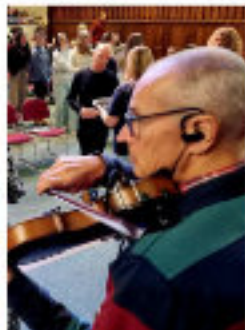




ANNUAL REPORT 2025



RECTOR'S REPORT

Rev Sam Cheesman



Last year the APCM was ably chaired by the then Lay Chair of PCC, a clear sign of St James' parish being in a period of vacancy. Interviews followed and the patrons presented a candidate to the Bishop who licensed, inducted and installed him on the 6th September 2025.

I feel privileged to write one year later as that candidate and now as your Rector.

The year has been marked for me by subtle change, joy, opportunity, excitement and challenge. Sentiments I think have been shared more widely across the congregations.

Below I will highlight some of the main matters of consideration from this year past and the year/s to come.

Congregations – “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.”

Our two Sunday services are in good heart from my perspective and filled with positivity. The sermon series on Colossians seems to have been very well received and many small groups have joined in with further study and discussion which has added much depth.

Some changes to the service have been implemented, such as returning the Eucharistic Prayer and distribution of Communion to the end of the service and



making sure the first third of the service is truly suitable for all ages.

Church attendance has increased over the last 6 months but until we have reliable data over a longer period of time we will not be able to confirm what the clear picture looks like.

The Wednesday morning service continues to be in good health in various ways and is a service particularly marked by wonderful fellowship and pastoral care. It is a joy to be at. We most usually use the lectionary readings for the day and I lead 3 services out of 4 with the 4th Wednesday being led by one of our capable LLMs.

Without Borders has become well supported in numbers and now seeks to grow into maturity as a service in its own right. With the right support and capacity in place it can offer something very much in line with how we worship at St James but with a slightly different vibe at a different time than the morning services.

We have had a number of requests for baptism from across our congregations – children, young people, adults, people new to faith and people deciding now is the right time. We have also had a couple of requests for renewal of baptismal vows and also for confirmation. This is all very exciting and have had baptisms in February, March, April and May. Praise God.

Visit to King's Highway Church – “There is one body, but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body.”

At the end of January/start of February I was delighted to be able to visit our link parish in Eldoret. It was extremely useful and massively joyful for a number of reasons:

-

I was able to link with the church leadership, particularly Henry and Fred who currently run the

church and church-plant. Getting to know my fellow ministers was lovely and important.

- Visiting the Church School was a great opportunity to see all that had recently been put in for them by St James' and others, as well as what they still very much need was good.
- Seeing some of the ministries, people and places first hand will make my prayers for them much more meaningful.
- Preaching on Sunday was great fun.

We will now continue to strengthen the link under Sam Johnson's leadership, and particularly focus on how we impact each other's worshipping life in the day-to-day. Many people have asked about a larger trip to visit our brothers and sisters in Kenya. The leadership and people at King's Highway are desperate for us to do so and we can now look at organising one that best serves them.

Half Penny Meadows – "see I am doing a new thing, do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness, new springs in the desert places"

The new houses being built on the old Standen Estate will eventually see almost 2000 new people live in that part of our parish.

The Christmas Carol Service on the estate was our first event on the estate and was a joy with 140 attending; it felt as though there was an open door for us to do more. Becky designed a fantastic family treasure hunt around the estate over Valentine's weekend and into Half Term which focused on the love of God. The next event being worked on



at time of writing is a family worship together style event on the afternoon of Palm Sunday.

The hope is still to have a worshipping community at the school which meets consistently on a Sunday afternoon from September onwards but have more work to do on leadership capacity to allow this to happen well and in a sustainable way. It might not be weekly to start but could be fortnightly or monthly. Please pray for this.

Staffing – "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters..."

Helen Potts stepped back her hours as Childrens and Families Minister and the PCC chose to back fill her hours by employing a Children and Families Worker. Becky Wright came on board to fulfil these and presently has a focus on: the after school Bible club, the work on Half Penny Meadows and supporting family faith at home.

The PCC have also supported the employment of a Worship Leader to be paid for using a specific gift kindly given for ministry in St James. My hope is that this person will not simply help us to continue worship as congregations, but will lead us in mission using music and the arts.

A new vision – "Hear, Oh Israel"

The current vision document comes to an end at the conclusion of this year and it is therefore my plan to have a new vision which will take us through to 2033 - 2000 years since the death of our Lord.

It is not my vision which I wish to discover, or even that of the wider leadership of the church. My hope is that God's Vision for St James' church for the next few years is made clear to us and a period of discernment is currently underway to attempt to do so. This has included a wide and thorough period of consultation which has gathered as many opinions/interpretations as possible, followed by a PCC away day to see if the church leadership was hearing the same or different things, and now I will work with a smaller group to determine how to turn what has been heard into a vision which impacts our structures, mission and ministry. Advent Sunday 2026 will be the day we hope to share the new vision with the church.

CHURCH WARDEN'S REPORT

Graham Haldane

As I write this in February 2026, it could be too easy to forget how important a transitional year 2025 was for St James' Clitheroe. Sam Cheesman has settled in really well as our new Rector, and we have settled with him, but this time last year Mark Pickett had just retired, and we were entering the hopes and unsettling period of a vacancy. Vacancies can be challenging for many churches, but thanks must go on so many levels and to so many people for how we came through it so well. We had supportive advice and guidance from the diocese, Trustee Patrons and PCC reps who worked well together, a PCC and Leadership Team who helped steer us steadily through the period, and a faithful staff team who carried on fulfilling their roles 'above and beyond' during the uncertainty they faced along with the whole congregation. A range of creative and well-planned social events also helped to maintain and develop our bonds as a community and welcome new people to it.

When we started our 'Year of Prayer' last January (see separate report), one of the key elements at the beginning was to express gratitude, both for all we have as a faith community in St James', but also for all that Mark and Della expressed through their ministry among us for over 21 years. We were so sad to see them leave, but they were given a great send off over a final weekend, and we know that the Holy Spirit still has his hand on them and will use them in new ways in the seasons of life to come.

It was great to see so many people involved in the prayer and consultation process that helped to inform our Parish Profile, which in turn attracted a good field of candidates for the role of Rector. With a thorough process in place, it was all the more a joy to see Sam emerge through it as the one we felt God was calling at this time to lead St James'. Sam comes with a great history in his various roles, including as a priest in Blackpool, school chaplain in Lancaster and most recently Chaplain to the Bishop of Blackburn. We welcome Mairi and Lydia too and look forward as we enter the next stage in the history, present and future of St James' Church.

Prayer in all its forms, individually and collectively, will continue to underpin our mission and all that we do. Mission is also going to be central as we move forward, and it's been so exciting to see the beginning of new things developing

in the Higher Standen estate. Outreach work in various schools continues and develops, many new children, youth and families are connecting with our various groups, and we are regularly seeing new people joining our worship services on Sundays. With the Love Clitheroe BBQ morphing this year into June's 'Live at the Castle' and 'Church at the Castle' and the parish mission weekend coming up in September, these will be just some of the missional highlights to come in 2026. As Blackburn Diocese sums it up in their headline for 2026, and Sam has preached so consistently since starting, it's 'All About Jesus'.



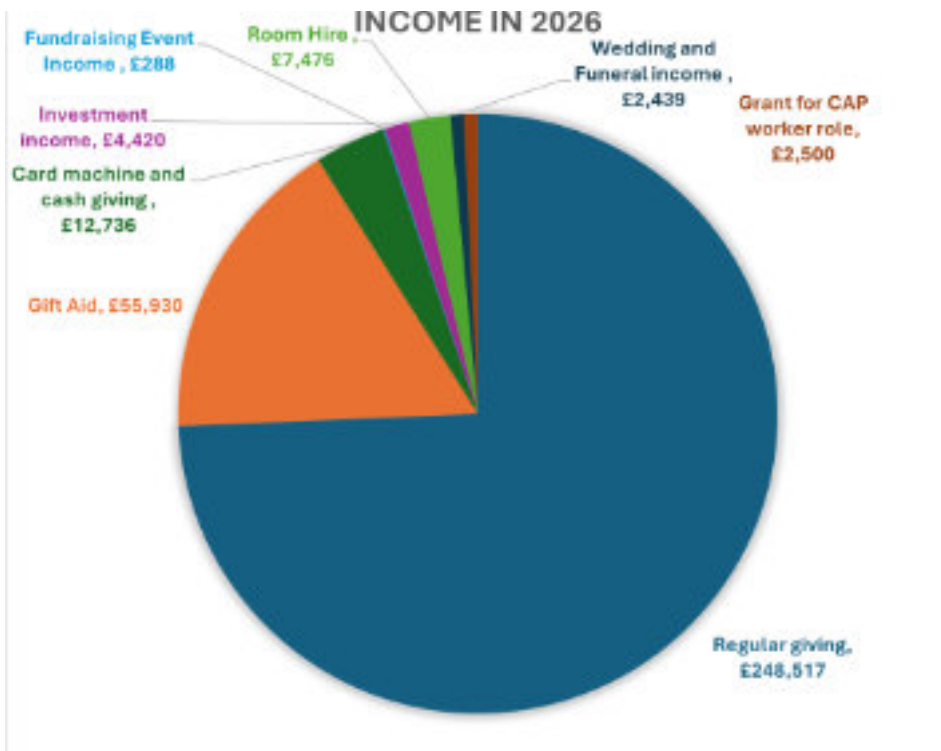
FINANCE REPORT

Naomi Lynas

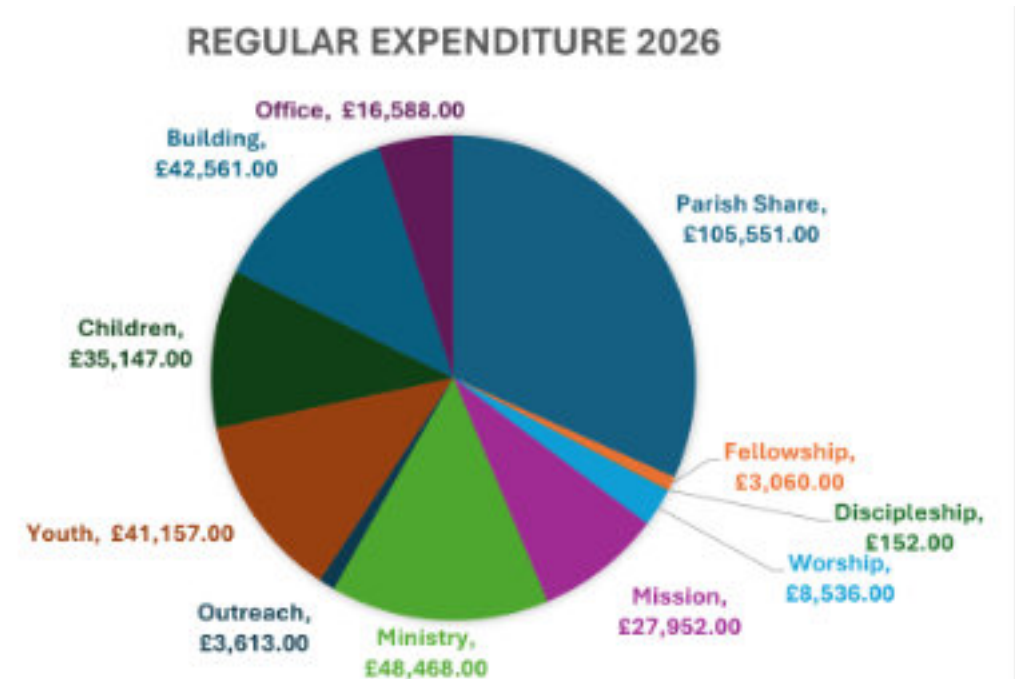
While 2025 was quite a turbulent year in terms of church leadership, it was a very steady year in terms of finance. Our income had increased significantly towards the end of 2024, and this increase was maintained throughout 2025. This is really wonderful, testament to the faithful and generous giving of St James'.

We also had an increase in terms of income to our investments, due to higher interest rates, and our overall income was over our budget by £10,400. Our total income for the year was £334,306, and £317,183 of this was from regular giving, cash or card giving and Gift Aid.

One thing that is interesting is that our Gift Aid amount was slightly lower than expected. If you're able to Gift Aid, please do check that you have completed the Gift Aid declaration – it allows us to claim 25% extra on your giving at no cost to you!



While our income was higher than expected, our expenditure was broadly in line with expected spending. Increased attendance mean we spent more on fellowship and catering, and we had a big expenditure for Mark Pickett's retirement party in February. However, this was offset by a number of factors. There was a lower than expected expenditure in Children and Families ministry due to a slight gap between Helen reducing her hours and Becky joining the staff team. Our gas bills were lower than expected, and tight controls on office spending meant we ended the year in a surplus in terms of our regular spending.



That surplus (£11,000) will be added to our Mission Giving pot for distribution in 2026, and it has been wonderful to see God's faithfulness once again.

We received two wonderful legacies and an incredible gift in 2025.

Many of you will remember Barbara Dennett. She left St James' church £115,000 from her estate, which we will put towards capital projects, and I'm sure there will be much more communication about this forthcoming. We also received a legacy from the estate of Mary Stott of £18,000, which has also been allocated towards capital projects.

We completed two significant works in 2025, both funded partially by previous legacies. The North Stained Glass Window was re-leaded in early 2025 after having been boarded up for a number of years. It's really wonderful to see it in its full glory, having been completed re-leaded and with a number of pieces repainted and replaced.

The East Window had also suffered from some damage, and was repaired in Spring 2025. The majority of this was covered by insurance.

The other big piece of capital work we had done in 2025 was a complete refurbishment of the toilets and vestry (although the majority of the vestry work was completed at the end of 2024). This came to a total of £40,000, and eventually included replacing the vestry flooring where we had dry rot. This was almost entirely funded by legacies. These significant gifts have made a huge difference to the fabric and longevity of our building and ultimately to the impact of our mission.

Finally, as Sam started his ministry at St James,' we received a wonderful one-off gift of £80,000, to be used to bless his time here. What an incredible act of generosity and grace! Again, this has been set aside but we are not planning to spend this on capital projects.

As ever, I am extremely grateful to Jonathan Frank for his steady reporting and scrutiny of our finances, and to Sue Clark for the day to day book-keeping. If you have any questions about our finances or your own giving, please do get in touch.

FABRIC REPORT

Andrew Stevens

Over the last twelve months the most significant work on the church fabric has been the complete renovation of the toilets. This comprised new tanked floors, new sanitary ware and cubicles and re-decoration. The gents were modified to replace the urinal with a third WC and the hand basin was re-positioned. Finally, a new fold down baby changing table was added to the disabled toilet to allow dads and wheelchair users to care for babies after the necessary elimination of the old changing table in the gents. The cost of this work was covered from legacies that had previously been left to church.

The other major work in the last year was an example of God's amazing provision for our church here at St James'. After the retirement of Mark and as our parish entered our recent vacancy the Diocese decided to sell the old rectory on Woone Lane and buy a new modern house for our new incumbent Sam and his family. This means that the PCC will no longer be responsible for a large, difficult to heat and maintain out dated rectory. However we have had to keep an eye of the old rectory through half a year until the Diocese managed to sell it, this included keeping the heating ticking over through the cold months to ensure no pipe bursts and once into early summer keeping the grass cut and the garden tidy, thank you to everyone who has helped Naomi, Graham and I with this task.

As a PCC I think we can now say that after a few years of hard planning and expense we have got the fabric of the church in a decent condition for the coming year and apart from the odd small maintenance job we can look forward to a comfortable year in our lovely church building. Looking further into the future I think it will be obvious to everyone that it is, at times, a tight squeeze. This is due to increased numbers of regular worshippers, the increased staff team and the amazing increase in regular youth attenders both midweek and at the second Sunday service. Please be assured that this dilemma is under constant review by your PCC who will keep you fully informed of any concrete plans and proposals as we continue to grow God's kingdom here at St James'.

ST JAMES' YEAR OF PRAYER

Graham Haldane

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

With this verse from Ephesians 3:20 as our starting point, we set off on an adventure in prayer in 2025. Building on the encouragement that all churches receive to pray during a vacancy, we felt we should have a focused and varied ‘Year of Prayer’ that would include not only praying through the vacancy process and for our new Rector, but praying for all aspects of church life and our wider mission.

At the heart of the Year of Prayer was a regular rhythm of Sunday evening and Wednesday morning prayer. Thanks go to all of those who engaged with and led these sessions, particularly those core people who committed themselves for the year. We must never underestimate the immediate and long-term effects of those prayers.

In the first months of the year, our focus was on Gratitude – for all that we appreciate about the life of St James’ Church and for Mark and Della’s years of ministry among us – and Dreaming Big. The verse in Ephesians above helped us to think and pray about what church could look like and what we were looking for in our new Rector. A series of consultation meetings, including prayer, contributed ultimately to our collected thoughts in the Parish Profile.

In addition to the weekly pattern, various prayer events were held. On a Saturday in April, people from all ages joined in the Great St James Parish Prayer Walk. The church was available during the day for ‘non-walkers’ to pray, families and younger children walked in the morning from the church via the castle to Turret House, then in the afternoon a mainly adult group walked the remainder of the parish boundary, which was far more extensive and rural than many expected. We held a Holy Week of Prayer in April, on the theme of Living Hope, joined in the Global 24/7 Week of Prayer in September, and finished the year with an Advent Half Night of Prayer in December.



Our indoor prayer labyrinth with the outline of the parish taped to the floor was a hit - and even made it onto the cover of the Church Times!



The labyrinth in the Castle Grounds provided more opportunities for contemplative prayer.

It's also been good to know that people from St James are engaging with prayer in many other ways: individually, as families, in small groups, corporately in intercessory prayer on Sundays, and in joining with other Christians, for example at Turret House of Prayer and in the growing powerhouse that is Pray for Lancashire.

In 2026, our emphasis will be on encouraging everyone to pray in many different contexts and situations, but we will be aiming to have at least one prayer 'event' each month, including e.g. prayer walks, prayer weeks/nights and joining in broader prayer opportunities such as Pray for Lancashire.

2026 was also a 'Year of Prayer for Growth and Renewal' across Blackburn Diocese, and the following prayer concluded the majority of our meetings and events:

*God of mission,
Who alone brings growth to your church
Send your Holy Spirit to give
Vision to our planning,
Wisdom to our actions,
Joy to our worship,
And power to our witness.*

*Help our church to grow
In numbers,
In spiritual commitment to you,
And in service to our local community,*

*Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen*

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Helen Potts

As I look back on another year, once again I'm so grateful for so many blessings.

- God always giving immeasurably more than I can imagine.
- God's promise that I do all things through his might and strength and not mine, turning my weakness into strength.
- The prayerful support and encouragement of my God family at St James' Church.
- God's provision and empowering of an amazing team of volunteers that serve faithfully. They are a blessing and it fills me with joy to plan and lead with these incredibly gifted and creative people, who are such wonderful reflections of Jesus to the children and families they serve.



I want to share their voices in this report, along with thoughts from the individuals who are hopefully blessed by each part of the ministry and so you will find many quotes dotted through this report.

Kingdom Kids

What a wonderful year we have! We are so blessed to have many new families engaging with Kingdom Kids and Tiddlers. We have a strong group of Year 5 and Year 6 children who are growing in faith, ask incredible questions as they think out faith and are a real joy to be with when they pray.

One of our challenges going forward is that we have a really small cohort of Year 3 and 4 children; we are praying faithfully for more children of this age.

There are challenges as each week we strive to meet the needs of all our children, those more established in faith and those new to faith or growing in faith. Finding ways of presenting Jesus in engaging ways to ensure every child leaves the morning sessions having an opportunity to have an encounter with God. We

always include extra activities, a quiet book corner, sensory toys, LEGO, playdoh to help meet this variety of needs.



Each week is a blessing, but don't take my word for it...

'Kingdom Kids doesn't settle for a quick Bible story and then free play, every session is prayerfully prepared and delivered meaning the children come away with new knowledge of God which in turn furthers their relationship with Him. As we sit as a family having our lunch on a Sunday, the kids love sharing what they've learned and the fun they've had.' Parent

'Kingdom Kids is fun and it helps me learn about Jesus'. Child

'I like playing the games and learning about Jesus'. Child

'The leaders are supportive and everything is faith based, backing up all we do at home as a family'. Parent

Kingdom Tiddlers

Tiddlers is our preschool group and creche. It is a safe and fun space for these youngest of children to start encountering the love of God. We firmly believe that no child, no tot, is too young to know and feel the love of God and this year we have continued to ensure this happens by always rethinking and evaluating, by prayerfully preparing materials.

Each week the children follow the same routine, beginning with a snack and simple story, then games, toys, craft and the special Tiddler prayer and praise time.

Every Sunday these wonderful tots have heard God's word, prayed, praised and encountered God's love through the love of their leaders.



Each week is a blessing, but don't take my word for it...

'Tiddlers allows my child to hear another voice and for me it allows me to sit in church and hear the teaching.' Parent.

Disciples Stepping Out (Kid's Council)

Our Kids' Council have had a busy year planning activities that they can invite their friends and other children to; activities that allow them to have fun and share wonderful truths about Jesus. In March they organised a Silent Disco, where every ticket was sold! Games in the garden where lots of families had an amazing time and the Bible Breakfast in January, because they wanted to tell their friends about the Bible!



So many blessings, but don't take my word for it...

'I love having lunch with the others!'

It is a wonderful opportunity to make things happen in the life of the church.

'It is really satisfying to see our hard work happen and for people to enjoy what we have planned.'

Little Fishes

Little Fishes continues to be a thriving community on a Monday morning. Every week there are new friends, nearly always coming on the recommendation of another family. The group is a warm and welcoming play group for under-fives and their carers. We love to provide a relaxing and accepting safe space, our prayer being, that Jesus is reflected in this warm hospitality. We always pray a prayer



of blessing over the families as they leave and we love to celebrate important festivals. We dressed up at Christmas to tell the Nativity story, we will tell the Easter story in an age-appropriate way and hunt Easter eggs, we have a sailing off into the sunset pirate party to celebrate and pray for our school starters. WE love to invite the families to Popcorn and to church.

So many blessings, but don't take my word for it...

'It's a wonderful that so many families come and are known by name, that it is such a welcoming and creative space.' Team member

It is a joy to be involved and chat to the lovely parents and grandparents.' Team member.

Waymakers (formerly Rockin)

Rockin was wonderful and had been an amazing blessing over the years. However, we were facing many challenges and so we felt that we needed a bit of a reboot and revamp. So, in the Autumn we felt it right as a team to spend time doing just this. The result was a name change, so now we are 'Waymakers'.



Waymakers is somewhere children can feel safe, loved and accepted. A place they can discover more about Jesus, have fun and meet friends. Our Vision is to create an irresistible, spirit filled environment, where children can journey with Jesus, deepen their faith and discover their spiritual inheritance as children of God. A key feature at Waymakers are the prayer stations. We all love the prayer stations, introduced instead of discussion groups, with the aim of helping the children respond to the Bible story of the night.

So many blessings, but don't take my word for it...

'I adore Waymakers! It's wonderful to sow seeds and see our children flourish and we are seeing it happen!!!!' Leader

Popcorn

What a year we've had leading Popcorn. It has been wonderful to welcome so many families and help them explore God's truths in fun filled activities as families together. There is a great team of leaders who share the planning and facilitating. Each session starts with a creatively told Bible story, followed by

activities including science experiments, craft, painting, prayer spaces, cold cooking and physical challenges. The UV spy pens have become a regular and well-loved feature for decoding Bible verses; we all love Claire's reflections stood around the altar together at the end, at the end of one session we had children reading Bible verses over their parents...so special!

So many blessings, but don't take my word for it...



It is wonderful to see the development of relationships between us and the families.

It is a blessing to see the engagement of the families with the quiet reflections at the end of the sessions. Leader

Popcorn provides a wonderful opportunity to welcome families from our local schools into church (many of who do not attend a Sunday service) and to pass on

our faith to them in fun and engaging ways.

I love that we are talking about Jesus, not just to the children, but to the whole family. Leader

School

Our links with school are stronger and broader than ever. Becky, Sam and me all go into school to take assemblies, lead clubs and take RE lessons. We've loved welcoming the school to church for special services, seasonal productions and for RE lessons.

In the Autumn we ran a prayer space in the new building to soak the new classrooms in prayer. Soon we will be sharing Easter Prayer boxes

St James' School afterschool club, Bible Diggers and Excavate, continue to be popular with 20+ children enrolled for each. Children continue to be excited to learn more about God and talk with confidence about Him. Parents receive a slip of paper sharing the session's story, to facilitate conversations of faith at home, and have been appreciative of this.

'Helen and Becky bring such positive energy to our school, sharing Jesus through their work and example...we are really privileged to have them'. Headteacher.

More highlights this year...

Light Night

This year we wanted to take Light Night out to the community. We wanted to take the light of Jesus out and let the light of Jesus shine bright on what can be a dark, dark night. It was amazing! A real wow, 'immeasurably more' night. There was such an amazing sense of being light bringers in a dark world. People getting involved and loving being involved. Hot chocolate on the church steps with lovely friendly faces engaging with passes by, some who came into the church We set up a trail around church family houses, who had stained glass windows displayed and lit up with messages of hope. They sat outside giving out sweets and Bible verses, being lovely to people going past. When I walked around the trail, it was amazing how these lights in the community stood out so brightly in the darkness.



And...the Kids Council helped plan and organise the event.



So many blessings, but don't take my word for it...

'People who don't come to our church are coming into our church! It's so exciting!' Kid's Council member

Christingle

Last year we were overcrowded, so we decided to move to two Christingle services. We were of course a bit concerned that they would both seem a bit empty, but we felt it was the way to go. Both services were full to bursting! Over 560 people came to hear the good news that this baby really was God, that this story is a true story, that this is real. Another immeasurably more moment.

What a blessing!



YOUTH REPORT

Lucy Skelton

This year we have seen God do some amazing things with the young people that we connect with either in schools, at outreach based activities at the church or through our discipleship based groups. We have seen young people choose to follow Jesus, we have given out over 10 Bibles to young people who have asked for one and we have seen young people, who last year we reported had decided to follow Jesus, move forward with Jesus and make significant progress in their understanding and commitment to Jesus.

Connecting activities

Typically the first time we meet a young person it is within one of our connecting based activities or groups. These activities may happen in school or at the church. The aim is to build relationship with young people and gradually have more opportunity to share the gospel as well as invite the young people to other activities which have a more Bible teaching focus.

Our connecting activities this year were...

- 4 lunch time clubs in three High Schools (Ribblesdale, Bowland and CRGS) with a overall attendance of 90 young people
- Hot chocolate club – this happens at the church after school, average attendance around 10.



- Youth Club, Friday evenings, average attendance 30- 40

Our school lunch-time clubs are still very popular and we have met new young people over this year. Some of whom have simply seen the posters in school, others have been brought along by young people who already attend. We have had the joy of seeing some of these friends then brought along to other events, activities and groups that we run outside of their school. Such as youth club, Wednesday evening youth and trips.

Hot chocolate club has been able to run weekly this year which is superb. We have got a core group of around 10 who attend each week. We have created a programme of different activities to do with the young people as well as keeping it a safe space to be after-school. Hot chocolate club is particularly good for helping young people who may have never been in the church before, to cross the threshold and have a positive experience with the team and other young people.



Youth club has been a bit quieter this year as we have lost some of our year 11s, but we have gained new young people who are gradually bringing more and more of their friends. Over the year we have looked at all sorts of different topics, we have just finished 'Junk in, Junk out' where we looked at what we feed our souls with, we looked at the effect of those who influence us, music, social media and pictorial media such as YouTube. We thought about how the damage that putting the wrong stuff in to us is invisible at first on the outside, but how it makes a lasting impact on the inside.



Changing activities

Over the last twelve months we have ran two different changing groups.

Wednesday Youth (412) – 412 has increased in numbers to consistently around 30+ each week. As our church youth numbers have increased to over 50 young people (these are young people who attend either/or Sunday morning and Wednesday evening, we have now started small groups for them. Each group has around 10 young people in it and 2 youth leaders. The people in the small group stays the same and up until February half term the small groups have been meeting once a month during the Wednesday evening youth session. The young people have been very positive about having their own small group, and after half term we increased the frequency to twice a month, with the aim that we will be in small groups 3 times a month in September. The youth still begin the evening with some hang out time, then some sung worship led by themselves before heading to their specific room with their leaders and fellow small group youth. The weeks we don't have small groups we have an altogether Bible study time after sung worship, these groups are much more fluid.

Sunday morning youth – We are still consistently having around 20+ young people choosing to come out to Sunday youth during the 11:15am service, yet we have also got at least 10 young people who choose to stay in for the whole service. We are still using three rooms and require three leaders each week to

allow us to do so. By splitting in to three groups we find that discussion is easier and the young people find it easier to focus.

Faith to Fight – Faith to fight is our termly lads get together, planned and ran by our older lads. Faith to fight has met this year and the lads continue to find it a useful time to be together and support each other in their faith.

Sisters in Christ – The girls have also continued to meet this year with Sisters in Christ. The girls really enjoy their time together and take great care in their planning and running of the event.

Youth Baptisms – We have had two young people baptised this year. It was wonderful to hear their testimonies and be there for the baptisms. We have more young people wanting to be baptised this year coming.

Engaging activities

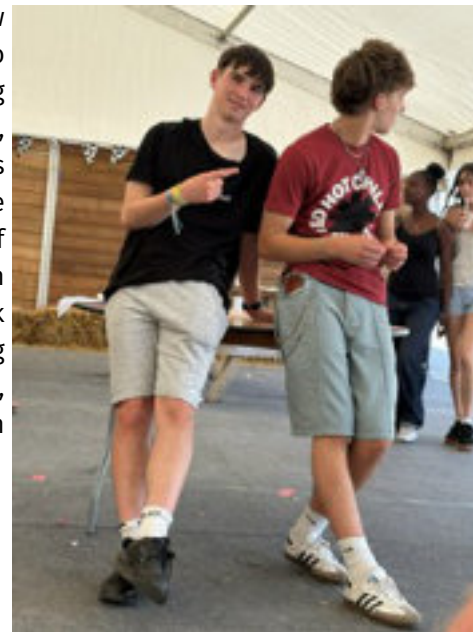
Young leaders – Our young leaders continue to be a massive help on a Friday evening at youth club. It is great to see them gradually become more confident, not just with helping out, but also with leading discussion times, leading games and activities and making suggestions in planning meetings. We currently have 5 young leaders on a Friday evening.



Youth worship team – The youth worship team continues to meet each Sunday after the 11:15am service. It has grown quite a lot this year, we now have 3 pianists, 1 who is very confident, 1 who is gaining confidence and 1 who has just recently joined. We have had a new young person join the youth worship team after becoming a Christian last year and starting to attend the Sunday service at the end of the last school year. He is a very good singer but is also gaining confidence on different instruments. We were very thankful to Tesco Stronger Starts grants, who gave us £500 to use towards the youth worship team. With this money we purchased a second hand iPad and software for those using the piano to give them access to modern sounds. 2 entry level bass guitars and 2 entry level electric acoustic guitars. The aim of the bass guitars and electric acoustic guitars is to enable more young people to begin on a journey of learning them. We now run a beginners guitar group on a Friday afternoon, this is ran by one of our young people who is a skilled guitarist, we have 2 young people who attend this small group with her. We have also given both bass guitars out on loan to 2 of our other young people and they are gradually getting more confident on the bass guitar. We have had 3 new young people start drum lessons with myself during the week, one of whom played the drums in the youth Christmas show. The youth worship team is large and has varying skill levels, yet they work hard to support each other, they have a rota for worship on a Wednesday evening and all that are happy to, have the opportunity to play then, we also have the opportunity for them to lead worship as part of the Sunday services a few times a year, and they lead at both Faith to Fight and Sisters in Christ. It has been particularly lovely to see our second year of year 10s taking the step to begin playing with some of the adult worship teams as well as with the youth worship team.



We not only teach the young people how to take part with the music side, we also teach them the tech side by showing them how to do the sound engineering, lighting and presentation software. This year our young person who has the role of sound engineer under the direction of one of our leaders, has also been showing a new young person how to look after the sound. It is great to see young people teaching other young people, and to see them each grow through doing so.



Youth led dance group – we have started a new weekly fun dance group which is led by some of our youth. The young people who go enjoy their time together putting together dances to Christian songs, which they will be able to use at events such as Sisters in Christ. They also spend time thinking through what movements can be put to worship songs so that they can be more accessible to our children on a Sunday morning.

Special events

In the last twelve months the youth have had the opportunity to attend the following events.

Abide youth event – Abide is not running until October this year, it will have had an 18month break by the time the next one happens.

Satellites youth camp – This last year we took 43 young people to satellites , which is 13 more than last year! We had a fabulous time and saw young people choose to follow Jesus. The team were amazing as they always are. With lots of very long days and very late nights, they gave their absolute best to each young person who came.

Blackpool Pleasure beach – this year we did a trip to Blackpool pleasure beach. We took 28 young people, some of whom had not been on a trip with us and some who had only been to a school club. We did rides in the morning, then in the

afternoon we split into 3 groups, one group did ice skating, one did adventure golf and the third group did more rides. We then ended our trip by getting fish and chips to each on the coach.

Youth Weekend at Church – We held a youth weekend at church at the beginning of March. We had 30 young people in attendance, most stayed over for both nights, and a few just came for the Saturday. The weekend included 2 worship and teaching meetings, late night worship slots, free-time to just hang out together, team challenges, prayer spaces and of course two sleepovers. Our theme was Faithful and we looked at what it meant to be faithful with each other, faithful to God and how God is faithful.

Youth Christmas Show

Our Christmas show this year followed the journey of the Magi as they followed the star. The youth all worked so hard on all the different aspects of the show. The charity that the youth chose for proceeds to go to was Cancer research and with the kind donations from those attending, they raised just over £200.

Non-club based schools work

Bowland R.E day – We hosted Bowland R.E day once again this year, with around 100 year 11s spending a lot of the day at the church as well as visiting other places of worship in the town. At the end of the day they have a question time which involves someone from each place of worship to sit together and answer questions that the young people have prepared. Unfortunately for the school the only people able to do that part was myself, Ian Humphreys from Trinity Methodist church and our own Sam Cheesman. It was lovely for the three of us to be able to share with the young people about what we believe and have opportunity to share the gospel message as part of our answers to their questions.

Ribblesdale once again had their year 7 harvest assembly at the church, it was great to welcome them and the staff in and to share a message about harvest with them.

What an incredible year, seeing young people's lives completely changed by Jesus is such a privilege, one of the young people who chose to follow Jesus last year, said to me the other day 'I used to message my friends when I felt stressed, now I open my Bible and I have been astonished how much that helps, I now read my Bible so much and can feel how it and praying makes a big difference in my life.'

Thank you so much for all your support of the youth ministry. Please keep the team and young people we meet in your prayers.

CAP DEBT CENTRE

Matt Wood

What has gone well?

One of the main positives that we have seen with Clients over the last year is how people are accepting and responsive to prayer. We always offer to pray with clients during every meeting which has been received better than ever before over the last 12 months.

When answers to prayer take place, we are in a privileged position to proclaim and encourage clients that God knows, listens, and because he loves us, will never turn away.

Many breakthroughs have worked out in seemingly impossible situations and circumstances, so proclaiming the Gospel truth in these opportunities continues to go well.

The Money Coaching team have adopted a new strategy toward how we promote and engage people with our courses which has seen attendees commit to attending. This is a huge improvement on last year when two of our courses had to be postponed.

New volunteers continue to commit to serving our community across both services.

At the beginning of 2026 we celebrated one of our clients becoming debt free. Over Christmas 2025 one client engaged with a Church based activity.

What requires support, improvement and prayer?

Overall referral number are low this year, this is mainly due to new referrals being on hold throughout Jan and Feb as training on our new Debt Help Platform training was being rolled out.

Please pray for Matt as navigating training for and using an entirely new casework system continues to take place.

Continuing to promote our services effectively is something that requires ongoing focus. Many of our recent referrals are from word of mouth, which is great, so please keep CAP in mind and in conversations so that awareness can continue to be supported throughout our community.

PASTORAL CARE

Peter Williams

The Pastoral Team continues to work hard towards their basic remit of keeping people connected to God, and keeping people connected to the church family - the church community.

Much of this is done through small groups where small group leaders keep a pastoral watch over each in the group, often supporting them and caring for them through changing or difficult circumstances. There has been much of this activity over the previous year - often unseen but always valued. Thank you so much to those who continue to undertake this wonderful service - you know who you are!

Occasionally the circumstances are such that a matter might be referred to the Leadership/Ministry Team or the Pastoral Team in confidence -and there have been several of these during the year. Members of these teams have prayed with, counselled, worked with and supported those in need.

Additionally the Pastoral Team has continued to visit those older or infirm members of the church family who, themselves, have worshipped and served with us over the years and now find this difficult or, indeed impossible. Anne Williams has joined the team as a “diary keeper” and we hope that this ensures we are more consistent in whom we visit and how regularly. Our visits include a bit of socialising and news sharing, sometimes home communion for those that want it, and always prayer.

We have also been called in (twice) to pray with people from other churches in the care homes in our parish, as they are dying.

Twice a year we pastorally review the church membership list to ensure we have maintained some sort of connection with everyone in the church family who wishes this.

We work in parallel with Allison Lord - our Anna Chaplain - whose remit is to visit and build links with other older people in our parish who haven't directly got a connection to our church; part of our church's mission.

All this work carries on mostly unseen, and unpaid, and we are very grateful to the great people who form this team and serve God by keeping people connected with Him and with His family here.

WORSHIP

Jonathan Berry and team

Over the past year, the worship team has continued to serve St James with commitment and faithfulness, leading the church in worship through music and song.

During the year, Jonathan Berry stepped back from the role of Worship Team Co-ordinator due to a career change and various other personal reasons. Rachel Shelley has also stepped back from the worship team during the past year.

In response, the worship leaders have collectively taken on additional responsibility to sustain this ministry. We are very grateful for this shared leadership, with particular thanks to Ellie Wood and Jenna Potts for the significant support they have provided during this period.

While the passion and heart of the team remain strong, the worship team is currently experiencing increased pressure in terms of capacity. When St James moved from one to two morning services over a year ago, it was hoped that the size of the worship team would grow accordingly. Unfortunately, this increase in team size has not yet taken place. As a result, a relatively small team is now supporting two weekly morning services, which has led to the team being stretched in order to ensure consistent provision for Sunday worship.

We want to express sincere gratitude to everyone currently serving on the worship team. Team members are generous with their time, deeply committed to the church, and passionate about worshipping God and leading others to do the same.

St James has a bold and exciting vision for mission and outreach, led by Sam, which the worship team wholeheartedly supports. At present, however, the team is finding it challenging to sustain existing commitments, let alone expand to support a wider missional vision. We recognise that God has richly blessed the St James worship team with gifted and faithful musicians. At this time, the primary challenge appears to be a lack of leadership and coordination capacity.

A strong and well-resourced worship team is an important part of a missional church, helping to create a welcoming, accessible, and safe environment for all to worship God, and Making it easier for people to invite others to church. The worship team is working closely with Sam and others to explore long-term solutions that will strengthen and sustain this significant and central ministry.

Our prayer is that, with God's guidance and the right support, worship will continue to shape and drive St James as we seek to build God's kingdom here in East Lancashire. We would welcome prayer, wisdom, and practical support from the PCC and wider church as we discern how best to address this leadership and capacity challenge.

KINGS HIGHWAY PARTNERSHIP

Sam Johnson

We have been incredibly blessed by the deepening and strengthening of the partnership between St James and King's Highway Partnership in Eldoret, Kenya, over the past 12 months. Following the visit to Kenya by Sam Johnson in January 2025 we have looked to make our partnership more visible across the life of the church, and also to have more regular contact with King's Highway to support and learn from each other.

Pastor Henry and Pastor Fred are becoming regular faces to our Sunday congregations as they regularly record messages of greeting and encouragement. A particular highlight was Pastor Henry being able to preach on Philippians 2 at our King's Highway Celebration Service in October, when we were encouraged to 'make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind'. During the service we were able to learn more about Kenya and Eldoret, and to understand something more of the partnership agreement where we commit to walking with and alongside each other 'in humble and relational ways as we call on King Jesus to fix the root cause of our brokenness'.

A few weeks after our special service the church family enjoyed a King's Highway brunch in November, where we launched our Partnership Booklet, and many thanks to Graham Haldane for creating such a helpful document. We were also able to set up a new WhatsApp Group to help keep Church Family members informed of what is happening at King's Highway Church and school.

The relationship between St James' School and King's Highway School also continues to develop. As part of the end of year celebrations at our school in the summer there was a 'Kenya Day' where children came dressed in the colours of the Kenyan flag and donated money so that the children at King's Highway School could join in the celebration too. Many thanks to Charlotte White at the school who has led on the partnership for the past six years; Charlotte has now moved on but Jonathan, the headteacher, has continued to lead the partnership with enthusiasm and joy.

We were delighted that our new Rector, Sam, was able to visit Eldoret in January and to spend time with Henry and Fred so early in his incumbency. I know how much the visit means to King's Highway Church and how much it helps them feel connected to the worldwide church.

Finally, I am really pleased that one of the key promises in our partnership agreement is now in place. In both Eldoret and Clitheroe we were keen to ensure that we prayed together regularly in 'real time'. This has now been happening for nearly 10 months, when on the second Friday of each month we 'WhatsApp' pray together at 8am for half an hour. If you would like to join this meeting then please see Sam Johnson.

Throughout the next year we will look to hear the voice of Eldoret more within our church as we introduce various people from King's Highway Church to St James and follow some of their stories and lives. We will also continue to support the King's Highway Church financially particularly with regards the training and education of young people, and in their ministry to widows. Please continue to pray for the church in Eldoret and for its leaders.



MISSION GIVING

2025 was the first year when our Mission Giving budget was actively ‘capped.’ Back in 2023, PCC decided that, in order to protect the mission that happens from this church, our Mission Giving budget would be capped. This meant we would have a break-even, rather than a deficit, budget.

So in 2025, we looked carefully at how we allocated our Mission Giving budget. We moved it to a percentage-based model, knowing that the amount available for Mission Giving was likely to fluctuate much more than it had in previous years.

We also created an ‘emerging church seed fund’ specifically for new projects that are birthed from St James’. We have often found that people have ideas or passions for a project, but we don’t really know how to finance that, and we end up working backwards to cover the cost. We’d rather be proactive, and to say ‘we have X amount to help launch this mission project.’ This also specifically targets one of the criteria of Mission Giving, ‘supporting new ministry and the emerging church.

Our Mission Giving percentage based model is now as follows:

Focus	Criteria	Percentage of Mission Giving
Persecuted church	Supporting the persecuted church	10%
UK partnerships	Distribution of the gospel Relief of poverty	35%
Overseas partnerships	Distribution of the gospel Relief of poverty	35%
Climate	To safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth	10%
Emerging church seed fund	Supporting new ministry and the emerging church	10%

In 2025, we had £33,520 to distribute, which was 10% of our income in 2024. We were aware that there was likely to be a significant decrease in Mission Giving funds to give away between 2025 and 2026 so we set aside £6295 as a buffer between the two years, and gave the remainder away as follows:

Focus	Projects	Amount given in 2025
Persecuted church	Open Doors	£1250
	CSW	£1250
	CSW Cards	£295
	Total:	£2795
UK partnerships	Good News for Everyone	£1250
	CAP Bradford	£4080
	180 Project	£1250
	Gateway Counselling	£1500
	CAP Blackburn	£1500
	Total:	£9580
Overseas partnerships	Kings Highway Church	£4660
	Charis	£4660
	Total:	£9450
Climate	A Rocha	£2700
Emerging church seed fund	Supporting new ministry and the emerging church	£2700
Total		£27,225
Remainder		£6295 buffer

Many of these projects will be familiar to you if you have been following Mission Giving for any years. Some of these projects have been on our list for many years, but there are a few which may be unfamiliar or have changed.

Gateway Counselling is a project of Ribble Valley Gateway Trust, offering affordable counselling sessions by professionally qualified counsellors to individuals who self-refer, having been signposted by GPs, local businesses, churches, care agencies, friends and family.

CAP Blackburn is a new CAP Debt Help Centre, run by St Luke's Church in Blackburn. Blackburn had a CAP Centre for a number of years, but when the centre Manager retired, the centre was closed down. St Luke's launched their centre in 2025 and asked us for financial support.

You may notice that we support more UK Partnerships than overseas partnerships. We would love to establish a wider range of overseas partnerships, so if you are involved with an overseas project which supports one of our 5 Mission Giving criteria, please do get in touch with us.

One of the wonderful things about having a surplus in 2025 is how God will use this to bless other projects. Despite putting a cap on Mission Giving, God has really shown his generosity and faithfulness, and we will have a similar amount to give away in 2026.

OUTREACH

2025 was a strange year in terms of outreach. I'm sure you'll have heard about The Quiet Revival, based on some research from The Bible Society. We've certainly seen something similar.

Over the past year, we've seen:

- Primary aged children wanting to come to church and bringing their parents
- Little Fishes mums (some from a few years ago) starting to attend on a Sunday
- A number of our young people making the decision to follow Jesus and be baptised
- New people attending every week, and many of them attending regularly
- One memorable lady wandering into the office mid-week and announcing she's just become a Christian

In fact, the number of new people at services in the Autumn was almost wonderfully overwhelming. What was interesting is that these people weren't

looking for a peripheral activity; they were looking for a worship service. They were looking for an encounter with Jesus.

Not all of these people have got connected, but the majority of them have, whether that's through attending the 'faith basics' course that Sam put on with Tracey Cross in October, or directly joining a small group. Our Welcomers have done an absolutely wonderful job in connecting new people but this is a good opportunity to remind ourselves that welcome is everyone's responsibility. It has been a real joy to see some people be quickly noticed and engaged in conversation, but it's also easy to overlook people we perhaps don't know so well. Sometimes the conversations someone has on their 4th time attending are more important than the first time.

We've seen this continue into the new year, and once again, it's not unusual to have up to 10 new people attending on a Sunday morning. So there's a real challenge for us who are established worshippers – how are we supporting these new people to become new and deeper followers of Jesus Christ?

Where we have deliberately extended invitations, the response last year was overwhelming. Easter was joyfully packed to the rafters. We moved to 2 services for Christingle, and invited widely, thinking that it would be awful to have 2 half-empty services. But I don't think any of us expected to have nearly 600 people show up!

We held our first event for about 6 years on the Standen Estate – Carols around the Oak Tree. We only managed to finalise a date for this about a week before, so the invitations had a short time to get out – but nearly 150 people showed up. I'd only printed 50 song sheets so we were a bit short! What was particular wonderful about this event is that there are definite events planned as follow up, with the aim of launching a worshipping community on Standen estate, and it's been great to have Becky Wright take a lead on this.

As does happen occasionally, Carols at the Castle was affected by terrible weather, but we still had 1000 people show up. The event was fully booked, with 2500 planning to attend, but the wet weather proved too much for many.

There was no Love Clitheroe barbecue last year. The team took a 'fallow year,' giving us time and space to prepare for the launch of Live at the Castle in 2026. This will be a huge weekend of outreach, with a free music and arts festival on the Saturday and Church at the Castle – a big open air worship service on the Sunday. Mark your diaries now for 27th and 28th June!

2026 will also see our Diocesan Centenary weekend, marked by a weekend of outreach in every parish in the Diocese. Plans are still coming together for our events, but that will be held on 11th -13th September.

WHO'S WHO



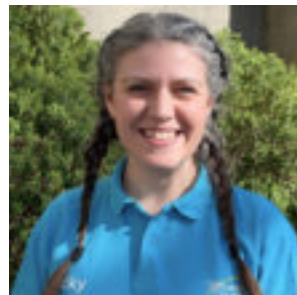
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Andrew Stevens

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Will Weston

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Peter Williams

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