



# **St Oswald's, Norbury**



# **Annual Report 2025**

## Introduction

2024 was certainly a big year for us at St Oswald's – a fitting tribute to all of those faithful members of the church who have cared for the buildings and gardens as well as caring for the souls of those people who live in the Parish and who worship here.

Big celebrations make big demands on everyone's time and energy, but thankfully, we are not a congregation that allows these things to divert our core ministry of being a Christian presence in this place, rather we take the opportunities to build on them and make connections – and we have made many connections in the year of celebrations. To be open to all who wish to come, and to actively invite them in.

A big celebration of the past can sometimes leave us feeling that 'things are not as good as they used to be' alongside being thankful for all that has been. But it is with joy that I see new people taking on responsibilities within the church and helping us to see a new way forward. Our 90<sup>th</sup> birthday was a great cause for joy, but it only has meaning if it helps us to be thankful for the present and to look to the future.

We are greatly blessed by many people who give of their time, and also their money, very generously in helping us to continue to do the things that we do so well. We all do this alongside other demands on our time and although we may sometimes get things wrong, or do things imperfectly we know that our efforts are pleasing to God.

I am very grateful to all those who give so much of their time in service of the life of St Oswald's, most of whom do so on a voluntary basis. But even those paid for their work do so much that is over and above what they are contracted to do. We are a community that knows our need of God, and of one another and we thank God for all that he has done in this place over the past year, and pray that we will continue to be blessed in the years to come.

Rev'd Alison Brunt (Vicar)

## 2025 Election Roll Report

The total membership, following a full revision of the Electoral Roll for 2025 for St. Oswald's Norbury Parish is 140 as at 26th April 2025.

Of this total 72 live within the Parish and 68 are non-resident (NR) and reside outside the Parish.

Electoral Roll figures from previous years:

2025 (full revision)	140
2024	162
2023	154
2022	158
2021	167
2020	163
2019 (full revision)	163

## Report of the proceedings of the Parochial Council 2024-2025

### Meetings and Membership

There were 7 PCC meetings held during the year between 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024 - 26<sup>th</sup> April 2025. The PCC members review all policies and regular procedures and are responsible for the effective implementation of safeguarding practices and general concerns of how funds are to be spent. The meetings were well attended with an average attendance of 74%.

The PCC operates with small sub-groups which lead on particular areas of work and discuss important topics such as finance, church fabrics, mission and report back the outcome of their meetings to the PCC. These areas are reported on separately later in this report.

The Standing Committee meets before each PCC meeting to review and discuss any urgent matters ahead of planned PCC meetings and report back to the PCC. The Committee consists of the Vicar, Church Wardens, Treasurer and the PCC Secretary.

Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at PCC meetings. This is in line with the recommended practice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. The Safeguarding Officer (Judy Morris) ensures that those who are in a position of responsibility, working with children and vulnerable adults in church have completed a Disclosure Barring Service Form and that all officers are familiar with safeguarding processes.

The following officers were appointed at the first meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

Chair:	Alison Brunt
Vice-Chair:	Yvonne Nwanokwu
Church Wardens:	Yvonne Nwanokwu, Yemi Adeogun
Deputy Church Wardens:	Sonia Rumbelow, Debbie Alleyne
PCC Secretary:	Maudlyn Riviere
Safeguarding Officer:	Judy Morris
Treasurer:	Dawn Blair
Treasury Team:	Dawn Blair, Sylvia James, Judith Kitchingman
Standing Committee:	Alison Brunt, Yemi Adeogun, Yvonne Nwanokwu, Dawn Blair, Maudlyn Riviere

## Report on the Fabrics, Goods and Ornaments of the Church

There were several projects completed during the past year comprising the following:

### Church

- The church car park wall was completely rebuilt in June. Later, iron railings were fitted which have been coated with a weatherproof sealant, to complete the work.
- The north-side church door had been continually sticking, a recommended carpenter was engaged to re-hang the door, which now opens and closes smoothly.
- The Vestry:
  - Work completed on levelling the Vestry floor. The new floor is now water resistant, insulated with foil and foam adding warmth to the vestry.
  - CES were engaged to fit an updated brighter lighting system.
  - Additionally, a new sink and drainer with under cupboard has been fitted.
- Organ repair completed on the 'coupling'- the organ is functioning well.
- Emergency boiler repair – Cowley attended urgently during the new year break to repair the church boiler which had not been functioning over the Christmas period. The church heating was restored in time for the first Sunday service in January.
- Church and hall heating additional work:
  - Cowley's repaired leaks in the church pipes, installed new TRV Valves and ran the whole system through in both the church and hall, bleeding all radiators, all work completed satisfactorily.
- Rodell's Ltd undertook inspection of the Church lightning protection system - a pass certificate issued.
- Chubb Fire and Security annual maintenance testing completed in September. Fire extinguishers in both hall and church serviced and the compliance certificate issued.
- High level church works recommended in the last quinquennial inspection are near completion.
- The church hedge has been cut and well maintained throughout the year.

### Hall

- Church Hall signage - the word **PARISH** replaced, and the wall whitewashed in time for St Oswald's 90<sup>th</sup> celebration.
- The hall garden fences were badly damaged during one of the many winter storms. McKeown Fencing Ltd carried out urgent replacement fencing to ensure the garden could be safely used by hall users. Insurance was able to cover some of the repairs.
- A new hall floor buffer was ordered to replace the old buffer.
- Several system leaks and blockages occurred in the men's and ladies' toilets. Necessary repairs were undertaken.
- Annual Services were completed on both the Church and Hall boilers
- General kitchen maintenance was carried out - including PAT testing in the hall and church.

### Gardens

Volunteers from the church keep the lawns and flowerbeds neat and tidy. The aim is to make the area around the church a relaxing and pleasant 'green oasis' for the community. Everything is designed to be minimum maintenance so that future volunteers will be encouraged to help out should the current 'gardeners' need to step down.

Following winter storm damage, part of the hall boundary fence has been replaced.

## **Report on the Financial Affairs of the Parish**

Overall, there has been a slight improvement in our finances compared to last year.

It is good to see an increase in Planned Giving and Voluntary Donations. We had various fundraising activities which included “Give a Little” and our “90<sup>th</sup> Celebrations”.

We received designated donations for the Vestry Carpet, Church Development Fund, Hymn books and flowers. Also a grant for a project to work with new parents and young children.

Fees received from funerals and weddings are similar to last year but most of this money is returned to the Diocese.

There was also a welcome increase in ABRSM fees.

Our annual pledge to the Parish Support Fund for 2024 was £50,000.

Following the Quinquennial report last year, we completed various repairs for high level work. Funds of £40,000 were transferred from the CCLA account to help cover these expenses and Utility bills. We also had an increase in church maintenance covering Organ and Piano servicing.

There has been a slight increase in Hall bookings. We have incurred expenses from high energy bills and major capital expenditure of £4,100.

## **Report on the proceedings of Croydon North Deanery Synod**

During the year the Synod met three times: February, June and October. The meetings were held in different churches in the Croydon North Deanery which covered different topics.

The North Deanery Synod continues to work with Croydon Citizens.

Zhane Wallace was introduced as the new Croydon Citizen Co-ordinator at the 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024 meeting, and she outlined her role which includes providing training for churches and involvement with “Be Well and Mental Health”.

Through her work and outreach Zhane said her aim is to develop and support leadership skills within the Croydon Community. She asked the Synod members to contact her to discuss how Citizens can provide support for initiatives, she said that by joining up voices changes were most likely to happen when we are working together, therefore she is keen to meet with churches in the Deanery to learn more about their communities.

St Oswald's Representatives are Maudlyn Riviere, Christiana Wright, Tracy Fagbemi and Vee Benn.

## **Key Activities and Events of the Church**

### Worship

Worship is at the heart of our life together as a church and week by week we offer a Sung Eucharist at 10 am on Sundays, with Sunday School during term time, and said services at 8am on Sundays and 10:30 am on Wednesdays. Common Worship Morning prayer is said together by Zoom each day (except Sunday) and a short evening ‘Prayer for the nation’ is said every evening also by Zoom.

The 10 am Sunday service is shared by Zoom with between 0 and 4 people joining each week. It is pleasing that fewer people now feel the need to worship from home, but others have welcomed the opportunity to join on the odd occasion when getting to church has not been possible. Unfortunately the quality of transmission, particularly of the singing, is not as good as we would like it to be.

We have enjoyed some good music from our choir of approximately 12 members under Ann Hubble who felt she must retire in May and more recently working with Paul Swinden who joined us in January. During the summer and autumn we were very glad of the support of Robin Field on the organ and some work with the choir by Michael Ball who helped to prepare music for the Advent and Christmas carol services.

Our usual seasonal highlights in worship included the All Souls service and special services marking our 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. We have worked hard to enable more people to take part in leading worship and especially in those seasonal times such as Holy Week which is characterised by the sharing of insightful personal reflections and well prepared dramatic readings. We take our worship outside when we can, notably at dawn on Easter Sunday and for our 'Carols on the Green'.

We also began to offer the ministry of celebrating wholeness and healing both at separate services and occasionally as part of the regular Sunday service. We intend to build on this in the coming year.

We are well supported by strong teams of servers, readers, intercessors, welcomers and coffee makers, not to mention the many people who prepare our worship without being seen – producing notices and service resources, cleaning the church and maintaining the rotas. But we would love to have more people involved, with the serving team in particular seeking for more helpers. Please do ask how you can help.

During 2024 we took services with 5 baptisms, 1 wedding and 15 funerals held either in church or at a local crematorium. We also held anniversary memorial services for 2 people and had an act of thanksgiving for the gift of children on Mothering Sunday. We hosted the annual service for AGNAP (The Association of Guyanese Nurses and Allied Professionals) in April.

### Children's Church

Children's Church takes place in the choir vestry during the 10am Sunday service. The young people are able to explore the Christian faith, at an age-appropriate level, through the set Bible readings. They enjoy listening to the Gospel stories, discussing and reflecting thoughtfully on themes related to their experiences of life. A small number of older primary and secondary aged children consistently attending have risen excellently to the demands of the monthly All Age services when called upon to read, assist or present their learning.

The young people have contributed to all the main festival services and in particular to our 90th anniversary celebrations in May 2024, when they designed posters, sang, danced and had special duties in the anniversary service.

Another pleasing development is the growth in numbers of younger children, especially those aged 5 years and under, and an increased commitment to offering more structured provision for these children.

There are toys and drawing resources at the main entrance which children can interact with during services, and after Easter it is planned that parents of under-5s will be able to come with their children to Children's Church to engage in age-appropriate activities, along with the older school-age youngsters.

It is lovely to see young people continuing to attend over many years, being known and visible members of our church community and hopefully to be entering a new era of truly all-age provision.

### Ministry

We are blessed with the supporting ministry of two licensed readers, Leonora Davies and Marcia Grant-Che who assist with preaching, leading worship and study groups while also offering pastoral support and friendship to the congregation. Our Commissioned Pastoral Lay Ministers – CPLM – (formerly referred to as SPAs) Anita Christ and Bevon West support and keep in touch with church members and others in the local community through visiting, telephoning and messaging and Bevon, through her work in the hall, is available for those who drop in while she is present, and also to hall users. It was a great joy to learn that our retired SPA, Glen Dawson was awarded the title 'SPA Emeritus' at a service in the Cathedral in recognition of her long service her at St Oswald's.

Although we are blessed with a strong team of licensed and accredited ministers, we are also thankful that many members of the congregation offer an excellent ministry of keeping in touch, especially with members who are unable to attend church.

### Mission Group

The mission group meets to look at the wide range of St Oswald's church mission, within the parish and local communities, throughout the year. Including contributing to church-led activities, charitable allocations both home and abroad. The group meets four times a year and comprises six members of the congregation led by Reverend Alison Brunt. The past year the group proposed, reviewed, and actioned the following:

Allocations of £100 granted to twelve charitable organisations based at home and abroad as approved by the PCC. These are:

#### **Overseas allocations:**

The LIFE Foundation, USPG, SOS Children's Village UK, MAF Flying for Life, Red Cross, and Manna Development Disability Centre, Bengaluru.

#### **Home Allocations:**

Salvation Army, Church Urban Fund, St Christopher's Hospice, Livability, Welcare, and Cerebra

**Church giving** – boxes were set up to support the St Alban's community food bank and collection of soft toys for orphaned children at the Manna Development Disability centre in India.

#### **Mission Strategy into the future**

The group are continuing to explore three key areas around church mission as highlighted by the diocese: **Anti-racism Charter, Living in Love and Faith and Eco-church** – shrinking our carbon footprint! Exploring the Eco-church Award.

### Flowers and church decorations

The floral arrangement at the altar continues to be renewed each week and arrangements at the Lady Chapel and Welcoming Area are also refreshed weekly except for the seasons of Lent and Advent when we maintain the sombre and penitential atmosphere of these seasons.

We decorated the Church for Harvest, Christmas and Easter Services following which some of the displays were used to make up approximately 25 smaller arrangements which were handed out.

For Mothering Sunday we put together 80 daffodil posies which were given out at the Service.

In May 24 during our 90th anniversary celebratory week of events we had a wonderful and special array of floral arrangements.

We are always pleased to welcome donations towards the costs of flowers, especially if you wish to mark a special anniversary by making a gift.

The cash donations to the Flower Fund - Total £891.40

Expenses - £905.78

Unclaimed flower donations - Total £307.00 :

£147.00 (receipted) and £160.00 (unreceipted but arrangements averaged at £20 per week)

The festivals/special events are detailed below and these figures are included in the expenses detailed above with the balance covering the weekly flower arrangements:

St Oswald's 90 <sup>th</sup>	£51.00
Harvest -	£107.00
Christmas	£106.00
Mothers' Day	£52.65
Easter	£157.43[u

## Celebrations, Social and Fundraising events

The 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration of the church provided a perfect opportunity for celebratory worship and social events during May.

The back drop to all of this was a beautifully curated exhibition of photographs and other documents from our well kept archives, along with a memory wall on which everyone was invited to contribute a 'brick' sharing their memories associated with St Oswald's.

Events included a very informative and interesting talk by local historian John Brown to a packed hall of people from across the whole Norbury Park area and beyond, followed by afternoon tea organised by the Women's Fellowship;

On the Anniversary day itself, May 16<sup>th</sup> we had a very special evening service based on the order of service used when the foundation stone of the church was laid; Our main celebratory service of worship coincided with the Feast of Pentecost and we were delighted to have Bishop Rosemarie preach and preside at our Eucharist. Later in the afternoon we enjoyed tea on the church lawn with big band music from the South London Concert Band.

The celebrations continued at our patronal festival on 4<sup>th</sup> August when we were delighted to welcome former vicar, Andrew Studdert Kennedy as our preacher and also to have Rev'd Mary Watts former assistant priest of the parish, Alison Morgan, wife of the late Rev'd Christopher Morgan, and the daughter of the late Rev'd Frank Doe all in attendance and sharing memories over a picnic lunch.

In September we held our Harvest Festival and Harvest Supper. Following the Harvest Festival, the contributions of food and other items were gratefully received by The Spires Centre and The St Albans Food Bank.

In October we marked Black History Month at an event with a lively and informative exploration of differences in traditional weddings 'Where we come from' in Africa and the Caribbean. Members of the congregation shared their stories and experiences, and treated the audience to displays of beautiful bridal dresses and adornments from Eastern Nigeria, Benin and Sierra Leone. Dance group 'A Step in Time' performed excellent line dance routines to foot-tapping music from America and Jamaica, there was a live hair-wrapping display, poetry recital and uplifting Bible readings of 'The Wedding at Cana' and I Corinthians 13 on 'Love'. The event was very well attended, with delicious refreshments and opportunities to socialise, and it was truly inspiring to be able to learn from and appreciate the diversity of experience among our congregation.

Our Summer and Christmas fairs, as always, offered an opportunity to invite in the local community as well as providing an opportunity to raise much needed funds for the church.

In December members of the congregation and other groups, including the brownies and children from Kensington Avenue Primary School started making pom-pom sheep for the St Oswald's Christmas Flock. During Advent the flock grew to beyond our target of 100 sheep and at Christmas they were brought to the crib.

We also began to get 'In the mood for Christmas' with another fantastic seasonal concert from the South London Concert Band. They were keen to return and we were delighted to have them back and we hope that there will be more opportunities to enjoy their music later in the year.

The Triptych singers came and performed a mixture of sacred and secular music in February, raising money for the Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association and giving us an evening of sublime music before enjoying a St Oswald's Supper.



### Pop In Club

The Club continues to meet regularly each week with an average attendance of 22, and we have gained two new members. It's very reassuring, having received feedback from members, how much they enjoy coming and I was even surprised when I met a couple who were told by a member what a relaxed and friendly Club it is.

We continue with the usual activities of quiz, exercise, bingo, raffle and games, which include scrabble, cards, dominoes, of course, some members prefer to just talk among themselves. Our annual day trip took us to Worthing, the weather was in our favour and a lovely time was had by all.

It was sad that we lost a very dear member whose 100th birthday we were planning to celebrate unfortunately, it was not to be. May her soul rest in peace.

### Women's Fellowship

The Women's Fellowship meets during the afternoon on the second Wednesday of each month. Unfortunately numbers have declined and a lack of a leader has made it difficult to organise regular speakers. However the fellowship element continues with trips out for lunch at Christmas and in the summer and on several Wednesday afternoons we have enjoyed conversation around particular topics of interest. A highlight of the year was the talk given by local historian John Brown with a tea organised by the Fellowship. Another memorable session was our piloting of making the pom-pom sheep for the 'Christmas Flock'

### Community Engagement

It is always a great joy to welcome local school children into the church and it has been good to welcome back Norbury High School for Girls and Children from Kensington Avenue Primary School for their Christmas services.

We have a good link with Kensington Avenue Primary School, with the vicar taking seasonal assemblies in school and children coming to visit the church for their RE studies. We are also, often, the recipients of plants that the children have grown.

### The Parish Hall

The Hall is a vibrant place with ongoing daily activities and the following groups continue to meet weekly. These include: Flexercise, Taekwondo, Zumba, Brownies, Rainbows, Women's Fellowship, Pop-In Club, Sandra Randall School of Dancing, Association of Jamaicans UK, Norbury Park Councillors surgeries.

The hall provides good facilities and an excellent venue for events such as the Summer and Christmas Fairs, Harvest Supper, Black History month celebration, Community lunches, Easter Sunday Breakfast and other celebrations for the life of the church.

The hall continues to host one off private bookings/events which bring in additional income.

We are hoping that in the coming year we will once more be part of the local NHS Blood Donation Hub which takes place a few times each year.