St Luke's Church Parish Profile

We are a diverse and welcoming group of Christians seeking to bring God's love to our local community and grow together in our faith.

We are a Eucharistically centred, modern catholic church with an openness to less formal worship styles

We are praying that we will find someone who will lead us on our journey.

Whether or not that person is you, please pray for us as you read this profile.





Letter from the Associate Archdeacon

The Benefice of St Luke with St Bartholomew is in fact a single congregation based at St Luke's. It is a lively and welcoming church embedded in its community with a diverse congregation which has been gently growing in numbers over recent years. St Bartholomew's is leased to a Community Interest Company with occasional services held there.

The St Luke's congregation are a deeply faithful and committed Christian community, placing the Eucharist at the heart of their worship with pastoral care and a generosity of spirit at the heart of their relationship with the wider parish. You will see all of that shining through this detailed profile.

The benefice is situated in urban East Reading close to the centre of the town and is a great community to live and serve amongst. The area has much life, energy and diversity with a core of longstanding residents living and working cohesively alongside the vibrant and transient student community. There is very easy access to Reading Station and the M4, both of which are only minutes away.

This 0.5 fte, single congregation incumbency might well be just the post for a priest who for personal or vocational reasons is looking for something less than full time and with greater flexibility.
St Luke's is well resourced with two retired priests, an administrator and a hall manager, all of which will free up the successful candidate to focus on the mission and ministry to which they are being called.

I commend this post to you and am very happy for a conversation with those discerning whether to apply.

The Revd Canon Paul Cowan
Associate Archdeacon
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The Parish

St Luke's is set in a residential area near both the University and the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

The area around the church is known for its friendly, very diverse, community, where long-standing residents live alongside young families and Reading University students.

Local amenities, including several excellent cafés, shops, doctors' and dentists' surgeries, schools, parks, theatres and leisure facilities are all within easy walking distance.











About us

We pride ourselves on being an inclusive church, welcoming people whoever they may be. (We even have a couple of regular canine members!)

The church is rooted in the local community, and although some members live outside the parish, their love of St Luke's means they choose to worship with us.

As well as worshipping together, we love to have fun. Our many social events strengthen our sense of being the Body of Christ (and they are a great way to welcome people).



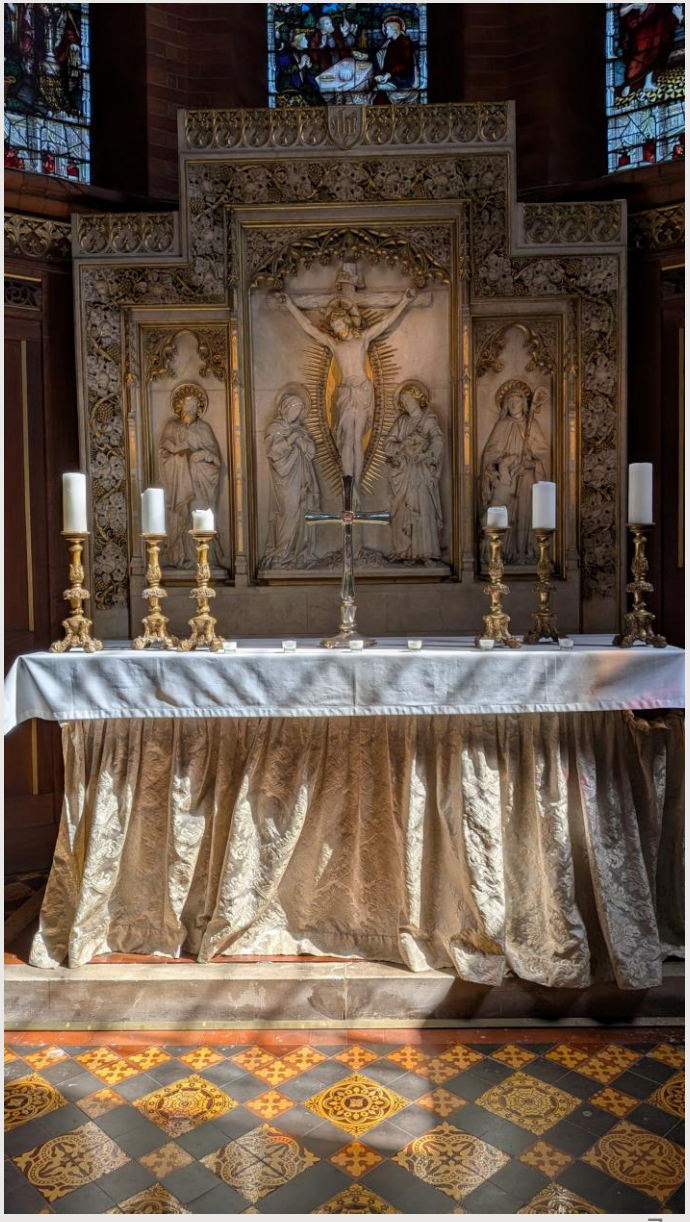


Our vision

We aim to make Christ and His teaching known to our community in East Reading.

We want to draw as many people as possible together from our diverse local population:

- to hear the Good News of the Gospel
- to join in prayer
- to study the Bible
- to care for each other
- to see God's love in action as we serve one another and the wider community



We have identified three areas that are important for us...



Equipping ourselves for mission



Being outward-looking



Working with children, young people and families

Equipping ourselves for mission

We are trying to deepen our faith through our Sunday worship and weekday services. We have one very well-established house group (and we have had two more groups during Lent) but it is a long time since there have been more people in study groups.



Each year we have a Parish Weekend in Bournemouth. This features bible study, discussion and worship, with a generous sprinkling of craft activities – and of course time to socialise, enjoy a walk and eat fish and chips on the beach. We have also held a Parish Day in our hall to include those who could not come on the weekend.

Our Sunday Club for young people continues to draw in new disciples.



Our Sunday worship has always had the Eucharist at its centre. The congregation want this to continue, but there is a growing realisation that adding other kinds of worship could help us to develop. This might include services for very young children or those who are starting their faith journey.

We want to grow as Christians. There is a desire to become better disciples through a deeper understanding of our faith.

Being Outward-looking

Our church is physically situated in the centre of our community, and we believe the church can be a blessing to those who live and work in the parish.



We are a parish that likes to gather people together. We have regular events to which we invite members of the wider community, including tea parties to celebrate civic events and an international meal. The church runs a weekly Toddler Group in the hall, which is a valued resource for the community and a great way of making links with young families.



Our core congregation remains stable, with an electoral roll of over 100, and with weekly communicants numbering around 50, roughly half of whom are retired. However, there are new people coming into our church, averaging one new person or family every month.

We are delighted that we can welcome Christians from many different countries and cultures into our worship. A substantial number work in the health sector, which means shift work, and many tend to leave quite quickly after the service. Our challenge is to integrate them more fully into our church family.

We are open to new ideas as to how we can reach even more people who live around the us.

Working with Children, Young People and Families

We think it is important that children are seen and heard in our worship, and we embrace the exuberant chaos that they can bring. Twice a month they can go to Sunday Club in our hall, after which they are invited to show and tell how they interpreted the Sunday readings when they return to church for a blessing. On other Sundays there are activity sheets at the front of the church. There is a dedicated safe area with toys and books at the back of the church for babies, toddlers and their carers.





When asked about their hopes for the future, the congregation frequently mention wanting more children, young people and families to be involved. In the last 2 years the number of children who have links with the church has doubled but there are still only a small number of teenagers. We would love to engage more with this age group, as well as find new ways to support families.

There is some enthusiasm for worship specifically for very young children and their families. Members of the congregation have been to observe 'Bubble Church', which has been a success at a local church.

Key priorities for the future

We hope that our new priest (within the limits imposed by a part-time post) will:

- love our community as much as we do
- help the congregation grow in their faith through teaching, prayer and example
- encourage and enable wider participation in church life through loving service and deepening discipleship
- continue enabling our worship to evolve, making it inspiring, accessible and fun
- embrace new approaches e.g. Messy Masses
- be involved in our existing work with children and young people, support the current team and build on this through creative use of our spaces and resources
- care for the congregation, especially those who are vulnerable including overseeing our pastoral care team
- be involved in the social life of the parish and use these opportunities to engage with the community

- See the Role Description document for more details

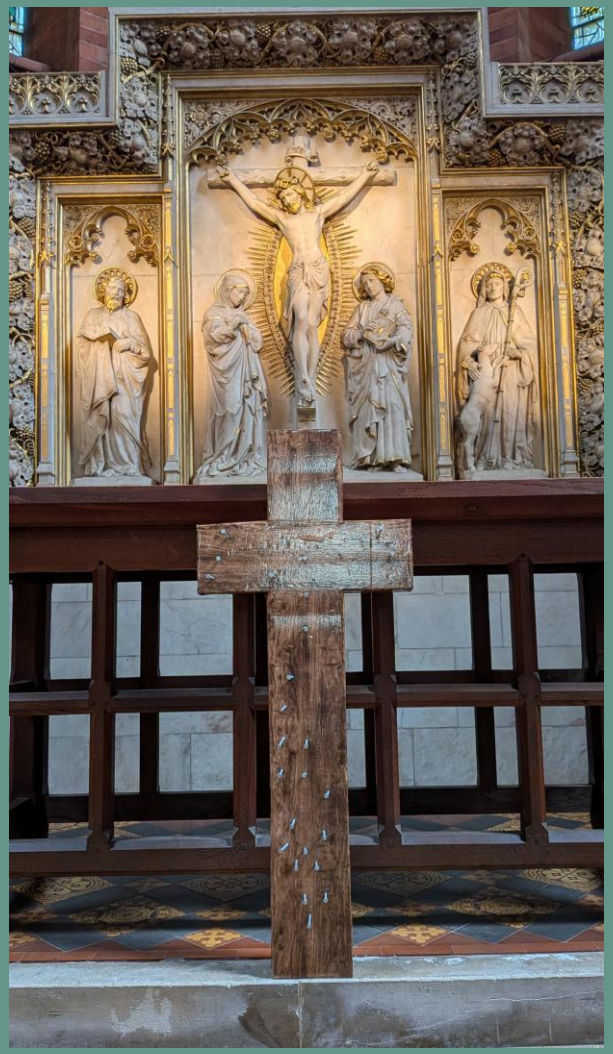


What kind of Priest are we praying for?

We are praying for someone who:

- has a lively personal faith and a deep love of sharing the Gospel
- has a strong prayer life and is deeply rooted in the sacraments
- is prepared and organised but is able to think on their feet
- is keen to get to know the congregation and will prioritise the pastoral over the procedural
- has the courage to take difficult decisions and the ability to encourage and inspire the congregation to take on more responsibility
- and - along with the above - is warm and has a sense of joy!

- See the Person Specification document for more details



Key people and roles

There are some people who have key roles in keeping the church running smoothly. Our new priest will find that they have good clergy and lay support.

Christine, our Associate Priest, has been ordained for over 30 years. Ben has been our altar server for many years. Both are very much valued by the congregation.



Christine was ordained as an NSM while she was a teacher. Since her retirement she has more time to offer the church. She has had an important role in keeping the church going during the Vacancy but is looking forward to more free time and holidays.



Francis, our retired priest, lives in the parish, has recently celebrated the 50th Anniversary of his Ordination and helps both at St Luke's and other churches in the Deanery.

Sarah is our Parish Administrator and Jane is our Hall Manager. They work onsite in our parish office on two days a week.



Lynne and Janet, our churchwardens, have been in post for 3 years and have managed the vacancy calmly and efficiently.

Sarah can be relied upon to manage the paperwork associated with occasional offices, deal with the diocese, produce copies of worship resources etc, and to be endlessly encouraging. Sarah is a warm and reassuring first point of contact for visitors.

Jane ensures that hall bookings happen smoothly and is often found doing maintenance tasks in our buildings and liaising with both the Community Garden and Aurora, the licensee (tenant) at St Bartholomew's. If you need to know how something works, ask Jane!



The PCC numbers 16 members and meets regularly six times a year. Its meetings are conducted in an atmosphere of thoughtfulness, honesty and good humour.

We believe in working towards a consensus rather than conflict but are not afraid to address difficult issues.



The Pastoral Care group meets each month to keep an eye on, and meet the needs of, particularly vulnerable congregation members. Its co-ordinator Sheila organises six Seniors' teas every year. There are also many other members of the congregation who care for vulnerable worshippers.

Gillian, our Safeguarding Officer, ensures that both the letter and the spirit of safeguarding practice are embodied in all we do.

The Buildings Group meets when needed and arranges for major tasks to be contracted out as well as arranging volunteer working parties.

The Aurora Group meets with the owners of Aurora Family Community Interest Company (the licensee of St Bartholomew's church) and ensures there is good communication to and from the church.

Our Worship



St Luke's has a strong Eucharistic tradition and sharing communion regularly matters to us. On three Sundays our service is quite traditional with an organ and a robed choir, and on the fourth we have "Messy Mass," which is less formal and involves all sorts of high jinks.



There are two short said masses each week, which are a time of quiet reflection. This is when we have Requiems for faithful worshippers. We enjoy celebrating special occasions and we mark all the important festivals with extra services. In Holy Week, on Maundy Thursday, we have foot-washing and a watch of prayer in our garden, there is a service and watch on Good Friday, and on Easter Sunday we light the New Fire outside the church.



We are a friendly bunch, and a recent visiting Priest says he believes we hold the record for the longest celebration of the Peace in a moderately-sized church!

Our love of God is at the heart of all we do. It is important that our worship is as well-ordered and as beautiful as we can make it. We are a family of people from many different backgrounds and traditions, and we are relaxed about the details so that everyone feels at home and can participate.

Our Music

Apart from on the second Sunday, we have a robed choir who lead sung responses and hymns, mainly from A&MNE but also some more contemporary worship songs.

We have a brilliant young organist, who makes the most of our organ, with its two manuals and pedals. Our choir has been faithfully serving the church for many years, and they are always willing to learn new songs and work hard to enhance our worship.





Our Messy Mass music group leads our singing, and the keyboard player can provide anything from Reggae to Rock, with percussion accompaniment from younger (and older) members of the congregation.



At Christmas we all work together to create an atmospheric Carol Service, which is very popular, and we invite members of the community to join the choir.





We are a church that loves to sing, and in celebration of this we have an annual “Hymns and Pimms” afternoon in our Garden.

An Inclusive Church

We are a member of Inclusive Church and have become known as a place where neurodiverse children and adults are welcome in our worship. It is not uncommon to see children wandering around the altar to see what is happening or performing impromptu dances to the music.

We welcome people from many different countries and cultures and of any sexuality, and we do our best to accommodate any other additional needs that people may have. For example, we provided a Farsi service sheet translation when some asylum seekers joined us, and they have now become part of our parish family.



Our Buildings

St Luke's recently celebrated 140 years of serving the local area and has been loved and cared for by generations.



Although it still maintains its Victorian character, the church has been modified over the years with the addition of a raised platform at the front of the church and removal of some of the choir stalls. We now have a parish office at the entrance to the church, a coffee bar with seating area and two toilets, one of which is fully accessible for disabled users.

Our sister church, St Bartholomew's, is a few years older and is interesting architecturally, having been designed by Waterhouse and adorned by Comper. It is home for a community enterprise, Aurora Family Community Interest Company.

Our Parish Hall is well used by the local community with many regular bookings and is also the venue for many church events and social gatherings. It is fully accessible (apart from the stage), and the Community Garden is situated behind it.





A growing church - literally



We care about the environment, and the land behind the parish hall has been turned into Erleigh Road Community Garden, supported by the church and run by members of the local community.





At the east end of the church a Healing Garden was created after the pandemic, with a bench that anyone passing by can rest on. On it are engraved words from Revelation 22: “the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations”.





Our logo shows a brick cross, echoing the brickwork at St Luke’s and St Bartholomew’s, with a dandelion growing beside it. There is the beauty of an opening bud, the stages of life, and seeds spreading out into the world, reflecting the stages of life. Dandelions are seldom celebrated, but we recognise that God’s love is for everyone, especially the forgotten and “weedy”.

The Vicarage

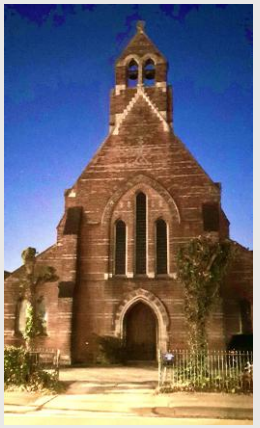
The vicarage is a modern detached four-bedroom family home set back from the road. It has two large reception rooms, study, cloakroom, utility room and large kitchen/diner leading onto a patio area to the rear. On the first floor there are four double bedrooms, two with en-suite bathroom, plus a good-sized family bathroom. Externally there is plenty of driveway parking and an ample garden to the front and rear.

The vicarage is a 15-minute walk from Reading town centre, and close to University of Reading and the Royal Berkshire hospital.





St Bartholomew's



In the 1980s the Deanery deemed it prudent to combine St Luke's and St Bartholomew's Churches into a joint benefice. For many years there were Sunday and midweek services at both churches and for a while we shared St Bartholomew's with a Greek Orthodox congregation.

In 2015 a theatre school started using the building as a college. This ran successfully until 2023 when changes to their funding resulted in closure.



Sunday Worship continued at St Bartholomew's until 2019, but when several key members of the congregation moved away from Reading it was decided with great sadness that regular Sunday services were no longer viable. We continue to hold special services there.

The building is now being used by a community enterprise company called Aurora Family. They support a variety of community events, educational initiatives and other activities, paying the church a sufficient amount to cover the costs of maintaining and running the building. We support Aurora as a community organisation, conforming, as it does, with the values we hold as a church, but we are clear that we need them to be self-supporting financially.



The fact that there were never pews fitted makes St Bart's a perfect mixed-use venue, and it is good to know that the church is still serving its community in new and exciting ways.

Some Recent History

Our church has spent 4 out of the last 7 years in Vacancy, and we thought you might like to be reassured that this is not because we are especially difficult!

In 2017 our then Vicar was asked to be Area Dean but after a couple of years he decided that this was a full-time job. He left St Luke's in 2019 after 7 years as our incumbent and continued as Area Dean.

The pandemic intervened and we were not able to appoint his successor until February 2021, when our next incumbent took over. In 2023 he was approached to be the Youth Minister at Salisbury cathedral (which was his dream job) and he left in early 2024.

The church has been supported by an NS Priest throughout these challenging times, and, in her own words,
"It's been a ball, but I'm looking forward to seeing what the future of St Luke's will look like. I hope I'll be able to be of help, but I know we need to change and grow, and I want to see St Luke's evolve under your leadership. (In other words, I won't get in your way, and I promise only to tell you what we did last year if you ask me!)"



Why a 0.5 FTE Appointment ?

We are advertising for a 0.5FTE Priest because we want to ensure that we can comfortably cover our Parish Share and have a substantial sum left over to support new initiatives in mission.

As you can read elsewhere, we own a second church building and, due to poor advice and unforeseen circumstances, we were left with financial difficulties after the theatre college who were using it went into administration. (Please note: we have learned from our mistakes and the current arrangement involving Aurora Family is well- managed.)

In 2023 we asked the Deanery for a recovery plan, and we have been comfortably meeting the agreed payments. In 2025 there was a campaign to help the congregation understand how much it costs to run our church, and as a result weekly giving increased significantly.

We have also received a very generous donation to ensure that the church can support a new incumbent in moving us forward.

We are not a rich parish but we are a generous one, and we are confident that, with prudent management, we will not be having to make our finances the major focus of our attention.

Appendices







Summary of Parish Activities

Toddler Group
This happens weekly during term time in the parish hall and offers a low-cost, safe play space for infants/toddlers and a social outlet for parents, grandparents, and carers.

Coffee Mornings
Coffee morning is held on the first Saturday of the month to foster neighbourhood connections and to raise funds for external charities including local, national and international causes.

House Group
The House Group meets monthly (weekly in Lent), for Bible Study, often linked to published courses designed to challenge, and extend, our understanding of our faith.

Adult Craft Group
This is an informal weekly gathering where people bring their own projects and chat. We welcome anyone who wants company and coffee, and people often wander in and are interested to see what's happening.

Seniors Teas
Six Sunday afternoons a year there is the opportunity to meet in the home of one of our congregation for a delicious afternoon tea and a natter.

Scrabble Group
We meet weekly throughout the year, and all levels of ability are welcome.

Men's Group
A recently-formed Men's Group meets around six times a year for pub-based chat, Bible study, walks and other social events.

Erleigh Road Community Garden
The church provides space for a community garden where all ages can learn new skills and connect with green spaces and the food grown in them. Trustees include members of the congregation and the local community. There are regular open events with refreshments and plant sales. These have included cooking classes, grape-pressing from the vines, pumpkin-carving and wreath-making.

Healing Garden
Funding from the Diocese of Oxford Development Fund and RG Spaces enabled us to create an easily accessible, peaceful space, designed as a rainbow, with a bench for reflection.

REInspired
This group made up of Christians from many local churches, including our own, does an excellent job of bringing the children from local primary schools to explore St Luke's and learn about Christianity, as part of the Religious Education curriculum. We are particularly pleased that we can partner with our local schools through REinspired and support the religious education of children.

Art Exhibitions
3 are held each year, 11 so far in total, to support local artists in the community.

Parish Hall Hire
Our parish hall is regularly hired by a wide range of local community groups for a variety of activities including Tango, Rugby Tots, Children's fencing classes, drama groups and children's parties. We also work with local charities such as Mencap and Berkshire Vision and provide space for local Councillors for their local surgeries.

Bed for the Night
Now approaching its fourth year, from Jan - March and working in partnership with 3 local churches, we provide space (once a week) for a bed for the night, along with a warm meal in the evening and breakfast. This is for refugees who have been awarded leave to remain and no longer have accommodation provided. This Christmas and New Year we will be providing daily overnight shelter for local homeless people with a warm meal in the evening, overnight accommodation and breakfast.

Social events
The parish regularly gets together socially, for BBQs, Hymns and Pimms, shared meals (including 'soup and puds'), tea parties and activity days. Specific recent events include an International meal, the Men's Group BBQ, 140th anniversary celebrations, and a VE Day tea dance.

Christmas Fair
This is a useful fundraiser, but it is also a great place to meet people who live locally and let them know what will be happening in church over the festive season.

Carol Service
This is a popular event, and the church looks beautiful lit only by fairy lights. We invite members of the community to join the choir for this.

Accounts

As the parish is made up of two churches that have been in existence since Victorian times, we are lucky to have two endowments per church. These in total amount to just under £300,000. The value fluctuates dependent upon the general stock market. We have in the past used some of these funds for major building works and have agreed that in principle we could request to use some to pay for any shortfall in parish share should that be needed over the next few years.

As our income is over £100,000, we have been registered as a charity for over ten years. We are members of the Parish Giving Scheme.

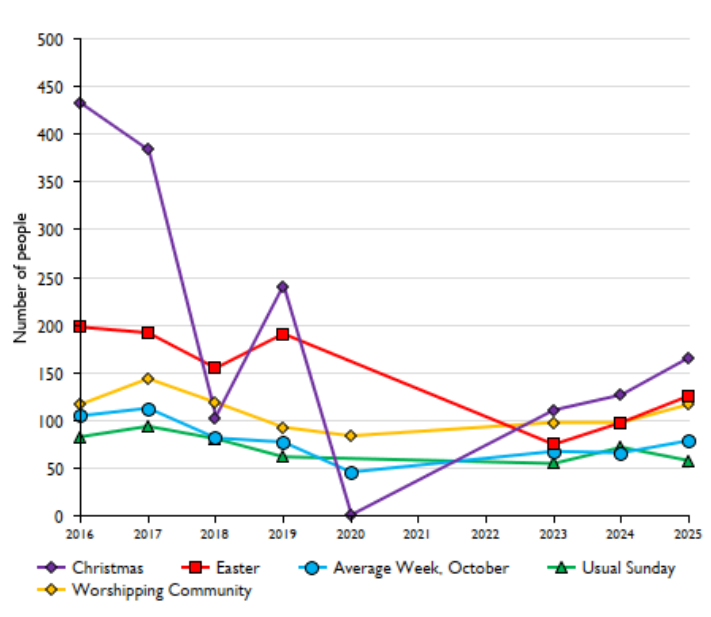
Our full accounts are uploaded to the charity commission and details can be found under THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF ST LUKE WITH ST BARTHOLOMEW, READING – 1158694

Our income in 2025 was about £135,600 and our expenditure was about £106,700. Our donations amounted to about £84,000 in 2025.We are able to comfortably pay our half parish share which in 2026 is about £32,000. We also employ a paid Parish Administrator and a Hall Manager, both of whom work part-time.

We have three buildings to maintain which means we have a considerable amount in upkeep and utilities. The hall gets rented out and usually covers its costs as does St Bartholomew's. St Bartholomew's has a community group that has a licence to use the building.

Statistics about the Parish

Occasional Offices	2023	2024	2025
Baptisms	4	3	7
Marriages	1	0	1
Funerals	4	3	3



Attendance summary	2023	2024	2025
Christmas	110	126	165
Easter	74	97	125
Average Week, October	67	65	78
Usual Sunday	54	71	57
Worshipping Community	97	97	116

	2023	2024	2025	2026
Electoral Roll	87	105	103	108

Percentage children	2023	2024	2025
Usual Sunday (aged < 16)	9%	8%	12%
Average Week, October, excluding school services (aged < 16)	7%	8%	11%
Worshipping community (aged < 18)	10%	10%	15%



Thank you