



The Vicar's Report

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Every year I am grateful for the opportunity to write this report for our Annual Meeting, even though I inevitably begin by taking a large gulp. Looking back on such a busy and full year can feel a little overwhelming, but here goes.

2025 had many important highlights.

Revd Prof. Alison Milbank joined us for the Triduum when she celebrated Mass and led some profound reflections on this seminal moment in the Church's year. Mthr Alison, along with others such as Mthr Anne from our next door neighbours at St Paul's, continued to help re-enforce the integrity and motivation for Eucharistic provision here, which flows from a love for the other, always seeking the best for our brothers and sisters.¹ I am immensely grateful to all the priests who have supported our parish over the past year, helping to ensure that the Eucharist is at the very heart of our worshipping and missionary life. Noting this, it is hard not to look forward to Fr Joe's priesting in June 2026! However, before that monumental moment we have had the opportunity to rejoice in his presence since June 2025 as a deacon. I am extremely grateful for the way in which Fr Joe has thrown himself into life in Ruislip. He is already making an impact sharing his musical gifts, natural enthusiasm and liturgical sense. I am sure I speak for all in giving thanks to God, and looking forward to the next three years of his ministry among us.

As we welcomed Fr Joe we also said a fond farewell to Rowland Linder, our Ministerial Intern. Rowland made a huge difference during her eleven months with us, from developing our Parish Communications to resurrecting the Parish Holiday Club. It is wonderful to note that in a few weeks she will be going through Stage 2 of the 'discernment process', with hopefully a "yes" from Bishop's selectors to begin training for the priesthood in September 2026. I know she is so grateful for the support of this parish and how we have helped equip her to explore the sacred ministry.

During the year, we also had our annual PCC Away Day on 1st November at St Edmund's Northwood Hills. The aim of the day was to produce a *Mission Action Plan* (MAP). The day began, deliberately, with a Mass as a reminder that any mission flows

¹ a. On Sundays and Holy Days of the Church there will be a celebration of Mass offered by a male priest.
b. If someone attends a mass celebrated by a woman priest they will have the option of receiving a prayer of blessing from her, or
c. sacrament in one kind (bread) set aside at an earlier Eucharistic celebration offered by a man.

from the altar. We then reviewed last years' MAP and, in light of the review, produced a new MAP for 2025/26:

1. Continue to review and renew methods of communication
2. To re-schedule the two masses on Tuesday and Friday to be 'Lunchtime Masses'. We discussed the positive benefits of our location on the High Street, local businesses and engagement with Hall groups, particularly the Friday Tots, and how we could enable more people to access our worship.
3. Volunteer Sunday. The PCC were keen to involve more people in the various activities at St Martin's. Therefore, decided that we would have a 'Volunteer Sunday' in early 2026.

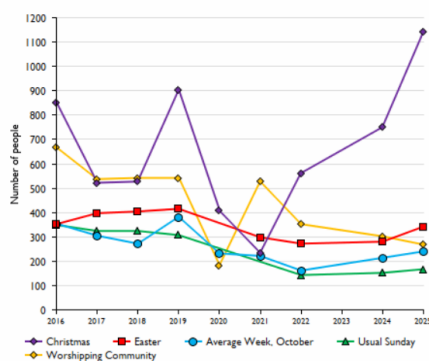
The point of a MAP is to keep us focused on our role as a missionary people, fulfilling Archbishop William Temple's famous axiom: *'The Church is the only institution that exists primarily for the benefit of those who are not its members'*.

Throughout 2025 there was much in the news about the results of a survey which led to the Bible Society saying that there was an observable, *'Quiet Revival'*. Although the 'robustness of the methodology' was found wanting, further work, other surveys (Ipsos Mori & YWAM) and the *experience(!)* (*The Times* 16.08.25, *The Spectator* etc) of parishes such as St Martin's is showing that younger people in particular are responding to faith, and particularly faith liturgically expressed like ours, and particularly during major festivals.

Through 2025 numbers gently climbed, and this was, as observed more widely, seen at the major festivals but also at other times. I said last year that 'I am always weary of things ballooning, as balloons tend to pop!' so it is vital that we welcome and integrate new people and teach them the faith.

In light of this, the Mission Stats for Christmas make for interesting reading, and raise questions for us in 2026:

1. Attendance Summary



	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Christmas	850	520	525	900	405	232	560	-	749	1139
Easter	352	395	402	413	-	296	270	-	278	340
Average Week, October	352	303	270	380	230	219	160	-	212	238
Usual Sunday	347	322	322	305	-	-	141	-	150	165
Worshipping Community	666	535	540	540	180	525	350	-	300	266

N.B. Because of the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, churches were not asked to report their Usual Sunday attendance for 2020 or 2021, or their Easter attendance for 2020

- Christmas: Christmas Eve & Christmas Day;
- Easter: Easter Eve & Easter Day;
- Average week, October: includes Sunday and midweek church services & fresh expressions in October but excludes attendance at services for schools;

All of this is an important reminder of the significance of understanding and celebrating who we are. Interestingly, our Thursday Mass always feels to me like a microcosm of St Martin's welcome and hospitality.

Another hugely encouraging sign has been the increased number of socials and attendees to these events. Of course, this does also highlight the need for more and new volunteers, if we are to consolidate and grow this part of our parish life. We bear

this in mind when we have occasions such the joyous Ascension Day Confirmation Mass and our Patronal Festival Mass which this year had as its preacher a familiar face and priestly presence, Bishop Richard Fenwick. It was a tremendous joy to welcome him and Jane back to Ruislip!

In 2025 we launched our Chancel Roof campaign and we are two-thirds of the way there but still need a final 'big push'. Can I say on behalf of the PCC a huge thank you to everyone who has contributed so generously.

Also, financially, even after an increase in giving, we are still a parish supported by others. The financial reporting and life of the parish are much more reliable and stable, respectively, but we must try to ensure we 'pay our way'. The PCC are very conscious of this, so we have, at the year end, sent surplus money to the Diocese. Of course, we are immensely grateful for all those who do give, thank you, thank you, but please do consider how 'sacrificial giving' applies to you.

As I draw this report to an end, can I, once again, re-iterate how much of a joy our open church is. It seems that barely a week goes by without someone telling me, thanking me for the chance to enter our beautiful church. This remains such a valuable resource to this community.

Conscious of this wonderful church and what happens within it, I would especially like to express my deep gratitude to all those who work so hard to ensure the worshipping life of the parish continues. Particularly I want to thank Viktoria and the choir, along with Alan and the serving and sacristy team.

Mentioning people specifically is always dangerous, for fear of missing someone out, because each and every one of you add to the life of this amazing place. So thank you, for all the faithful prayers offered, for the upkeep of the building and lands, for clocks wound and drinks served. For toddlers welcomed and the vulnerable helped. Again I unapologetically echo a previous year's observation, that as the eucharistic bread broken at the altar here, new life, renewal and care is a seven day a week force for good at St Martin's.

We need to rejoice in this loving activity and I want to thank all who work to ensure the various groups happen, which so enrich our life together.

I would, however, like to say a thank you to Gill, who works so hard in the office and is a wonderful colleague and does so much to help me, Fr Joe and the parish, thus guaranteeing the facilities of St Martin's are available to so many in our community.

Finally, I would like to thank Jacqueline and Pete for their amazing work as church wardens. Again, it has been a hard year for them in terms of health and workload, but they serve as a constant reminder of all that is best here. We are very blessed to have such excellent and generous wardens. I am indebted to them for their support and care. Also, thank you to all who have served on various Synods, Committees and the PCC; your partnership in the gospel is invaluable.

To end on a personal note, on behalf of Sarah, Izzy and Alex, I am so, so grateful for all you do for us as the people of God. Please realise how much that means to us!

