

# **St Mary Magdalene Church, Latimer**



## **Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Parochial Church Council for the year ended 31 December 2024**

**Latimer PCC is a charity excepted from registration with the Charity Commission**

**Rector of Chenies Benefice**

**Revd David Whale**

### **Background**

St Mary Magdalene Church, Latimer is part of a benefice which includes St Mary Magdalene, Flaunden, St Michael's, Chenies and St George's, Little Chalfont. The Revd David Whale is Rector of the benefice. The Latimer PCC has responsibility, with the Rector and the Associate Ministers, for the mission and maintenance of Latimer Church including Latimer Parish Hall.

### **Membership**

Members of the PCC are either *ex officio* or elected by the APCM in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. The meeting for the election of churchwardens and the APCM were held on Sunday, 12 May. During the year the following served as PCC members:

Rector	Revd David Whale, Chairperson of PCC
Associate Ministers	Revd Dr Brian Ludlow Revd Peggy Ludlow

Churchwarden	Dr Helen Leary
Deputy Churchwarden	Mrs Joanna Barclay

Minutes Secretary	Dr Helen Leary
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Elected Members: Mrs Joanna Barclay, Mrs Annabel Briggs, Mr David Briggs,  
Mr Chris Gregory, Mr Michael Todd.

Treasurer	Mr Andrew Hall
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Representative on the Deanery Synod: position vacant

The PCC may operate through a Standing Committee, as allowed by church law, and has power to transact the business of the PCC between meetings and make decisions by email.

Mr Briggs stood down as Treasurer at the APCM after ten years' sterling service. He was presented with a bottle of whisky and a card on behalf of the PCC.

The appointment of Mr Hall as Treasurer was approved at the PCC meeting held on 20 May, to take effect as soon as he had completed the Independent Examination of the 2023 accounts.

### **Church Attendance**

*Electoral Roll.* The Roll stands at 24, down from 25 in 2023. Seven people were resident outside the parish. Since the last Roll was compiled in 2019, a completely new one is required in 2025.

*Sunday Attendance.* Morning Prayer (Common Worship) or Holy Communion (BCP or Common Worship) services were held every Sunday throughout the year. Usual Sunday attendance was around 17. The regular congregation extends a warm welcome to couples who are fulfilling the attendance requirements in advance of their weddings at Latimer Church.

### *Special Services*

14 February	Ash Wednesday – Benefice Service of Holy Communion and Imposition of Ashes
28 March	Maundy Thursday – Agape Meal and Service for the Benefice in the Church.
31 March	Easter Day service – attended by 52 people (28 in 2023)
30 June	Joint service with Flaunden on the site of Flaunden Old Church
29 September	Harvest Festival Service followed by a light lunch in the Hall, organised by Deborah Todd. Donations made at the service were given to the Chiltern Food Bank.
3 November	In Loving Memory Service
10 November	Remembrance Sunday Service began with a gathering and wreath laying by the Boer War Memorial on the village green, followed by a service in the church. Sherry and fruit cake were served afterwards in the Hall.
22 December	Service of Lessons and Carols followed by mulled wine and mince pies at Latimer House, courtesy of De Vere Hotels
25 December	Christmas Day Service - attended by 76 people (57 in 2023)

The service of Lessons and Carols was attended by over 125 people (the highest figure for six years). The singers' joy in creating such a good sound transmitted itself to the whole congregation. We thank David Heath, organist and director of music, Deon Maxwell, choir master, and all the singers, readers and sidespeople for their hard work.

There were five weddings during the year, one baptism and one funeral.

### **Events**

- There were two coffee mornings: one at Hockley Farm on 29 May and one at the Long Barn, Blackwell Farm on 11 December. We thank Annabel Briggs and Deborah Todd for organising them.
- On Sunday, 30 June there was a joint service with St Mary Magdalene, Flaunden on the site of Flaunden Old Church, the first such service since 1988. It was followed by tea and cake in Flaunden's Parish Room and the launch of Tim Leary's *The Church in the Valley. Flaunden Old Church*, funded by Flaunden PCC and published by Hawkes Design and Publishing of Chesham.

As part of the research for his book Tim Leary identified the marble slab in Latimer's vestry, hidden behind the organ, as the altar top from Flaunden Old Church. It was moved temporarily to Flaunden 'new' Church for the celebrations on 30 June, its permanent, legal transfer subsequently approved by the Diocese.

- Latimer Music Festival took place from Friday 16 to Sunday 18 August. In addition to the usual three concerts, there was an additional concert on the Sunday morning featuring artists from the Royal Academy of Music's Junior Department; their virtuosity was extraordinary. The Church thanks the musicians, the artistic director, Mark Nixon, and the organisers, Chris Gregory, Deon Maxwell and Deborah and Michael Todd, for their dedication and energy. The event has become the highlight of Latimer's summer.
- On Saturday 14 September there was the annual Ride+Stride to raise money for the Buckinghamshire Historic Churches Trust; half the proceeds raised by our walkers go to Latimer Church. The walk was organised as usual by Joanna Barclay.
- 16 December – Christmas wreath-making workshop in the Hall, attended by 14 people, many of them from the Hatch End Flower Arrangement Group. A contribution was made to the General Fund.

### **Church Maintenance, Repairs, Renewals and Conservation**

The PCC and Churchwarden keep a regular watch on the building, which remains in a good state internally and externally.

The redecoration of the whole of the church interior in February (including the repair of the unsightly peeling area on the apse wall) has made a subtle and stylish improvement. Thanks are due to Chris Gregory and Victoria Supple for their care in choosing the paint colours. Financial support was received from the Benefact Trust.

LED bulbs were installed in the spotlights in the nave.

Following a tortuous process to obtain faculty approval, the Henry Holiday windows on the north side of the nave were conserved in the second half of the year. The work was entirely funded by the extraordinary generosity of Mrs Joan Hadley, widow of the late Dennis Hadley, an international expert on the Victorian stained-glass designer Holiday. Conservation of the window in the south transept by C.E. Kempe was carried out at the same time, entirely thanks to a grant from the Kempe Trust that covered the whole cost. The conservation and cleaning were carried out by Holy Well Glass Ltd of Wells, led by Jack Clare. The cleaning of our windows was first mentioned in the PCC minutes nine years before. We get there in the end!

The support and enthusiasm of our community and congregation are vital to the continuing work on the Church fabric but much less would be possible without the generosity of the Music Festival's organisers who pass over its profits to the Fabric Fund. We are also grateful to the Oxford DAC for their help with and formal approval of our projects.

Projects for 2025 include the installation of a lightbox to display three stained-glass panels donated by Mrs Hadley and the conservation of the sanctuary carpet.

### **Churchyard**

Latimer House most generously provided a gardening team of six people in February, who raked the main path, weeded, cleared the compost heap and levelled two grave spaces that had sunk.

The Chiltern Society came again in July for their annual tidying. We thank the Society and also our regular gardener, Peter Evans, who continues trimming the hedges and mowing the grass.

In the summer a team of congregation members cleared the bark chips, membrane and wooden edging from the large ashes area, and installed heavy-duty metal edging; after the delivery of topsoil, grass seed was sown, which took very quickly in the wet weather. A generous donation from a congregation member covered the costs. Attention will be given to the ashes area by the Hall in 2025.

### **Parish Hall**

We continue to be grateful to Latimer and Ley Hill Parish Council for renting space in our Hall and for a contribution to the upkeep of the Churchyard. Grace Ackerman continues to hire the hall for weekly yoga classes, which provide a useful income for the church and an enjoyable local activity. The Chalk Streams Project (under the auspices of the Chilterns Conservancy Board) held training sessions on 29 and 30 May, for which the Hall, situated close to the River Chess, was ideally situated.

In 2025 the inside of the roof will be strengthened where it shows signs of weakness from the weight of the slates, and the outside will be painted.

### **Treasurer's Report**

The financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2024 are attached as part of this report. They show that we had a deficit of receipts over payments of £6,305 (in 2023 a surplus of £9,938). Our total reserves therefore decreased from £42,053 to £35,747, our unrestricted reserves decreased by £2,632 and restricted reserves by £3,673.

The Fabric Fund received income of £27,919 during the year, including grants and gift-aid recoveries. Expenditure was £31,593, leaving a balance of £19,135 at the year end.

### **Safeguarding**

All members of the PCC take seriously the matter of safeguarding. The parish's Safeguarding Policy was reviewed in September 2024 and is available on the Benefice website. Tim Leary continues as Parish Safeguarding Lead.

### **Risk Management**

In accordance with recommended practice, the PCC continues to identify major risks which affect the work of the Church, including health and safety issues. A Health and Safety & Emergency Management Manual, drawn up by Revd Dr Brian Ludlow and including a Fire Risk Assessment, was approved by the PCC in January 2024. Financial accounts for the church's operating activities, the Parish Hall, the Churchyard and the Fabric Fund are separately maintained as is the regularly reviewed insurance policy.

### **Independent Examiner**

The PCC is grateful to Andrew Hall for undertaking the Independent Examination of the church accounts on a voluntary basis.

### **Review of the year**

The church is open every day for private worship, thanks to Revds Brian and Peggy Ludlow, Steve and Diana Ackerman, Barbara Perrott, Alison Platt and Josephine Whelan, who unlock and lock the building each day. A good number of visitors record their appreciation of the church's peace and beauty in the Visitors' Book.

Latimer Church is indebted to many people for their work and support: to Revds Brian and Peggy Ludlow for leading our services and to those who do so on an occasional basis to allow Revd Peggy to fulfil her duties as Area Dean (Revd Dr Phoebe Swart, Revd Sue Gill, Dr Bridget Nichols, Mr Tim Phillips and, from our own congregation, Dr Tim Leary). We are grateful too to our organists (Ruth Purton and Deon Maxwell), to the sidespeople (Annabel Briggs, Joanna Barclay, Helen Leary, Alison Platt, Josephine Whelan), to those who decorate the church for Harvest Festival and Christmas services and provide weekly vases of flowers (organised by Joanna Barclay) and to everyone in the congregation and the wider community who supports the church.

The PCC and congregation also thank the Churchwarden and Deputy Churchwarden.

### **Minister's Report to APCM Flaunden and Latimer Parishes**

It is hard to believe that yet another year has passed. Across the Benefice much has been happening, with much work on the St George's redevelopment project; initial Architects' plans were submitted for pre-planning advice and, since then, the Building Group has been meeting weekly to refine the designs to take account of the Planning Officer's comments. There is still a way to go but the growing numbers worshipping, and the growing number of different congregations in Little Chalfont underpin the urgency of upgrading the building. St Michael's changed its diet of Services to a 9am BCP and 6pm Evensong and has seen a slow but steady increase in congregation, particularly at 9am.

This side of the River we have seen our service attendance generally remain stable week by week, although we sadly miss one or two members who are no longer fit enough to come to Church on Sundays. However, we have also seen an increase in numbers attending the many and various 'special' services we have held during the year. One highlight was a joint service at Flaunden Old Church – the first time a service has been held there for many decades. The Service order followed that used in 1988 with the Rector opening the Service, the Associate Priests leading the worship and the Archdeacon giving the Blessing. After the service a very happy band walked up the hill to Flaunden's 'new' Church for tea, a historical display and the launch of Tim Leary's book.

Overall, we can conclude that the Benefice in general and the Parishes of Latimer and Flaunden in particular remain in good heart.

The Reverend David Whale (Rector)

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