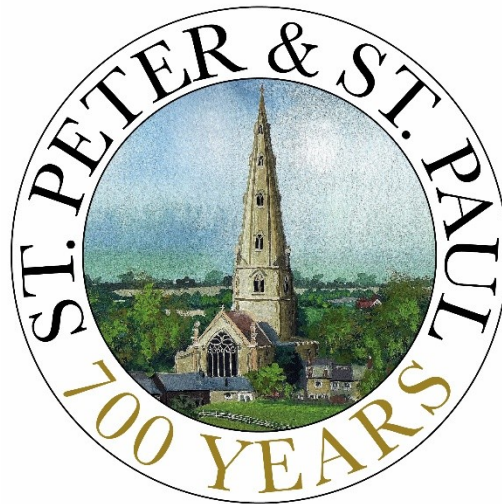


APCM 26th April 2026

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

Dear Friends,

It was my honour to be installed as Priest in Charge for St Peter and St Paul Olney in September 2025. Thank you for the warm welcome I received from the congregation, community and ministry team. It has been good to begin to get to know the parish and listening to what God might want to make us for this latest season of ministry with me as your priest in charge. It has been good to lead worship, study and teach in various forms, to administer the sacraments, preach the gospel and adapt to the pattern of parish life here in Olney.

On Monday we have continued to offer a programme of bible study on Monday afternoons. On Tuesday I have introduced Morning Prayer at 9.30am. We continue to offer a Mid Week Communion at 10am according to order 2 common worship (traditional language). Thursday church members deliver Church Mice under 5s provision for families lead by Susan Heron. We have ministered a substantial number of funerals in the time I have been here which clearly is an important feature of ministry in Olney. As a parish church for the whole town we will continue to serve the people of this community in this way and many others.

In November we observed All Saints, All Souls & Remembrance. In December the church was full and thriving with a very full programme of Advent and Christmas services, gatherings and concerts. Although this report covers 2025 I wish to mention a few things from 2026 as they were important in showing me how this parish works and how we work together as a church community...In January we began a time outside of our church building in order to allow substantial decoration. Service and activities were held at the Rectory, other churches and the church hall. Thanks for all those who supported that time which was fruitful and productive. You embraced change positively, and this will be important during the re-organisation process. In February we returned to the building in time for Shrove Tuesday and I really enjoyed hopefully the first of many pancake days.

In March we said farewell to our assistant curate Rev'd Hugh as he moved to incumbency. We began Lent programmes of study on Monday afternoons and a Pub Church fresh expression on Monday evenings, both were well received. Holy Week was observed fully at the end of March and by April we welcomed Easter Day with good attendance at the 10am service. The main Sunday service will move to 11am in May. My priorities will continue to be preaching the

gospel, reverential administration of the sacraments, growing our church and growing it younger and improving our church where we can. A huge thank you to everyone who serves the Lord through this church, in ministry, in hospitality, in welcome, in mission and evangelism. As we move forward to become the benefice of Ouse Valley North I am optimistic that the Lord will grow his witnesses and fellowship through us. Thank you for your support of my leadership and this church.

With Blessings,

Ben

Fr Ben Lewis Priest in Charge for Olney.

Electoral Roll Report 2025

As at 8th April 2026, the role stands at 113.

There have been 16 new names.

3 members of the Parish have died during the year.

!6 members on the roll live outside the Parish.

Rev. Josephine Spray, Electoral Roll Officer

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 2025 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 2025 are as follows:

- Renovation of the stonework around the West Doors and tower faces
(Over 50% of the costs of this major project were financed by funds raised by the Olney Pancake Race)
- Clear the sensory garden at the rear of the church hall.
- Work to the 11 yew trees in the churchyard to remove elder, ivy, etc. and to raise the crowns where appropriate

The latest quinquennial reports covering the church and church hall are both dated 2021 so further inspections are due in 2026

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

- 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
- Extend the safe play area at the rear and side of the church hall
- Replacement of the lights in the choir stalls
- Develop proposals for the renovation of the church hall windows
- Redecoration of the nave ceiling and the North porch

David Phillipson, Chair of the Fabric Committee

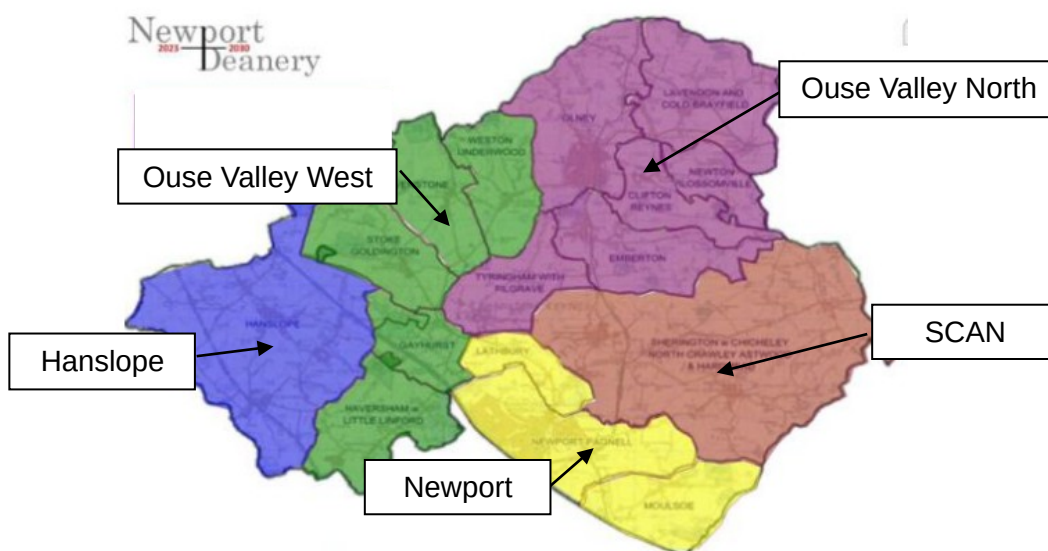
Deanery Synod Report

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. Retiring 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. Elections will be held at the Annual meeting for three representatives on the next Synod, starting in June 2026

Much work was done in 2025 to finalise the planned pastoral reorganisation of the deanery. This will reduce full time stipendiary clergy in the deanery from 5.5 to 5.25. The Area Dean, Rev. Professor Adrian Lowe has extended his retirement date to December 2026 with the objective of finalising the scheme by then. The earliest date the scheme may be approved is August 2026 and no appointment can be advertised before that date.

Christa Pomfrey has retired as rector of Lavendon Benefice, effective November 2025, and Coralie Mansfield has announced her intention to retire in August/September 2026. This will leave the Deanery with 4 full time clergy out of 5.5 previously and 5.25 planned. As Hanslope has a different churchmanship from the rest of the deanery this effectively means there will be 3 full time clergy out of 4.5/4.25 in the remainder of the deanery by the end of 2026 and 2 in 2027 following Adrian's retirement and before appointments to Ouse Valley North and Ouse Valley West.

Olney will be part of Ouse Valley North, together with Lavendon with Cold Brayfield, Newton Blossomville, Clifton Reynes, Emberton, and Tyringham with Filgrave. There will be two stipendiary posts associated with the benefice, the Rector of Ouse Valley North in Olney and another 0.75 stipendiary post based in the Lavendon rectory. It is written in the scheme that Fr Ben will become Rector of the new benefice.



The Deanery Synod also discussed the apportionment of Parish Share to current parishes and the new benefices. One issue was the allocation of Community Support Allowance (CSA). CSA is given by the diocese to rural deaneries as a reduction in Parish Share. Previously this discount had been applied evenly to all parishes in the deanery but it was proposed and agreed to allocate CSA to the individual benefices based on the diocesan calculation, however flawed some felt this to be. As this would eliminate any discount currently applied to both Olney and Newport benefices it was agreed to phase this in over three years, with 33% directly allocated in year 1 and 66% evenly allocated.

CSA has three factors, the first being Ministry Cover Support, given to any benefice with more than 3 churches per 1 stipendiary clergy. The second factor is Church Building Support, allocated to churches with fewer than 1,000 population. This is however averaged based on the total population of the benefice and the number of churches. The final factor is Deprivation Support, based on the Index of Mean Deprivation. SCAN is the only benefice in our deanery which receives this. Olney receives no CSA.

It was further agreed that the treasurers of the planned new benefices should apportion the benefice allocation to the parishes. The result for OVN is:

	CSA	33% (c)	FTE	2025 Share	Net 2026	Variance	Variance %
Clifton Reynes	£6,947	£2,316	0.125	£7,637	£6,289	-£1,348	-18%
Newton Blossomville	£6,947	£2,316	0.125	£7,637	£6,289	-£1,348	-18%
Lavendon & Cold Brayfield	£13,893	£4,631	0.250	£15,273	£12,579	-£2,694	-18%
Tyringham	£2,582	£861	0.125	£8,247	£7,744	-£503	-6%
Emberton	£4,972	£1,657	0.225	£15,884	£13,831	-£2,053	-13%
Olney	£0	£0	0.900	£61,096	£61,954	£858	1%
	£35,340	£11,780	1.75	£115,774	£108,686	-£7,088	-6%

Malcolm Jones, Deanery Synod representative

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, pack away & vacuum afterwards! The session runs from 10am to 11am (approx). 2026 sees us celebrate our 30th year of Church Mice so look out for news of our special celebratory events!



Summer Fun takes place in the Church Hall on Thursdays during the summer holidays, with larger play equipment, a 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.

The Good Friday Easter Egg Hunt is a joint event from the Churches of Olney. It continues to be very popular and we had help making the Easter Garden on Holy Saturday in Church.

Lifepath was hosted in Elstow where the weather was fairly kind to us. We will host the event again in 2026 and preparations are already underway.

Holiday Bible Club, led by the joint Churches of Olney, took place once again this year and was well supported. We went to "Arctica" learning about Jesus and are looking forward to being "Time Travellers" this August, 3rd to 7th 2026.

Susan Heron

Social events

Most of our social events this year focused on the 700th anniversary. To mark the beginnings of the celebrations for St Peter and St Paul Church 700th Anniversary started with the Stedman Caters peal of bells. This involved 5700 changes in the three and three quarter hour duration. There was also a Flower Festival providing beautiful colours for the event; many volunteers were on hand to help with this and enjoyed the social aspect of welcoming people and engaging in conversation with them all.

Later that evening there was a Hog Roast in the grounds together with specially brewed Church Ale. Inside, music was provided by Invisible Folk.. We had wonderful Art Displays both in and outside the church, many works were provided by children from the Olney schools. Everyone enjoyed the chance to experience the church building whilst sharing stories and good conversation with friends, old and new.

There was also a History Day, events marking the 300th Anniversary of John Newton's birth.

A Civic Service was held attended by Revd Canon Dave Bull (Bishop of Buckingham) our guest speaker. During this service a specially commissioned new hymn with words written by Bethany Heron and music composed by Jonathan Heron was performed.

We also enjoyed a quiz at the start of the year and enjoyed a lovely buffet as part of Ben's installation service. The Harvest lunch was well attended as well.

All events were very well attended and we look forward to a full calendar of social activity during 2026 as we look to join the new Benefice.

Mary Prosser, Church Warden



Outreach

Knitty Stitchers

Knitty Stitchers meet on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month from 1pm-3pm.

We are a diverse and sociable group of about 28 ladies who enjoy one another's company, lots of chat, laughs and numerous cups of tea. In many ways this is the most rewarding part of our group; people being in Church informally, enjoying the peace, ambience and each other's company.

Alongside all the interactions we are busy making items in knitting, crochet, cross stitch or anything else that can be sold on our stall at Dickens of a Christmas to raise money for Church funds.

During the summer we work for charities. Last year we made catheter bag covers and syringe bag covers for a Nursing Home in Northampton, baby hats and canula sleeves for premature babies in Milton Keynes hospital and many outfits for Emily's Star. We spent a lovely morning with Sam and Izzy from the BBC in January as they interviewed Katie for the Songs of Praise programme. Katie created Emily's Star after she tragically lost her baby after 26 days. Our group were a cameo for this programme and were referred to as an ARMY OF KNITTERS!!

Our charities this year are, poppies for Armistice Day, baby hats for MK Hospital and blankets, socks and stump socks for Ukrainian amputees, we hope it will bring some warmth and comfort for them next winter.

We keep busy and that is part of staying happy and well, there is always a buzz of conversation to the consternation of visitors who drop in to look around, and occasionally give us a donation.

Gill Noon

Memory Club

The Memory Club continues to meet ten times a year, on the first Friday of each month at 1.30pm in the Church Hall. A small committee plans the annual programme – activities designed to stimulate memory in a gentle, non-threatening way. In addition there is a strong team of helpers, some of whom sit with the mostly elderly members, others are stalwarts in the kitchen, providing the refreshments with which each session begins. The committee is also grateful for the additional help in setting up and taking down of tables and chairs. Without our volunteers we would be unable to function.

Games such as dominoes, a beetle drive and scattergories continue to be popular, and we were also able to welcome two speakers – Coralie, our former curate and Zoe who treated us to a taster session of her exercise class.

There is no charge for attendance – the club is part of the church's outreach and its service to the community, recognition that memory loss is exacerbated by loneliness and lack of human contact. With a warm welcome, refreshments and an opportunity for a chat, we continue our efforts to remedy this.

However, we are aware of the difficulties of reaching those who need us most, and would encourage our church members to spread the news and bring in those who would benefit from the social contact which is the antidote to loneliness and isolation.

Rev Thelma Shacklady

Olney Pancake Race

4th March 2025 saw the 78th running of the race in the modern era, and the 76th running of the International race against Liberal since its introduction in 1950.

The Olney race was won by Eloise Kramer in 1 minute 7 seconds. Eloise won two years ago but was beaten into second place last year. This year the Olney winner's time was just pipped by Liberal's fastest runner, Pamela Bolivar in a time of 1 minute 3 seconds. In second place was Linda Church, with Lupa Morera and Rebecca Budd tying for third place. The three-legged race was won by Emma Clarke and Stacey Knight. The Liberal win brings the win count to Olney 32 and Liberal 41, with three years not counting for various reasons.



From a financial view we had an excellent set of results. The overall surplus showed an increase of 64% on the previous year

Our main sponsor Francis Jackson Homes have decided to step down as main sponsor in 2026, ending a run of 26 years of increasingly generous support. We have parted on the very best of terms but they wish to play down this decision. In 2025 they contributed financial support, runners t-shirts, advertising boards, hosted the VIP reception, etc..

This year we welcomed back Whitworth Bros. who brought Fred the famous Homepride flour grader with them, and Kingsley Healthcare from their new home at Olney Meadows. For the first time we welcomed Bonne Maman, the French jam and preserve company, who provided the aprons and headscarves for all 170 child runners as well as 50 frying pans for the main race. We also welcomed Blackstone as sponsors who provided griddle pans for the marquee kitchen.

Whilst it is early to talk about the event in 2026, Bonne Maman have confirmed that they will step up as 'Main Sponsors' in 2026 and match the financial contribution from Francis Jackson Homes. We now need to engage with the other sponsors and establish their intentions for 2026 and beyond.

My thanks to the members of the Pancake Race Committee, all of the volunteers and to all members of the church family who supported the event.

David Phillipson, Chair of the Pancake Race Committee

Cherry Fair

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. The 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.

In 2025 we ran this alongside the Flower Festival for our 700 Celebration this year. We will be running the Cherry Fair again in 2026 on Sunday 28th June, 12noon to 4pm. For more information or to offer to help please contact us via 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 showcasing many wonderful groups in Olney. On the Saturday evening The Olney Singing Studio 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 Olney Infant Academy. It was quite close; over 2000 votes were cast over the weekend. The date for 2026's Christmas Tree Festival is Saturday 5th December and Sunday 6th December (with booked visits from school/pre-schools/vulnerable groups on Friday 4th December.) Please contact me if you would like to take part next year: christmastree@olneyparish.org

Susan Heron



Combined Churches Outdoor Nativity

Once again we joined with the other churches in Olney to take part in the Outdoor Nativity in the Guinea Orchard. With more people attending each year this is becoming a staple in the town at Christmas.



Dickens of a Christmas

A team from the church was very busy in the Church Hall on Dickens day. We started the day with a delicious cooked breakfast cooked by our kitchen hero Lindsay Heath, where we sold a record number of breakfasts. With barely enough time to change over for lunch, we then served homemade soup and rolls made by our wonderful Pat Pankhurst.

All day long we also offered teas, coffee and hot chocolate and homemade cakes and ran a raffle with proceeds from all activities going towards helping the church and our mission and work in the local community.

Our thanks to the team who worked tirelessly across the day and who are already planning for Dickens of a Christmas 2026!

Tim Haskell

Tithing

Following the Annual Meeting in 2025 we made donations of £735 to each of the following charities:

Advantage Africa
Christians Against Poverty
Christian Aid
Leprosy Mission
Olney Newton Link
Church Mission Society
Ailsa's Aim
Shelterbox

It was agreed that these charities would be supported for a period of two years.

Malcolm Jones, Church Warden

Unity and Diversity

We continued with our diverse worship during 2025, particularly in the 6.00pm Sunday slot, with Worship services, Taizé and Celtic Workshop alongside more traditional Evensong and Compline. The church band played on two Sunday morning services per month, with the organ accompanying our hymn singing on the alternate Sundays. We look forward to developing diverse worship under Fr Ben.

The Ministry Team

Nurturing

Exploring Faith 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...

During summer 2025 we followed the diocesan booklet looking closely at the Nicene creed, which was most helpful .

During Advent we followed many journeys through the gifts the Wise men brought to Jesus. Hugh's swan song was a long-promised couple of sessions about the book of Revelation, which we all found most interesting. 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.

All are welcome; please think about coming along.

Rev. Janet Lawrence

Organisation and Communication

The Communications Team has been busy over the last year:

- We increased the size and layout of the weekly Pews News, extending it to four A5 pages with a separate section for notices and a calendar of services and events looking ahead two or three weeks. The monthly version of Pews News was also changed to four A5 pages.
- We launched a new email address - news@olneyparish.org – from which to send out editions of Pews News. People are now able to subscribe to (and unsubscribe from) newsletters by emailing this address. This is important from a GDPR perspective. This is also the address to send information for inclusion in the weekly and monthly sheets.
- Behind the scenes we have changed the way in which the subscription list is maintained, making it a lot easier for the Pews News team to send out emails.
- The church website now has a calendar feature, so people can see the services and events on any particular day rather than simply information about regular service patterns. The website continues to feature articles about group meetings and events through the year, as well as other news from the church.
- We continue to produce physical posters for groups, events and special services using the Canva software. We also continue to manage communications on our Facebook and Instagram pages as well as our Facebook “members and friends” group. Our Facebook page has seen a significant

increase in followers in the last few months: at the time of writing the page has 525 followers. We regularly have over 2000 views of our page in a week so we're reaching a good number of people.

The Communications Team members are Derek Martin, Katie Charlesworth-Lowe, Gill Parker, Susan Bailey, Malcolm Jones and Fr. Ben

Derek Martin