

CLERGY REPORT

2025 has established and embedded our working patterns, as we have continued to work 'as if' we were a legal team with St Mary and All Saints Kidderminster, St Barnabas' Franche and Holy Trinity Trimpley. In January 2025 we held individual vision days for all six churches to understand and articulate the unique context and mission of each of our churches. We then held a Team vision day to begin to consider the ways in which we can work together for the health and sustainability of the whole team. This work has continued throughout the year, with the staff team meeting weekly, churchwardens meeting every other month and DCC and PCC treasurers meeting together regularly. We have also introduced gatherings for all our worship leaders three times a year for mutual learning, encouragement and support, and a twice-a-year thank you event for all our many volunteers.

In February 2025 we said farewell to Fr Tim Williams following his nine years of service in Kidderminster West, and to Mary. There was a special team service at Candlemas for Tim's leaving service, and a number of Kidderminster West parishioners attended Tim's licensing in St Andrew's, Ombersley. Tim remains Area Dean of the Kidderminster and Stourport Deanery, and so our clergy remain in touch with him.

The heart of our parish is our Eucharistic worship, the proclamation of the gospel and the welcoming and flourishing of God's people. In 2025 the usual seasonal round of services occurred, including an Epiphany Carol Service, Lent and Easter services, Thy Kingdom Come, Harvest, All Souls' and Remembrance, Advent and Christmas. Each of the church congregations and DCCs have worked hard with the clergy and PCC to worship well, do outreach, social and fundraising events, and support one another. We have been impressed this year with the willingness of congregations to try new things during the vacancy; these have included altering the evening service pattern at St John's to allow for more variety and planning to trial a service of Morning Prayer each month at Holy Innocents' in 2026. We have been pleased to welcome clergy and Lay Ministers from the wider team to lead worship in our churches during 2025 and have benefitted greatly from their wisdom and commitment.

At St Peter's, the 11.00am Sunday Service pattern now includes a monthly Eucharist, café church and two Morning Prayer services, and the variety is appreciated by those who attend. On occasions throughout the year there has been live music in worship, and there are always crafts for children. Regular social and community events have occurred through the year, including the weekly breakfast morning, drumming group, choir and sea shanty group, Coppice Community Music nights, and the monthly community market. St Peter's has operated as a Warm Space throughout the winter months, with food and activities being offered free of charge each Thursday and now hosts a community fridge and Foodshare, which is frequently in use and successfully distributing food to those who need it. The building is regularly hired by other groups and hosted a successful 'Seaside at Home' summer activity day in July. In September, St Peter's marked its 70th anniversary of serving the people of Birchen Coppice, with a special Café Church celebration and a number of artistic projects including a community rag rug, clay artwork, and the continuation of the mural in church.

At St John's in February 2025 we launched a New Worshipping Community, *POP-up Church*, alongside St John's CE School and the iSingPOP organisation, which is successfully offering worship opportunities to many new families. Coffee, Craft and Chat, the monthly Social Club and Tiny Tots continue to offer support and welcome. We were invited to St John's Day, a new annual worship event at St John's School, and have committed to working with the school towards a Church-School Partnership application. The refectory space is regularly in use, and 2025 saw several social and outreach events including a bring-and-share harvest lunch, and Mothering Sunday afternoon tea with prayer and outreach offered in the churchyard with those visiting graves and memorials. The choir have been active, singing regularly in worship, and alongside others in services for joint choirs, particularly our new, more formal, Choral Evensong. Plans for a Sensory Garden area to encourage community engagement were paused during 2025, awaiting more time and volunteers.

At Holy Innocents, progress has continued with plans for re-ordering the building to make it healthy and sustainable for the future. In 2025, planning permission was obtained and an initial faculty proposal submitted. The discovery of a badger sett behind the church may cause further issues along the way. We have continued to work alongside community partners, taking an active role in a Health Partnership group for Foley Park, working alongside other community, council, health and wellbeing organisations. Fundraising events have included the monthly Saturday coffee mornings, and monthly Wednesday coffee mornings, plus a Folk evening, harvest supper, poppy cascade display, and Christmas hamper.

Teaching and preaching have continued in 2025. In Lent we ran an evening course based on the Church of England's Lent materials 'Living Hope', plus a Wednesday morning sermon and discussion series considering aspects of the character of Jesus. We held a week-long Advent retreat, using the church buildings for silent prayer and sharing in liturgy and reflection on the Church of England's theme of 'JOY'. We continue to find opportunities to offer different types of services, and during 2025 have held Celtic evening services, BCP evensong, Messy Church, Café Church, Family Friendly worship, POP-up Church, and healing Eucharists.

We continue to work ecumenically with other churches in Kidderminster, notably welcoming Foley Park Methodist Church congregation to Holy Innocents' Patronal service and joining them for their Covenant Service and working with Churches Together in Kidderminster on the Easter Trail. We work with our friends in other Deanery Churches, joining them for prayer during Thy Kingdom Come and our annual Deanery Service, which was held this year outside at St Andrew's Ombersley. In 2025, Holy Innocents' and St Peter's took part in *Sustfest* – a town-wide sustainability festival – with special events, fairs and eco-church services.

In terms of Occasional Offices, team clergy took 20 funerals, two weddings and 13 baptisms in our churches in 2025, including one adult baptism. The Team held a Confirmation service in July, bringing one adult candidate and five young people for confirmation. The ministry of pastoral care is shared with Carol Watkins and Liz Littler who take communion to a number of parishioners not able to get to church.

Liz also ensures a presence in The Gables care home. In September 2025, Sue Cousins was licensed in Worcester Cathedral as a Licensed Lay Minister and will serve on our church rota initially before transferring to Wales where she now lives. We were pleased to welcome a placement student from The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham in 2025, Kerstin MacDonald, who took part in a variety of services and events alongside her training, and very much enjoyed her placement.

Ministry to and with children, young people and families has developed this year, continuing with our two regular playgroups, Tiny Tots and Little Fishes, the weekly Praise Maze family service, and the youth group run in partnership with the YMCA. Messy Church in 2025 was held on 13 occasions, across St Peter's and St John's, with a regular congregation developing. The Children's Festival in the last week of the summer holidays, entitled '*Under Construction*,' was this year expanded to offer free events across all six of our churches. We offered a range of community and faith-based events and reached 140 children and their families. We are grateful to all volunteers from the congregations who assist with this. Team clergy have provided weekly assemblies in St John's CE School and St Catherine's CE School, monthly assemblies in Birchen Coppice Academy, Foley Park School and St Oswald's CE School, and welcomed children regularly into church for tours and visits. St John's Church continues to work closely with St John's CE Primary, offering support with worship and the RE Curriculum, and regularly welcoming children, teachers and parents to St John's.

Mission and outreach continue to be a priority, both in person and online. Our mailing lists, Facebook followers and YouTube subscribers have grown in 2025. It is always a delight when new people begin attending worship, and we welcome all those who have joined us in 2025. We continue to work on our buildings, finding ways to become more efficient and eco-friendly in line with our eco-church status. We are aware of our commitment to safeguarding and continue to update our policies and provide access to safeguarding training. In November we held 'Safeguarding Sunday' across all six churches, reminding the whole community of how to respond and who to contact if they have safeguarding concerns. In 2025 a small group from across the team worked alongside Ellie Jones from the diocesan office to create a new website for the team, which was launched in

Advent 2025. We have also begun a weekly online mini-service of prayer and reflection, '*Woven Worship*,' since the decision was taken in 2025 to cease live-streaming worship on a regular basis.

Throughout 2025 a small group has continued to meet with a Mission Accompanier, Susan Blagden, in order to formulate some priorities for mission and produce a Health and Sustainability plan for the parish. These meetings came to an end during 2025, with Laura continuing to work on the Health and Sustainability plan, and some ideas and projects to continue moving forward. Laura also meets with Susan fortnightly for coaching.

In the Diocese and wider church, Team clergy have continued to offer cover where possible at various churches in the Deanery, including Fairfield, Broome and Wolverley. In addition to their parish roles, Laura serves on the Diocesan Deliverance Ministry Team and is a mentor to new incumbents in their first post of responsibility as well as being Guardian of the Defibrillator at Holy Innocents. As Honorary Canon at Worcester Cathedral, Canon Alex is involved with various events at the Cathedral and was part of the process for the formal nomination of Bishop Hugh Nelson, the new Bishop of Worcester, who will join the diocese in January 2026. She is also involved with offering Celtic style services with a team in the south of our Deanery. Chris Betson serves in wedding and funeral ministry, plus is now regularly taking Sunday and Wednesday services and offering service cover outside the parish. All the Team clergy are committed to attending teaching and ministerial development events provided by the Diocese. We are grateful too to our retired clergy, Robert Jones and Hayward Osbourne, for their regular work for our team.

The clergy team would like to thank all those who serve and volunteer in so many roles, committees and jobs within the parish. Our thanks to the church wardens for their work and support, to all our Licensed and Authorised Lay ministers, and to the church organists, choir and musicians for their contribution to our worship.

Looking to the future, we plan to begin putting together individual church profiles in 2026 and then work with a small group to draft our parish profile. Following this, we plan to hold a parish-wide open meeting to consult and feedback on the profile, looking for consensus on our new team vision, structure and the person specification for our new Rector. We'll continue to build on the friendships that are growing across our churches and focus on noticing where there are signs of growth in faith or God at work, putting our energies here. There are so many possibilities for the future in this parish, and this is a really exciting time. We plan to pace ourselves, focus on worship and welcome, and be open to new possibilities for this coming year.