



St Matthews

helping local people follow Jesus Christ



PCC Report for 2026
APCM

Minister's Introduction

Then [Jesus] said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Matthew 9v37-38

As we look back on 2025, we can rightly give thanks to God for his grace and mercy to us as a church. We have seen people come to faith and be baptised, we have seen many grow in their discipleship and others step out and start serving God in new ways. All of this is evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit amongst us.

The APCM this year will not only be a chance to look back and thank God but also look ahead as we prepare for the upcoming change of St Leonard Hollington (Church in the Wood) joining our family of churches. I also hope to have an update as we seek to appoint both a second member of clergy and a new Families and Schools Worker.

I look forward to seeing you on 18 May.

Yours in Christ

Matthew

Electoral Roll

The electoral roll is a list of names of every person who can vote in the annual parochial church meeting and is the closest we have to a church membership. Every six years the church must create a new roll and in 2025 the roll was produced from scratch.

The revised Electoral Roll has been produced in preparation for the 2026 Annual Parochial Church Council Meeting, and it contains 87 names.

Pauline Blythe, Electoral Roll Officer

PCC

The PCC have met 6 times since the last Annual meeting held on 18th May 2025 – these meetings were held in July, September, November and December 2025, and the PCC met in February and March 2026.

These meetings have been well-attended. As usual, a variety of discussions have taken place covering all aspects of the life and work of St Matthews.

A copy of the minutes is posted at the back of church once approved by the PCC. More details and copies of the minutes are available on request.

Hastings Deanery Synod Report

This will be my final report, for the moment, as I step down as one of the St Matthew's reps after my six years.

This year we have held our usual three meetings in the year, as per our constitution.

In October, we met at St Leonards CE Primary Academy, where we were given an insight into the work of the Diocese from Lesley Hurst, the Diocesan director of Education. She talked about the C of E vision for education and especially the vision in the Diocese. For those of you that like statistics – the diocese works with 37,000 children in C of E school, of which 3,667 are in Hastings schools. At the end of her presentation, in a Q and A session, there was much talk about the positive work being done at Ark Alexandra, but Lesley was questioned about the negative impact the number of leavers had on local churches.

After this, Mark Talbot – CEO of DCAT (Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust) – gave a quick overview of the 4 DCAT schools in Hastings and St Leonards and how their vision is to help every child in their faith and how DCAT would like to help more churches partner with schools.

Our second meeting of the year, came in January and was hosted by St Peter and St Paul, Parkstone Road. It was the Hastings and Rye Deaneries Deanery Celebration for the 'Year of Faith'.

2025 - from Advent 2024 to Advent 2025 was a year of celebration of the Christian faith across Sussex. It marked the 950th anniversary of the formation of the Diocese of Chichester and Chichester Cathedral and 1700 years since the Nicene Creed first emerged. This meeting was attended by Bishop Martin and Bishop Will and Matthew gave a very

interesting whistle stop tour of all the churches in Hastings and St Leonards and their history. This video was also shared at a following service at St Matts. Well done to Matthew for putting it together. We also had testimonies from a couple of young people.

Our final meeting of the year was only back in the middle of March. The main speaker was Buff Stone – Diocesan Environmental Officer. She had enough slides to have talked for several hours, but had been given a maximum time and so ‘whizzed us through’ some of the more relevant slides talking and fielding questions as she went. When questioned about some of the problems we face here in Hastings, I took from the meeting to ‘do what you can’ as you cannot do everything. I did have a laugh, when she suggested curtains at church window and draught excluders! As a church, there is no way that Hastings planners will let us put solar panels on the roof – although she did suggest persisting as Kings in Cambridge were initially turned down for the same thing.

There are vacancies for you to volunteer as we, as a parish, have three places on Deanery Synod. Don’t be put off; it’s not that bad and Matthew leads it as Rural Dean. As I sign off, I wish whomever takes my place, a blessed time on Synod – give it a try, you’ll enjoy it.

Malcolm Harris

Staffing

In August 2025 we said thank you and goodbye to Nicky Adams who had served as our Families and Youth worker for the previous 3.5 years. Nicky’s work has enabled us to develop our relationship with St Pauls CE Academy and begin to lay the foundations for ministry to children and young

people in the years ahead. Nicky has since moved to a new role at a church new Manchester. The plan is to advertise for a replacement of Nicky's role this spring.

The other change this year is that we moved to employing an assistant administrator and we were delighted to welcome Fran Wratten to the team in September 2025 to help Pauline Blythe in the office.

Matthew Foy

Pastoral Care

We give thanks for the leadership of Matthew, and for all of the Link Church Members of our Pastoral Team, which meets together officially four times a year.

Several church family members are completely housebound, others are semi-housebound, and others are in full time care. Many have some long-term health issues and are particularly vulnerable.

We also visit church family who are in the Conquest Hospital, and occasionally at the Hospice too.

We arrange Christmas, Easter, and Harvest Services at both The Crest and The Derwent. When possible, Matthew leads these services. We lead a monthly Holy Communion Service at The Crest, which is usually well attended. Other residents are happy to observe, and occasionally join in with familiar verses or prayers. We spend time talking to, and praying with members of both Care Homes. Many tell us about their lives, and connections with St Matthews and the local community.

We do try to keep in touch with all those unable to attend church, and we pray for them. We also visit, telephone, send

cards, prayer notes and newsletters. Sometimes people who are away for a short time like a visit; especially if they live on their own.

We are both authorised to lead a short Holy Communion Service for church family members living at home or in care.

It has been a privilege to support and offer prayer, help and encouragement to families and individuals at times of loss and sadness. When appropriate, we attend funerals and thanksgiving services for late members of our church family. We give thanks, that as a church, we have made good progress in developing a 'whole church' approach to Pastoral Care.

This is now prayerfully, and actively overseen by the leaders of all Discipleship groups and Church family midweek gatherings.

In time of Pastoral need, please make contact. We are available to listen, pray and help. If the church office is closed, a message can be left.

Celia Walton and Susan Devenish

Prayer Gatherings

It has been a joy this year to gather on the first Wednesday each month both at lunchtime and in the evening to pray for the life of the church, our town and our world. The lunchtime prayer meeting is followed by a light lunch. Looking back, it has been a joy to share in these meetings, all the ways God has been at work among us and to thank and praise him for many answers to prayer.

Matthew Foy

Safeguarding

PARISH DASHBOARD - The Parish Dashboard is an online tool, funded by the diocese, to help parishes manage their safeguarding responsibilities. It stays fully aligned with the latest Church of England policies and procedures.

Key features include:

- A clear, at-a-glance overview of a church's safeguarding status
- Straightforward explanations of required actions
- Automatically generated action plans and reports for PCC meetings
- Helpful guidance with links to relevant safeguarding information and resources

The use of the Parish Dashboard is mandatory for all parishes.

We continue to undertake the necessary Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on all volunteers working regularly with children as well as other members of the Church Family in responsible positions as necessary in line with diocesan guidelines.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser is Colin Perkins. The best way to contact them is via the generic safeguarding team email address safeguarding@chichester.anglican.org

Our Safeguarding Officer is Maggie Lloyd. Pauline Blythe and Fran Wratten validate DBS applications prior to processing by Thirtyone:eight, an approved Registered Body with the Disclosure and Barring Service.

A copy of "Keeping Children Safe in the Church: a Brief Guide to the Diocesan Child Protection Procedures" booklet is

distributed to our new volunteers as part of our own ongoing training and our existing volunteers undergo refresher training each 3 years. All of our volunteers for children's work through the church have been DBS checked and have completed the necessary safeguarding courses.

Finally, the PCC has a standing agenda item on safeguarding and has complied with its duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

Maggie Lloyd, Safeguarding Officer safeguarding@stmatts.co.uk

Sunday Services

In 2025 our main Sunday service has been at 11 am. We share communion at this service once a month. We have occasional all age services around 6-8 times a year. We also had three baptisms in September 2025.

Our preaching in 2025 followed a mix of series looking at Matthew's Gospel, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Obadiah, Acts and Genesis. We remain very grateful to David Clover, Ben Masters Stevens and Alan Freeman as our Authorised Lay Ministers for helping with our preaching.

I am very conscious that our Sunday services only run because of the dedicated hard work of so many volunteers. Please may I take this opportunity to thank everyone who uses their gifts and gives up their time to serve the church on a Sunday.

Matthew Foy

Newcomers' Tea

It has been a great joy to welcome a number of new people to St Matthews in 2025. To help people settle in and learn more about the church, we hold an afternoon tea for newcomers from time to time in the Rectory. These usually take place on a Sunday afternoon and are a chance to people to learn about St Matthews and how they can be involved.

Midweek Groups

In 2025 the church has continued to have a mix of midweek small groups meeting at different times and at different frequencies. We know from the feedback we have received that they have all been appreciated by their members. If you would be interested in joining a midweek group, please do speak to Matthew.

Creche

A creche is available every week at the 11am service except on weeks when we have an all age celebration. Crèche is for babies and toddlers up to the age of 4 and is supervised with two helpers each week, we hope this gives an opportunity for parents and carers to be able to be in the church service as much as possible. We have a willing team of helpers on the crèche team and a good variety of toys available for the children to play with in the crèche room. If parents do stay out in crèche there is a facility whereby there are able to get the audio of the service in the crèche room via a speaker. There is also the option, if parents prefer, to stay in the service and they are welcome to make use of the children's area in church. This was relocated in summer 2025 to the back of church to make it more family friendly for newcomers.

Sunday Club

Sunday Club continues to meet every Sunday during the 11 am service, except when it's an all age service. The group is for children in Reception-Year 6 (5-11 year olds) and we can get around 5-12 children who come along each week. We have been using Mustard Seeds resources to help plan the sessions, which includes games and crafts linked to the Bible passage. We hope to make Sunday Club fun and engaging for the children as we teach them truths from the Bible. In 2025/26 we taught from Acts, Ephesians, Mark, Genesis and John's gospel. We have a great team who help out with Sunday Club each week and we give thanks to God for all those who work so hard to teach and help the children each week.

Tracey Foy

Impact

The Impact group at St Matthew's Church, St Leonards is for those who are in the academic years 7-11, (11-15 year olds).

The group has met regularly, but not always weekly, and followed most of the sermon plans until July. From September some different resources were used including, 'Life with Jesus' and 'The death and resurrection of Jesus'.

It was felt that the group should have more opportunities to stay in church for the whole service which has happened. This has led to some searching questions being raised by them.

All of the group have had opportunities to take part in reading the bible, leading some aspects of sung worship and playing their musical instruments.

The group also supported the holiday club as young leaders helping in many different ways. Impact members are now part of the welcoming team, greeting those arriving for the Sunday morning service.

We are very grateful for all the efforts that the leaders, helpers and young leaders bring to the group.

We were sorry to lose Nicky in July, who felt called to move on and we are grateful for all she has done with all the children at St Matthews.

Steve Hill

Roots and Ignite

Up to July 2025 we ran a weekly youth group for children in year 7-11 on a Thursday evening. Following Nicky's departure, we have now replaced this with a joint monthly youth group from St Ethelburga's Church on a Sunday afternoon called Ignite. This group is led by Sara Ainsworth the Families Worker at St Ethelburga's Church. Each Ignite session includes games, food and a video explaining something about the Christian faith for young people to discuss.

Matthew Foy

Youth Summer Residential

In August 2025, we took five 11-14s for a summer residential called Woolhampton 2, which is based in Reading.

Woolhampton 2 is a place for 11-14s to meet other Christians

their age from other churches, in a week of activities, bible studies and fun.

In 2025, the theme was detectives, as we investigated who Jesus is in the gospel of Luke in both main meetings and our room groups. We had a day out at Chessington, an inflatable day and lots of sport, games, craft and challenges. There was a bookstall, lots of songs, and 2 spotlight sessions.

Overall, it is an fantastic opportunity for young Christians to make friends from other churches, to have fun and learn more about Jesus.

Hannah Foy

Smarties Toddler Group

Our Smarties toddler group continues to be a place where parents and carers can come along with their babies and toddlers to enjoy meeting up with other adults over a hot drink while the little ones play with a good variety of toys, do fun crafts and enjoy snacks. We have had a busy year at Smarties and we currently have between 25-30 children attending most weeks. Each week along with our regular 'song-time' we also have a short 'story-time' where we read a story with actions each week from the 'Play-along Bible'.

We had a Smarties Christmas special in December, with the children getting a chance to hear the Christmas story along with a Christmas themed craft and snack time. We gave them all a copy of a small book with the Christmas story to take home. We also do an Easter themed Smarties where we look at the Easter story together and have an Easter egg hunt. Each year at the end of the summer term we also say goodbye

to any of the children who are going up to Nursery or School, we use this opportunity to give all our leavers a small Bible story book.

We use the opportunity we have at Smarties to invite the people who attend to come along to St Matthews, both to special events and Sunday services. There have been a number of current and previous Smarties attendees attending our annual holiday club and also Christmas and Easter services.

We have been very grateful for our wonderful team members including; Liz Huggett, Karen Wilhelm, Fran Wratten, Jane Gurr, Evelyn Brett and Tracey Foy. The size of the team gives us good opportunities to chat to and get to know the people who come along.

Smarties has now been running for 25 years at St. Matthew's church, and we give thanks to God for all He has been doing throughout this time and also to those who first started running Smarties and those who have given their time to help over the years.

Tracey Foy

Holiday Club 2025

In February 2025 we ran an Egyptian themed holiday club about God rescuing his people, with teaching from Exodus. Holiday club is for primary school aged children (5-11 year olds) and includes games, crafts, drama, talks and time to reflect on the bible teaching . We had approximately 40 children attending each morning and parents joined us for lunch on the final day. This was our biggest holiday club to date. Thanks to everyone who was involved in the preparations and served at holiday club.

7th St Leonards Guides

St Matthew's Guides meet every Wednesday during term time. Guides for girls aged 10-14 years old. Our Guide unit currently consists of 18 regular members, 2 young leaders and 3 adult leaders.

Over the last year Guides have enjoyed working on various badges including the Entertainer, First Aid, Fitness and Food critic. Guides also emersed themselves in the great outdoors and completed the challenge 'Take only photos, Leave only footprints'

We spent a bright and sunny day in Brighton to enjoy the rides and entertainment on the pier. Guides had adventures at Picketts Wood campsite where we built dens, lit fires, toasted S'mores, tried orienteering and had a go at craft.

Guides also made catapults and led each other blindfolded around their own made labyrinth.

And of course we rounded off with a campfire and plenty of singing.

This year we are looking forward to the county international camp where we are excited to welcome Guides and Girl Scouts from all over the world including Canada, Japan, Australia and Spain.

For more details about joining the Guides or becoming a volunteer please go

to <https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/information-for-parents/register-your-daughter/>

Olau Dadswell, Guide Leader

The Hub

In a busy year, we have been open and included the following: September was our Macmillan event, with the queue right out of the door, described as 'manic'. However, all cakes were gone an hour before planned closing time. A record amount raised, over £300 on the day alone, so thank you to all who donated on the day or before. Total raised was £572.02.

December was our usual Christmas buffet with a record number (31) enjoying the festive fayre.

January was the official opening of the refurbished hall work, with 43 people in attendance, including a representative from Biffa.

March was our usual pancake day 'special' with 50 people in attendance and 68 pancakes served.

A reminder that we are open 50 weeks of the year on Tuesdays from 10 am-12 noon. Everyone is welcome for a chat and homemade cakes and tea/coffee.

Shirley and Malcolm Harris

The Friendly Afternoon/Friendlies for Seniors

We are a seniors group, who meet on Tuesday afternoons in the Mill Room of the Church Centre, for tea/coffee/biscuits and a friendly time together. Some of us are members of St Matthews; a few go to other churches, and all are welcome.

We have a time of worship and prayer, refreshments, and then perhaps a quiz, occasional bring & buy sale, talk about a topical subject, or share our own thoughts and ideas.

Each year we have an excellent pre-Christmas lunch in December, this time at the Bull Inn, followed by our own Christmas party at the last meeting before Christmas. The Senior Men's Forum meet in the main Hall from October to April, and they invite us to join them for their Annual Open Meeting, usually with a very interesting speaker.

Ladies Connect

We meet throughout the year on Monday mornings 10-11.30 am in the church centre, and start with coffee and refreshments; just catching up and fellowshiping together for 3/4 hour. Then we move on to discussing the Sunday talk and finish up with a time of prayer.

There are usually around 14 of us and we are mostly, but not exclusively those of more mature years.

This last year we have done the 321 course as a group, that we found valuable. For more information, please see Sarah or Catherine

Sarah Searle

Ladies Wot Lunch

Ladies from our congregation are invited to join us in The Welcome for fabulous lunches, fellowship and support. We aim to meet quarterly and try to alternate between Friday and Saturdays, so to be accessible to those working or not. The menu averages at about £15per head. There is a hardship fund available.

Catherine Harvey

Men's Events

The men's fellowship usually has 3 events during the year which include Mini Golf, Ten Pin Bowling and a Christmas Meal we have also starting having 3 men's breakfast a year.

A small committee meets three times a year to discuss the men's ministry and the way forward.

Dave Broome

Hastings & St Leonards Country Dance Club

Members of this club enjoy all kinds of English country dances from the seventeenth century to the present day, plus some American and Scottish dances. It is a very friendly group, and no partner or experience is needed. The club meets in the Church Centre at 7.30pm every Tuesday. and new members are welcome to try out an evening free of charge. Please contact Chris (01424 713819) or Janice (07526 567537) for more information.

Janice Bolton

St Paul's CE Academy

We continue to partner with and serve St Pauls CE Academy our linked Church of England primary school. Throughout 2025, we have given talks in weekly whole school worship on Wednesday. We also ran from January to July run a popular weekly lunchtime club called glow club.

We have also taught some RE lessons to individual classes and we welcomed reception children and year 5 to church for school trips. We also led the school Christmas and Easter services in the church building and gave a short talk at their Christingle services. Thanks to everyone who has helped us serve the school.

Mission Support

At St Matthews we set aside each year a set amount within our budget to support our mission partners. In 2025 we made donations totalling £2,415. We plan to increase this to £2,990 in 2026.

These monies supported our three main mission partners, London City Mission, Tearfund and Christians against Poverty.

Our link with London City Mission is with Adam Boyce who is the team leader for Haringey. Our link with Christians Against Poverty is with the Hastings Debt Centre. Here we support the employment of two debt coaches who work to help local people in our community struggling with debt. Matthew is also one of the trustees of the Hastings Debt Centre.

We also continued a member of the Evangelical Alliance and the Sussex Gospel Partnership.

More information is available from our website
www.stmatts.co.uk