use by the Minster.

Lastly, I would like to thank the members of the committee for all their support. Church House provides a valuable resource for the Church, the Parish and the Minster.

Marion Deeks (on behalf of CHMC)

Friends of St Nicholas

At present we have 20 members and the financial situation is as below:-

Friends of St Nicholas

Opening investments at 1st January £24,000

Additional investments £ -

Change in value £ -

Total investments at end month £24,000

Opening bank at 1st January £2,077

Donations £635

Charges -£17

Closing bank at 28th February £2,695.26

Total assets £26,695.26

The total assets include £24,000 invested with CCLA but the yield from those investments is not available at present.

As the PCC will be aware, raising funds in this present environment is challenging and the Friends would appreciate any help available from PCC members. Leaflets are being taken from the dispenser in the church constantly so the hope is that they may result in gifts/ bequests in the future. Meanwhile the plan is to arrange a talk on some of the fascinating churches in the wider area and, with the Town Council's permission, to place an appeal in their magazine.

David Moulson (Chairman)

Environment - Eco Church – Net Zero Carbon Report

We continue to work towards our target of "Net Zero Carbon by 2030". Whilst we have been disappointed by planning refusals in the past, there are plans to resurrect the solar panel project and we continually fine-tune our heating and lighting usage in the Church and in Church House. We contract with electricity suppliers who are using 100% renewable sources.

Andrew Deeks

Volunteers

In all the Church's activities reported in this annual report, volunteers have been essential for the functioning of St Nicholas Church. The clergy and church officers are very aware of the ageing congregation and especially the resulting increased demands on those who continue to give their time, talents and finance to ensure that the church is here for future generations. Within this report are many "thankyou's" for those volunteers and cheerful givers of time and talents. However we need more willing volunteers for the many, sometimes unseen, tasks which help to run the services and the upkeep of the buildings. Please contact any of the church officers if you could give some time and they will help you find the right job for you!

Other Reports of Church Affairs:

Appendix 4

Arden Foodbank Report 2025

In 2025, the Arden Foodbank was under the jurisdiction of St Nicholas PCC but, as noted in the following report, it became an independent charity in September 2025 and from that date St Nicholas PCC relinquished any responsibilities.

A Year of Change and Continuity

2025 was a year of significant change for Arden Foodbank, but also a year in which our core mission remained the same: ensuring that people in our local communities have access to emergency food and compassionate support when they need it most.

Even during a period of major organisational transition, our volunteers, supporters and partners ensured that the Foodbank continued to operate without interruption, helping individuals and families across Alcester, Studley and the surrounding communities.

A Tribute to Our Founding Manager

After 13 years of remarkable leadership since the Foodbank's creation, **Susan Kinnersley stepped down as Foodbank Manager at the end of March.**

Through Susan's kindness, compassion and tireless dedication, Arden Foodbank grew from small beginnings in 2011 into an organisation supporting almost **1,900 local people in 2024.**

Her leadership helped shape the welcoming and caring ethos that continues to define the Foodbank today. Susan's contribution to our community has been immense, and she remains greatly appreciated and warmly remembered by all who volunteered alongside her.

Strengthening Governance

A new Foodbank Manager was appointed in May.

In June we received a **Governance Audit Report from Trussell**, identifying several improvements that required immediate attention, particularly in the areas of:

- Safeguarding
- Health and safety
- Data protection

Work began immediately to address these recommendations and strengthen the governance structures that support our work.

At the same time, the Rector of St Nicholas Church advised that, due to planned changes to the church's own governance arrangements and the increasing regulatory requirements placed on Foodbanks, it would be difficult for Arden Foodbank to continue operating as part of the church charity.

Becoming an Independent Charity

In early July the Foodbank Committee held an emergency meeting to consider the options available.

After careful discussion, a difficult but forward-looking decision was made: **Arden Foodbank would become an independent charity.**

Over the following two months a great deal of work was undertaken to establish a new organisation and appoint a Board of Trustees.

On **5 September 2025**, the Charity Commission officially registered **Arden Foodbank as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)**, marking the beginning of a new chapter in our journey.

Continuing to Serve Our Community

While these organisational changes were taking place, the day-to-day work of the Foodbank continued as normal.

Emergency food parcels continued to be distributed each week to people facing hardship across Alcester, Studley and nearby villages. The generosity of our supporters ensured that shelves remained stocked and help remained available for those who needed it.

Our weekly distribution sessions take place:

Alcester

Friday afternoons, 2.00–3.30pm
Eric Payne Community Centre

Studley

Tuesday afternoons, 2.00–3.30pm
Studley Methodist Church

Our Impact in 2025

From **1 January to 4 September 2025**:

- **375 food vouchers** were fulfilled, issued by our referral partners
- **821 people received food, including 311 children**
- **7,389 meals** were provided

Foodbanks do more than provide food though. They also help connect people with further support.

During the same period we **signposted 24 clients to specialist advice and support services**, helping individuals address the underlying causes of hardship.

Why People Needed Our Help

The most common reasons people were referred to Arden Foodbank in 2025 were:

1. Rising costs of essential living expenses
2. Priority debt
3. Benefits delays or sanctions
4. Long-term physical or mental health conditions

Last summer, some clients newly claiming Universal Credit reported waiting **up to seven weeks** before receiving their first payment — a delay that can place enormous pressure on already vulnerable households.

The Generosity of Our Community

The Foodbank exists because of the extraordinary generosity of local people.

Between January and early September we received **6,528 kilos**, collected through:

- Over **20 community collection points**
- Individual donations
- Corporate contributions
- Organised collections
- A highly successful **Waitrose food drive in March**

In total, **8,110 kilos of food** was distributed to local people in need.

Every donation, large or small, helps ensure that no one in our community has to face crisis alone.

Supporting Children During the Holidays

School holidays can be particularly challenging for families who rely on school meals.

During the **six weeks of the summer holidays**, we provided breakfast and lunch packs containing **five days' worth of food** for **210 children** identified by local schools as needing additional support.

These packs helped ensure that children could continue to receive regular meals even when school was closed.

Our Volunteers: The Heart of the Foodbank

None of this work would be possible without our extraordinary volunteers.

Arden Foodbank is supported by a team of **more than 50 dedicated volunteers** who give their time, energy and compassion to help others.

Unlike other Trussell Foodbanks in Warwickshire, **Arden has no paid staff**. Every role is carried out by volunteers.

From sorting donations and preparing parcels to welcoming visitors and coordinating collections, their commitment makes everything we do possible. We are deeply grateful for their generosity and dedication.

Looking Ahead

As **Arden Foodbank CIO** begins this new chapter as an independent charity, we are excited about the opportunities ahead.

Our vision is to develop our two distribution centres into **community hubs**, open to everyone, where anyone can just walk in and access advice, guidance and support from partner organisations, and emergency food if they need that too.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to **St Nicholas Church**, which provided a home for Arden Foodbank during the first thirteen years of our journey. We look forward to continuing to work closely together as we support people in need in our community.

Find Out More

For more information about Arden Foodbank and our work:

Website

<http://arden.foodbank.org.uk>

You can also follow our work on **Facebook**.

Helen Watson
Manager, Arden Foodbank

ST NICHOLAS CHURCH PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS OF FUNDS HELD BY OTHER CHURCH ORGANISATIONS
AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2025

	2025	2024
	£	£
BELLRINGERS	2,203.07	3,341.69
CENTENARY CLUB	4,516.66	4,203.24
GARDEN FUND	640.67	2,035.75