



ST SAVIOUR'S CHURCH
SANDPIT LANE | ST ALBANS | AL1 4DF

stsavioursstalbans.com

VICAR'S REPORT 2025

On this Sunday after the Ascension, the readings at the 10am All Age Service helped us to think about our need to let go of what is past and grasp hold of what lies ahead of us. Naturally we think of the Ascension in narrative terms (i.e. Jesus went from A to B to C then up to D!) but it's richness in theological terms is always in reflecting on its meaning and the spiritual truth it embodies. Speaking theologically, the ascension is at one with the resurrection; in narrative terms we think of them as *separate* events, but theologically they illustrate themes of new life, vindication, glorification and triumph. But as much as the resurrection of Jesus helps us reflect on the spiritual principle of new life and hope springing from suffering death, so the ascension reinforces the learned spiritual truth that to *grow*, we often must first *let go*.

As with last year's Vicar's Report, I'm focusing my comments on our three Mission Action Plan priorities and goals and making a simple assessment of where we are with them. Later in this meeting (and of course beyond the scope of this report) I will say a little about how the PCC have reviewed and reshaped them in February 2026.

Priority 1:	<i>Consolidate various aspects of our vision to make our buildings fit for purpose as a community hub and to create a Development Project as the basis for mission & ministry in years to come.</i>
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- At the end of 2024 the PCC instructed the architect to tender for the provision of electric heated floor mats to cover the central area of the nave, with the capacity of reaching 28°C in 20 minutes. Early in 2025 the PCC instructed the architect to engage RPL Construction Ltd, and to schedule the installation of the heated floor along with the necessary expansion of the power supply. This work was undertaken in August 2025. It took most of the autumn to sort out snagging issues, but it very quickly drew appreciative comments from members of the congregation. It does, of course, have its limitations and was only ever intended as a first phase of a larger scheme. The next priority in terms of heating will be to address draughts and insulation. Significantly, as a scheme intended to benefit the regular congregation, thanks to grant applications and fundraising income at the PCC's disposal there was no need to ask for further contributions.
- At the 2025 APCM I introduced a draft scheme drawn up by the architect to develop much needed facilities (including disabled access and toilets) at the West End of the nave, in consultation with the DAC and PCC the plans for which were then available for a period of consultation and comment. As the year progressed the PCC were notified of the unexpectedly large bequest to the Organ Fund of £100,000 by the late Sue Myerscough – a gift for which our thanks are of course due not only to Sue but also to John and the girls. Sue wanted her gift to be large enough to make a difference – and in fact it made the project viable in a way none of us had imagined possible. A

lot of conversations and consultations went on in the middle part of the year to raise the extra £40k required and to agree a scheme of work with Gary Owens Organ Builders to ensure that as much of the VAT might be reclaimed as possible before the end of March 2026 and the end of the Listed Place of Worship Scheme. At this point in time we expect the parish organ to be handed back at the end of May 2026.

- We are still waiting for the removal of the IOF Organ, which once completed will enable the rebuilding of the sanctuary platform to provide an enlarged liturgical and performance space. It is anticipated that the platform will incorporate heated flooring to compliment the system in the nave.
- As I said in my report last year, the West End development and Nave Platform would need to be the subject of a significant fundraising campaign, seeking funding from grant-making trusts, the local community, congregation and individuals.
- Our **GOAL** with this first Priority was to establish a small Project Development Team: I was joined by Trevor Barton and Phil Elson and the churchwardens to review heating proposals and bring them to PCC.

Priority 2:	<i>Continue to develop existing avenues of community engagement and identifying new opportunities.</i>
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- Having hailed the 2024 Beer & Fizz Festival as a ‘record-breaker’ the success of the 2025 Festival was greater still! Thanks to the generosity of the local community and members of the congregation who gave their time, energy and financial support to the event we were able to welcome even more people over the weekend and achieve profits of just over £23.5k. Roll on our 8th Festival in 2026!
- A significant tool in our mission and engagement in 2025 has been the new parish website and its interaction with our social media and event ticketing. It has quickly become a point of reference for many within and beyond our church community, and its development has continued through the year; we are currently making the final tweaks to an online booking system which will simplify and streamline the process of hiring church and hall.
- Alongside concert hires, our programme of events such as concerts by internationally acclaimed band *Track Dogs*, folk singer *Edwina Hayes*, the *Swan Vesta Social Club* and other locally known groups, plus performance poet *Harry Baker* have helped diversify the kinds of people coming to St Saviour’s. Enhanced by the established links with *St Albans Folk*, *Street Food Heroes* and our regular hall users there have been many overlaps with requests for baptisms, weddings, blessings and attendance at Christmas, Easter and for Sunday services.
- Our **GOAL** in this second Priority was to establish a Bernards Heath Community Forum to bring together contacts from a variety of community groups and organisations. This didn’t happen as what seemed like a good idea at the time never found an opportunity, despite favourable conversations with local councillors.

Priority 3: *Growing younger and more diverse.*

- It has been great to welcome The Revd Emily Lloyd to the parish as Assistant Curate. With a natural enthusiasm she has thrown herself into all aspects of parish life, but especially in relation to our work with children & young people, in church and community (especially Bernard Heath Junior). Already we are seeing the fruits of that ministry at Tots Time, Families at Four and in our All-Age Worship. Despite having to cancel the Good Friday and Advent activity workshops in 2025, Emily's arrival has helped to bring a fresh energy. (The Good Friday Activity in 2025 drew 32 children and 48 adults, helpers included!)
- In Lent we were able to commission our first Choral Scholars, and during the year Ethan and Alexander were joined by Amelia, Eva and Lucille.
- During the year we have built significant links with Hightown Housing Association who used St Saviour's as the base for their outreach to local homeless people, and we have also made the church available for a monthly support group for young adults living with eating disorders.
- Towards the end of the autumn we hosted a Thanksgiving for Marriage using *Prayers of Love and Faith*, the Church of England's pastoral provision for same-sex couples.
- Our **GOAL** in this third Priority was to secure funding for a Youth Worker post, which developed under the job title of Children & Families Worker. We were successfully awarded a grant from the Diocese to part-fund the role along with some of the proceeds from the Beer & Fizz Festival. However despite our efforts, we didn't attract any suitable candidates in 2025, so the role description and expectations are to be reviewed.

Now in my eighth year as Vicar of St Saviour's I am even more aware of the thanks I owe to so many others who's ideas, vision and efforts - including their time and money - make this a vibrant, missional and outward-looking Church. The Annual Report highlights just some of what goes on in this place and parish week by week. My thanks of course to my clergy colleagues, our Churchwardens, Parochial Church Council and its officers, to our Music Department and Parish Administrator – and all those who contribute to our shared mission and ministry, and as we continue slowly but steadily to grow.



The Revd Richard Watson
Vicar