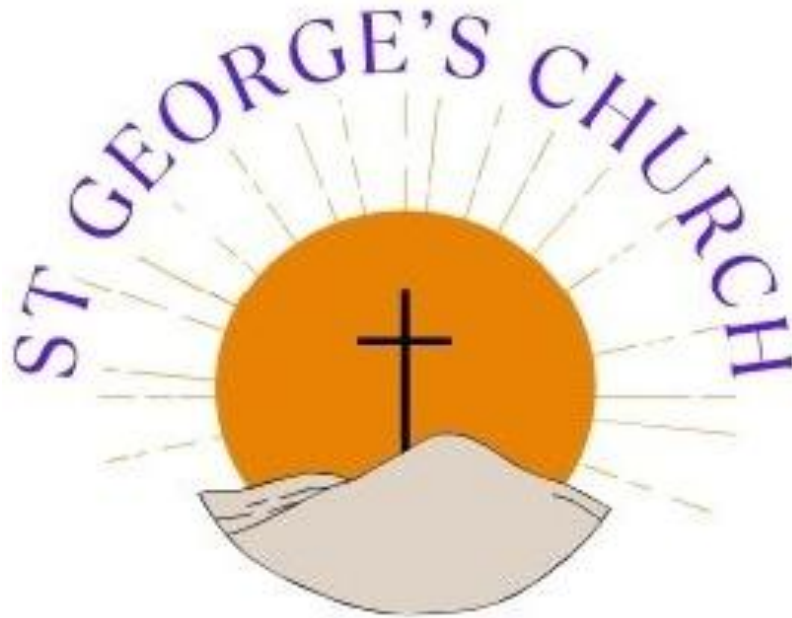


**THE PARISH OF  
ST GEORGE THE MARTYR, WOOTTON**



**PAPERS FOR THE ANNUAL MEETINGS**

**TO BE HELD ON**

**SUNDAY 12TH APRIL, 2026**

# The Parish of St George the Martyr, Wootton

A meeting of parishioners\* to elect churchwardens

will be held on

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2026 at 11.45am**

## Agenda

- a) Minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2025:

The meeting commenced at 11.45am and was chaired by Alison Goodman. No nominations were received for the post of Churchwarden and so both posts remain vacant. The meeting continued within the Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

- b) Election of churchwardens for 2026.

Nominations received:

None – at time of publishing.

*Nominations remain open **until** the meeting commences. Nominations must be made in writing using the 'Nomination for Churchwarden' form available at the back of the church and should be passed to the meeting Chair (Revd. Tracy Pegram) before the meeting starts.*

\*For this purpose, 'parishioners' means those whose names are on the electoral roll of the parish, **or** those persons resident in the parish whose names are entered on the register of local government electors by reason of such residence.

# The Parish of St George the Martyr, Wootton

## Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2026, 12pm

### Agenda

1. Prayers
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the APCM held on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2025 (enclosed – pages 4-7)
- 4. Review of 2026**

#### Required reports:

- 4.1 Incumbent's Report (to be given verbally)
- 4.2 Presentation of the Statement of Financial Activities of the PCC for the year ending 31st December 2025 (see separate, printed document) and Treasurer's Report. (page 8)
- 4.3 Report by the Churchwardens (including comment on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church). (pages 8-9)
- 4.4 Report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod (page 10)
- 4.5 Report by the Parish Safeguarding Officer (page 11)
- 4.6 Report by the PCC Secretary (page 12)

#### Other reports:

- 4.7 Curate (page 12-13)
- 4.8 Licensed Reader (page 13-14)
- 4.9 Womble's Youth Group (page 14-15)
- 4.10 Sunday Stars (page 15-16)
- 4.11 Little Stars (pages 16- 17)
- 4.12 Wednesday Home Group (page 17)
- 4.13 Wootton Church Bellringers (page 18)
- 4.14 Church Flowers (page 18)
- 4.15 St George's Gardening Club (pages 18-19)



# The Parish of St George the Martyr, Wootton

## APCM Minutes for meeting held on Sunday 25th May 2025 at 11.45am at St. George's Church, Wootton

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer – Revd. Marta Brothers
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising
  - 3.1 The minutes from the previous meeting were circulated.
  - 3.2 The Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true record.
4. Election of Churchwardens

There had been no applications for the post.
5. Financial Report and Appointment of Auditors

Sue Oswin shared the end of year report.  
It was proposed by Sue Oswin that the auditors Kilby Fox would be appointed for the coming year this was seconded by David Jenkins.  
Sue asked for prayer for ongoing funds.

### 6. Electoral Roll

### Other Reports

7. Bell ringing

Adrian Meadows shared his experiences of bell ringing at St George's and in other settings. He shared his enjoyment of ringing for special occasions, weddings and funerals. They are looking for new members if anyone is interested. Adrian shared that there are many opportunities to travel with bell ringing and the chance to meet lots of new people.
8. Communion Café/Curacy update - Marta

The café attracts predominantly non-church people and is a valued community event. Marta asked for helpers to run when she is not available as we currently do not have a backup team.
9. Work in schools

During the Christmas period there have been a number of schools attending services within the church building. This has been a great opportunity to build relationships. Marta has also been involved in taking assemblies and creating prayer spaces in local schools alongside Rachel.  
Marta quoted John 13: 34 'A new command I give you. Love one another'.  
We have had the unexpected gift of having Marta remain with us. She will stay with us in her curacy until spring 2027.  
Marta asked for prayer during the vacancy and in the transition as we seek to appoint someone. Pray particularly that we can appoint someone who understands us.  
Marta has valued the support with her training and support from the PCC.

## 10. Children and Families work

Rachel Bates shared her report. She was particularly encouraged with new families coming along for the Easter garden project and the Light event.

Activities and experience lead events have appealed to families.

Rachel would like to offer four events a year. This will need a team so that the planning for these events can be shared, as Rachel's contract finishes in August.

Schools - Rachel feels that there has been a better connection with children and staff and that we have managed to raise the profile of the church in the community.

The creation of a Prayer Space at CCS gave opportunities to relate to children and staff within the school. The use of a lovely outdoor space was particularly beneficial for adults and children connecting to activities.

Hazel Taylor has been a huge support with Sunday Stars.

We are blessed to have children of different ages.

We will be looking to seek out funding to carry on with Rachel's post.

If anyone has any experience of applying funding and would like to help this would be gratefully received.

There is a Deanery vision to develop Children and Families work.

Rachel asked for prayer for funding and extra volunteers.

## 11. Safeguarding

Gail Smith shared her report.

She has processed 5 DBS applications and a few DBS need renewing.

The Parish Safeguarding dashboard has experienced lots of changes recently. We are currently 77% compliant. There are ongoing tasks that we need to focus on:

One of these is to encourage volunteers to do online safeguarding training.

Gail will circulate details about the online training in the coming weeks.

Gail asked us to pray about online training and sourcing a new Safeguarding Officer and a couple of assistants, so she can step back from this role in the coming months.

## 12. Gardening Team

Julie shared that there are around five or six people who assist with the Gardening team.

They meet on Thursday evenings between 7 and 8 pm from the end of March to mid-October.

They occasionally meet in the winter, if there are other projects that need attention.

The team take care of the church grounds and have recently looked after the rectory grounds during the vacancy.

The roles include weeding, pruning, keeping paths clear and maintaining the Back to Nature area. They also help maintain any ivy and bramble and keep the paths edged.

The Back to Nature area is marked with peg, the paths are mowed and this is a new approach. We will be seeing how it works. Some seed balls have been added to see if we can encourage wildflowers alongside the grass and weeds. The Guides have put bug hotels into the Back to Nature area. It is a natural habitat and we need patience for it to establish itself. The log circle has been created and this is to be used as a reflective space for adults and children alike.

£500 of the Veolia grant has been used for the Gardening team to purchase a strimmer to help maintain the Memorial area.

13. Sound desk - John Murray Hawkins

The team is John, Alex, Stuart and David.

The team ensures that there is music for backing tracks, which has helped enhance the experience of worship in church.

There has been a collaboration between Marta, Gail and the team to choose the best songs to get a good balance for worship within services. The team are looking at purchasing rechargeable batteries for the microphones.

Their prayer request would be that the congregation continues to grow and worship continues to be fulfilling for those that attend.

14. House groups- Gail Smith

Gail runs the house group and it's attended by about nine people.

In January, there was a new focus, which is going well. They have been looking at 'How to pray' by Peter Greig. There is the possibility that a new house group may start up.

15. Deanery Synod - Richard Taylor

Richard has been attending Deanery Synod and there have been presentations on different topics including Living in Love and Faith. There has been a definite split with churches regarding this area. The Hope centre did a presentation to Deanery Synod.

Richard's prayer request was for unity and mutual respect where there are differences.

16. Roof - John Murray Hawkins

Swinglers a local roofing company are doing checks every six months. At the moment, there are no new leaks. It is going to cost around £1000 a year to maintain this contract for the roof. This money can come out of the roof fund for now.

17. Back to Nature

It has been quite difficult to get the parish council to agree. The idea of Back to Nature is leaving the grass to grow and see what it does.

On the 4th of June, the Guides will be planting small plants within the church yard.

18. Wombles - David Jenkins

Attendance has been up and down.

Please pray for attendance to stabilise and for a new wave of youth to join in the coming year. Leaders have come up with the idea of moving the age back six months, to appeal to new members.

19. PCC – Alison Goodman

Alison shared her report and talked about what the PCC had been working on during the year, including the recent work to complete a Parish Profile ready for advertising.

Prayer request was for new PCC members and for the PCC to work well together during the vacancy.

20. Election of PCC members

Heather Jenkins                      Proposed by Richard Taylor, Seconded by Alison Goodman

Chris Newton                        Proposed by Rebecca Churchill, Seconded by Jason Churchill

Heather and Chris were welcomed onto the PCC.

## 21. A.O.B

A new house group may be started by Rebecca, Jason and Beattie. The group would meet every two weeks and the first meeting would be on the 5th of June at Beattie and Freddie's house.

A point was raised about the purpose of WhatsApp groups.

Rebecca Churchill pointed out there is a lot of support and prayer requests and events are put onto the St George's WhatsApp group. It is good to share positive and thankful news. It was proposed that this subject would be added to the PCC agenda for discussion. The PCC will agree on content, which is to be included in WhatsApp groups and clarify how many groups there are and who is overseeing messages.

Gail thanked Sidespeople, those who have lead prayers and done readings in church.

Gail also shared that she was going through a discernment period with a view to going into training for ministry. Gail would like to serve St George's fully including leading communion. If accepted, she would do a two-year course and she sees her future as supporting the ministry at St George's.

Her ministry will continue much the same, although she may be away some weekends.

The meeting finished and drinks and nibbles were served.

#### **4.1 Incumbent's report at the APCM on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

(to be given verbally at the meeting)

#### **4.2 Presentation of the Statement of Financial Activities of the PCC for the year ending 31 December 2025**

***The financial statements are available as a separate document.***

#### **Treasurer's Report for the year ended 31 December 2025.**

I am pleased to present the accounts for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025. At the end of the year the general fund balance stands at £0.00 and restricted funds stand at £18,202.60. The restricted funds include our shares, a church clock trust fund and development fund of £15,056.10

Our Parish Share for 2025 was £64,816 unfortunately we were unable to pay this in full for this year and we fell short again by £26,000. Our Parish Share for 2026 is £61,420 and we need to pay £5,119 per month towards this but unfortunately, we are not able to maintain this payment based on our current income.

I know 2026 will be yet another challenging year for the church and we still have to address the issue of not having any reserve funds and lack of income in the current account. Every expense will need to be thought through and discussed before being approved during this year.

I would once again like to thank everyone who has agreed to pay their donations by direct debit, not only does this help with budgeting but it also means we receive the gift aid back at the same time. If anyone would like to pay their donations in this way please speak to me and I can provide you with the necessary forms.

I would like to thank Gail who is always ready to approve online payments.

I must also say a big thank you to Kilby Fox who has very kindly donated their time and expertise in preparing the church accounts.

*Sue Oswin, Parish Treasurer*

#### **4.3 Report by the Churchwardens (including comment on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church)**

During 2025 there were no elected Churchwardens. The PCC has worked hard to maintain the worshipping life of the church and the fabric of the building during the vacancy. This has included; supporting Revd. Marta Brothers and arranging cover for services, as needed; repairs to the roof, on-going cleaning of the church and facilities; care and maintenance of the churchyard; and many more acts of generosity and kindness from the church family.

It is noted that Holy Communion is not celebrated on the first Sunday of the month and this should be rectified. The Incumbent will explore the best way to meet our Canonical obligations; through introducing Communion at the Family Service, or providing a separate service earlier, or later, in the day.

Since the appointment of a Priest-in-Charge, a decision has been taken to postpone minor roof repairs whilst we await the outcome of the recent Quinquennial Inspection. The Diocesan Architect has been made aware of our desire to use our funds as effectively as possible and it is hoped that the Quinquennial report will reflect this, proposing that the South Roof is replaced, rather than repaired. Work has been taking place to prepare us to apply for grant funding once the scale of the work has been identified.

A Building's Committee is to be established to allow volunteers from the church and wider community to help maintain the building; reporting proposals and costings to the PCC to allow for efficient use of PCC time.

The church building, fabric, and contents are in generally good order, with the following exceptions:

Pipe organ – unusable due to water damage. Repair is likely to be cost-prohibitive. Music is currently provided digitally, providing opportunities for a wide range of styles to be enjoyed.

Chancel lighting – light level in the Chancel is poor and one bulb needs replacing, indicating that other bulbs are likely to require replacement soon. The replacement of four bulbs is likely to bring benefit and will be carried out in the new year.

Water heater in toilet not working – this will be repaired to ensure access to hot water for handwashing is available.

Loose tiles in Chancel – various tiles are loose and require fixing to prevent further damage.

Potentially unsafe floor in vestry – the carpet needs to be lifted to inspect the cause of voids in the floor.

Many people remark at what a beautiful church St George the Martyr is, and this is in witness to the love and dedication of the many people who contribute to its upkeep, through giving of time and talents, and through regularly supporting the church financially. The Priest-in-Charge offers sincere thanks to all who support the work of maintaining the worshipping life of the People of God here in Wootton.

*Report provided by Revd. Tracy Pegram, in the absence of Churchwardens.*

#### **4.4 Report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod**

Greater Northampton Deanery Synod is a gathering of lay and clergy representatives from Church of England Churches across the town of Northampton, led by the Rural Dean, Father Oliver Coss.

As a church with an Electoral Roll of between 40 to 80 we are entitled to have two Deanery Synod lay representatives. This is significant this year, as it is the members of Deanery Synods that will be electing the new Church of England General Synod – which acts as the Church of England's Parliament.

Deanery Synod is a forum where we can see how different churches are facing similar challenges. I believe there is much to be learnt to grow our church from the experience of neighboring parishes. There are also presentations on topics that can be fed back to the churches.

However, we must acknowledge there are differences over the Church of England's "Living in Love and Faith" process, which looks at the Church's approach to identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage. Unfortunately, this has led to some churches threatening to withhold Parish Share. It is to Father Coss's credit that he has kept the Deanery Synod meetings amicable and constructive.

Deanery Synod has met four times in the last year.

In July we met at All Saints in the town centre, with a reflection on the anniversary of the Great Fire of Northampton and on Pastoral Care.

I was unable to attend the meeting in September at Holy Sepulchre, which was on the Diocesan Governance review.

The meeting in November was at St Francis, Duston, and had a focus on Safeguarding, with talks from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

Finally, we met in February at Abington Church Hall, with an address from the Bishop's Missioner, a discussion on the problems around clergy vacancies in parishes and a debate on a motion about a church in the deanery not paying its Parish Share.

*Richard Taylor – Parish Representative to the Greater Northampton Deanery Synod*

## 4.5 Report by the Parish Safeguarding Officer

We take the safeguarding responsibility seriously in our Church environment and in the wider community.

In November 2025, Safeguarding Sunday was the focus for one of the Sunday morning services.

Throughout the year, we have continued to complete online DBS applications for volunteers working with children, young people, and vulnerable adults, some new applications and others relating to the three years renewal process.

Our Parish Safeguarding responsibilities are recorded via the Diocesan online Parish Safeguarding Dashboard, which helps monitor our compliance with Diocesan and National requirements. The dashboard is regularly updated to reflect Safeguarding issues nationally and during this year additional training requirements have been added. We have currently achieved 74% compliance on the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard, which is a reasonable position but a slight reduction from this time last year.

As a PCC we are aware of some policies which need updating, and these are scheduled to be amended and reviewed during the next few months.

The PCC members have made significant progress of the completion of the Church of England safeguarding training courses, and we will be encouraging all volunteer DBS holders to undertake the training as part of St George's ongoing compliance requirements.

Another overdue task is the preparation/review of job role specifications for all group leaders and volunteers, and the process has started recently following Revd. Tracy's involvement, encouragement and support.

Thank you for trusting me for so long in this important parish role. As I mentioned last year, the role needs more time and commitment than I have available. Also, if I am successful in the next stage of my discernment pathway training I will have to step down from the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer. Please pray about the Parish Safeguarding Officer role and how this can be successfully achieved in the future with a willing volunteer.

Thank you to the ministry team, PCC members, volunteers, and members of St George's for your care and commitment to safeguarding - **Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: working together under God for a safer church.**

*Gail Smith, Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)*

## 4.6 Report by the PCC Secretary

It's been a busy year for the PCC. Following the APCM last year we welcomed Heather and Chris onto the team. The first part of the year was spent planning services during the vacancy. Around Easter, a small group of us concentrated on updating our Parish Profile ready for advertising for a new Vicar. Huge thanks to Marta and Gail who worked so hard with me to put together the Profile. We interviewed for the new Vicar in July and were very pleased to successfully appoint Tracy. During the vacancy, the PCC met monthly to monitor applications for weddings, baptisms, funerals and interment of ashes. We were also a point of contact for anyone with concerns around weekly services. Much time was spent discussing ongoing maintenance and repairs of the church building. I would like to extend my thanks to everyone on the PCC for all their hard work during the vacancy. We really did pull together as a team to keep things running smoothly. The latter part of the year was spent preparing for Tracy's arrival and planning the service to welcome her into her ministry here at St George's. We have now settled into a new way of working with Tracy and feel very blessed to have her wise leadership at St George's. We look forward to the year ahead with new exciting things being planned and new growth. If anyone is interested in joining the PCC, please speak to one of us to find out more about what is involved. We are a friendly group, and it is a privilege for me to be part of such a lovely team.

*Alison Goodman, PCC Secretary*

## 4.7 Curate



There are many more pictures I wish I could place in this section, because in the last year so much has happened, and St George's has grown both spiritually and in numbers. From 24 hours of prayer to a beautiful candlelit service; from our Christingle reimaged outdoors, to holding our Sunday service outside. To have our first fully immersive outdoor baptism, which was very moving — it has been truly beautiful to see how the church has gathered during the changes of saying goodbye to one vicar and welcoming a new one.

In this season of shift and change, the love of God and of one another has truly been demonstrated. As a pioneer curate, I have been very blessed to work with such an amazing PCC that really held things together during the transition. I have learned so much about

leadership and fellowship alike. As a curate, I know there is so much more to learn, and I look forward to discovering what God's calling on me as a minister will look like in the future.

I have been blessed to learn how, within the traditions of the Church, there is space for creativity and different forms of expression in worship and prayer — that God is not static but always moving. That in the simple sharing of a cup of tea, a slice of cake, and our stories, people come to see God's love, and that, with that love, we carry it forward and share it with others. The mix of diversity and inclusion has been truly welcomed, and I am grateful to God for placing me here as your curate.



*Revd. Marta Brothers, Curate*

#### **4.8 Licenced Reader**

The last year has been busy, varied, interesting and exciting.

I was relicensed as a Reader in Peterborough Cathedral in September, a lovely service and celebration of lay ministry throughout the Diocese.

It is a huge privilege to serve as a reader and to be part of the ministry team in Wootton, and I am blessed in being given different opportunities in the parish and beyond.

In addition to the Sunday morning worship roles, I have been involved in different forms of ministry, some serving independently, others working alongside Marta during the vacancy, and more recently alongside Tracy and / or Marta.

I am fortunate to be called to serve in the following ways –

- leading Family Services
- co-leading / leading the monthly Service of the Word at Merrifield House – particularly to maintain the monthly contact during the vacancy period
- supporting at the monthly Holy Communion service at Richmond Village, Grange Park
- leading the annual 'A space to remember before God' service
- funeral ministry

- a little pastoral visiting – Home Communion
- leading fortnightly Home Group
- invited to lead Evensong services at Christchurch, particularly during their vacancy period.

I would like to thank Tracy and Marta for their trust and encouragement, and the privilege of serving alongside them (and more recently Evie too) as part of the St George's ministry team.

Since September my discernment journey has continued, and I started my formal studies with St Hild College as an Elizabeth Pathway student. The study involves online module training sessions, study days in Lincoln and residential weekends in Mirfield. The next stage of the discernment process is the Stage Two (BAP) interview panel which is scheduled for the end of May. If I am successful at that stage and recommended by the Bishop to continue my studies, I will study for a second year with St Hild, with the hope to be ordained in 2027 and after further training become a local minister at St George's working alongside Tracy.

May I take this opportunity to thank you all for your prayers and encouragement as I have been discerning and trusting that I am following God's plan for me and for my ministry here in Wootton.

*Gail Smith, Licensed Lay Reader*

#### **4.9 Wombles Youth Group**

WOMBLE'S - who are we? We are a group within the church for Year 6, Secondary school and Sixth Form aged youth. We meet every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday evening during term time. We have 3 leaders, Gail Smith, Richard Taylor & David Jenkins.

2025 was a tricky year, with numbers attending each session fluctuating between 1 and 6. As reported in last year's Report, we changed the format of our meeting following a suggestion by Marta, and have continued the format throughout the year. Our sessions are more a chilled games evening, with a 30 min focus on a topic. Any of the youth can bring along whatever games they want to play, music is supplied in the background, and then the 30 mins serious piece rounds off the meeting. It's a good job the leaders are up for an hour of games too 😊. Our games sessions have been quite varied, with a selection of board games, activity games (indoors and outdoors), card games, etc...

We have continued the approach of the youth telling us what they would like to focus on for our 30 minute focus time. At the first meeting of every term, we have a planning focus, where they can openly tell us what they would like to focus on, where they have questions that we could maybe look into and try to answer, etc... Some of the topics we covered over the course of the year were "A synopsis of the Easter story", "Ash Wednesday", and "A look at the Church of England Hierarchy". We also entered our "The Melodies of Christmas" Christmas Tree & Quiz into the 2025 Christmas Tree Festival.

Regular attendance has again been our largest challenge over the year. This has continued to make planning and delivery of the sessions challenging. However, we *did* manage to organise an entry into the 2025 Christmas Tree Festival.

Unfortunately, during 2025, the regular UNITE events run by NYAC for Church youth groups within the County appeared to dry up. We did not hear about nor attend any of these events during the course of the year.

Looking forward to 2026/2027, we hope that our attendance will stabilise and that a further intake of youth will be available as we move into the next academic year.

Message from the leaders to the youth: We thank you all for your continuing support and involvement in the WOMBLES group. This is not *our* group, this is *your* group, and we really hope that you take as much away from these sessions as you need to grow in your faith and understanding of God and all his wonders. We would also like to thank you for some of the challenging questions and topics you put to us. It is not just you guys that learn from this, we learn a lot too. We have seen alternative ways of thinking about things from hearing different viewpoints, explored areas we haven't really thought about previously, and most of all enjoyed the laughs and fun we have shared with you all.

*Dave Jenkins, Wombles Group Leader*

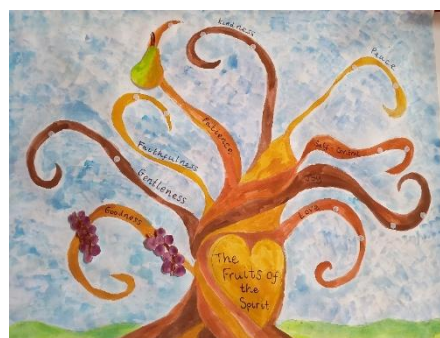
#### **4.10 Sunday Stars**

Sunday Stars meets during the Holy Communion service, usually on the third Sunday of each month. Many of our sessions are attended by anywhere between 6 and 11 children. Numbers have increased significantly.

We finished the summer term 2025 with Sunday Stars looking at different people we encounter in the bible.

When we returned in September we commenced our sessions on the Fruits of the Spirit. You may have seen the Fruits of the Spirit Tree at the front of church near the pulpit.

For our sessions in February and March John Murray-Hawkins has led the group looking at the bible and splitting the two sessions between The Old Testament and The New Testament. The children created bibles to take home with them.



We are returning to complete the Fruits of the Spirit sessions for the rest of this academic year.

We are very grateful to be able to use the log circle outside in the churchyard on Sunday mornings when the weather allows. This has enabled us to do more creative activities and use the space for games as well as craft and prayer.

A big thank you must go out to Rachel Bates who comes up with most of the ideas for the Sunday Stars sessions and creates the activities.

We would love more people to get involved with our Sunday Stars group, you do not have to lead the group, supporting as the second adult would be welcome. Please note that you will need to have a DBS check. Often as an adult leader or helper you come away from a Stars group with a whole new outlook on a bible story or character that you may not have considered before.

I pray Sunday Stars continues to grow both with children attending and more adults to lead and assist. Amen.

*Hazel Taylor, Sunday Stars Group Leader*

#### **4.11 Little Stars**

Over the past year Little Stars has grown significantly in numbers and in spirit, with those now coming regularly enjoying the atmosphere and fellowship. One newer Mum commented via the WhatsApp group: "It was lovely being in the Church for the first time for Little Stars this morning...You've all created such a precious community." Weekly attendance has risen from around 5 families a week, to 11 families a week, with ages 0-4 represented. One family is having their child baptised this Easter.

We have explored different topics over the past year: animals of the Bible; how to show love; fruits of the spirit; children of the Bible, as well as exploring creatively the Christmas and Easter stories. We continue with a mix of songs (accompanied and unaccompanied), a short story using visual aids, and a short, interactive prayer. For prayer, I have attempted a number of science experiments, some of which have been a success, and others less so (!), but all have captured the children's imagination. It is a joy to see the children excited and entirely focused on what is happening. I have also been inspired by their spiritual awareness, and their willingness to pause and listen for the spoken prayer. At these times, there is a sense of God moving among us.



Parents and carers have been enjoying time to chat to one another while the children play with a mix of toys and occasionally, a sensory tray or craft. It has been heartening to see relationships within the group grow, and support networks developing. Some of the parents now meet-up outside the group.

We enjoyed a picnic outside in the churchyard in the summer, and a New Year's party in January. For the first time, we hired the hall at Wootton Trinity from January to February half-term. This worked really well for the very cold weeks of the year, and the children adapted brilliantly to the change. Thank you to those who supported the temporary move.

Little Stars families have attended other Church events throughout the year, in particular the Easter Story Garden Trail, the Fun Friday event over the summer holidays and the Christmas Tree Festival and associated crafts.



Grateful thanks to Sally-Anne, Pat, Ann, Sarah, and Amy, who have supported the group faithfully, providing refreshments and fresh fruit for the children each week.

I pray Little Stars continues to grow roots, and everyone becomes more and more inspired to know and follow Jesus. I pray also for two children who will be moving on to school in September, and their families, as they adjust to new routines, opportunities and challenges. I pray we maintain connections with those families beyond Little Stars. Amen.

*Rachel Bates, Little Stars Group Leader*

#### **4.12 Wednesday Home Group**

Our small group meets on a fortnightly basis (weekly during Lent).

The sessions involve prayer, Bible study, related discussions, visual and musical contributions; sharing our thoughts, ideas and questions in a relaxed environment.

We have studied different topics during the year, including focusing on 'The Prayer Course' for 8 sessions, and then working through a poem 'Heaven's Grocery Store'.

We had a series of sessions where we were looking at hymns and worship songs which were significant to us in our faith journey and the lyrics in relation to Bible passages.

Whatever the session focus, our discussions take us through a range of Bible passages as conversations spark a thought which in turn leads us to a different Bible reference.

I would like to thank Liz and Pete, and Pat and Pete for their wonderful hospitality in hosting the group, it is appreciated.

If you are interested in joining an informal home group, please speak with a member of the ministry team.

*Gail Smith, Home Group Leader*

#### **4.13 Wootton Church Bellringers**

At present we only have four workable bells out of a total of six due to maintenance required in our bell tower. Fundraising will be needed for this.

Over the past year we have rang for a couple of weddings, with the help of outside ringers, and we have rung a single bell for funerals, when we have a ringer available to do so.

*Elaine Holmes, Tower Team*

#### **4.14 Church Flowers**

The Altar Flowers are mainly artificial, kept in a box near the organ, trying to keep seasonal flowers and colours throughout the year, and keeping the cost down.

Thanks to Margaret and the late Trevor Parrish for their very kind donations of holly, over many years, for the Advent Wreaths and window decorations.

*Elaine Holmes, Church Flower Arranger*

#### **4.15 St George's Gardening Club**

The Group:

The group consists of volunteers from the church and includes members who live outside the village or do not come to church. In total we have 10 members.

We are always pleased for new people to join us. We meet every Thursday evening at 7:00 for an hour or so of gardening and then followed by Wootton Club for Lemonade, a packet of crisps (or other snacks) and a good chat.

Main Tasks Completed this year:

We have:

1. Repainted and Varnished the two memorial garden benches.
2. Tidied the Memorial Gardens by cutting the grass, weeding and trimming the edges of the memorial stones. We also remove old flowers and seasonal objects that have deteriorated, broken jam jars etc.
3. Trimmed overgrowth of Ivy on the walls surrounding the church yard, being careful not to disturb the 36 varieties of moss and lichen that grow there.
4. Pruned existing shrubs and bushes throughout the garden.
5. Re-established path edging and general weeding.

6. Removed unnecessary items from the garden.
7. Cleared water course gullies and gutters.
8. Ensured that all garden rubbish is bagged and removed from site and no rubbish tips grow.
9. Removed the garden waste using bags, which members recycle at home or our two brown bins, which are usually sponsored by gardening club members. David (in the big white house at the entrance by the notice boards) kindly puts the bins out and puts them back on bin days.
10. Sanded down and applied a new coat of wood preservative.

Wishes for 2026/2027 Season:

1. As the third of the four planned sections of the memorial gardens has started to be used, we need to move the borders of the memorial garden to encompass the third section. There is an ever increasing encroachment and interference of the roses on some memorial stones in addition to making the cutting of the grass and keeping the area, we would like to put a plan to the PCC for the removal of the roses and the establishment of a more suitable border for the memorial gardens.
2. Re-painting the Harris Tomb and re-pointing of the cement area around the bottom of its metal fence.
3. In addition to clearing the gullies a full clean of the drains will also be undertaken to ensure that there is as little standing water in the gullies as possible.
4. Needles from Yew trees inhibit grass and other plant growth underneath their canopy so, every few years these needles have been raked up and removed which then allows the grass to reestablish itself. This year we intend to rake all the areas in the part of the church yard that is not part of the BTN scheme. We will ask the managers of the BTN scheme whether it is appropriate for the BTN to be included in the rake up.
5. Jobs inside the church to be decided with the PCC.

*Pete Donabie, Gardening Team Leader*