



The Seven Towers Benefice

The Parishes of
Down Hatherley, Norton, The Leigh with Evington,
Sandhurst and Staverton with Boddington

Annual Report of The Joint Council 2025 – 2026

and

Accounts Year ended 31st December 2025

Administrative information

Following approval by The Diocese of Gloucester Bishop's Council in September 2023, Seven Towers Joint Council became effective on 1 January 2024. At that time the PCCs of the parishes of St Mary's Norton, St Mary & Corpus Christi, Down Hatherley, St Lawrence, Sandhurst, St Catherine, Staverton with St Mary Magdalene Boddington and St Catherine The Leigh & Evington went into abeyance.

The Seven Towers Joint Council (also known as Seven Towers Benefice) is part of the Diocese of Gloucester within the Church of England. The correspondence address is c/o Sandhurst Church, Sandhurst, Gloucester, GL2 9NP. The Joint Council (JC) is a charity (number 1205403) registered with the Charity Commission.

JC members who have served from 8th May 2025 until the 28th April 2026 are as below.

Name	Post	Dates if part year
Revd Joe Knight	Priest in Charge	Resigned 14/02/26
Simon Trapnell	Benefice (& Norton) Church Warden, Lay Vice Chairman	
Ian Donald	Benefice (& Down Hatherley) Church Warden	Elected 08/05/25
Carolyn Wright	Sandhurst Church Warden*, Secretary to Joint Council until 13/05/25	
Ellie Stevenson	Down Hatherley Church Warden*	
Janine Smith	Staverton with Boddington Church Warden*	
Jean Smith	Norton Church Warden*	
Phil Cotton	The Leigh Church Warden* & Deanery Synod Rep	
Adrian Hawkins	Sandhurst Church Warden*	Resigned 08/05/25
Derek Wright	Elected Member, Treasurer & Deanery Synod Rep	Elected 08/05/25
Hazel Cotton	Elected Member	

Tony Crawshaw	Elected Member	
Andrew Wilkins	Elected Member	
Graham Limbrick	Elected Member & Deanery Synod Rep.	
Joan Howard	Elected Member	Elected 08/05/25
Lynda Chan	Co-opted member and Secretary to Joint Council from 13/05/25	
Alison Moseley	Co-opted member	
Rev'd Philippa Donald	Co-opted member	

Note * also referred to as the Parish Representative

Co-opted members are leaders of the Mission teams: Lynda Chan - Prayer Team , Alison Moseley - Worship Team and Rev Philippa Donald - Pastoral Team.

Gareth Moseley as the Safeguarding officer (from 08/05/2025) also attends meetings.

The Finance and Property Committee is a sub-committee of the Joint Council, responsible for all financial matters and consideration of church maintenance issues. Each parish is represented on this committee.

Additionally, as needed a Standing Committee can act on behalf of the JC. Members are the priest in charge, Benefice wardens, treasurer, secretary and 2 other members of JC.

Structure, governance and management

The method of appointment of JC (PCC) members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll of one of the former PCCs and stand for election to the JC. Seven Towers Joint Council became responsible for governance and management on 1st January 2024, taking over from the PCCs. However, each parish electoral roll is still required and will continue to be updated annually.

Each elected member is elected for a 3-year term and will then retire by rotation and is eligible to stand for re-election. For the first 3 years it was agreed that two members (Derek Wright & Graeme Hunter) would retire after 1 year (in 2025), two members (Graham Limbrick & Tony Crawshaw) would retire after 2 years (in 2026) and the other two members (Hazel Cotton & Andrew Wilkins) would retire after 3 years (2027).

Joint Council met for 6 regular meetings during 2025. Minutes of the meetings are posted on the Seven Towers website.

Objectives and Activities

The JC has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parishes the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. Each parish comprising the benefice has been encouraged to establish a team under the direction of the local parish representative to maintain the local church and churchyard and organise local events.

Financial Review

Total receipts for the General Fund which meets the day to day costs of the benefice were £96,902 (£111,200 in 2024) and are detailed in the Financial Statements. Total payments from the General Fund in the year were £116,404 (£112,417 in 2024). The largest item of expenditure was Parish Share of £78,964 (£75,204 in 2024), which is a payment to the Gloucester Diocesan Board of Finance to enable it to provide the benefice with clergy and support services.

The net result for the year was a deficit of £19,501. Adding cash, bank and deposit balances brought forward at the beginning of the year, the balance of the general fund carried forward at year-end 2025 totalled £79,907 (£94,408 in 2024).

Reserves policy

It is JC policy to maintain a balance on general funds (if possible), which equates to between 3 and 6 months' general fund payments, to cover emergency situations that may arise from time to time. At year-end, the figure was outside (greater than) the reserve's guideline but is expected to fall back into the range during 2026.

It is our policy to invest our fund balances with the CBF Church of England Deposit Fund.

Electoral Roll

Sandhurst	46	Down Hatherley	19	The Leigh	11
Norton	19	Staverton with Boddington	18		

Clergy Report (reporting w.e.f. January 2026)

It has been a busy and varied start to 2026 in the Benefice, since Rev Joe left on January 4th.

From the beginning of March, we have brought all our morning Holy Communion services to the same time, 9.30am. On the first Sunday in the month, this will be followed either by a café style service, led by Revd Philippa and Ian, or an informal service led by Simon Trapnell.

In the evenings, services are led by Revd Katie (Staverton) and by lay members of the Benefice in the other churches, with each parish having one evening service a month, or once every other month.

We are very thankful to have Revd Natalie Burfitt coming to lead one morning service a month.

This year our home groups looked at the letters 1, 2 and 3 John. After Easter we will return to 1 John for a more detailed study.

Our Lent course, looking at 'The King's Speech' went well, though numbers attending were small.

There are currently 4 baptisms booked this year, with 2 more potential baptisms, and 5 weddings and 1 potential wedding later in the year.

Holy Week was a wonderful week of different worship gatherings and services, using each of our different churches. Many thanks to all who helped prepare these gatherings, lead them or facilitate them. It was a real example of being a United Benefice.

The journey towards appointing a new Incumbent continues. The Benefice Council all feel very proactive, and we continue to push the Diocese to move as fast as they can on this. The meeting with Revd Susan Cooke (Interim Assistant to Archdeacon Katrina) and Revd Jacqui Hyde (Area Dean) in late March went well. After Easter a small group will be formed to begin to put the Parish Profile together.

As the current 'temporary' vicar in the Benefice, I would like to thank everyone for their support – Carolyn for her consistent admin support, Derek for his work as Treasurer, Simon and Ian for their work as our Benefice Wardens, and each of the parish reps from the different parishes. It makes my current role much easier with so many kind and helpful support.

We 'sail on' through the year, with God's help, towards the next stage of the journey.

Rev Philippa, April 2026.

2025 Joint Council (JC) Report

We are blessed with having an active and committed Joint Council (JC). JC is effectively the PCC for the Benefice. Rather than having a separate PCC for each parish, as was the case before the restructuring of the Benefice, the JC works for the good of the whole Benefice and is made up of the incumbent, the Benefice churchwardens, one representative from each of the former parishes, six members elected from the Benefice and co-opted vision team representatives. The Benefice safeguarding officer also attends meetings. It met six times in 2025.

JC attends to the day to day running of the Benefice, supports and receives reports from the incumbent, the treasurer, the various sub committees and vision groups as well as the parishes. It discusses new initiatives and priorities for Seven Towers as a group of churches working together. *Reports from these groups are included in this annual report.*

During the year, Lynda Chan took over from Carolyn Wright as Joint Council secretary. We gratefully acknowledge the years of sterling service Carolyn sacrificially gave the Benefice in this role (and the Benefice Council before it). We welcome Lynda and thank her for her willingness to serve.

For 2025, JC settled on 3 areas to focus upon - embedding Eco-church, enriching worship and embracing mission and outreach. We looked at how we could welcome visitors to our services, churches and communities better, and wrestled with the challenges of stewardship and giving, as well as worship styles, pattern and promotion.

We discussed and/or approved/updated policies including: Care of Creation and Celebration (a new policy), Safeguarding, Social Media, Magazine advertising, Health and Safety and Equal Opportunities. Different members of the JC agreed to take responsibility for oversight of these policies and to bring back to JC when changes need to be made or the periodic review is due.

Benefice initiatives supported and encouraged by JC this past year included Lent and Advent courses, the online video Advent calendar, 'And is it true?' event, the Tracks Festival, Benefice Tree Festival, promotional materials, website updating, the Harvest collection and Benefice charitable giving.

This has been a challenging year. However, we should be encouraged that there is a real desire to keep moving forward, together. With Joe Knight's announcement towards the end of the year that he was leaving the Benefice in early 2026, there will be much work for JC to do in the year ahead as we journey through vacancy. We are blessed with having this group of people committed to keeping the flame burning bright in our communities and preparing the ground for a new incumbent to join us on our journey of faith. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Joe and the family for all that they did for us and with us.

We are grateful too to all those who served on JC, giving their time, and bringing ideas, dreams and suggestions to the table. If you would like to contribute to JC discussions or make suggestions of any sort, please contact your parish representative or speak to the Benefice wardens. We are always pleased to hear what you think. Better still, consider whether there might be role for you on JC, building on what people have done thus far!

Simon Trapnell, Lay Chair Joint Council

Worship Team Report

Your Worship Team: Matt Waterfield, Andrew Wilkins, Philippa and/or Ian Donald, Gareth and Ali Moseley

Worship Patterns in 2025

Following the success of our Harvest Gathering in 2024 at Boddington and open conversion with families in the area Celebrate was born! Janine planned an informal gathering each month following the theme of Care for Creation.

A small (average 12 adults and 7 children) but loyal group of attendees met each month and enjoyed the informal structure, time for fellowship and creative ways to think about and connect with God's beautiful creation, but sadly it did not manage to attract the young families it was primarily aimed at and so it was agreed that it would end in November with the creation of a beautiful recycled Christmas tree for the Benefice Tree Festival.

We continue to think about different ways we can engage and connect with families and young people living in our Benefice and welcome ideas.

Similarly, our once a month informal worship took on different expressions in the form of Café Church, Explore, Informal Themed Worship all as a second morning gathering at St. Lawrence, Sandhurst and Family Communion as a second gathering once a month at St Catherine, The Leigh.

Attendance

Café Church		Explore		Informal Themed Worship		Family Communion	
Adults	Children	Adults	Children	Adults	Children	Adults	Children
22	6	9	1	10	6	18	7
-	-	16	7	23	6	16	6
12	2	13	7	-	-	40	9
						Mothering Sunday	
						24	6
						13	2
						20	4
						15	6
						11	1
						15	7

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Café Church and Informal worship are likely to be continued alternately throughout 2026.

Our worship pattern in 2025 continued to try to offer both traditional and contemporary worship and encourage our congregation to meet together in fellowship. Some discussion was given to ease of people travelling to different churches. Car sharing and even a mini bus was discussed to support this - if necessary we can revisit this in 2026 but car sharing seems adequate at the moment.

As we enter 2026 without Rev Joe patterns of worship will change slightly but we are hoping to continue to offer a variety of worship opportunities including Taizé style gatherings and outdoor events plus seasonal community gatherings that may reach the residents of the new houses around the Benefice.

A summary of the number of gatherings and attendance in our churches in 2025.

Communion Average attendance	Sandhurst	Staverton	Boddington	Down Hatherley	Norton	The Leigh
Adults	31.4	25.6	25.7	33	29.5	
Children	2.5		1.6		5.6	

Summary of number of services	Communion/Family HC.	Weddings	Funerals	Baptisms	Evening Prayer	Morning Prayer	Harvest	Carols	Other
Sandhurst	25	1	3	6	3	8		1 (48 Ad 11 Ch)	1 (12 adults,4 children). Songs of Praise (23 ad 6 child), Remembrance (23 Ad)
Staverton	6		1		9	9	22	1 (42 Ad)	1 (17)
Boddington	8		2	2		9		1 (17 Ad)	Remembrance (4) Celebrate (Average 11 Ad. 8 Ch)
Down Hatherley	7	2	8	2	8	9	17	1 (46 Ad)	Remembrance (5), Quiet Christmas (10), Peace Vigil (10), Holy Week 1hr Silence (10), Midnight Mass (25)
Norton	7	1	3	1		9		1 (39 Ad 9 Ch)	Ash Wednesday (20), All Souls (40), Remembrance (13), Advents Carols (57 Ad 9 Ch), Blessing Bells (17 Ad 2 Ch)
The Leigh	9		1	3	10	8		1 (105 Ad & Ch)	Maundy Thursday meal, Healing Service (18Ad, 6Ch), Remembrance (4), Benefice Harvest celebration (26Ad 5Ch)

It's such a blessing to have hosted major life events such as weddings, baptisms and funerals and lovely to note how many people engage in the different types of gatherings scheduled.

We have an average congregation size of approximately 30 which grows to more than double for seasonal/special occasions in 2026 the worship team will discuss ways of encouraging more engagement throughout the whole year - **again ideas welcomed.**

Although it is not our main aim, it is interesting to note the specific gatherings that attracted the most attendees, outside of special occasions, for example Songs of Praise, and so we will look to increase these types of gathering if appropriate.

Ali Moseley – Worship Team leader

Prayer Ministry Report

The Prayer Team has kept its basic principles at heart:

- to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus in prayer.
- to commit to praying regularly individually or in small groups for the life of the Benefice now in this vacancy time and for those in the leadership team: Rev Philippa, Simon, Ian and Carolyn.
- to look for ways to encourage prayer within the whole of our church community in all its different prayer styles.

Membership & Training

The team is now: Ali, Gareth, Ian, Louise, Rev Philippa & Lynda. We continue to access training opportunities at Harnhill Centre of Christian Healing.

Prayer Circle

This still has 18 members across the Benefice, who are pleased and privileged to pray for others as requested. We continue to stress the confidentiality of this service.

Pewsheets Prayers & Monthly Prayer for Magazine

The writing of these prayers continues to be shared around the team on a monthly basis. Thanks to Parish Reps who suggest local prayer points for the pew sheet every five weeks. The inclusion of a prayer within the benefice magazine remains a priority and we continue to work on creating an inclusive tone and style for its readership.

Monthly Days of Prayer

We have a small but faithful group of pray-ers who join in with this every month from 6 pm on the third Friday in the month to 6 pm on the Saturday. Hourly slots can be booked for personal prayers. Although we've usually had empty slots in recent months, there is often more than one person praying in some slots. Few people access the online booking but are happy to sign up on paper at church and then we input their names online on the 24/7 website, which generates email confirmation and reminders. We have continued to suggest themes for each day of prayer and produce accompanying prayer resources.

Prayer Gatherings

These continue meeting monthly on second Friday evenings at Norton Church. Numbers have declined and recent months just saw two of us gathered in the church. We remain hopeful that more people will feel drawn to meet to pray during the vacancy, but will consider dropping it if it doesn't seem the right thing for the benefice.

Post-gatherings Prayer Ministry

We continue to offer this formally twice a month and as requested. Although uptake is small, we feel it's an important part of our prayer life together and are always looking for ways to encourage engagement.

Benefice Prayer Tree

Following encouraging engagement with the Prayer Tree set up as part of the Benefice Advent Tree Festival, we decided to keep the tree available for personal prayers and to move it around our churches in line with Morning Prayer locations. Hopes and prayers for the benefice during this vacancy time can be written on prayer tags and tied to the tree. Although engagement has been small, we remain hopeful. These ideas can be an important part of our parish profile and our hopes for the future when we advertise the vacancy.

Leigh Prayer Room Prayer Stations

We set up prayer stations for Lent in The Leigh Prayer Room. It seems that very few people from the benefice visit, so we will leave it empty after Easter and have a bit of a rethink.

The Prayer Team welcomes any feedback or new ideas for helping us all to pray together, especially during this vacancy time.

Lynda & Prayer Team

Pastoral Team Report

The membership of the Pastoral Team has changed a little during the last year.

- Christine Murray stepped down as the rep for Staverton with Boddington during the year. We thank her for her commitment to the team over several years.
- Janine Smith takes her place.
- Gareth Moseley also stepped down during the last year, and we thank him too for his commitment.
- Jackie Stephens has stepped back recently, due to John's illness.

So, the membership of the Team is currently – Louise Greswell, Jean Smith, Sally Ann Chandler, Janine Smith, Ellie Stevenson, Rev Philippa. We would very much welcome more people to the team, and it would be good to have a man on the team, to balance it a bit more.

Rev Philippa continues to be very thankful for those on the Team, who are the eyes and ears out in the parishes, for those who might need support. The clergy cannot know everything that is going on across the Benefice, so it is very good to have the Team to keep us informed.

Earlier this year we ran the Bereavement Journey Course, a 7-week course for anyone who wants to talk together with others who are bereaved. The course has 2 short videos to watch each week, followed by discussion in groups. 24 people attended on Wednesday afternoons at Down Hatherley village hall, and it was very well received. Thanks to all those who attended to support the course and help facilitate the groups. We have let all those who attended know about our various coffee mornings across the Benefice, so they can continue the contacts and friendships they made during the course.

The team would like to have a supply of notelets/cards that they could put through people's doors, if they visit, and find the person not at home, to let them know they have called. We would welcome any artistic ideas for this.

Rev Philippa would like a list of anyone who might like home communion.

One of the main difficulties as a team is finding a time to meet! We tried zoom for our last meeting in January, but unfortunately the internet would not oblige. But we will not be discouraged and will continue to meet as and when we can!

Rev Philippa April 2026

PARISH REPORTS

St Mary & Corpus Christi Church, Down Hatherley

We continued to host the Benefice Holy Communion on alternate months with our monthly team led Evening Prayer services continuing with Ellie Stevenson leading and Chris Baldwin playing the organ each time, for which we are extremely grateful. We were pleased to host weekly Morning Prayers in January and July which adds a different approach and flavour to our worship. Special gatherings in our church also included a reflective Taizé service during Holy Week, a Peace Vigil together with our own parish based Act of Remembrance to commemorate Armistice. We also repeated our Quiet Christmas gathering to offer a different experience of Christmas and to connect with people in a different way. Our candlelit Carol Service and Midnight Mass helped us celebrate Christmas in more traditional ways and it was good to welcome people we don't normally see from one Christmas to the next, as well as always some new faces – all are welcome.

We also provided for seven funerals and memorial services, two weddings and two baptisms.

The year has been dominated by the enormous effort of the project to re-roof the vestry, organ chamber and chancel roofs. Despite years of maintenance and regular patching of failing tiles, it became inevitable that a major refit was required across these slopes. Under the guidance of our architect, Alan Simcox of Nick Joyce Architects, following their recommendations in the latest QI, we had obtained DAC approval so our major focus for the year became fund raising.

We met this through successfully applying for grants from six major funding bodies (Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Garfield Weston, National Churches Trust, Enover and the Benefact Trust). In addition, through Derek we took advantage of re-claiming VAT from the Listed Places of Worship grant scheme.

In addition to the grant raising, it was a real pleasure to see so many people contribute time and effort to raising funds locally through hosting a Spring Fair, Cotswold Male Voice Choir concert and welcoming the Mothers' Union to celebrate Mary Sumner Day with us which was great to generate funds as well as really enjoyable time spent together. It was also very moving to be able to acknowledge the significance of the church to over 50 local people who contributed through our Sponsor a Tile initiative. Tiles commemorating loved ones or events are now truly part of the fabric of our church together with a record and certificates in our Benefactors' Book.

The external roofing, undertaken by GE Dowdeswell through all weathers, went well and was completed before the year end, with just a few minor and internal items to finish off. We are indebted to all who helped in this major project and are now assured that the building is in good order and watertight for the foreseeable future.

As well as the extra efforts of fundraising required for the roof, we were also blessed by the support of our regular volunteers turning out each month to continue to maintain the churchyard. Through our good relations with the Parish Council, we were able to secure a grant from Tewkesbury BC to provide for a new battery powered trimmer and wheelbarrow to help support these tireless efforts, for which we are very grateful. Towards the end of the year, we also managed to carry out much needed tree works to reduce the risk of falling limbs, but whilst still retaining the trees for their habitat and landscape value.

Through the efforts of so many individuals we can look forward to continuing to be a place of worship, Christian witness and building connections and although it is sad that we also lost the support and inspiration of our good friend Margaret Brind and our Rev Joe Knight as they moved on, we are in a good place to reflect and learn as we move forward.

Twigworth Churchyard

Although the future of the building of St Matthew's, Twigworth remained uncertain throughout the year, we are indebted to Paul and other volunteers who continued to maintain the churchyard. As it continues to be regularly used for burials, we know that it remains an important place of reflection and comfort for many local people.

Ellie Stevenson, Churchwarden, 7 April 2026

St Mary's Church, Norton

In our 2024 report we were able to write about the conclusion of the bell project at Norton. That story however, lives on, because the refurbished bells have proved to be a wonderful blessing this past year, being regularly rung by ringers from both far and wide. For people in our communities the sound of the Church bells are the most historic sound that many will hear, reminders not just of our beautiful building and historic past, but also of our church's place in the community, God's faithfulness over the years and his presence with us today. We are so thankful for the blessing of the bells.

One of the joyful aspects of restoring the bells was how the project brought people together. We experienced that again this year when Norton hosted the Benefice Advent Tree Festival. It was wonderful to see all the churches represented in a wonderful display, together with trees prepared by community groups, the school and some of our vision groups. It was a thrill that the school came to the church to see the trees and have their own worship service. The two most popular trees, as voted for by visitors, were the Tuesday Trotters Tree and the Prayer Tree. The festival included an evening concert by the Leadonvale Singers and concluded on the Sunday with the Benefice Advent carol service. Too many people were involved to list them all, but we sincerely and unreservedly thank them all, including those who made wonderful items for the silent auction, mentioning, in particular, Mandy Guest whose oversight ensured the whole event went smoothly.

We have loved hosting Benefice gatherings including Morning Prayer, Benefice Holy Communion, the Ash Wednesday service, the Good Friday Walk of Witness, the Advent Carol service and the monthly Benefice Friday prayer gatherings. We thank Craig Major for being our loyal organist, and all those who contributed to our monthly team led services. Sometimes the prayer gatherings met outside and made the most of our beautiful setting appreciating all the hard work of the volunteers who maintain the churchyard. We thank them all and all those who so kindly helped with church maintenance both inside and out.

Those efforts were recognised when we had our quinquennial inspection during the year. The inspector was very pleased to see progress had been made on items mentioned in the previous inspection and, though there were (inevitably) other ongoing items mentioned in this inspection to attend to, the report said that 'the church remains very well cared for and in excellent overall condition'.

We record our thanks to the team that ran our monthly coffee mornings. It is wonderful that so many local people value this opportunity to come together. The church also hosted several evening social gatherings of the Priors Norton community. At the end of the year a Benefice Christian book library was placed at the back of the church with free loan (and take away) books, generously donated by the benefice worshipping community.

In November we heard that Joe Knight and his family were moving on early in 2026. Norton feels very blessed and grateful to have had Joe as its incumbent, supported by his family. Though so very sad to lose them, the Norton community wish them every blessing in the future. We will treasure the gifts they gave us and the reminders they left us as to where our priorities should be.

In the year ahead Norton Friends are keen to play its full part in the life of the Benefice. Projects for the year ahead include trying to finalize plans for an outside toilet, to develop Ecochurch initiatives and introduce new ways of welcoming visitors outside service times.

Simon Trapnell, Benefice Warden and Jean Smith, Churchwarden and Parish Rep

St Catherine's Church, The Leigh Report

2025 became a milestone year for St Catherine's, The Leigh.

Following on from Rev. Joe's utilisation of the O/H projector during the Christingle service, "on screen" services have become the norm for Benefice Services adding further depth and range to the presentation, including embedded video content.

The fact that St Catherine's organ was "offline" for a significant part of the year did not diminish the message of the service, thanks to Rev. Joe's guitar input and Ian's outstanding keyboard and vocal support, setting the appropriate ambience to the service.

Notable services in the year included, a well-supported Healing service, The Baptism of Theodor Whitehead (filling the church to the brim) and the ever-popular Christmas Eve service, proving there remains a huge "Harvest" out there waiting to be harvested!

The Church organ was fixed thanks to Craig and Geff from the Repair Café, plus Derek for the use of his Scaffold Tower (and helping to assemble it). Interestingly, the fix was replacing several "blown" transistors at a total cost of less than £10

A HDMI port booster was added to enable the "AV operator" to run the presentation to the rear of the nave. On a further technical point, St Catherine's went "live" with the installation of Wi-Fi, at no cost to St Catherine's, thanks to a very generous offer by the Parish Council

Fundraising for the year included a Mini Fete, several coffee mornings, a "Sparkle and no Bangs" themed Bonfire Night get together, hosted by St Catherine's but run by the Parish Council.

Once again, Wreath making sessions were hosted in St Catherine's and proved to be very popular – many thanks to Karen from the village.

2025 did come with disappointments when an additional service was added to the worship pattern which coincided with St Catherine's Benefice service, which understandably impacted on attendance. But the really big shock came in December with news of Rev. Joe's (and family) sudden departure.

We have been very, very fortunate that Rev. Phillippa (and Ian) have stepped up their support of the United Benefice to ensure we grow from strength to strength.

Phil Cotton – Churchwarden

St Lawrence Church, Sandhurst Report

Sandhurst Church continues to be a prominent part of village life, with many volunteers and supporters helping to maintain the church and churchyard, take part in social events and join us for worship.

Worship: The benefice worship pattern effective from January 2025 resulted in two Holy Communion services, an informal service and Evening Prayer each month in Sandhurst Church. We were privileged to be the venue for 'See the Servant of the Lord' an Easter musical, Easter Sunday Eucharist, Harvest Songs of Praise and our Christmas Day service.

Our thanks to Pat Parkes, who continues to be our Sacristan preparing the altar for each communion service.

This year, we are endeavouring to give our monthly Evening Prayer services an eco-friendly focus with themes such as planting, growing, awe & wonder and gathering.

Maintenance: Sandhurst Church building and churchyard remain in relatively good order, thanks to our large contingent of volunteers who diligently maintain both the churchyard and church, inside and out. No structural maintenance has been required during the last year.

Following a number of issues with the organ, the decision was taken to refurbish rather than replace it. This has entailed Cotswold Organ Co. taking the organ away to rebuild the electronic elements and restore the casing. Some of the speakers in the church roof were also malfunctioning and these too are being repaired. After many delays the organ has now been returned and we hope to showcase its full potential very soon.

The glazing project, which had been ongoing for over 2 years with the Diocesan Advisory Committee raising one objection after another, has been withdrawn. As a compromise a polycarbonate transparent panel has been temporarily fitted to the vestry door and we hope to purchase heavy duty curtains to hang behind the tower gates to reduce draughts.

Social and fundraising activities: Over the early months of 2025 and again in the autumn the monthly 'lunch together' in the Village Hall proved popular and was well supported by the whole community. Similarly, Film Nights during the darker evenings continued to attract a number of attendees who enjoyed a variety of films - documentary, autobiographical, comedy etc.

In June, a take on the TV programme "Call My Bluff" proved very popular, with a panel of *experts* describing 3 wines as the audience sampled just one and tried to decide who was telling the truth rather than bluffing. 6 samples later, all agreed the evening was a success.

The annual Harvest Supper was well attended and this was our main fund raiser during the year.

Thank you to all those people who keep the church at the centre of our community:

The Church Yard Working Team, led by Tony Roberts, who mow, strim, hedge trim, weed and generally tidy the churchyard throughout the year.

The church cleaning team, led by Joan Fynes and Sue Duncan, who do a great job week by week. Thank you to all the team, who ensure the church looks welcoming for all worshippers and visitors. The church flower ladies, led by Helen Smith, for their hard work, enthusiasm and artistic talents to decorate the church with wonderful, colourful creations especially at festival times.

Dee Cheeseman, the Tower Captain, who always manages to put a band together when requested for weddings or other special occasions, as well as arranging for visiting groups to ring the bells several times a year.

As always, any additional volunteers, whether to join the Sandhurst Team, the churchyard working party, flower or cleaning rota or just help from time to time will always be welcome!

Carolyn Wright – Churchwarden

St Mary Magdalene Church, Boddington & St Catherine's Church Staverton

At the last APCM Edmund McClure (St Catherine's, Staverton) and Janine Smith (St Mary Magdalene, Boddington) were elected as churchwardens.

Janine Smith agreed to stand as parish representative on the benefice Joint Council. Janine also agreed to be electoral roll officer and representative on the Finance & Property sub-committee. After many years Edmund McClure has decided not to stand for re-election for 2026-2027. He is thanked for his hard work, time, dedication & commitment to the role and the life of the church in SwB and across the benefice.

Services:

The benefice holy communion service has continued to be held in Boddington and Staverton on alternate months with fellowship after each service being enjoyed by all. Evening prayer continues to be held once a month in Staverton led by Revd Katie and Edmund McClure with an increasing congregation with many offering support during the services. A new all-age afternoon gathering "Celebrate" was trialled once a month at Boddington during 2025. Led by Rev Joe and Janine Smith, topics from Ecochurch were presented with activities for all ages to join in with. At 'Celebrate harvest' a variety of seeds grown by Boddington Estates were presented and the congregation were asked to match them to their corresponding foods; 'Celebrate Christmas' saw us using cardboard tubes (painted green) to make a Christmas tree (Recycle; Reuse) for the Norton tree festival. Although a regular congregation supported these services, it did not attract families from across the benefice, therefore it has not continued into 2026.

Both churches held joyous Christmas carol services. The Staverton service saw parishioners old and new read lessons and a moving solo 'Silent Night' was sung by Ali and accompanied by James on guitar. The Boddington service saw three generations of the Stedman family read lessons and lead the intercessions. Both churches held an Act of Remembrance on November 11th 2025 led by Janine Smith (Boddington) and Edmund McClure (Staverton).

A Taizé service was held on the Wednesday of Holy Week led by Rev Joe Knight and a 'New Fire' service was held on Holy Saturday in Boddington.

Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals:

There have been funerals of Victor (Bill) Gooch; Donald Latham (Boddington) and burial of ashes from family members of the Hathaway (Boddington) and Preen (Staverton). There was a 'Thanksgiving' service for the life of John Stedman (Boddington) who used to ring the church bell before each service in Boddington.

Fund raising:

Boddington hosted the annual "Mince pies and Christmas songs" organised by Olivia Bowkett and Rebecca Metcalfe. Thanks for their dedication to such a successful community event.

Bob and Di Lewis, supported by their daughter Jo, continue to organise regular coffee mornings in Staverton church. These are valued by local residents who provide cakes and donations to SwB fabric fund.

Thanks are given to Christine Hitchins for her commitment to fundraising for SwB fabric fund :

- Snowdrop event: Boddington Manor. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped on the day, made cakes and/or donated tombola prizes.
- Parish ramblings: a talk by Chris Evans in Staverton church
- The Land of Song: a talk including music by Pam Street in Staverton church
- Book sales

Thanks to volunteers:

Both churchyards are kept looking beautiful with the help of local parishioners at the regular churchyard working parties mornings - whatever the weather

Thanks are given to :

John Maguire (Boddington) and Simon Peach & Bob Lewis (Staverton) for mowing the grass regularly;

Richard Smith; James Metcalfe and Jonathan Coulson(Boddington strimming team);

Jane Williams (Staverton flower garden)

Helen Evans (Boddington) & Rob Buckland (Staverton) regular flower arrangements;

Anne Newton & Rita Preen church cleaning & flowers (Staverton)

Brigid & Rob Stanley, Mark & Helen Clay, Lorraine O'Brian & Alan Drinkwater, Julie & Andy Jackson church cleaning and church decorations for harvest and Christmas (Boddington)

John Maguire & Ben Crocker (Boddington)and Simon Peach (Staverton) for daily unlocking and locking of our churches.

Boddington Estates for the use of their field in dry weather for car parking for Boddington services

Julie Jackson for distributing the benefice magazines across SwB and to Bob&Di Lewis, Jan

Twinning, V.Berry, Rob Buckland, Christins Hitchins, Steve Mills, Brigid Stanley, Jacqui Maquire and Rebecca Metcalfe for delivering to the homes.

Fabric:

St Catherine's Staverton

A List B was granted to enable the sunken flagstones in the North Transept to be removed, infilled with sand and then replaced. Thanks to Bob Lewis for arranging this work and his daughter Jo for writing the risk assessment for the work.

A List B application has been submitted to the DAC to replace the noticeboard.

Thanks to Simon and Julia Peach for replacing spotlight bulbs in the church.

The Quinquennial Inspection for the church has been carried out 10th April 2026 and we await the report.

St Mary Magdalene Boddington

Hook Mason (Architects) and Lean Structure (structural engineers) have written a specification for replacement of the rotten oak lintel above the tower entrance. A faculty application has been submitted for this work.

Thanks to Alan Drinkwater for making sure the area is safe for use until this work can take place.

Thanks to Cassie Hitchins for replacing spotlight bulbs in the church.

The Quinquennial Inspection for the church has been carried out 24th April 2026 and we await the report.

Janine Smith – Parish Rep & Churchwarden

SEVERN VALE DEANERY - SYNOD REPORT FOR 2025

The Severn Vale Deanery – 12 Benefices including over 40 churches – continues to be led by our Area Dean, the Reverend Canon Jacqui Hyde, and our Lay Chair, Sue Padfield, with Steve Riddick serving as Secretary and Derek Wright as both Parish Share Officer and Treasurer.

Deanery Synods are usually held three times per calendar year, to share matters of common interest and to act as a conduit with the Diocese. Details of Synods held in 2025 are as follows:

Thursday 6th March 2025 *(at Holy Trinity, Badgeworth)*

The principal topics of this evening were (i) the Diocese's current thoughts on how to fund future Parish Share, including reference to related questionnaires, future meetings with the Diocese, and how the new system is intended to be more "collaborative" than existing arrangements; and (ii) a presentation on issues facing Primary School Education by Stephen Dean, the CEO of Primary Quest (a grouping of nine – about to be ten – primary schools, mostly Church of England, in our area), with concerns mainly related to inadequate funding in the light of higher costs, increasing numbers of Special Educational Needs Children, higher parental demands and similar issues putting ever more strain on both finances and staff.

Tuesday 8th July 2025 *(at St Mary's, Newent)*

The main business of this Synod was for us to hear from and raise questions to Bishop Rachel, who had spent the whole day in the Deanery, including visits to Churcham, Newent, Minsterworth, Churchdown, Innsworth and Hartpury. Bishop Rachel talked about how most of what we do ties in with the LIFE Vision; whether we spend too much of our time on internal matters rather than on reaching out; and how we can best collaborate to use the various gifts of our clergy and laity. She encouraged us to never lose sight of our greater purpose (i.e. the Kingdom of God); to be mission-focussed and resource-aware; and to always remain humble and confident in our faith. Questions to her from the floor then covered topics such as Living in Love and Faith, the Palestine situation, the age profile of churchgoers, the Archbishop of Canterbury appointment process, and the finances of the Church Commissioners.

Wednesday 15th October 2025 *(at St Mary and St Bartholomew, Ashleworth)*

This Synod was largely focussed on the Seven Sacred Spaces model of church life (the seven being Cell/Retreat, Chapel/Encounter, Chapter/Contribute, Cloister/Connect, Garden/Serve, Refectory/Eat and Scriptorium/Explore). After discussion of the concepts, we heard firstly from Will Mansell – the founder of the Grace Network – about how they use the model to ensure the work they do (mainly in social enterprises, helping those suffering from poverty and a lack of support structures) covers all bases. Rich Witham and Kelsey Martyn from Sportily then spoke about what they are doing in our area (including things such as After-School Clubs, Breakfast Cafés and support during longer holidays), and how the model helps check their work is properly balanced. After break-out groups to consider the concepts further, we then heard from Jacqui Hyde of how Deanery Operations Leaders are currently being recruited for three Deaneries, and how we hope to be in the next batch.

Full Deanery Synod minutes and other information on all the above can be found on the Deanery website, or via the Secretary.

Steve Riddick, Secretary to the Deanery Synod. 28 February 2026

SEVEN TOWERS JOINT COUNCIL- Annual Accounts to 31 December 2025

Notes	General Fund	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2025	Total 2024	
Income						
	Collections	5,491	683	452	6,626	8,123
	Regular Giving	35,976	3,604	0	39,580	48,844
	Ad hoc Donations	7,300	13,295	11,847	32,442	20,231
4	Charity collections	6,561	0	0	6,561	6,230
5	Grants	0	0	25,435	25,435	50,819
	Legacies	0	5,000	0	5,000	10,000
	Gift Aid reclaim	12,469	1,234	143	13,846	15,822
	VAT reclaim	0	0	646	646	16,520
	Magazine - Subscriptions	3,083	0	0	3,083	3,059
	Magazine - Adverts	1,688	0	0	1,688	1,268
6	Fund raising	3,435	5,725	2,543	11,703	10,297
	Bank interest	2,346	8,501	384	11,221	11,465
7	Investment Income	2,040	0	4,415	6,455	5,223
	Fees - Funeral	11,103	547	0	11,650	14,129
	Fees - Monuments	1,810	0	0	1,810	1,338
	Fees - Weddings	2,895	0	0	2,895	6,778
	Book sales	0	33	0	33	196
	Other (Gifts)	705	0	0	705	0
	Total Income	96,902	38,622	45,865	181,389	230,343
Expenditure						
8	Parish Share	78,964	0	0	78,964	75,204
	Water	311	112	0	423	398
	Electricity	3,392	0	0	3,392	4,455
	Oil	842	0	0	842	409
	Insurance	8,034	0	0	8,034	7,762
9	Running Expenses	1,181	1,761	1,009	3,950	2,163
	Toilet Hire	0	804	216	1,020	0
	Magazine printing	3,272	0	0	3,272	2,837
	Statutory fees	4,056	0	0	4,056	4,262
10	Organist fees	2,298	0	0	2,298	2,296
11	Building works	0	970	51,456	52,426	8,412
	Clergy expenses	3,170	0	0	3,170	3,000
4	Charity	8,063	0	0	8,063	8,048
6	Cost of fund raising	107	818	150	1,075	1,584
	Worship Requisites	722	0	0	722	304
	Bank Charges	74	0	0	74	324
13	Churchyard Maintenance	0	6,654	498	7,152	3,826
12	Mission Teams	325	0	161	486	379
	Bell costs	205	0	0	205	109,456
	Outreach	1,205	125	0	1,330	868
	Other	182	3,051	840	4,073	1,829
	Total outgo	116,404	14,295	54,330	185,028	237,816
14	Inter fund transfer	5,000	(5,000)	0	0	0
	Excess / (deficit)	(14,501)	19,327	(8,465)	(3,639)	(7,473)

Assets as at 31 December 2025

	31-Dec-25	31-Dec-24	Change
Current accounts	20,220	15,945	4,275
Deposit accounts	62,388	46,813	15,575
CCLA	210,923	240,266	(29,344)
SJP	60,546	54,691	5,855
Total	354,077	357,716	(3,639)

Assets by Funds

Funds	31-Dec-25	31-Dec-24	Change
General	79,907	94,408	(14,501)
Restricted			
Sandhurst Bells	3,000	3,000	0
Youth Mission	2,697	2,430	267
Mission	2,000	2,000	0
The Leigh Fabric	55,265	50,814	4,451
DH Roof	(10,781)	1,562	(12,343)
SwB Organ	22,675	23,515	(840)
Total Restricted	74,856	83,321	(8,465)
Designated Funds			
Sandhurst Fabric	34,600	22,718	11,882
Down Hatherley Fabric	71,687	73,658	(1,971)
SwB Fabric	56,192	47,403	8,789
Norton Fabric	7,575	9,073	(1,498)
Norton Bells	2,008	1,690	318
Norton Toilets	14,084	12,556	1,528
Hardship	900	900	0
Twigworth Churchyard	12,268	11,989	279
Total Designated	199,314	179,985	19,328
Total Funds	354,077	357,716	(3,639)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year to 31 December 2025

1. **Presentation of financial information**

These financial statements have been prepared on the receipts and payments basis and in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006. Seven Towers Joint Council became effective on 1 January 2024 at which time the 5 original PCCs (Down Hatherley, Norton, Sandhurst, Staverton with Boddington and The Leigh & Evington) went into abeyance.

2. **Accounting Policies**

These financial statements include monetary transactions, assets and liabilities for which the Joint Council ("JC") can be held responsible. They do not include the accounts, if any, of any other benefice wide groups that owe an affiliation to any other body.

Receipts are included as received and expenditure when irrevocably paid.

3. **Types of funds**

In these accounts funds are described as General, Designated and Restricted. '**Restricted funds**' are sums held on trust for particular purposes and can only be spent on those purposes. '**Unrestricted funds**' (**General Funds**) are simply the ordinary property of the JC and can be spent on any of the JC's general purposes. '**Designated funds**' are sums earmarked by the JC for specific purposes.

In these accounts Restricted Funds are the Staverton with Boddington ("SwB") Organ Fund, Sandhurst Bell Fund, The Leigh Fabric Fund, the Down Hatherley Roof Fund, the Mission Fund and the Youth Mission fund. These funds were set up as a result of specific donations for that purpose only.

Designated Funds include the Fabric Funds of each of the previous PCCs, the Norton Bell Fund, the Norton Toilet Fund, the Hardship Fund, and the Twigworth Churchyard Fund

4. **Charitable Collection and Donations**

Since April 2020, we have been collecting fortnightly for Gloucester Foodbank from church porches, Nature in Art and the Co-op at Twigworth Green.

The money collected at the Ladies' and Men's breakfasts was donated to The Gloucester City Mission. Money collected at the monthly community lunches in excess of costs was donated to Gloucester Foodbank.

Apart from September, half of the money donated at the monthly Friendly Fridays less the cost of hall rental was sent to Longfield Hospice and the other half to Down Hatherley Roof Appeal. The September donations were sent to MacMillan together with money collected at a MacMillan coffee morning held in Sandhurst Village Hall.

Collections at funeral services were sent to the charities nominated by the families of the deceased.

Where appropriate gift aid is added to donations and passed on to the various charities. The Joint Council "funds" the gift aid until such time as it is claimed back from HMRC.

Charitable gifts included £735 to Gloucester Foodbank, £1,021 to Macmillan Nurses from the September coffee mornings and £4,161 to various charities in memory of those whose funerals were held in our churches. In addition, £460 was passed onto Gloucester Foodbank through CAF cheques from members of the congregations.

5. Grants

Grants of £25,435 were made by various bodies towards the repair of roof at Down Hatherley church (see note 11).

6. Fund raising

Various fund-raising activities were held across the Benefice, some for the Benefice general fund others for local projects.

	Income	Costs	Net
Benefice	3,434	107	3,327
DH Roof appeal	2,393	150	2,243
Norton Toilets	515	0	515
Sandhurst	2,328	818	1,510
The Leigh	151	0	151
SwB	2,882	0	2,882
Total	11,703	1,075	10,628

£1,096 of the fund raising shown for the Benefice came from the Christmas Tree Festival organised by the Norton Church Team. £1,864 was raised at various events organised by The Leigh team including £820 from the fete. The JC thanks those involved for all the hard work put into organising these events.

7. Investment Income

Investment income includes £600 rental income from a piece of land in Boddington and gains on an investment with St James's Place resulting from the sale of the village hall in The Leigh. In line with past practice, dividends and interest arising on the St James's Place investment (£1,440 in 2025) are credited to the general fund and growth (£4,415 in 2025) to The Leigh Fabric Fund.

8. Parish Share

Parish Share is money requested from and paid to Gloucester Diocese Board of Finance to cover costs including those of the clergy remuneration and related costs including housing and central services incurred by the Diocese.

The 2025 allocation from Severn Vale Deanery to the Benefice was £78,964 (£75,204 in 2024).

9. Running Expenses

The running costs by parish were as follows:

	2025
Down Hatherley	217
Norton	1,310
Sandhurst	163
SwB	71
The Leigh	865
PAT testing	432
Stamps	21
Total	3,079

"PAT" testing was paid for from the General Fund. Other costs charged to local fabric funds were the Fire Extinguisher testing for all church buildings except Norton, AV upgrade at The Leigh, QI report at

Norton and Lightning Conductor testing at The Leigh In addition £105 was paid for the benefice mobile phone and £766 for various licences

10. Organist fees

£1,758 was paid to organists in respect of Funeral and Weddings and £540 for playing at various worship gatherings.

11. Building Works

During the year a major project was undertaken to repair the roof over the chancel and vestry of Down Hatherley Church funded by reserves brought forward, grants received and various donations. At the end of the year the DH Roof fund is shown as having a negative balance as a result of timing of some grants and VAT refunds still to be received. The Joint Council thanks all of those involved in the project, the bulk of which was successfully delivered on time in late December.

Other minor repairs comprise:

Sandhurst	310	
SwB	660	Includes Architect fees
The Leigh	265	
Total	1,235	

12. Mission Teams

This comprised £161 for Children's work and £325 for the prayer team.

13. Churchyard Maintenance

Churchyard costs by parish were as follows:

	Fuel	Mower servicing	Other	Total
Down Hatherley		0	2,760	2,760
Norton		814	58	872
Sandhurst	49	114	2,702	2,865
SwB		0	0	0
The Leigh	200	0	297	497
Twigworth		0	156	156
Total	249	928	5,973	7,150

Other costs primarily comprise tree maintenance and laying of the new path in Sandhurst.

14. Interfund transfer

The Down Hatherley parish team decided to transfer £5,000 from its Fabric fund into the Benefice general fund to help meet the costs of running the Benefice. The JC records its thanks to the DH team.

Independent Examiner's Report to the Members of the Seven Towers Benefice Joint Council ("the Trust")

I report on the accompanying accounts of the Seven Towers Benefice Joint Council for the year ended 31 December 2025, which have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis as the Trust's gross income for the year was below the threshold of £250,000.

Respective Responsibilities and Basis of Report

As charity trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the annual accounts of the Trust in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011, the relevant sections of the Statement of Recommended Practice for Accounting and Reporting by Charities, and the appropriate Church of England Accounting Guidelines. My responsibility is to perform an independent examination of the accounts in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission.

Independent Examiner's Statement

An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Trust and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a true and fair view.

In connection with my examination, no matters have come to my attention which give me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect:

- (i) accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act 2011, or
- (ii) the accounts do not accord with those records.

In addition, I have come across no other matters to which in my opinion attention should be drawn to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Steven Riddick FCA
Woodview
Pirton Lane
Churchdown
Gloucester

6 April 2026