



The election of Church Wardens and Annual Parochial Church Meeting will be held on Sunday 11th May 2025 in St Michael's Church after the Holy Communion service.

The meeting will start at approximately 11.45am.

APCM Agenda

1	Opening Prayer
2	Annual Meeting of Parishioners – 2.1 Election of Churchwardens
3	Annual Parochial Church Meeting
	3.1 Apologies for absence
	3.2 Confirmation of Any Other Business
	3.3 Minutes of APCM of Sunday 26 th May 2024 and matters arising
	3.4 Electoral Roll Report
	3.5 PCC, Deanery Synod and Fabric Reports
	3.6 Churchwardens Report
	3.7 Financial Report
	3.8 Appointment of Independent Examiner and remuneration
	3.9 Election of laity representatives to the Parochial Church Council and Deanery Synod
	3.10 Date of next PCC meeting
	3.11 Appointment of sidesmen/welcomers
	3.12 Church Report/Mission Plan 2025/26
	3.13 Any Other Business
	3.14 Closing Prayer

BUILDINGS A 5-year plan has been written to address the recommendations of the diocesan energy audit report which focuses on how our church buildings might significantly decrease their carbon emission. The first part of this plan involves change existing lighting to LED, install motion sensors and upgrading insulation of windows and doors in the church rooms.

LAND There is now a development plan for EcoEden (the garden outside the church office). In August a working party tackled the long grass and prepared the land for rotavating and seeding. Unfortunately the remaining work could not be completed but we will try again this year. A wonderful bird-feeding station has been added and a 'secret' gardener has tidied the 'patio' area. Once the church gutters are clear we plan to install a water butt and start to grow flowers to encourage more pollinators.

COMMUNITY AND GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT In May we are focusing on action for Climate Justice by supporting Christian Aid Week, through prayer and reflection, a continued focus on reducing personal carbon footprints and by writing to local to MP to voice concerns. ECO LENT raised awareness of Tree Aid and raised funds for this charity. The amount raised has still tbc.

Jill Elbourn EcoChurch Champion, Member of PCC

Copies of St Michael's draft 2024 Financial Report can be found at the back of church or on the website - www.stmichaelshighworth.co.uk

We have been pleased to welcome Anne and Liz to our church flower arranging team but would be delighted to hear of anyone who would like to join us or offer to water flowers during the week. If you or anyone you know you would be interested we would be pleased to hear from you. You would be very welcome and we can help if you are just beginning!

With grateful thanks to everyone who arranges flowers. *Anne Hinton*

St Michael's Parent/Carer and Toddler Group

We thank God for another happy and fulfilling year as we continue to reach out and provide a safe and welcoming space every Monday morning in term time to the many parents, carers, grandparents and their babies and toddlers who join us. Many come regularly and we have got to know them very well and it's a joy to see the children – and families – grow. We continue to provide a wealth of toys and activities with excellent refreshments which are much appreciated. Some families come more spasmodically, and we invariably welcome at least one new family each week. We finish each session with a short and simple Bible story and singing and rhymes which most families now join in with.

A real answer to our prayers came at the beginning of the year when the availability of some Team members changed, and the practical future of the Group began to be in doubt. But two more of our older Church members stepped forward to help in the kitchen with the refreshments and have proved a true blessing and we are so grateful both for them and for each member of our small team.

This Group together with the Youth Group that meet on Tuesdays are the two regular weekly forms of outreach ministry at St Michael's at this time.

PLEASE PRAY for God's blessing as we seek by his grace to share his love both by word and welcoming practical hospitality and care in every way we can.

Lyn Sapwell: Co-ordinator

Eco Church

WORSHIP Our mission CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION was launched at a family service on 1st Sep. Intercessional prayers regularly focus on global, national and local environmental issues. At least 2 sermons have focused on God's creation this year.

LIFESTYLE Significant action has been taken to engage our congregation in the mission. An Ecohub provides a focal point for information. The year has been carefully mapped to include a different ECO focus every 4-6 weeks. Promotion of each focus has been highlighted through ECO bookmarks, ECO Christmas and Lent and support for Christian Aid Week. Recycling in the kitchen is now better organised and supported. We will be working towards becoming a Fair Trade church in 2025/6.

Vicar's Report

Church ministry has always been a marathon and not a sprint. It often feels that we need to get things done now, but the reality which has pressed home to me recently is that there is no point in rushing, the Church always has moved very slowly and this year is no exception

2024 has been a year of some significant changes in the way that we provide worship, Many thanks to Rev John for his help particularly during the interregnum and our best wishes go with him as he moves nearer to his family in Cricklade. Also to Rev Alison as she also has stepped back from taking regular weekly services, but continues with the monthly midweek service that is going from strength to strength, My grateful thanks also go out to Lyn and Phil as they lead one of our main Sunday services and provide much needed cover in the festival season and when I have been unwell.

Thank you to Phil and Pam our Churchwardens who have been strong pillars of the church for many years especially during the interregnum. Their gifts and talents have made it easy for me to settle in and quickly become part of the family of the church here, but now feel it is the right time to lay down their staves and have a well earned rest. At the time of writing we do not have any one to take their place, but my hope is that during this year God will raise up people to take on the mantle of Churchwarden.

Thanks also to our Youth Team, lead by Jo Vizor and Bella, for providing a hot meal and a safe place to explore the bible every Tuesday to the Youth Group and activities for Sunday groups whilst many of the team also juggle their youth support with leading and preaching on a Sunday morning.

Also standing down is Ruth who has been our Safeguarding officer for several years. She has done an exemplary job, both looking after the Administrative side of DBS checks and training, but also working through a number of pastoral issues. My grateful thanks to her for all she has done this year. We look forward to Stephen Smith taking up that role when he has completed his training.

The Church office has also seen some changes, Jo who was with us for several years has moved on to become a school administrator a post which she has been looking forward to for a while, and Julie in the office has been joined by Sarah who is fitting in very well.

Julie has been the backbone of the church administration for some time now, going over and above her paid hours to help in a wide variety of church activities, Coffee mornings, Tuesday Meet Greet Eat, the list is endless and I know that I speak for everyone in the church in expressing our grateful appreciation for all that she does. Her contributions of time, cooking and hard work are a vital part of our life together.

Thank you to all the PCC who have met regularly during the year and fielded a number of tricky issues, not least the closing of St Michael's hall, the significant reduction in Income over the last four years to name but two.

There are many church based activities that have continued on throughout the year. In particular Lyn and the team who run the toddlers, Thank you so much for a wonderful ministry that helps us to engage with many who would not normally come to our worship services. Also to Jo and others who provide the Craft-based coffee mornings several times a year. Weekly Coffee mornings continue to meet in the church rooms and also the Meet Eat Greet in the church once a month. Thank you to everyone who helps with those.

We have lost a number of friends and family during the last twelve months. We remember with gratitude and love Jean and several others whose funerals I have been part of. Jean will be long remembered as many in the community were taught by her. Her love of God shone and many musical gifts shone through everything she did.

St Michael's is a caring and loving family, that cares about those in need both within the church and across the community. The building refurbishment has proven it's worth, with many community organisations now making use of our great facilities. We were privileged to host a General Election hustings in 2024 at which all of the candidates expressed their views to a large number of local residents from across the area. We also were able to host a Volunteer expo, where many of the local voluntary organisation came together under our roof to promote their numerous and important works. As well as many concerts, craft fairs and other community activities.

Thank you to all the volunteers in our church family who enable our outreach and worship to continue week by week. I note particularly the AV team Stephen, Arfon and Andy who look after the sound and video week by week, the Flower Arrangers The Fabric group, and George who faithfully and humbly moves the chairs every week and has also been helping me with the many Baptism services. Thank you to Malcolm who provides the AV support for the many Weddings and Funerals we have had during the year.

Looking forwards, I want to remind you of the vision that I shared with you when I first arrived. I am seeking to help all of the church family to "Be church, not to just Go to church." Wherever we are, we are ambassadors of Christ, carrying his love, mercy and grace into our broken world. Looking not to fill the church building, but to build the Kingdom of God in Highworth and beyond.

That vision has not changed. In particular this year we still need to look forward and plan how we can share the Good News of Christ with those who are moving into the new Housing estates. We will be helped with this task by our new curate Andy Bissex who will be joining us in July 2025 and receive support and training opportunities as we work with the Diocese of Bristol and their vision of culture change "Transforming Church. Together." reimagining the way we form collaborative relationships which bring more people to Christ.

On a personal note, I have had the first of two surgeries on my knee and hope to have the second one in the summer of 2025. This will mean I will be taking things a little slower than I normally do, but I am again reminded of my opening thoughts.

I am looking forward to an exciting 2025

God bless, *Rev Phil Goodey*

Bellringers Report **St Michael's Highworth and St John the Baptist Hannington**

Sunday service ringing is generally well attended and most weeks we have enough ringers to ring on all 8 bells. We have rung for all important town events during the last 12 months and will be ringing for the VE Day celebrations on May 8th.

Our learners are showing good progress and are now progressing from call changes to method ringing. We had a successful joint summer outing with Wanborough and Liddington to 4 towers in the Cotswolds.

St Michael's were placed 4th in the recent Swindon Branch striking competition, which was disappointing. Something to work on for next year.

We will be holding a 'Have a go session' in June, for the 8 people on our waiting list wanting to learn. This is a very healthy position to be in as other local towers struggle with recruitment.

A new set of ropes have now been ordered and should be with us in the coming weeks. A problem with the 6th bell was found, which will need a bellhanger to rectify. As soon as we have the appropriate Church authorisation the work will be carried out. To cover some of the costs, we have applied for three grants, plus held a tower open day on 3rd May 2025.

At the AGM on the 17th April 2025, Rob was re-elected as Tower Captain. Alan was re-elected as Steeple keeper. Alan's wife Alison was re-elected to manage our accounts.

Rob has requested and is waiting for a meeting with St John the Baptist Church Wardens, regarding the repair of the tower roof. *Rob New*

St Michael's Flower Guild

The sad loss of Heather Gunn, our much loved Chairman and talented flower arranger has cast a shadow over this last year and we continue to remember her with great affection. Members of the Church Flower Guild have continued to provide flowers in church each week (except in Advent and Lent) as part of our personal giving to St Michael's. We have celebrated Christmas, Easter and Harvest with more elaborate decorations and are very grateful to those who have made donations towards those flowers. We have also done special arrangements for Weddings.

In September we were delighted to take part in the Highworth Flower Festival organised by Highworth and District Floral Art Society depicting 'The Wonder of Words' in flowers. The church looked amazing and attracted a large number of visitors.

Following the success of the original Highworth Poppy Project which we organised in 2022 we were able to display the poppies in November 2024; they were again much admired.

Youth and Childrens Report

And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:3

Another year and there is much going on here at St Michael's through our youth and children's volunteers. Our youth group has again seen a continued growth and we just welcomed 10 new year 6s to join our regular older youth on a Tuesday evening. We continue to start by sharing food then explore the Christian faith through games and activities. These young people mainly come from non-church families so it a wonderful way to engage with them.

Half term activity days, which happen on a Thursday afternoon in the school holidays are very well attended, and using the Messy Church resources, we are able to dig into a Bible verse or story through crafts. We have also recently added a celebration to the activities on offer and we are very grateful to those of you who have given up an afternoon to sit and chat to the families who come, as well as those of you who bake a cake for us to share.

The monthly Saturday morning drop in has moved to the second Saturday, and reaches far more than just youth and children. We are heartened to see that this truly is a church family activity. The crafts on offer give the children, and some adults, an activity based on a Bible verse, while the adults are able to chat, read the papers and of course tuck into a bacon roll, while Cynthia runs the sewing table and Kathleen has her cards for sale.

We still don't officially have schools work at the moment but we do support John Hares, from HCC, with Christmas workshops in the schools, plus moving on workshops for year 6. We also support the schools when they hold their Easter, Harvest and Christmas concerts in church.

On Sunday mornings we offer activities and groups for all ages with the toys area for our youngest members, Sunday school for those aged 3 and up and we have continued our Bible study group for our youth, those who go out from the service with the croissants, giving us a chance to chat about their week before we look at the Bible study. We are only able to offer this range of activities through your continued support of our young people through giving up your time on a Sunday morning.

We are also thankful for Lyn and the team who run the Toddler group on Mondays, which have a separate report on the fantastic work of this group.

While we still don't have a youth or schools worker at the moment, we have continued to reach out to the younger members of the Highworth Community and as we continue to pray about employing someone in one or both of these roles we are grateful that God blesses all we do and that there will be plenty of opportunities to follow up on when the time is right. Thank you again to everyone who prays for us, bakes for us or gives up time to support all this very vital work.

Then he 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 9:37-38
Jo Vizor

Churchwarden's Report

This past year has been our last as churchwardens. Once again, we are so thankful to you all for the support that you have given to us in so many ways. Words of encouragement, stepping up to do jobs of many kinds and of course praying. We thank you for standing with us over this past year.

It is said that the only thing that's constant is change and that certainly has been true for us since this time last year! The biggest change of course has been the welcomed arrival of Phil and Sandra who have made such a big impact on the church. Every incumbent approaches the job in their own unique way and as churchwardens we have been keen to ensure that all the behind the scenes work of the church supports the way Phil wants to take the church forward. Having a new rector has given us the opportunity to make significant changes to the way the office operates and this was essential when, sadly, Jo moved on to a new job. This did however give us the opportunity to appoint Julie as church manager which means that she can now make many of the decisions that previously required approval from the churchwardens. She is also now line manager of Maddy, our part time cleaner who makes sure the church and church room are always spick and span. Not only is this arrangement much more efficient but it also empowers Julie enabling her to get on with the things she is so very good at doing and on which we, as the church, rely. We have been extremely grateful for her understanding enthusiasm, wisdom and fellowship during the past year.

Most recently Sarah started work in the office to support Julie, She is now getting to grips with the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of church life. We also want to thank Ann Crowley who gives up at her Tuesday mornings to support the office by looking after our finances.

Throughout the year the routine tasks of producing service sheets, bulletins, diary, rotas and much more, have continued. The use of the building has grown not only for services, weddings, baptisms and funerals but also for a wide variety of other events both regular and occasional. All have been conducted in the calm and polished manner that befits the beautiful building we care for – beneath the surface however we have been paddling like the proverbial swan!

A major issue for us this year has been the problems with the church hall. This started with the apparently minor issue of sagging ceiling tiles in the kitchen. Closer investigation revealed the presence of asbestos throughout the building. We had known that the building needed thorough refurbishment, but this discovery meant that the complexity and cost of undertaking any work on the building would be prohibitive. Although the hall is valued by its users it is not used by the church. The income from hirers falls very far short of the cost of running it. Projections of likely costs and incomes from refurbishing the hall showed this to be a completely uneconomic proposition. The PCC have therefore decided to sell site for redevelopment, and we are currently consulting with the diocese on the best way to do to do this.

While all manner of issues are dealt with as they arise, there remains one problem that faces the church and seems to grow with the passing of time. It seems that every activity, in every sphere of church life, lacks people willing to commit to taking part and helping. Requests for people to volunteer for one off events and more regular activities are invariably met with a very poor response and it is often the same people who keep things going time after time. To echo the World War One poster “**Your Church Needs You**”

Finally, as our term of service as churchwardens draws to a close, we want to say how much we have appreciated the fellowship of the church and those we have worked closely with over the past years. We have seen the vision of so many of the people who went before us and worked so hard to bring about the reordering of the church, turn into the reality of a witness to Jesus’s love in the heart the town. We have been extremely proud to serve Saint Michael’s. Above all we are proud of the warmth and love that our church family freely gives to anybody and everybody we have contact with.

Pam Linfield and Phil Sapwell
Church Wardens

PCC Report

During 2024 the PCC and Standing Committee met 11 times either in person or via email. PCC meetings include a report from the Treasurer and updates from the Safeguarding Officer and Fabric committee. Matters discussed at PCC meetings during the year included:

- Sevenhampton Church, maintenance and services
- Church Hall
- Church finances and Parish Share Obligations
- CAP and Highworth Churches Together
- Eco Church
- Youth Ministry, what we need, how we meet that need and the costs.
- Telecommunications in the tower

Fabric Report

To be brutally honest the fabric committee is one of St. Michael’s teams suffering from a lack of people. The verse “The heart is willing but the flesh is weak” describes the situation only too well. As a team we are getting older, most of us can no longer carry out anything other than the most straightforward maintenance. We are also having to restrict ourselves from climbing ladders and going onto the roof – though we all think we still can, common sense tells us not to be so silly. We need fresh minds and bodies to join us.

That said many issues have been dealt with by the team. For example, keeping the footpath lights working (this seems to be a perennial issue) unblocking sinks and cleaning a large wine stain from the church floor. The running of the church has been maintained with PAT testing electrical equipment and boiler maintenance/repairs have been carried out. Both of these are done by outside contractors who are engaged through the office. More serious repairs are also contracted out (e.g. repairs to the church wall when a car hit it and repairs to the clock). However, some of the biggest projects have not been advanced. These include the repair of the flagpole and weathervane and replacing the lead on South Transept roof. These require more involved and technical discussions with contractors, including on site (i.e. on the roof/tower) than is reasonable to expect or possible for our admin team to deal with. We need an able-bodied team member with some building knowledge to take the lead on these projects – volunteers please! *Fabric Committee*

Midweek Church

Midweek Church continues to be appreciated as a quiet, reflective communion service on the third Wednesday of each month. Coffee & cake (always home made!) are served from 10.15 ish, and the service begins at 11am. We alternate traditional Book of Common Prayer with modern language Common Worship, and value liturgy, clergy robed and a thoughtful sermon. We are mostly seniors but anyone is welcome of course! Numbers are usually between 15 – 20, and often more. We began this service in 2016 and from the start noticed that many who come do not attend any other service at St Michael’s, so appreciate what we provide.

Sadly some of our “regulars” have died over the past year including Prue Hardie, Jean Ashton and Cynthia Freemantle, as well as Jane Bateman who always came early to help with refreshments. We remember them all with affection and in our prayers. My special thanks continue to go to Kathleen Spencer and Anne Hinton who have faithfully over the years helped to serve refreshments – the kitchen & coffee machine being well beyond my skills! And Jean Homer is very grateful to those who push her wheelchair to enable her to come. *Alison Williams*

Meet Greet Eat

We meet on the fourth Tuesday from 10.30am, starting with coffee and have lunch around 12.30pm. Numbers have reduced slightly over the year as we have lost some dear friends. We are pleased to welcome some new people and have around 18 people attend each month. As ever, Scrabble is a serious business whilst others try out new games or sit and have a chat.

Everyone was game to Julie attempting to cook the Christmas meal this year and with superb assistance from Cynthia and lots of advice from Anne it went fine! As with all areas of church, we couldn’t do it without volunteers and we are very grateful to Bella, Cynthia and Cath for stepping up and helping out this year. *Julie Miles*