

The Parish Church of St. Christopher, Willingale



Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council

Year ending 31st December 2025

Incumbent: Parish is in Vacancy Bank:

Barclays Bank, Chelmsford,

Essex Independent Examiner: Mrs Allyson McKenna

St. Christopher's Church, Willingale

Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council for the Year Ended 31st December 2025.

Introduction

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St. Christopher's, Willingale, presents its Annual Report in accordance with the recommendations of the Church of England.

The PCC seeks to place the church at the heart of the community by promoting the principles of Christianity and supporting local people through life's significant events. All are welcome to attend services, visit the church, seek support from clergy or members, or simply be part of the church community.

Aim & Purposes

The PCC has responsibility for co-operating with the incumbent in promoting the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social, and ecumenical, within the parish. The PCC is also responsible for maintaining the fabric of St. Christopher's Church.

Objectives and Activities

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our parish community in Willingale. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions on how our services can involve all members of our community. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament.

- Worship and prayer; learning about the gospel; and developing their faith.
- Providing pastoral care for parishioners and people living in the parish.
- Supporting outreach activities led by clergy, Rev Stewart Gibbs and members of the congregation, and the refreshments and events organised by the PCC.
- To facilitate this work, it is important that we maintain the fabric of the church of St. Christopher.
- To provide a welcoming environment and a safe place for all.

Achievements and Performance

Worship and Prayer

Reverend Stewart Gibbs, who has supported the parish since August 2021, was given oversight in May 2022. The parish was formally declared in vacancy on 28th July 2022. The PCC records its sincere gratitude for Reverend Gibbs' continued voluntary leadership.

A regular pattern of services is maintained:

- 1st Sunday: Holy Communion
- 2nd Sunday: Evening Prayer
- 4th Sunday: Family Service

Average attendance:

- Holy Communion: 19
- Evening Prayer: 13
- Family Service: 19

Special services were held for Easter, Harvest, Remembrance, Mothering Sunday, St Andrew's Day, and Carol Service.

During the year:

- 1 Baptism
- 2 Weddings
- 1 Funeral, 1 Memorial Service & 1 Burial of Ashes.

As well as our regular services, we enable our community to celebrate and thank God at the milestones of the journey through life. Through baptism we thank God for the gift of life, at confirmation we welcome candidates into the joy of Holy Communion; in marriage public vows are exchanged with God's blessing, and through funeral services friends and family express their grief and give thanks for the life which is now complete in this world.

The church continues to support individuals and families at key life milestones.

Access

The church remains open daily for private prayer and welcomes many visitors, particularly due to the Essex Way footpath passing through the churchyard.

Facilities include:

- Portable wheelchair access ramp
- Hearing loop system

Pastoral Care

Reverend Gibbs and members of the congregation continue to provide pastoral support, including visiting those who are unwell or unable to attend church.

Financial Review

The bank balance at end December 2025 was £21,544.95 at the same date in 2024 it was £18,213.

Parish Share contributions were made at a reduced level in line with financial viability.

The contactless payment terminal set up in September 2021 has continued to be beneficial. £1,145.70 was received via the terminal during the year.

Full financial details are provided in the attached accounts.

Insurance

The PCC maintains insurance cover with Ecclesiastical Insurance.

General Maintenance and Care of the Fabric

Routine maintenance undertaken included:

- Servicing fire extinguishers
- PAT testing of electrical appliances
- Clearing gutters and drainage
- Managing vegetation growth
- Organ tuning

During 2022 the church was subject to quinquennial inspection with the report stating: Page 4 "The repairs carried out in the last 5 years have completed the majority of the urgent repair necessary to the church and structurally the church is in good condition.

There are some outstanding repairs required of the external finishes, but these are generally of a less urgent nature and cover the replacement of individual defective stones and localised repointing works.” And “Day-to-day maintenance of the building is of a high standard and a credit to the PCC.” During the year work was carried out to replace slate window louvers in the tower and on various of the recommendations in the quinquennial report leaving mainly window ferramenta to be addressed. A project to repair and restore the stained glass commenced development in 2023.

Maintenance of the Churchyard

Mr. Terry Barton was employed to keep the churchyard in good order and this proved to be a satisfactory arrangement, and the PCC is grateful to Mr. Barton. A grant toward churchyard maintenance is received from Willingale Parish Council. The grave marker stones were checked for stability.

Volunteers

Again, this year, Church life has been enriched by the contributions of many people notably Rev. Stewart Gibbs.

Others involved are:

1. Mr. Ray Farnall & Miss Gemma Crouchman, Verger's.
2. Organisation, provision and arrangements of flowers and decorations in St. Christopher's church co-ordinated by Mrs. Booty.
3. Provision of music for services by Mr Richard Overill, Mr. David Stokes & Mrs. Jan Cass local organists. For some services the music is provided via CDs.
4. Preparation for the services and the clearing up afterwards by members of the PCC and congregation, the Churchwardens and Verger.
5. Mrs Jacqui Donoghue for Co-ordinating church communication.
6. Mrs Densie Kerwin and many others for provision of refreshments after services.
7. Ms Sarah Goodwin or organising the Cleaning rota and the team who help keep the church clean and tidy.
8. Mr. Gordan Hone, for daily opening and closing church.
9. The bell ringers for calling parishioners to worship and marking other important events.
11. Mr Peter Davies for his work as treasurer.
12. Ms Allyson McKenna for her work as examiner of the accounts.
13. Mr Ian Kerwin for the maintenance of the church.

We wish to take this opportunity of thanking everyone involved in any way in these activities.

Policy on Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

The PCC is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. The PCC has appointed Mr Ian Kerwin as Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO).

1. We are committed, within our church community, to the safeguarding and protection of vulnerable people.
2. As a parish we have adopted the Church of England House of Bishops' Promoting a Safer Church safeguarding policy.
3. We will carefully select and train all those with any pastoral responsibility within the Church, including the use of Disclosure & Barring Service disclosures where legal or appropriate.
4. We will ensure that all those with responsibility for the care or supervision of children or vulnerable adults within our church community have satisfactorily completed all safeguarding training required by the Church of England.
5. Any disclosures shall be reported to PSO who's contact details are available in church and also on the A Church Near You website and the church's section of the Willingale village web site; also disclosures will be referred onto the Diocesan Safeguarding Team for further investigation and the PCC will co-operate with them, the police and local authority in any investigation. We will respond without delay to any disclosure or complaint received that an adult or child, whether part of our church community or not, has been subject to abuse, whether emotional or physical, co-operating with police and the local authority in any investigation.
6. We will seek to offer informed pastoral care to anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate healing ministry.
7. We will challenge any abuse of power by anyone in a position of trust.
8. We will care for and supervise any member of our church community known to have offended against a vulnerable person.
9. During the year Mr Kerwin ensured that all DBS checks were up to date. PCC member safeguarding training has been completed and is up to date for most members of the PCC, but still in progress for others.
10. Many people will have heard of the Makin report into the handling of allegations of serious abuse concerning John Smyth which led to the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the recent allegations concerning the Bishop of Liverpool, and the case of a musician who was involved with several local churches. All of this makes clear how important it is that we take all safeguarding matters very seriously. We therefore encourage anyone who has a safeguarding concern, whether concerning someone who may be a victim or someone who may be a perpetrator, to ensure that this is reported using the contact details – Mr Ian Kerwin, Telephone: 07837 170816 or Email iankerwin@btinternet.com or the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor 01245 294444.

All concerns are taken seriously and reported appropriately to diocesan authorities, police, or local services where necessary.

Structure, Governance and Management

At present there are 34 parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll.

Mr Ian Kerwin was appointed churchwarden at the 2023 annual meeting of parishioners.

The PCC is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure. The PCC is not a Registered Charity.

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. At St. Christopher's the membership of the PCC. consists of the churchwardens (one currently vacant), a Priest-in-Charge (currently vacant) and members elected by those of the congregation who are on the electoral roll. All those who attend services are encouraged to register on the electoral roll and stand for election to the PCC.

The PCC. members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish including deciding on how the funds of the PCC. are to be spent.

PCC members who have served until the date of this report were:

Mr I Kerwin
Mrs D Kerwin
Mrs J Donoghue
Miss G Crouchman
Ms S Goodwin
Mrs P Booty

The PCC met on 6 occasions.

Incumbent:	Vacant
Warden:	Mr. Ian Kerwin
Vergers:	Miss Gemma Crouchman & Mr Ray Farnell
Representative on Deanery Synod	Mr Ian Kerwin
Parish Safeguarding Officer	Mr Ian Kerwin
Electoral roll officer	Vacant

Treasurer:

Mr Peter Davies

Accounts examiner

Ms Allyson McKenna

Main Topics Discussed;

The main business considered during the year was:

1. Finance and Parish Share.
2. Parish reorganisation.
3. Restoration projects.
4. Arrangements for services including weddings and funerals.

Fund Raising

Fund raising events held throughout the year helped with towards paying full Parish Share, engaging with people, and promoting church.

The Willingale Bell Ringers contributed towards the cost of electricity.

Mayday celebrations

Church Calendar

Autumn Quiz held in October

The PCC makes full use of Gift Aid and Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme for recovery of VAT.

Figures of fundraising are within Appendix 1.

Special Events & Services

Events included:

1. To celebrate May Day there was a service, and day of traditional village activities culminating in a barbeque at the Village Hall.
2. Special services for Easter, Harvest and Remembrance took place.
3. The Carol Service was held on 14th December with readers from within the village.

The PCC seeks to use every opportunity, such as the above events, to reach out to the wider community and engage with those who do not attend services. The PCC express their gratitude to all that were involved with these special events and services.

Communications

The PCC recognises the need for good communication with the community and that nowadays people use a variety of means of communication. The church communicates via notices during services, notices boards and black boards. The church has established a WhatsApp group and an e mail group, Facebook and Instagram pages.

The PCC maintains a presence on the following web sites: A Church Near You (Willingale: St Christopher's - A Church Near You), Willingale Village web site (St Christopher's Church – Willingale Village), and National Churches Trust (Willingale St Christopher | National Churches Trust).

A photographic display of church activities is maintained in the north aisle.

Administrative Information

St. Christopher's Church is situated in Willingale. It is part of the Diocese of Chelmsford within the Deanery of Ongar & Epping Forest in the Church of England.

The correspondence address is: Miss Gemma Crouchman, 7 Manns Yard, The Village, Willingale, Essex. CM5 0TQ. (Telephone: 07850 487878)

The PCC is a charity excepted from registration with the Charity Commission.

Bankers:	Barclays
Independent Examiner/Auditor:	Mrs. A. MacKenna
Insurer:	Ecclesiastical

Signed:.....
Rev Stewart Gibbs

Date.....26/4/26

Signed:.....
Miss Gemma Crouchman (PCC Secretary)

Date.....26/4/26