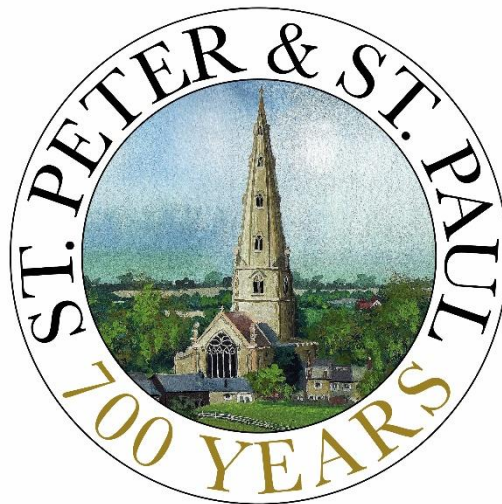


# APCM 18<sup>th</sup> May 2025

## Church Reports



We have a statutory obligation to provide reports on the electoral roll, deanery synod and church fabric. In addition to these we have compiled reports from a number of contributors on church life, which have been organised to reflect the five elements of our church vision:

**Being a Welcoming Church**

**Outreach**

**Unity and Diversity**

**Nurturing**

**Communication**

## **Electoral Roll Report 2025**

Following a complete revision, as is required every six years, the electoral roll now stands at 100, which is 31 fewer than last year. 43 members left the roll, and 12 new members joined with 88 parishioners renewing their membership.

Jo Spray

## **The Fabric of the Church and Church Hall**

Our buildings are there to provide safe and usable environments for the church family and the wider community and visitors. The wardens, PCC and the members of the fabric committee work to ensure the upkeep of the buildings through planned and budgeted routine maintenance, emergency repairs when required, the development of future projects for the renovation and improvement of the facilities provided and the ongoing performance of inspections to ensure the health and safety of all users.

This work continued through 2024 and at the end of the year there were no major issues outstanding relating to the church or church hall buildings.

Fabric projects completed in 2024 are as follows:

- Installation of a new fire alarm system in the church hall \*
- Renovation and regilding of the church clock face \*

(\* These projects were fully financed by funds raised by the Olney Pancake Race)

- Renovation of the outer North doors and regilding of the badges
- Update to the 'Rectors' Board'
- Major upgrade to the Broadband and wi-fi system in church
- Installation of a new wi-fi system in the church hall

The latest quinquennial reports covering the church and church hall are both dated 2021 so further inspections are not due until 2026

Projects for 2025, 2026 and beyond, under discussion or approved, are as follows:

- Renovation of the stonework around the West Doors and tower faces
- West end reordering, completion and costing of proposals
- Work with the Architect to develop a plan for the demolition of the existing shed and the erection of a modern storage facility
- Clear the sensory garden at the rear of the church hall and extend the safe play area
- Replacement of the lights in the choir stalls
- Work to the 11 yew trees in the churchyard to remove elder, ivy, etc. and to raise the crowns where appropriate
- Develop proposals for the renovation of the church hall windows
- Redecoration of the church and porch ceilings

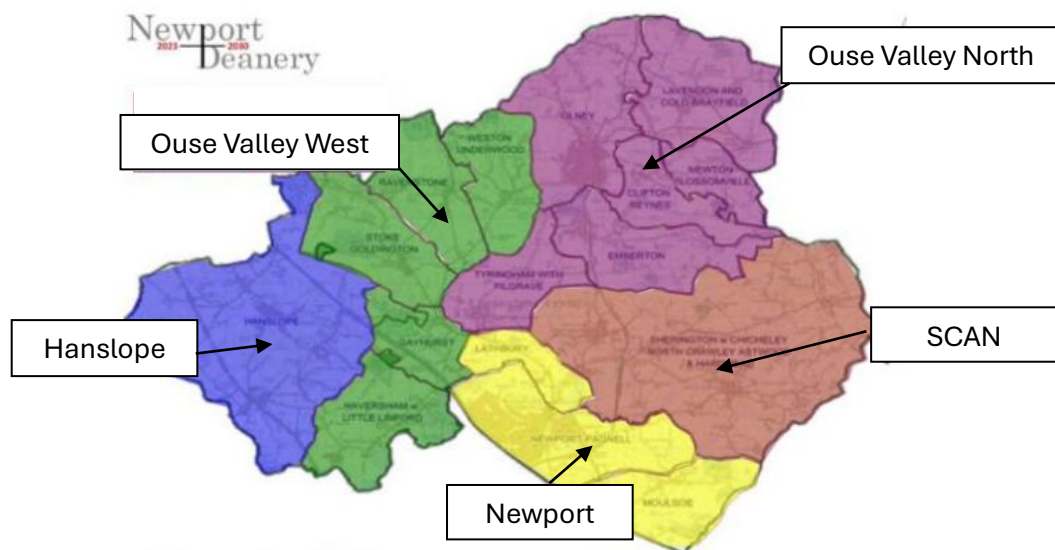
*David Phillipson*

## Deanery Synod Report

The Benefice and Parish of Olney is part of the Deanery of Newport in the Archdeaconry of Buckingham in the Diocese of Oxford. Deanery Synod representatives are elected for a three year term from 2023 to 2026. Current representatives of the laity are Malcolm Jones, Andrew Geary and Kate Nicholas. Kate also serves on Diocesan Synod and Malcolm on the Deanery Pastoral Standing Committee.

After much discussion and meetings, the plan for pastoral reorganisation of the Deanery has finally been approved. This has resulted in the proposed creation of two new benefices, Ouse Valley West and Ouse Valley North – the names chosen as the diocese stipulated the use of geographical names rather than acronyms such as SCAN. The Benefices of SCAN, Newport, and Hanslope with Castlethorpe remain as currently configured.

Olney will be part of Ouse Valley North, together with Lavendon with Cold Brayfield, Newton Blossomville, Clifton Reynes, Emberton, and Tyringham with Filgrave. Timing is dependent on the retirement of the current rector of Lavendon, sometime in 2025. There will be two stipendiary posts associated with the benefice, the Rector of Ouse Valley North in Olney and another stipendiary post in Lavendon. While the rector will be a full time position, the other post may be anywhere from 0.5 to 1.0 full time equivalent, although at a meeting of parish treasurers it was agreed to aim for the higher end of this range.



The deanery was also asked by the diocese to prepare a plan based on developing youth and children's ministry and Louise Cook from Emberton has begun research on current activities and needs in the deanery. Nearly 50% of the 14 and under age group in the deanery live in Newport, nearly 20% in Olney Parish and 27% will be in the Ouse Valley North Benefice.

As part of her LLM training, Louise is working with the Youth Café at Quarrendon in Aylesbury and in contact with some of the Deanery level Youth Workers, building on experience and constantly seeing new things. Her current focus is on learning what is being successful in the deanery, such as our Church Mice and Holiday Bible Club and other initiatives in Emberton.

Deanery events in 2024 included the Night of Miracles Cantata and Deanery Evensong in Emberton and a series of talks by the area dean on Science and Christian Faith in Newport.

*Malcolm Jones*

## Being a Welcoming Church

### Welcomers

We have some strong welcomers at the door these days, who are not able only to do the handing out of books at the door but also following up newcomers. This is much appreciated. It would be good if they could be joined by others who might cover some of our bigger services.

Of course, it is the job of any one of us who sees a need for help or encouragement, wherever they are in church, to be a welcomer.

Thank you to our teams.

*Rev. Janet Lawrence*

### Youth Work

**Church Mice** continues to thrive; with around 25 children & 30 adults attending each week in term time for songs, Bible stories, craft, play and prayer. We also meet in half term week which allows school age ex-mice to come back for the day. We have a great team of helpers to set up, man the door, help with crafts, serve drinks, set up, pack away & vacuum afterwards! The session runs from 10am to 11am (approx).

**Summer Fun** takes place in the Church Hall on Thursdays during the summer holidays, with larger play equipment, painting table and crafts. We have snacks and drinks available. It is open to all ages and generally attracts around 20 to 30 children and parents. The session runs from 10am to 11am (approx). Both groups follow a program based on the church lectionary and the Bible

**Good Friday Easter Egg Hunt** a joint event from Churches of Olney was very popular and we had help making the Easter Garden on Holy Saturday in Church.

We were once again hosts for **Lifepath** where nearly 1000 children and their teachers came to Olney to learn about the life path of John Newton, over 3 days in the week before the May half term holiday, with four streams of workshops and opening and closing times together with elements of collective worship. The weather was fairly kind and we had a really good time.

**Holiday Bible Club**, led by the joint Churches of Olney, took place once again this year and was well supported. We went travelling at "Light Speed" to learn about Jesus and are looking forward to going to "Arctica" this August 11th to 15th.

*Susan Heron*

### Social events

We have had several successful social get togethers in the Church Hall up to now including a very successful quiz night and a Beetle Drive. Hopefully we will be able to have even more next year; please contact Mary Prosser if you have any ideas for things we can do together.

The 700th Anniversary arrangements are forging ahead. The celebrations will start with a 'Hog-Roast BBQ with Church Ale' at the church on Saturday 28th June. We will be blessed to enjoy the wonderful flower festival in the church from the outset and we have other exciting plans as we aim to invite as many people as possible into the church with us.

*Mary Prosser*

## Outreach

### **Knitty Stitches**

We meet on the first and third Thursday of each month in Church from 1.00pm – 3.00pm for tea, cake and lots of chat. Alongside this we make many craft items mainly knitted and these are sold at the Christmas Tree Festival and on Pancake Day. This year we donated £500 to the Church from our efforts.

Last summer we worked for charities, these included the End of Life Care Team at Milton Keynes Hospital and Bay House. We also made canula sleeves and baby hats for newborns and lots of knitted toys to be given out for comfort to patients or young visitors. The Twiddle Muffs would be enjoyed by anyone in need of comfort from itchy fingers on the Dementia Ward.

In 2025 we will be working for Emily's Star who provide premature baby clothes and lots more, to families in need at that time of their lives, when unexpectedly the joy of having a baby turns into worry. The other charity we will be working for is a Nursing Home in Northampton where by special request we will make catheter bag and syringe bag covers. We intend making these bright and cheerful to bring a smile to visitors and patients. By special request from a Midwife at Milton Keynes Hospital we are replenishing their supply of canula sleeves and baby hats. When September arrives we will start again on Christmas gifts.

In our spare moments we are making mice for the 700 years Anniversary - not sure we will manage the 700 but are working on it! We are busy but actually we love each other's company and it is a joy to meet up and put the world to rights. Anyone is welcome to pop in and say hello and have a cup of tea.

*Gill Noon*

### **Memory Club**

Memory Club is the church's outreach to older people in the town. There is a committee of five who plan the programme, a team of volunteers who ensure that members are made welcome and with at least one volunteer on each table act as coordinators for quizzes, games etc which are always team efforts. In addition, there is our lovely kitchen team, providing the refreshments which start each session.

This year's programme included speakers, notably David Pibworth with his magic tricks and Joanna Steer providing an insight into lipreading; games, including dominoes and a beetle drive; quizzes and carol singing. Each session ended with gentle chair exercises to loosen up the body ready for going home.

We are always looking for extra volunteers, particularly the able-bodied who can help Rod set up and clear for each session. It would mean arriving at 1pm to prepare for our 1.30pm start. Visitors are always welcome, so come and see what we are doing. We do not charge for our sessions.

I know there must be many in our town who would benefit from the social interaction which helps stave off memory loss, so please publicise our club wherever possible. Unfortunately we are unable to provide transport, but family or friends can drop off new members and collect them later.

Finally a big thank you to all our volunteers, particularly committee members Rod and Gill Parker who do so much behind the scenes. Without them, the Memory Club would not function.

*Rev. Thelma Shacklady*

### **Olney Pancake Race**

13 th February 2024 saw the 77 th running of the race in the modern era, and the 75th running of the International race against Liberal since its introduction in 1950. The day dawned overcast and threatening, and sure enough the rain started at about 9.15 and continued for most of the morning. Despite the weather, the turnout was excellent and probably more in number than the previous year.

Financially the year had been very challenging for the organising committee as our long-term main sponsors, Teflon, had advised us in October 2023 that they could not support the race for 2024 as their European operations were being cut back. This had a serious impact upon our likely finances as not only did they contribute financially, they also paid for the marquee, the kitchen, all of the frying pans, aprons, headscarves and the celebrity chef.

After months of hard work, we eventually secured new sponsorship through Whitworth Bros., Kingsley Healthcare and McCarthy Stone which with the continued and long term support from Francis Jackson Homes Limited enabled us to stage the event with only a few changes in format to previous years. Despite a large increase in our expenditure, we did manage to offset some of this by our performance on the income side with nearly 1000 more raffle tickets being sold than in 2023, and other sales were increased as well. This all enabled us to achieve an excess of income over expenditure of nearly £4,700, which was an excellent achievement in the circumstances.

To celebrate the 75th International race, we decided to present special engraved glass trophies to the winners of the race on both sides of the Atlantic. The winner of the Olney race was presented with the silver platter from Liberal, the glass trophy and a copy of the Olney Hymns. Our winner was Kaisa Larkas, but we later found out that we had narrowly been pipped at the post by Pamela Bolivar from Liberal. This brings the win count to Olney 32 and Liberal 40 (with three years not counting for various reasons.)

*David Phillipson*

### **Cherry Fair**

Andrew and I took on the coordination of Cherry Fair for 2022, after the gap due to Covid and it continues to thrive. We run the Cherry Fair with a small group of fabulous people, who between us manage to set up, run the entrance gate, stalls, BBQ, refreshments, Pimms, tower tours and arena events. Cherry Fair was very well supported by locals and raised a significant amount for Church funds. It was particularly lovely to start the day with the Communion Service on the field. We have been very touched by the number of people who have taken the trouble to tell us how much they enjoy this event.

We will be running Cherry Fair again this year on Sunday 29th June, 12noon to 4pm and, as this is part of our 700 Celebration this year, we would be very grateful for confirmed offers of help as soon as possible. [Cherryfair@olneyparish.org](mailto:Cherryfair@olneyparish.org)

*Susan Heron*

## **Christmas Tree Festival**

We had a fabulous weekend; with so many visitors enjoying our wonderful Church and hospitality. We also took many donations, which was lovely. It is becoming a beloved community event and show cases so many wonderful groups in Olney. On the Saturday evening The Bedford Gallery Quire gave us a wonderful concert.

We finished the Christmas Tree Festival by turning down all the lights and singing carols among the sparkling trees.

The winning tree, with the most votes, this year was HelpUkraineBAMK, made out of bobble hats that will then be sent to Ukraine.

As we took down trees on Monday an enthusiastic lady told me how many days it would be to next year's festival; if you want to put it in your diary the date for next years Christmas Tree Festival is Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December and Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December (with booked visits for school/pre-schools/vulnerable groups on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> December.) [christmastree@olneyparish.org](mailto:christmastree@olneyparish.org)

*Susan Heron*

## **Tithing**

In January 2024 we made donations of £785 to each of the following charities:

Advantage Africa  
Christians Against Poverty  
Christian Aid  
Leprosy Mission  
Olney Newton Link  
Church Mission Society  
Friends of Olney Middle School  
Shine Zambia

For 2025 we will have a new process for tithing which will hopefully allow the church family to build better connections with the recipients and help us to do more within our local community.

*Katie*

## **Unity and Diversity**

As well as outreach activities such as Cherry Fair and our Christmas Tree Festival, we have revised our pattern of worship to be more diverse and inclusive. We have introduced an informal eucharist on the fourth Sunday of the month, with music provided by the church band rather than organ and have modified our second Sunday informal worship. Mix services at 6:00pm now encompass a real mix of Praise, Taize, Celtic worship and even Prayer walks, alongside traditional Evening Prayer and Compline. It was with sadness that we put a hold on our robed choir due to falling numbers, but hope to revitalise this under our new incumbent. We are however still able to organise a festival choir for major services.

*Malcolm*

## Nurturing

### Exploring Faith Group (previously Monday Small Group)

During the past year up to 16 of us have enjoyed some encouraging Bible studies, which have led to helpful discussions about today's world and our lives. We have followed courses from "Faith and Worship".

In Advent we followed themes in the hymn "Hark the Glad Sound", and during Lent we looked at followers of Jesus to the Cross. In between Hugh, Derek and I have devised relevant sessions. There has been some lively discussion and helpful topics to think about .

We have been meeting through the kindness of the Baptist Church in their building. During warmer weather, we convene in our church.

All are welcome; please think about coming along.

*Janet*

## Organisation and Communication

The Communications Team is now well established and oversees communications on behalf of the church. The members are Susan Bailey, Katie Charlesworth, Malcolm Jones, Derek Martin and Hugh Reid.

A major project over the last year was the establishment of a new "[olneyparish.org](http://olneyparish.org)" website and set of email addresses, replacing the old "olney.church" ones. The website is now largely complete and actively maintained. We hope to expand the "history" section in due course, so that visitors and online researchers can find out more about the church. Our Pews News now has a weekly version, which gives information about services and events in the coming week(s), and a monthly version, which looks back at events in the last month. Our social media pages are a means of communicating with the wider town, and the number of people following these pages is increasing. Our "members and friends" Facebook group continues to run and has a steady membership of just under 200. More recently we have refreshed the notice boards in the church and porch. We have a license for "Canva" software which allows us to create high quality posters using consistent fonts and colour schemes. The Canva software also allows us to build up a library of posters, images and logos which means that posters can quickly be created or amended.

Members of the team are currently involved in promotional materials for the 700th Anniversary celebrations, including event programmes, posters, magazine articles and online communications.

*Derek Martin*