



**Annual Parochial Church Meeting of the
Polden Wheel Benefice**
Date: 18 May 2026 7.30pm;
Burtle Church (Refreshments from 7.00pm)
AGENDA

1. Opening Prayer
2. Appointment of Secretary
3. Apologies for Absence

VESTRY MEETING

4. Election of Church Wardens

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

5. Minutes of previous APCM 19th May 2025
6. Matters Arising
7. Election of Local PCC Representatives. (to be voted en bloc).
8. Election of Cashiers (to be voted en bloc)
9. Election of Electoral Roll Officer.
10. Election of Deanery Synod Reps (to be re-appointed this year)
11. Appointment of Independent Examiner.

REPORTS

- a) PCC Annual Report, b) Church Warden's Fabric Reports, c) Treasurer's A/cs & Report, d) Electoral Roll Report, e) Deanery Synod Report, f) Safeguarding Report, g) Other Reports.

Chair's Reflection/Votes of thanks

Open Discussion

Dates: Archdeacon's Visitation, Next PCC Meeting, Commissioning of Wardens and PCC Members.



Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM):
Polden Wheel: Monday May 19th 2025 at
Edington Church.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting for the Polden Wheel benefice took place at Edington church. Representatives from each of the six churches were present. All reports had been previously circulated and had been placed on the parish website. Notices had been displayed on church noticeboards. Copies of the full accounts had been circulated prior to the meeting and placed on the website. Nominations for Churchwardens, Cashiers and PCC representatives had been carried out in the respective parishes and completed forms were to hand. There were no Deanery Synod elections this year since the current three-year tenure remains until 2026.

Revd. Rich Tweedy chaired the meeting and opened with prayer and thanked Edington for their hospitality.

Appointment of Secretary:

Mrs Freda Prime was appointed to act as Secretary for the meeting. Proposed by M, Bell and seconded by A Sparkes.

Apologies for Absence:

Not recorded.

VESTRY MEETING:

Election of Churchwardens for 2025/26, The following nominations had been received:

Parish	Nominee	Proposer	Seconder
Ashcott	John Harvey	Lyn Harvey	Freda Prime
Ashcott	Vacant	N/A	N/A
Burtle	Rosemary Tucker	Margaret Bell	Jane Ponsillo
Burtle	Alison Everett	Margaret Bell	Lorraine Simmonds
Catcott	Martin Melia	Jackie Parkes	A Stevens
Catcott	Corinne Reynolds	Jackie Parkes	Sandra Pearson
Chilton Polden	Vacant	N/A	N/A
Chilton Polden	Vacant	N/A	N/A
Edington	Rosie Tilbury	Iona Stevens	Tom Wilson
Edington	Vacant	N/A	N/A
Shapwick	Vacant	N/A	N/A
Shapwick	Vacant	N/A	N/A

All nominations unanimously agreed by the meeting: Proposed by Anita Hayne seconded by Chris Lush.

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING.

1. Minutes of APCM 29th April 2024)

Minutes of the previous APCM were to hand and agreed. These were signed as a true record.

2. Matters Arising:

The issue of communication was discussed in relation to Deanery Synod, noting that the 5 marks of mission put forward by the DMP had not been discussed as agreed, at PCC level and would need to be on the agenda in the coming months

The distribution of APCM Packs had been discussed last year and was not felt to have been very effective. This year the packs had been produced and CWs were asked to request the appropriate number for their respective churches. It was clear that this had not happened in all cases and we will need to do better next year in terms of promoting the meeting and ensuring that everyone has access to the relevant documents.

The issue of Lay Pastoral Assistants was discussed. It was regrettable that the group had lapsed and Rich agreed to give this priority in the coming year.

3. Election of Representatives on PCC from Local Committees:

Parish	Nominee	Proposer	Seconder
Ashcott	Freda Prime	Nancy Routley	Henry Routley
Ashcott	Margaret Trimm	John Harvey	Lyn Harvey
Burtle	Margaret Bell	Rosemary Tucker	Alison Everett
Catcott	Jackie Parkes	Corinne Reynolds	Sandra Pearson
Chilton Polden	Chris Lush	Anita Hayne	Rosie Tilbury
Chilton Polden	Anne Lush	Anita Hayne	Rosie Tilbury
Chilton Polden	Anita Hayne	Anne Lush	Sarah Bathurst
Edington	Alison Sparkes	Rosie Tilbury	Iona Stevens
Shapwick	Vacant	N/A	N/A

All nominations were unanimously accepted by the meeting. Proposed by Anita Hayne seconded by Chris Lush

4. Election of Local Cashiers: The following nominations had been received:

Ashcott	Margaret Trimm	John Harvey	Lyn Harvey
Burtle	Sue Ball	Rosemary Tucker	Alison Everett
Catcott	Stuart Frier	Jackie Parkes	Dave Parkes
Catcott	Dave Parkes	Sandra Pearson	Martin Melia
Chilton Polden	Anita Hayne	Anne Lush	Sarah Bathurst
Edington	Nadia Wilson	Rosie Tilbury	Iona Stevens
Shapwick	Carolyn Fitzpatrick	Rosemary Hargreaves	Chris Hargreaves

All nominations were unanimously accepted by the meeting. Proposed by; Caroline Snell & seconded by Chris Hargreaves.

5. Election of Electoral Roll Officer: Anita Hayne was elected to serve as Benefice Electoral Roll Officer for the coming year. Proposed by Freda Prime and seconded by Chris Lush.

6. **Appointment of Sides Persons:** In line with the revised Church Representation Rules 2020, the sides persons for each church will be appointed at the first PCC meeting.
7. **Appointment of Independent Examiner:** Mr Stephen Fry was appointed as Independent Examiner for the coming year. Proposed by Caroline Snell and seconded by Anita Hayne.
8. **Appointment of Deanery Synod Representatives: To serve for three years.** The three year tenure of 2023 elections stands until 2026 therefore no elections took place. The current Deanery Synod representatives for the Polden Wheel who have six available places are as follows;

Ashcott	Vacant
Burtle	Sue Ball & Rosemary Tucker
Catcott	Corinne Reynolds
Chilton Polden	Vacant
Edington	Rosie Tilbury
Shapwick	Rosemary Hargreaves

9. **Reports (all reports had been previously circulated)**

PCC Annual Report: The annual report for the Parochial Church Council was produced as an overall report for the six churches. The information had been gained from contributions from every church and represented the activities from the parishes. The report was proposed by Freda Prime and seconded by Martin Margaret Bell and carried.

Churchwarden’s Fabric Reports: The inventories of all moveable items had been updated. **Ashcott;** The repairs that were highlighted in 2019 Quinquennial were in three phases and the first two phases are planned to take place in 2025. The schedule of work is ongoing and during 2024 new lighting to the path was installed and new louvres in the tower is in hand. It is hoped to secure grants to assist with re-ordering the church to make it more attractive as a venue other than worship. **Burtle:** New louvres have been installed in the bell tower and the damp on the interior walls have benefitted from washing down with water. **Catcott;** the fabric of St. Peter’s is in good general repair. During 2024 Catcott have continued to progress their plans for the installation of toilet, kitchen and disabled access. St. Peter’s is a grade one listed building which means careful planning in order to preserve the character and history of this beautiful ancient church Chilton Polden; The mortar under the coping stones on the south side of the nave roof have been replaced and also pointing on the south west corner. It is hoped that this will prevent further ingress of water. Further restoration of the bells is required. **Edington;** the structure of the church is satisfactory. Rain coming through the holes of the bell ropes has caused paint to fall off the interior wall. It is hoped to remedy this as soon as possible, when a contractor can be found. **Shapwick:** Unfortunately there was a flood in the boiler room which had to be pumped out and further flooding has meant that there has been no heat coming through. It is hoped that the heating issue will soon be resolved.

The reports were accepted en bloc, proposed by Chris Lush and seconded by Rosie Tilbury.

Electoral Roll Report: The revised Electoral Roll report had been prepared by Anita Hayne with information from the six parishes. This represented an entirely new roll with all

members re-applying for inclusion. Anita will forward the certificates for noticeboards in due course. The Electoral Roll was accepted. Proposed by Anita Hayne and seconded by Rosie Tilbury. A certificate will be issued for display in the church porches, showing the final number on the new roll. There are 133 members on the revised rolls across the benefice. Ashcott, 22, Burtle, 29, Catcott 33, Chilton Polden, 14, Edington 21 and Shapwick 14. Proposed by Anita Hayne and seconded by Rosie Tilbury.

Deanery Synod Report: The Synod report had been prepared by Sue Ball. There had been four meetings of the Deanery Synod over 2024, held at Street Mission Church in January, Glastonbury St. Johns in May, Shapwick in July and in October in the Brue Benefice. The new Synod term of office would run from July 2023 – June 2026. The focus for 2024 in ‘Five Marks of Mission’ had been ‘Tell ‘with Rich as Deanery Champion. The focus of discussion over 2024 has been Shared Ministry and how the deanery will be restructured. The full Deanery Synod Report is available. The report was proposed by Sue Ball and seconded by Anita Hayne

Safeguarding Report: It was agreed that this should be a standing item on every APCM agenda going forward. All DBS checks are up to date for staff and volunteers and training is in hand. Safer recruitment policies are followed. During 2024 all those in leadership roles will complete the mandatory Leadership course which some have already completed. The Safeguarding Dashboard and Hub is being used with the assistance of Niki Hill and provides a helpful prompting of when actions need to be taken and when. Proposed by John Harvey and seconded by Anita Hayne

Jesus and Me: Jennifer Tweedy has begun a group for the children which is currently at Ashcott and Chilton Polden Informal Worship services. It is hoped that these will grow and flourish.

10. **Finances:** Caroline Snell had done sterling work in producing a very readable set of accounts for the six churches and was warmly thanked for her efforts. In turn Caroline thanked the local Cashiers for their work in providing her with the information that was needed to prepare the end of year accounts and for keeping their respective records in good order. The accounts for the Benefice are prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 on a ‘Receipts’ and ‘Payments’ basis. The Parish Share continues to be a heavy burden on all six churches and the new expectations from the Diocese has done little to reassure rural parishes going forward, Caroline Snell proposed that the accounts be adopted and this was seconded by Margaret Bell and carried. A full accounts summary is attached to these minutes and filed. There are ‘Good boxes’ installed in Ashcott and Chilton Polden churches which enable visitors to donate digitally. These have yet to be assessed fully.
11. **Chair’s Reflections:** Rich began his reflections by proposing a warm vote of thanks to all those who have given so much time and effort to the work of the churches in the area. The Churchwardens, Secretary and Treasurer were thanked by Rich all of whom devote a significant amount of time to the benefice. Sue Ball, our parish Administrator was also warmly thanked for her amazing contribution despite ongoing issues following her fall. The services of Andrew Gordon Clark are much missed. Rich went on to say that we must not underestimate the difficulties that lie ahead in these times. He referred to the decisions that are currently being discussed at Deanery and Diocesan level regarding the loss of clergy posts

and the likelihood that the Polden Wheel would expand to include two other parishes from MOMMS. Namely Moorlinch and Stawell. The issue of a 'House for Duty' which would provide a part time priest to take on some of the ministry forms part of the discussions and it was felt that we should press for this to happen in the event of those plans to expand coming to fruition. Rich felt that the ongoing difficulties around finances would increase in a painful way since, already some churches are unable to meet their full Parish Share. The new format of collecting Parish Share contributions has only served to increase the burden on rural parishes. Rich pointed out that even for a benefice that was thriving financially, the 70% increase would be huge. Indeed it seems that a bad situation has only been made worse for many, including ourselves. Clearly the Diocese is also in financial crisis. Rural parishes being particularly vulnerable. Rich urged members not to be impatient as we endeavour to grow our churches and the outcomes from Christianity Explored will bear fruit. Rich thanked John and Linda Johnson for their help in facilitating the groups. Rich drew attention to a Bible Society Survey which showed that there is a quiet revival becoming evident and pointed to the full report on the Bible Society website. Rich extended special thanks to Anne Lush who was retiring as churchwarden of Chilton Polden after many years of dedicated and selfless service to St. Edwards and to the benefice. She will continue as a PCC member.

12. Open Discussion

- a) John Harvey made the point that many local churches are thriving with strong membership and felt that we should consider what it is that makes for a strong church. There was considerable discussion around growing our churches.
- b) There was a feeling that the 'disconnect between our six churches had not improved and there was less coming together as a benefice. Once again the issue of communication needed to be more robust in this regard.
- c) There was discussion around Spokes and whether it was still fit for purpose or whether it needed a re-vamp. The suggestion of a sub group to look at this was made.
- d) Thanks were recorded to Rich for all that he does across the benefice.

13. Dates: Archdeacon's Visitation: Not to hand

Next PCC Meeting; Wednesday 4th June @7.30pm in Shapwick Church.

Commissioning of PCC and Wardens Monday 23rd June.

The meeting closed with prayers at 8.40pm

Signed.....Date.....

The Polden Wheel Benefice: Annual Report: January – December 2025

INTRODUCTION

2025 has been another year of significant challenges within the Church of England and within our Benefice. The need to be listening for God's guidance is vital in these very challenging times. The issues highlighted in the 2024 Annual Report remain deeply concerning and, some four years on, we continue to support the people of Ukraine in our prayers and also the fragile peace process in Gaza. Much on the global stage is upsetting and worrying but, as Christians, we hold fast in the knowledge that God is faithful. The appointment of Dame Sarah Mullally as Archbishop of Canterbury is controversial but we pray for her ministry. Significant change for our benefice lies in the fact that there are plans to add two further churches, Moorlinch and Stawell, and a meeting with Archdeacon Gell in January confirmed that this was indeed the case. During 2025 Revd. Andrew Stevens retired from leading services and is greatly missed in this regard. However, we are always happy to see him and Iona joining our worship and other events and are grateful for their continued service in Edington.

The pattern of worship across the six churches remains unchanged with services on alternate weeks being the general rule. The decision not to share the communal cup at Holy Communion continues with the dipping of the sacrament at the altar rail but Catcott has continued with the practice of taking the sacraments to the congregation. Sadly we are not able to say that we see much increase in numbers across the benefice but there continues to be a small but strong core of members in each church. All six churches have a local committee of Friends/Supporters who oversee and administer the business at a local level. These groups are the mainstay and link between the church and the wider community and efforts are made to ensure that the many and varied fundraising events reflect the work of the church and its identity.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Polden Wheel continues to operate as one Benefice with a single Parochial Church Council representing six churches. Our vicar, Rich, works collaboratively with his churchwardens and Lay Worship Assistants. Currently there are no Lay Readers in post in our benefice. Engaging with our respective communities forms a key part of our church lives and a range of activities ensure that the church family plays a central part in community life beyond the church walls. It is fair to say that 2025 has been dominated very much by the restructuring of our Deanery and the discussions that have taken place are well documented and, now, at the end of the year, it is clear that the Polden Wheel will become a benefice of eight churches when Moorlinch and Stawell join us with the splitting of MOMMS. These decisions are driven by financial constraints within the Bath & Wells Diocese. The process has been difficult and thorny but now, as we move into the changes that 2026 will inevitably bring, we welcome new friends and move forward in faith. Reciprocal meetings, both formal and informal, have taken place over 2025 and also a further meeting with the Archdeacon in June.

LEGAL/ADMINISTRATION

Administrator: We are pleased to have the services of our administrator, Sue Ball, who is based, part time at the Vicarage office and is a valuable asset both to Rich

and to others of us who often request her expertise and assistance. Unfortunately, Sue suffered a very serious fall last year which has impacted greatly on her ability to do certain tasks. She has continued to work at home and has demonstrated great commitment in the face of health setbacks.

Finances: We were delighted to have been able to appoint Caroline Snell as Benefice Treasurer but sadly, towards the end of 2024 Caroline resigned due to pressures. She proved to be an excellent treasurer and is much missed. So far it has not been possible to recruit a replacement and we are very grateful to John Harvey, churchwarden at Ashcott, who has consolidated the end of year accounts. Cashiers continue to conduct financial business at a local level. It has been a difficult and challenging year with regard to the financial position of our rural churches. Dwindling numbers and rising costs have contributed to a situation where, in some churches, outgoings have exceeded income and the burden of the Parish Share has been heavy and not paid in full in some churches. The change from Parish Share to Benefice Share by the Diocese has done nothing to alleviate the pressures and has actually served to increase the burden that is already felt. The issue of fees will be addressed early in 2025. The two digital devices in Chilton Polden and Ashcott churches are drawing some additional income but it is still early days. The Treasurer's report forms part of the overall reporting for the APCM. Some of our churches continue to hold a Gift Day each year and others are considering the possibility of doing so going forward. At the beginning of 2025 a Stewardship campaign across the six churches was held which realised some increases in regular giving.

Parochial Church Council: The PCC meets on a regular basis and all six parishes are represented. Two of our churches are without a churchwardens having regretfully seen the retirement of two of our longstanding and dedicated churchwardens in Shapwick and Chilton Polden. Two have only one in post making a total of six across the Benefice. They, together with one other representative from each church make up the body of the PCC. Where there is only one churchwarden a second representative may be appointed. The secretary is a PCC member but the Administrator is ex officio which may be the case for the new Treasurer.

Electoral Roll: Each church maintains its own Electoral Roll and posts names only, two weeks prior to the APCM. A report is prepared for the whole benefice by our Electoral Roll Officer. For the period 2025/26 there are 131 members on roll.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM): The APCM for 2024 was held at Edington on 19th May. The meetings are compliant with current legal regulations and procedures followed in terms of advertising and reporting. A comprehensive Annual Report is produced each year and accounts properly consolidated and independently examined.

Deanery Synod: The appointment of Deanery Synod representatives took place during May 2023 and elections will take place in 2026. At the time of writing our benefice has only three representatives at Deanery meetings.

Safeguarding: The PCC is mindful of its responsibilities in this regard, both for safer recruitment and those working directly with children and vulnerable adults. Freda Prime continues as Safeguarding Officer for the six churches and is responsible for the wellbeing and protection of vulnerable adults and children and attends regular

training events as arranged by the Diocese. 2024 saw the appointment of a 'trainee' SGO, Niki Hill, who has now completed her statutory training and safer recruitment procedures and she will take over the SGO role at the 2026 APCM. The Polden Wheel is compliant with current guidance and uses the Safeguarding Dashboard which is a tool that enables SGOs to keep track of actions that need to be taken in order to remain compliant. In the Polden Wheel we were 93% complete most of the time but there can be delays between PCC meetings where reviews take place. The Diocesan Hub is now fully populated with roles and training records. The DBS checks for our staff and volunteers are all up to date. Regular briefings are given to the PCC and all decisions and reviews are ratified by them. Sensitive documentation is securely held at the vicarage office. It will be necessary to liaise closely with Moorlinch and Stawell in due course, to ensure that the benefice of eight churches are compliant with regulations.

General Data Protection Regulations: The PCC gives due regard to the requirements of GDPR. The safe storage, sharing and retention of sensitive information is an ongoing responsibility with our administrator taking the lead role on behalf of Rich and the PCC. The PCC secretary has the use of a designated laptop for church business.

Disability Audit: Not all churches have an Accessibility Plan in place but this is work in progress. All churches are wheelchair friendly; some have ramps on a permanent basis and some on request. It is acknowledged that more could and should be done but there are some constraints in the nature of our ancient buildings. It had been the intention, during 2024, to carry out a Disability Audit across all six churches but this has yet to take place.

Health & Safety: There is no specific Health & Safety Officer in post either for the benefice or individual churches. Whilst this remains officially pending for the time being, there is a good deal of informal expertise in this area and all churches seek to ensure that they fulfil their obligations to the public and to members. During external activities such as tower opening days, Risk Assessments are in place. Running Man exit signs are in place in all churches together with other safety precautions such as torches and first aid kits and painted step edges. Some members have undertaken the Food and Safety Hygiene Certificate online and it is hoped that more will do so. In addition, the requirements of the Safeguarding Dashboard are fulfilled, to a large extent, with Risk Assessments and Role descriptions being set up for all church led activities. All churches will look to update fire safety procedures in 2026.

Discipleship: Invitation to Explore: following the success of previous courses, these have continued. The course is aimed at those people who are not church members but who are on the fringe or seeking answers to questions. The Big Church Read, The Greatest Story Ever Told by Bear Grylls formed the basis for autumn groups and was much enjoyed.

Music Group/Support for Services: our Music Group, Polden Praise, brings much valued enhancement to our services across the six churches. This is often a challenging juggling act for them but communication via WhatsApp is very effective. We are also grateful to those who play the organ or piano at other times. As a backstop a digital media system of pre-recorded hymns and songs has been purchased and is being successfully used where necessary. We are mindful of the need to have the appropriate licences in place for using music that is not in our

books. A musician's combo, led by Jennifer Tweedy, provides music for the monthly Café Church. The use of the projector and laptop in church appears to have lapsed and it is hoped that this will be used again. It was good to have been able to use this at both Christingle services.

MINISTRY:

Lay Worship Assistants: There are six Lay Worship Assistants across the Polden Wheel. LWAs have led Informal Worship in church throughout 2025 and this will be invaluable as the benefice enlarges. Role Description and Risk Assessments are in place.

Regular Services: Services follow a pattern of 9.30am, 11.00am and 6.30pm (4.30pm for some during the winter months). The main festivals and celebrations in our churches are planned to enable all six churches to have a fair share of festivals at important times of the year. We have always been pleased to be able to keep all of our churches open during the day and very much appreciate the faithful members who open and close them each day. Service of Quiet and meetings for private prayer in groups take place in some of our churches.

Café Church: This continues to be a popular format each month. Bacon (and vegetarian) rolls and percolated coffee make for an informal atmosphere where discussion, videos and worship songs are enjoyed. The numbers have remained fairly static over the year but some new faces have been welcomed, some of whom attended the Invitation to Explore and Alpha courses.

Easter 2025; Easter in the Polden Wheel began for the hardy among us, at sunrise on Ham Wall Nature Reserve, always a very meaningful time. During Holy Week a 'Stations of the Cross' was held. The Easter Saturday Vigil held at Catcott was well attended and very moving. The Easter day service which, this year fell on a Café Church morning, was well attended and was a very happy occasion.

Victory in Europe (VE) Day; was marked with a service at Catcott in May.

Harvest Thanksgiving: in 2025 our focus for Harvest offerings was dedicated to the Trussell Trust Food Bank once again. This is regularly supported by our churches with collecting boxes in all six churches. This was a Harvest initiative across all six churches and the generosity of all the villages has been so much appreciated. The dedication to this cause by Anita is much appreciated and she has established a good connection with the depot in Bridgwater.

Remembrance Sunday: once again an act of Remembrance was held outside at the Catcott War Memorial. The benefice Remembrance service was held at Ashcott this year when the names of the fallen in conflicts were read out.

All Souls Service: this took place at Edington when those who had suffered a bereavement during the year were personally invited to attend to feel supported and to light a candle if they wished to do so.

Service for Peace: Catcott instigated an opportunity to come together and pray specifically for peace around the world. These are quiet and meaningful and several have been held over 2025.

Advent Christingle: Two Christingle services were held again this year and, although numbers have reduced over time, these services continue to be well attended. This service provides a link with our two schools.

Christmas: Carol Services were held in most churches during December and an outdoor Carol Service at Shapwick. The annual Nativity held at Edington is always a well-attended event with a good number of children and families attending and participating.

Men's Breakfast; this event is well attended and much enjoyed. Rich has been able to engage the services of some very interesting and stimulating speakers.

Deanery Mission and Pastoral Group. Deanery Mission & Pastoral Group (DMPG) continues to work at Deanery level and the new Deanery Mission Plan was published in 2022 and the five marks of mission are worked on in turn. It is fair to say that during 2025 the deanery Synod group have been much exercised with the plans for restructuring.

BUILDINGS/BUILDING WORKS

The maintaining and running of the six lovely buildings across the Polden Wheel is often a challenge and we are mindful of the balance between our responsibilities in this regard whilst ensuring that the true mission of Christ cannot be found in bricks and mortar alone. Only four of our churches have a churchwarden in post but all members are dedicated to maintaining and overseeing their respective parish church buildings and fabric. We have been pleased to have been able to continue regular fundraising through 2025 which is a vital part of being able to maintain our buildings and churchyards. However, this continues to require a good deal of effort from a few but is done with support from communities and fellowship enjoyed. There are many events that are planned and organised across the six parishes, some of which are 'one off' initiatives and others held on a regular basis. At these times the church promotes a community presence as well as raising much needed funds. All events are recorded at PCC meetings in order to ensure that we adhere to insurance guidance and regulations. Caring for God's world is a responsibility that lies with everyone and it is hoped that steps will be taken wherever possible to bring all of our churches into new ways of becoming greener. Chilton Polden, having already achieved their Bronze Eco Church Award, gained their Silver this year. Many congratulations to them. Burtle also achieved their Bronze award in March 2023. The reporting on finances and the fabric of buildings can be seen in individual reports from the treasurer and churchwardens who have prepared them for the 2025 reporting year.

ACROSS THE BENEFICE

Discussion and work on improving our communication is an ongoing priority. It is clear that we need to be better at promoting ourselves and our wonderful story whilst ensuring that six churches remain as connected and informed as possible. Our website has been updated with 'Church Edit'

Fairtrade: the review of our use of Fairtrade goods that was planned for 2022 has yet to happen. It is clear that not all churches can honestly say that they are a Fairtrade church.

Food Bank Donations: we have been pleased, once again, to support the Trussell Trust Foodbank in Bridgwater with collecting boxes in the churches. Over 2025 the amount donated amounted to 723kg, Special thanks to Anita Hayne for her commitment to this cause.

Samaritan's Purse Shoe Box Appeal: is organised by Burtle church and is well supported with boxes being filled and collected across the benefice and also by non church members. In 2024. 96 boxes were filled and sent.

History Booklet: Most churches have a history booklet that is available to visitors. Our churches are opened every day.

Service of Quiet: For some time now, Catcott has held a 'Service of Quiet' each month and this draws a number of people who do not attend normal Sunday services. It is growing and clearly meets a need for quiet reflection in these challenging times. In addition some services specifically praying for peace have been held in Catcott.

IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Whilst we celebrate our benefice identity as the Polden Wheel group, we are mindful that each parish has its own individual identity in terms of the way it interacts with the community that it serves. The many and varied fundraising events provide a strong link between church and village and also provides vital opportunities for networking

PASTORAL CARE We are mindful of those in the parish who need our care and our prayers. Pastoral Concern is a standing item on the local agendas.

Lay Pastoral Assistants: It is our hope to relaunch this group in 2026..

BUILDING WORKS The churchwardens maintain oversight of their respective church buildings as far as they are able. It is fair to say that 2025 has proved to have been as challenging as previous years have been, with rising costs and diminished income. All of our buildings are high maintenance due to their age and this is an ongoing pressure for those in office. (See individual reports)

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In conclusion the PCC would like to thank everyone for their generous support, creativity and faithfulness in what has been another very challenging year for everyone. We know that much will change for us in the coming months but we remain positive and welcome the opportunity to meet new friends and perhaps learn how to do things differently as we prayerfully move forward. Having one priest for six churches is a challenge in itself but working together is our strength and that, together with a total acceptance that God is in control, we shall overcome! There are always things to be thankful for however difficult and challenging we find things and we are grateful to those loyal members who keep our churches going with a warm welcome to all comers.

Signed.....



date.....

5/5/26

Secretary to the Polden Wheel Parochial Church Council

All Saints Church, Ashcott **Churchwarden's/Fabric Report for 2025**

The inventory of books and other moveable items has been checked and brought up to date.

The repairs and renovations as detailed in the quinquennial inspection report are in hand. Quotations for the urgent work have been sought and one accepted and it is hoped that the work will be completed in the Spring. The majority of the funding should be available from the Miles and Hurman Charity Trust.

Fire extinguishers have been inspected and are in a satisfactory condition.

Following Gary Townsend's decision to relinquish the role it was taken over by Mick Knight who has continued to maintain the churchyard to a high standard throughout the year.

We are pleased to report that All Saints' Church is open every day, normally from 10.00 until 4.00pm but sometimes longer.

Services have continued as normal with just two per month, an Informal Worship at 11am on the second Sunday of the month and a service of Holy Communion at 6.30pm on the fourth Sunday of the month. We are grateful to those who have provided music to accompany our services, particularly Polden Praise, Jenny Cole, David Newick, Margaret Dobbs and Adam Mellor and to those involved in other ways such as readers and intercessors.

The finances of Ashcott Church continue to be under strain. In addition to the considerable amount required to keep the building in reasonable repair, the day to day running expenses far outweigh the regular income from church members. The gap has been partly filled by fundraising with the Big Breakfast, a successful social and financial event, and other activities all helping to keep our balance in the black. We continue to be unable to meet the requested share from the Bath and Wells Diocese and continued increases in this request well in excess of inflation will mean that this shortfall will only worsen. The suggested share for 2026 is almost £34000, which given our smaller congregation numbers equates to just short of £2000 per person per year, an impossible expectation. We do contribute what we believe is reasonable and which matches our regular income from the worshipping members, so the fundraising is put towards the fabric repairs and the benefice and domestic expenses.

There are many persons involved behind the scenes in the day to day running of our Church. We give grateful thanks to all of them who are too many to name, but they include the cleaners, the flower arrangers, those providing refreshments after services and on other occasions, the bell ringers under the leadership of Henry Routley, the coffee morning run by Marion Folkes and those overseeing supplies of fresh linen and consumables. We also acknowledge the contribution from those who open their homes for meetings. We must thank those members of SAS who are very supportive and prepared to undertake tasks on behalf of the Church.

Finally, we thank our Vicar, Rich Tweedy, for his contribution to the ministry in the Polden Wheel and of course in Ashcott. Without his contribution, Church life would be very different.

John Harvey
Churchwarden

Annual Report 2025

St Philip and St James Burtle

The church continues to hold two services a month, one service of Holy Communion and one Informal service which is often lay led. We held special services at Harvest and Christmas, including the YFC Carol service and carols around our life-sized crib in the churchyard with Burtle Silver Band.

Several social and fund-raising events were held during the year including the popular Cream Tea afternoon at Catcott Burtle Farm, and the Classic Car Run from Burtle via a scenic route to the Quantocks. We held a Harvest Lunch in September and in late November joined with the Burtle Silver Band in an evening of Christmas music and carols with refreshments. The community coffee morning at the village hall donates proceedings every few months for which we are grateful.

Again, we left an area in the northeast of the churchyard unmown again to encourage wildflowers and other wildlife. The snowdrops and primroses have once again been giving a good spring display and are spreading.

To Keep our church and churchyard cared for we wish to thank the of volunteers who help on a regular basis or come along to our churchyard days and of course we are very grateful for the parish council grant which helps towards mowing costs We also wish to thank the volunteer team who arrange flowers, clean the church, deliver newsletters , play the organ and generally help to keep the church a welcoming space in our village.

Fabric Report

The loose louvres in the bell turret have been replaced. We continue to have trouble with the internal painted walls and condensation causing areas of mould; so we have sought advice from the architect and she has provided us with a data logger to measure the levels of damp Hopefully this will give good information so the architect can give advice on of how the problem can be dealt with. We are very grateful to volunteers who have washed the walls down with water to improve the internal appearance.

Alison Everett and Rosemary Tucker.

St Peter's, Catcott's Report to the APCM 2025

Fabric

St Peter's is generally in good repair. There is some concern about damp penetrating a section of the West wall at the level of our gallery, and this is something which we are monitoring. We are conscious that St Peter's lacks a toilet, kitchen and disabled access, and are exploring ways in which we can get grants specifically to provide these without altering the appearance of our Grade One Listed building. Informal discussions with members of the DAC and interested villagers are at an early stage.

We lost a large cherry tree in our churchyard to the storms in November, but fortunately it missed the church and boundary walls.

Activities

During the year we continued to hold monthly Services of Quiet, as well as monthly BCP Communion services, with attendance reaching or nearing 20.

Fundraising for the church is, as ever, at the heart of our activities, but we sought to raise money for other causes during the year. This included regular collections for the Bridgwater Food bank, donations from the opening of our church tower in June, which were given to the Air Ambulance, and gifts of new toys, clothing and Christmas fayre, generously donated by the people of Catcott and given to the Salvation Army to distribute as part of their Be a Star Christmas appeal for families in need.

To support our own income, we held monthly Coffee mornings, sold cream teas at the Catcott Open Gardens Day, held our annual Gift Day, raising £1,203, staged a Harvest Light Lunch and participated as stall holders at several local events.

St Edward's Chilton Polden

APCM report 2025

Fabric

We have continued to complete work identified in the Quinquennial report, having the mortar under the coping stones on the South side of the Nave roof replaced to prevent water ingress and pointing other areas on the South West corner for the same reason. The continued water ingress has prevented us from painting the South West corner following the replastering last year.

Unfortunately, our one remaining bell rope became dislodged in the year, and on investigation to replace both ropes, it has been identified that further restoration of the bells is required, for which we shall need to fundraise and seek grants to complete the work.

We held our annual churchyard tidy at the beginning of the year, which is very well supported by villagers, and this has been a regular event since Covid, enabling us to undertake various jobs and keep the churchyard looking good. This year saw us start a new mowing contract using the commercial arm of a local Community Interest Company, 'Seed of Hope', who use the outdoors to support mental health, and they are very knowledgeable about wildflowers and have created a mowing regime that has seen our wildflowers thrive. We are very grateful to the Chilton Parish Council, who provide us with a grant towards the mowing of the Churchyard and who provide a Village Christmas Tree each year.

We have used the funds raised at our previous Christmas Tree Festival to purchase a new Church Notice board and are now in the process of obtaining quotes to erect it.

Due to ongoing financial pressures, we have not been able to pay our parish share in full this year, and whilst we work hard to cover the costs for the year find ourselves at a slight loss again this year, even without paying the full parish share.

General

The numbers at our services vary greatly, however, it is fair to say they have not returned to the numbers we saw in previous years, and we have been saddened to see some of our congregation leave for other churches outside the Polden Wheel in the year.

We continue to hold 2 services a month, each attracting different congregations, and are very grateful to the visiting clergy who preside at our Holy Communion.

Whilst we had no Easter Day services or Christmas Day services, our Christingle Service proved to be very popular in attracting Families to church over the Christmas Period, and we were able to send an increased amount on previous years to the Children's Society.

With people leaving sadly, the Friends Group has now dwindled to just 3 people and we are looking to attract more people to it.

Our 100 club continues to prove a popular way for the villagers to support the church, and we are very grateful to Karen Squires for running that.

Our other fundraising events, of Family Bingo and Cream Teas, were well supported throughout the year.

The church would not be able to run without the continued support and help of all those on our various rotas; sidesmen, readers, organist/musicians, flowers, locking and unlocking, and cleaning and we are very grateful to everyone who helps in whatever way including delivering Spokes.

Anne Lush Churchwarden April 2025

St. George's Wardens/Fabric Report for APCM 2026 reviewing 2025

Accessibility plan: there is reasonable access along the path and into the church. There is also wheelchair access to the altar. No plan to improve at the present, as it is adequate.

Health and Safety – a risk assessment is carried out each time there is an event and are discussed at the friends meeting.

Overview:

Fundraising - St. George's church has a small 'Friends Group' who organise events and raised £1,775.45p. during 2025. Events included coffee mornings, providing money for the church and a much needed meeting point in the community. This year we held a special gift day with tea and coffee and cakes and a plants sale at the church. We held our annual cream tea, a harvest lunch and a Christmas card delivery service.

Fair trade - at the moment we are buying fair-trade goods at the supermarket.

Churchyard – we are part of 'Caring for Gods Acre' scheme. The grass is left to grow allowing wildlife to blossom. Many different insects and butterflies now visit the churchyard and wild orchids are seen in the summer. Paths are cut to enable graves to be attended.

Flower group – chair person Margaret Tolchard, organises the rota; they provide beautiful displays throughout the year. Thank you to all on the group.

Outreach:

Macmillan's Cancer Research – Coffee afternoon and raffle which raised £260 .

Stamps are collected for Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance.

Food bank - There is a box at the back of the church for donations, organised by Anita Hayne from St. Edwards, Chilton Polden.

Services in 2025:

St. Georges' has one regular holy communion service each month and one informal service with Polden Praise Music Group every other month. We also host a monthly mid-week communion service led by retired Revd. Andrew Stevens. Thank you to all those who help make our services possible.

Carol Service December 18th 26 attended.

Nativity on Christmas Eve – attended by approximately 60 adults and 15 children. Thank you to Jemma for organising this event.

There were no weddings, no baptisms and two funera's and one memorial at St. George's during 2025.

The church is open between 10am and 4pm, later in the summer. There is a visitor's book and welcome leaflet about the church. There is also a booklet on the history of the church and record of graves which was updated in 2020 by the Edington and District History Group and is on sale at £4.00. We continue to manage the churchyard as in 'Caring for God's Acre' leaving the grass

uncut to attract wildlife such as wild orchids, butterflies and other insects. During the spring we are blessed with snowdrops, hundreds of daffodils and primroses.

Fabric

The structure of the church is satisfactory. There has been rain coming in the holes of the bell ropes making the paint fall off on the inside wall. The architect suggested larger cowels on the ropes. I have asked three builders, so far, who all said it would be very expensive to get the scaffold up to the height of the bells on the roof and have never come back to me. I am hoping to get it done this year by a builder who has said yes and that it would not cost so much. When it has been done we also need to wait for the inside wall to dry out and have it repainted. The fire extinguisher and PAT testing have been carried out this year and certificates filed. The log book and Inventory are up to date.

Rosemary Tilbury (churchwarden)

1th March, 2026

Report for St. Mary's, Shapwick

The monthly café church has continued to be our most successful church service, averaging at around 30 adults and 3 children. We are most grateful to those who provide the catering for these events.

After two years with no heating, the boiler was repaired and has since been functioning well. At the same time, the basement boiler room also needed a sump pump fitted to prevent further flooding: this has worked extremely well in the very wet winter that we have had.

In November the WI decorated the church gates and the churchyard with beautiful handmade poppies for the Remembrance season.

Two smart new noticeboards have been erected at each entrance and we are very grateful for this very generous donation to enhance our church appearance.

The Parish Council erected a Christmas tree in the churchyard and Michael Motum very kindly donated a Christmas tree in the church.

We had two excellent Christmas carol services: the candlelit carol service attracted about 70 adults, while – to our surprise! – the outdoor carol service on Christmas Eve attracted about 80 people.

Ken Wade who has been our Tower Captain for some 40 years retired this year. We are indebted to Ken for his dedication and expertise. We are also delighted that it has been possible to recruit a new person into this role and Chris Gaunt will be formally appointed under the Safer Recruitment regulations early in 2026.

Parish of The Polden Wheel

Report from the Benefice Financial Coordinator for the year ending December 31st 2025.

At present the Benefice does not have a Treasurer following the resignation of Caroline Snell in September 2025, hence the alternative title.

Overall the finances for the Benefice remain strong with a surplus in excess of £11000, a small increase over last year. The performance by Church does vary with two showing a good surplus – Ashcott through fundraising and Catcott through a backdated claim for recovery of income tax paid on donations – and two showing a significant shortfall, both Edington and Shapwick having spent a good amount on maintenance and repairs.

It is pleasing to note that receipts from offerings, planned giving and donations have increased significantly although the overall reclaim of income tax was reduced despite the gains from Catcott referred to above. There were also lower receipts from fund-raising efforts overall. Fee income showed an increase.

On the expenditure side there was an increase in the amount paid to Bath & Wells Diocese towards the Common Fund although this did not reach the increased request from the Diocese. Other significant increases were noted on insurance premiums and, as mentioned above, on repairs to the church buildings.

Financial assets across the benefice show a credit balance in the General Funds across the churches and including the benefice account of over £87000 and there is a further £15000 in the restricted or designated funds across the churches. Although set up for specific purposes for good reasons, the number of restricted or designated funds can get out of hand due to local circumstances and may need consolidation if their continuing existence is superfluous to requirements.

John Harvey

Diocese of Bath & Wells

The Electoral Roll for the Polden Wheel Benefice: New Electoral Roll Year 2025

As a Benefice of six churches with one Parochial Church Council, there is now one central Electoral Roll which is currently overseen by the Electoral Officer. These figures represent the electoral rolls, as provided by the parishes for this APCM, and I am very grateful to each of the church contacts for supporting me in this process.

The Polden Wheel Benefice listed **131** members across the six churches.

Ashcott **22**, Burtle **29**, Catcott **32**, Chilton Polden **13**, Edington **21**, Shapwick **14**

Anita Hayne

Electoral Role Officer

April 2026

POLDEN WHEEL DEANERY SYNOD REPORT FOR 2025

This report has been compiled from the minutes of the three Deanery Synod meetings held in 2025. These meetings were attended by our three current Synod members who represent Burtle, Catcott and Edington churches.

The first meeting on the 19th February was at Street Mission Church and, after an opening prayer, began with update by Revd Jane Durham about the **Shared Local Ministry**. She advised the meeting that it was hoped that there would be an idea of the feasibility of the project from the Sedgemoor deanery by the end of March and the possibilities surrounding the expansion of the Polden Wheel would be coming soon. The situation surrounding Greinton church was continuing but the overall progress was slow. The meeting then continued with an introduction by Revd Rich Tweedy to the **Tell** aspect of the Deanery Mission Plan and the **Talking Jesus Research**. Rich encouraged members to talk to people about their faith and Jesus and to encourage conversation about belief. He then showed a video from his short pre-Alpha 'Invitation to Explore' course and there was a discussion about this style of resource as a way to **Tell**. Revd Jane Durham provided an update about the **Thrive** program currently being undertaken across the deanery, which saw four benefices meet at Glastonbury Church Lane Hub. The focus was 'prayer' and the reps from Synod on the course felt it was an excellent and exciting course. Details of the next session in May and contact details were then provided. The financial report had been circulated prior to the meeting by Sonia Beaty. The levy was requested in Autumn and all levies have now been paid. The minutes of the last meeting were approved and the Synod also noted those from the last meeting of the DMPG. The meeting was advised that it was announced in January that the Revd Fr Kieron Rowley had been appointed to a new role in the diocese of Southwark and so the synod will require a new secretary. As it was his last meeting the Area Dean offered heart-felt thanks to Kieron and he was applauded by the Synod.

The second meeting was held on the 7th of May at St Mary Magdalene Keinton Mandeville. The meeting began with an update on **Shared Local Ministry**; Revd Ana Lawrence updated the meeting on the process to implement option, which is a reshaped Polden Wheel, with Moorlinch and Stawell added and Middlezoy and Othery moving to Athelney Benefice, which is in the Sedgemoor Deanery & Taunton Archdeaconry. Ongoing conversations continue within the parishes and between the Archdeacons; also about an associate House for Duty. She noted that there is considerable uncertainty and anxiety, particularly for MOMSS & the Polden Wheel. Currently everyone is waiting for a meeting of the Polden Wheel PCC with Archdeacon Anne and the Lay & Area Deans. Vacancies in MOMSS & Glastonbury (particularly with Rev Kieron's departure for Southwark) meant clergy cover across the deanery was now stretched, and all sought to cover services as much as they could. Revd Jane Durham updated the meeting about the closure of Greinton Church following a quinquennial which noted issues with the chancel roof with a projected cost of £65k. The DMPG has recommended to the Archdeaconry Mission Pastoral Group that the church should close, with a process to be followed from there on. There were questions asked by the members about how pastoral care could now be provided. This was already a part of the conversations regarding Polden Wheel and MOMSS but the plan is for the closure

process to be handled at Deanery and not benefice level. Cheryl Govier spoke to the Synod on **Living and telling the story of Jesus** in our schools and the importance of developing relationships between school, household and church. She was thanked for her thought-provoking input. Mary Masters noted that there was still a need for secretary. Minutes of the last meeting were approved and signed and members were asked to note the notes from DMPG on 1 April 2025

The **third meeting of the year was on the 2nd July at Butleigh Village Hall**. The meeting began with Rev Ana Lawrence providing an update on the Shared Local Ministry process which continues to progress very slowly. Recently the Revd Alice Watson, previously Chaplain of Queen's College, Oxford, had been appointed vicar of Glastonbury Benefice. There were meetings due about Middlezoy and Othery being attached to the Sedgemoor Deanery and Moorlinch and Stawell being attached to Polden Wheel Benefice. It was also noted that the closure of Greinton Church had been approved by the Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Group (AMPG). The Pastoral Measure to bring this to fruition would then go to the Church Commissioners. The meeting was told that Revd Jane Durham, half-time Mission Enabler and half-time Rector of Wheathill Parish, helps out where she can in MOMSS. Next there was a presentation by the Revd Rich Tweedy about **The Quiet Revival Report** produced by The Bible Society. Rich introduced the report and asked the members to discuss its findings in small groups to try to work out the reason for the quiet revival and findings were then shared with the whole meeting. Mrs Pat King of Compton Dundon parish reported that to further the **Thrive** initiative **5 minutes at 5.00** had been set up when each person who took part would know that others were praying at the same time. Also Ms Deborah von Bergen described the **prayer tree** they had set up in Keinton Mandeville. **The new Prayer Diary** was promoted by Jane who expressed dismay that some schools had been left out and that, disturbingly, this had not been noticed. Members were encouraged to take some copies. After a correction that the closing prayer at the last meeting had been led by Hilde Grint, the minutes of the last meeting were approved and signed by Revd Ana Lawrence and Mary Masters as a true record of the meeting. There were no matters arising and the notes from the from the last meeting of the DMPG were noted.

Sue Ball, Parish Administrator

24/2/26

Safeguarding report for Polden Wheel Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)

May 19th 2025 (Reporting period; January – December 2024).

The Safeguarding in the Polden Wheel is overseen by Freda Prime, Safeguarding Officer, and assisted by Niki Hill who is also fully trained. The Safeguarding Dashboard and Hub are used as a valuable tool in keeping up to date with training, DBS checks, reviews and policies. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is kept up to date in terms of reviews and compliance and safeguarding is a standing item on the PCC agenda.

Security of Information.

The SGO maintains a database on the church laptop, regarding training and DBS checks etc. However, all sensitive information is held in a locked cabinet in the church office. GDPR in general is overseen by the Parish Administrator and the secretary has use of a laptop specifically for church use.

Training

During 2024 most churchwardens and volunteers in leadership roles, undertook the mandatory Leadership training which consisted of, either a face to face training at Flourish House or via Zoom. There are two sessions, one week apart and a degree of 'homework' is required. I am grateful to all those who have committed to this and successfully completed it. The remainder will be completed early in 2025. During 2025 a significant amount of other training will need to be updated which includes my own. This can be done, individually, online or in a group with a Diocesan Facilitator. Some concerns have been expressed about the vulnerability of some to complete this challenging material alone and I am mindful that pairing up or a group option may need to be arranged.

DBS Checks

All appropriate DBS checks are up to date but some criteria has changed with the new provider ThirtyOneEight. A database of those requiring DBS checks is maintained on the church laptop.

Reviews

The PCC are regularly updated and are required to review actions, policies and training as appropriate. Some communication that is non sensitive is done by prior notice by email and this works well, giving members time to read documents ahead of the meeting. There are some gaps in actions which centre around ongoing formal support for volunteers and this is being addressed. Policies are in place as required and displayed in the churches where appropriate.

The resignation of Archbishop Justin Welby in November has served to not only heighten awareness of the importance of safeguarding at all levels, but also the need for vigilance within our churches and an awareness of what action needs to be taken in all circumstances. I am confident that continued reporting ensures that, should the need arise, correct and prompt action would be taken and the appropriate people made aware.

I would like to thank Rich and PCC members for their patience and support in maintaining this challenging role for the Polden Wheel.

Freda Prime
Safeguarding Officer.