

St Peter's Church, Great Asby
Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council
Year Ending 31st December 2025

Administrative Information

St Peter's Church is situated in the centre of Great Asby. It is part of the Benefice of the Heart of Eden in the Appleby Deanery of the Diocese of Carlisle within the Church of England. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a charity exempted from registration with the Charity Commission. The PCC members who have served from 1st January 2025 are as follows with their role on the Committee and dates of appointment in brackets where appropriate: -

Priests-in-Charge: Andrew Burrell

Churchwardens: Vacant

Representative on Deanery Synod: Mr John Bevan (Acting Treasurer)

Elected Members: & Mr. Peter Miller (Lay Chairman & Safeguarding Co-Ordinator)

Ms. Karen Royle (Secretary)

Mrs. Pat Bevan

Mrs. Helen Cooper

Mrs. Pam Cowey

Mrs. Denise Frisby

Mr. Chris Hollett

Structure, governance and management

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All Church attendants are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll & stand for election to the PCC.

Objectives and activities

St Peter's PCC has the responsibility of cooperating with the responsible priest, in promoting the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical in the ecclesiastical parish. It also has maintenance responsibilities for the Church building, and the Lychgate, both listed buildings.

Church attendance

As at 31st December 2024 there were 30 Parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll with one person not living in the Parish. This is six people up on last year, when we had 24 on the roll. The average attendance was 13 adults (no children on a regular basis but always welcomed). We've had 1 wedding, 3 funerals, 1 burial of ashes, and no baptisms.

We have continued with our monthly and fifth Sunday services, being shared with the Baptist Chapel. Some fifth Sunday services have also been shared with the wider Benefice.

Review of the year

The full PCC met 7 times during the year, with an average attendance of 86%.

As mentioned in our annual report of 2024, we have continued our attempts to raise the profile of church in the village by organizing new style services and various social events. Special services in the year have included;

- Meditative, reflective service for Good Friday
- Annual service in a wood
- Harvest festival, supported by children from the school singing
- Traditional Remembrance service at the Lychgate, led beautifully, again, by John Bevan
- Food for Thought, a new cafe church venture
- Advent Candle painting service

Other social events, we have enjoyed have included,

- Regular 3 Cs coffee mornings
- Summer Village BBQ
- Moment of Peace (meditation and gentle movement)

And, for the 13th year running, villagers submitted photographs for inclusion in the Asby calendar. As in previous years we were grateful for the support of Nick and Barbara who gave their time once again to select the appropriate pictures and assist with the final production.

The PCC is extremely grateful for the support given by all those who play a valuable part in the life of the church: bell ringers; sides-people; cleaners; people who provide flowers, the Christmas tree and refreshments, and Mrs Pam Cowey, who has continued to be the church organist.

Message from St Peter's PCC Lay Chairman: Peter Miller

During 2025 there have been many positive developments in the Church Community, which is St Peter's, Asby encompassing the settlements of Great and Little Asby and the surrounding area.

In Asby we are fortunate to have an active Parochial Church Council (PCC) which has met regularly throughout the year. PCC meetings are lively, and all members participate freely in a good discussion on matters that require a decision.

Chris Hollett has continued to develop the content and reach of Asby Matters (AM) and together with able proofreaders has produced an essential Village Information publication that is well read and informative. AM is available in printed hardcopy and as an online reference file and in downloadable format.

I reported last year that we faced a challenge with the production cost of AM. I am pleased to say that the Parish Council has agreed to make an annual contribution, recognising that AM carries important village information. After an appeal to readers for discretionary donations towards the costs, gifts are being made, and its future is assured for the immediate future.

With the enthusiastic support of Mothers Union, we have maintained once a month, the 3C's (Coffee, Cake and Chat) on Saturday mornings which has been welcomed and provided an opportunity for good social contact. This will continue during 2026 when spring arrives.

The Village Barbeque in June, was hosted by the Dillon family in the garden of The Old Rectory on Sunday 15th June and brought excellent reviews particularly for the live music, which this year included a solo artist and a folk band from Kirkby Thore. Our thanks go to the hosts and the many individuals who gave of their time and talents to make the event memorable and a financial success.

During 2024, the South Aisle of the Church was reordered to provide a flexible area for a variety of village activities. The space was formed by the repositioning of the pews, back to the wall. This change has been well used for a variety of Church activities and has occasioned many positive appreciative comments.

During 2025 we have been bold and tried new forms of 'Church'. Cafe Church (Food for Thought) is being developed as a regular monthly gathering over hot food which is proving popular and attracting fresh faces. To help fund this venture, we received £250 from the Seedbed venture, operated by the Carlisle Diocese.

We are also trialing a blend of Meditation with gentle yoga as a way of bringing peace to busy lives.

These activities, along with the more established 3C's Cafe, are examples of what is possible with the change to the layout of the South Aisle of St Peter's. All these initiatives are good examples of the Church reaching out to the community.

Since the unwelcome departure of Rev Fran Parkinson, early in the year, Rev Andrew Burrell, supported by Joanna Burgess, his part-time administrative assistant, has worked hard to meet the needs of the extensive Benefice he serves. As a thank you to Fran, we were able to present her with a small cross made locally by Stuart Marston, out of old wood from the Lychgate that was recently renovated. Fran was over the moon with this gift and was delighted that its small portable nature means she can use it for home visits, perhaps when she is serving communion to people at home.

Led by the Archdeacon Rev Ruth Newton thoughts are being developed about the future needs of the Benefice and the form of ministry that might be possible to start to meet the needs of the residents. Inevitably this will lead to the question of how to fund the necessary work. The discussions will continue throughout the coming months.

Over Christmas our services were well attended the highlight being the annual Christmas Eve Carol Service when the Church was filled by the sound of some 160 voices, standing room only and we were delighted to welcome many unfamiliar faces and young people.

The Church is an important symbol of our witness to the village, prominently situated in the heart of Asby. Many people, some of whom are not regular worshippers, support the work of our Church in so many ways, and we give thanks for their quiet commitment.

The Church community is keen to continue to try a variety of worship formats and goes forward with confidence in the future.

Asby Churches Together Fellowship Group

We continue to meet, fortnightly and welcome folk of any denomination-or none-for an evening of fellowship, singing and discussion. Numbers are low and we hope that the variety of several different forms of worship and participation now happening locally might encourage others to join for more, deeper consideration of 'religious' subjects, while the exchange of views and understanding of the themes chosen for discussion at Fellowship is usually interesting and stimulating.

This year began by looking at the early days of Christ's life, while currently we are discussing the Beatitudes (St Marks gospel chapter 5) - one at a time!

Our grateful thanks and appreciation to Revd. Andrew Burrell, Donald Marston, Jane Morris and our hosts Pat and John Bevan for their time, care and thoughts as they lead our contemplations.

St Peter's Outreach

Asby Endowed School (AES): We have continued to work with the school in various ways during 2025 and were delighted that the children decorated a church window at both Easter and Christmas. The PCC was again pleased to present the children with small individual Easter eggs which come with an appropriate story and activity booklet.

The school continued to be privileged to have regular visits from Andi of NISCU (Northern Inter-Schools Christian Union) who has amazing art ideas for the children to carry out in relation to biblical topics: she master-minded the collaborative work of Class 1 (enormous Wise Men!) and the individual artwork by Class 2 for their Christmas window.

Assisted by intern Eve Brett, the Rev Andrew Burrell led an appropriate proactive Easter service, and Eve, together with Karen Royle, later in the year celebrated St Peter's Day with the children making use of the now open-and-carpeted area in the south aisle.

At the end of the summer term, we said 'Goodbye and thank you' to headteacher, Michelle Clark, with whom we had worked for many years. In September we welcomed her replacement, Andy Liles, whose first active link with St Peter's was to lead a small group of pupils in song at our Harvest Festival.

On Remembrance Day the school had planned to hold a short commemoration around the Commonwealth War Grave in the churchyard, but the weather dictated otherwise. So instead, use was made of the south aisle for a thoughtful time led by Mr Isles. The children had prepared illustrations of poppies and 'thankyous for freedom to ...': these were displayed in our 'memorial' window near the pulpit for all to see.

In December, Christmas Story Sacks were taken home again to set out and share the story with family members. The now traditional Christingle service was held in church led by Denise Frisby with headteacher support. This was very well-attended by parents and members of Mothers' Union who also provided refreshments.

We are delighted to say that plans are already in place for further links with the children and the RE curriculum and we look forward to continued liaison with, and support from, Andy Isles and his staff.

Asby Lunchers (previously known as Diners): Renaming this monthly lunch facility in the village pub, even with extra PR, didn't raise the numbers managing to attend. This meant the event was no longer financially viable for the Three-Greyhounds, and reluctantly we agreed it should be discontinued. Thanks are due to Sam and Phil for their hospitality, and especially for being an outlet for the sales of the Asby Calendar for 2026 which was completely sold out.

Upper Eden Food Bank: The collection point in St Peter's for groceries for the Upper Eden Food Bank has continued to be available: contributions have come in steadily.

Recycling spectacles and batteries: The collection of unwanted spectacles and used household batteries continued: the battery collection is made in collaboration with the school.

Great and Little Asby Mothers' Union

The Asby branch of the Mothers' Union now comprises 12 members and regular "friends" with Sheila Braithwaite, Carole Cozens and Denise Frisby continuing as Chair, Treasurer and Programme Organiser respectively. Many thanks go to Wendy Fairey for her five years' service as Branch Secretary. She has now gradually stepped away from those duties but remains a full member.

We are an active branch in our 66th year. The programme for 2025 included five meetings with speakers; Pat Bevan on the Wycliffe Bible Translators, Gareth Cozens with a brief history of the Thames River Police and his role in that service, Shelley Murphy on Breath Counselling who taught us how to breathe properly, Steve and Diane Blenkinsop on life as a Submariner in the Royal Navy and the impact that had on marriage and family life and also Keith Cooper who provided a running commentary on the history and features as he guided us around the east of our village.

Our annual church service was held at St. Peter's and was lay led. We attended Deanery services to celebrate Lady Day hosted by the Shap Branch and Advent hosted by the Bolton Branch. Social events included a meal out at The Bay Horse, Winton, lunch at The Pot Place north of Penrith followed by a walk from the A66 to the now disused church of St. Ninnian's (Ninekirks) near Brougham and an "at home" Christmas get-together after carols around the village Christmas tree.

For action and outreach, the Branch has continued to provide refreshments for school services and monthly "3Cs" (coffee, cake and chat) mornings in church from March to May and July to September and at the Open Garden event at Harlea House in June where funds were raised for Dementia Research UK. The Branch would like to extend its thanks to all our Parish Community who support us in all our activities throughout the year.

Safeguarding

Our Parish Safeguarding Officer is Mr Peter Miller.

Church Policy and Guidance

All parishes are required to have agreed a formal statement of adoption of the House of Bishops 'Promoting a Safer Church: safeguarding policy statement', and of Church of England safeguarding policy and guidance.

Safeguarding has been on the agenda of all PCC meetings. The Safeguarding Officer has always reported to the PCC and would have brought to their attention any matters that were of concern. As a PCC it is accepted that we also have an individual and collective responsibility to be mindful and aware of the well-being of both children and vulnerable adults in the Parish.

St Peter's PCC has adopted the 'Promoting a Safer Church: safeguarding policy statement', and the Church of England safeguarding policy and guidance.

However, discussions at the PCC acknowledge that standard, national, policies can never be a 'one size fits all' solution and it has therefore been suggested that there are statements within these policies that need interpreting appropriately to suit our own circumstances at St Peter's.

Each PCC member has completed the church's recommended on-line safeguard training module and domestic abuse module.

Health and Safety

St Peter's has a policy statement and maintains a Logbook & Accident Register. The PCC Members collectively and individually keep a watching brief and draw to the attention of the designated member (Peter Miller) any matters that require attention to avoid potential accidents.

The firefighting apparatus is maintained and placed in strategic locations within the Church. During 2025 there were no recorded accidents.

Financial and Fabric (Ways & Means) review

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with SORP requirements, have been examined and signed off, and are presented separately. We paid our increased Parish Offer in full.

Historically, the PCC has agreed to support two specific charities each year, with other charities added as one-offs, when required. Our two fixed recipients this year have been, British Heart Foundation and Cancer Research UK; the payment made to these charities is based on an average monthly collection. Proceeds from carol singing at the village tree, the Christmas Eve Service and other collections throughout the year, meant that, in total, we donated to six charities (in particular, the Great North Air Ambulance and Hospice at Home), as detailed in the accounts.

Our other commitments have been met in full. Full details are set out in the accompanying financial statements and attention is drawn to the notes on the accounts. As is normal, income tax on gift aid donations, and recovered under the gift aid small donations scheme, is claimed and received following the calendar year in which the relevant donations were made.

The Church furnishings and plate are included in the inventory and are formally vested in the Church Wardens in special trust (albeit at the moment those offices are vacant). Our insurance policy is maintained with Ecclesiastical Insurance. The Church assets and metal are marked (AlphaDot and SmartWater) as advised.

The fire extinguishers have been routinely maintained.

Clergy Review of the year

2025 was a very interesting year for us and, I believe, a good year. We faced many challenges together, and those challenges continue in 2026, so I'm not going to pretend that they have somehow vanished. We face many trials, but at the same time we need to focus on the most important thing, which is that we are the body of Christ.

In your APCM, you are going to discuss what it is that you want your church to look like. On our Vision Day, we had many conversations about the things we already do, which are amazing and the number of events and interactions that we have, to touch our local communities is outstanding. The Archdeacon herself went away from that meeting feeling so lifted and inspired by the work we're doing that she truly felt God was at the centre of where we are and that we are doing our best to bring God's love to the centre of our communities, wherever they may be.

We can look at things such as festivals, Christmas etc, and notice how many people still come to our churches, over 1500 people in total. Maybe they came two or three times, but 1500 people! When there's only 7000 people in the Benefice. I think this is something that we need to take seriously. God is love, and love is the thing that we as humans all search for. The things that we do, the church services, the coffee mornings, welcome in, youth work, recharge, renewal, well-being, rainbow club, and the list goes on, and they are all efforts in taking God's love into our communities. Without doubt this is what we need to continue to try and focus on in 2026 – loving our neighbour!

2025 was a challenge, there is no doubt, and the rota is definitely part of this. We are trying to look at different solutions of what that means from a Sunday service perspective. I want to emphasise something here: Church is not just something that happens on a Sunday, it's happening in our communities, in different times, in different places. These are not a path to a Sunday, they are services in their own right.

Sunday service is one way of us expressing our love for God; it is also one way of us actually offering God's love for the world, through Word and Sacrament. As you all know, the Eucharist is an extremely important part of my faith. Breaking bread together is a profoundly important event that has been at the core of the Christian community since the very beginning of the church, and I am committed to ensuring that we provide this spiritual nourishment that so many hold as essential to their Christian life.

Services are important and key to who we are; they utilise the buildings that we have entrusted to care for. From that premise, I ask you in your APCMs for 2026 to consider what it means for you to be a church in your community and consider how you use the buildings and other resources you have.

With all these challenges I am here to help and support you as much as I can, as is Joanna. Having changed the church times, we now need to see how they work out and we need your support with this. The lay-led services are as important, so please help us when we ask you to work on these and support each other. Maybe think about going beyond your parish and helping another parish lead their lay-led service. For these services we have several names on the rota, and we give thanks for all those people because they are yearning to keep God's Word alive and God's sacrament alive within our parishes. I thank you all for everything that you've done in 2025 and I look forward to working with you all.

As we continue in 2026 to do the most important thing that our faith asks us to do. Which is to love God with every fibre of our being, and our neighbour as ourselves.

Signed: 

(designation fh*st wi CLarge)

Date: 22 March 2026.