

St Thomas', Trowbridge and St John's, West Ashton Monthly News June 2026



All people are like
grass, and all their
faithfulness is like
the flowers of the
field.

Isaiah 40:6

Vicar's APCM Report 2025

This month we thought we'd share the vicar's APCM report. So that you can all see how God is moving, and where we are going. God is good, and we seek to continue to walk with Him in faith.

Vicar's APCM Report 2025


The year

On the face of it 2025 looked like a good year in the life of our church – even though we had a new vicar. In fact, I'm pleased to say I think I have made little difference – which is good, because usually there is a negative hit when a church has a transition between vicars. Genuinely, it is usually expected to see a fall in numbers through interregnum and first year of a new vicar.

There is not an exact science in how to gauge a healthy church.



APCM 2025



I am the vine; you are the branches.
If you remain in me and I in you,
you will bear much fruit;
apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15 v5

However, taking the 2025 verse for the year, Jesus' words saying;

Let's look for the fruit. We can look at how

people work together. How they love one another in good times and tough. How the church pulled together through an interregnum. We see God's fruit here.

You can see how the church feels when they gather. We see God's fruit here.

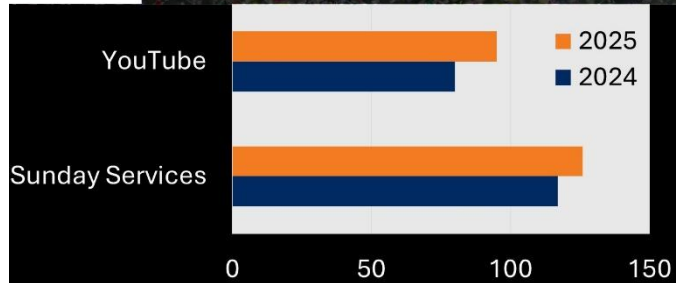
We can look for the impact in the wider community – lives beyond our walls touched by the love of God. In our APCM reports - all ages and stages. We see God's fruit there.

Perhaps those are subjective, so you could look at some numbers. As I said before the usual expectation for interregnum and new vicar is for the numbers to drop.

The average attendance for Sundays at St Thomas' from 2024 to 2025 is up from 117 to 126. St John's is up also, from 19 to 21.



APCM 2025



The numbers watching online, numbers attending midweek communion,

attending communion in residential homes. Not down, but all up something like 10%.

I hope to have a closer idea of Messy Church numbers going forward – so we can see where God is moving there too. Messy Church is a church service just like all the rest, and we have moved to make sure it is considered and stays that way.

Small groups have gone from 9 to 12, including over 100 people and our youth.

Youth Alpha, New Wine, Church weekend away.

Across the board, we see God's fruit.

Jesus said - If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Praise God for His goodness and these blessings, it all comes from being rooted in Him. Remaining in the vine.

Rooted in Jesus

We are rooted. We meet regularly together.

We pray first at all times, acknowledging this is all God's work.

We do this on Sundays, we do this in Staff Team meetings, PCC, and I encourage you all to do the same whenever you meet. Being rooted in Jesus is incredibly important.

Signs of God moving

We are continuing to see signs of God moving.

We have talked already about His fruit, and that is a sure sign of God moving.

When we meet at Staff team we pray and then begin by sharing how God is moving for us in the last week or so. We always have much to say – in excitement and in challenge. God is moving.

In the last year we have had several instances of people coming to us at St Thomas' after divine revelation.

What do I mean by that – I mean something like a dream, or an urge to come to find out about something they can't shift. Young and old.

Several instances of people seeing God in some way and *having* to come here to find out more. I have stood at the back at the end of a service and when asked if they could have a bible, I have said yes, absolutely, here's a bible!

This is unusual, but an example of the times we are in – God is moving, please be encouraged.

Not just here too – incredible examples of faith in our primary schools, and also full common rooms in care homes too when running acts of worship there, especially at Wingfield.

Where there used to be a few, now there are many.

God is leading us in all sorts of ways, not least in our themes and teaching at St Thomas'. We gather as a group – me, Martyn, Alison, and Angela, and God seems to keep guiding us together. I hope you have found that in all the themes like the Spiritual Gifts series in the autumn.

We work to help us continue to focus on how God is leading. We have done this in the PCC too.

Identity

Firstly, we continue to work on identity, so we can be true to God and ourselves, and also so people know what to expect when they turn up here. Our core values being -

Christ focussed

Community facing

Church family

This is not new, but we feel it very much reflects us as a community – this is still our identity, but we have worked on underpinning values too

Scriptural – Prayerful – Missional – Generous – Family - Worship

We continue to seek God in who we are and find ways of communicating that to those around us.

We have also defined focus areas for 2026 at St Thomas' church.

These are four areas we are focussed on to look to develop.

- o Layout of worship area & entrance
- o Paid post decisions
- o Communications and visibility

o Systems and processes

Some of which you will have noticed, like advertising the new youth worker role, we continue to look at welcome, social media, website, signage, new safeguarding system thirtyone:eight and ChurchSuite is imminent!

Growing

We continue this year to be a growing church. The 126 average Sunday attendance from 2025 is now about 140 so far in 2026. God is incredibly good, and we must respond by considering growth in all areas, to step out in faith.



APCM 2025
2026 and beyond



Stepping out in faith
Sustainability and scalability
Long term
For His glory

As our treasurer Lyndsey has said, we have been blessed with a windfall in the form of room rentals, but on the other hand giving has been static over the past few

years. God is good to us, we can step out in faith over the next couple of years, but in order to continue to grow sustainably we need resource to continue longer term. We see God moving, let's step with Him.

We are looking to apportion the windfall to short term contracts for both a Youth worker (in partnership with Wiltshire Youth for Christ), and later a Children and Families worker (with The Bridge project and local primary schools). If we are unable to progress the partnership, we will look for a part-time Children and Families worker. We would love to maintain those roles longer term, but that will depend on being in a suitable financial position to maintain them.

We will need more small groups, so more small group leaders and hosts.

We need more support for the pastoral care team, for care homes, youth work and schools.

We will need more support in the office, and central ministry team.

I have already raised the ministry side with the Diocese who are willing to partner with us. That may mean a curate in time, and an associate minister.

Space in St Thomas' becomes tighter, so where do we go next? More services here (which in some ways we have already started with Messy Church, Encounter, and Praise my soul), and/or utilise other areas of our parish. I would love to see worshipping communities rooted also in Paxcroft and Holy Trinity (Broadmead).

But only with that same DNA throughout, with God in the centre.

We need a sustainable model that grows as God moves.

We don't have that yet. However, we are looking to make this norm – constant growth, walking with the God who offers abundant fruit.

Just like the early church.

It sounds like a lot, but we are only called to take the next step in faith. The Tanzanians had a saying as we climbed Kilimanjaro – pole, polé – which means slowly, slowly. One step at a time, then we look back, like today, and see how far God has taken us.

God is blessing us, so I ask you, what is the next step he is calling you to?

Is it coming alongside a new Christian.

Is it to a new mission area – like care homes, primary schools, youth work, morning break, toms/women's shed?

Is it to financial giving, to partner with us on this journey God leads us in?

Or is it to the administration – our office, social media, communications, safeguarding.

Or keeping doing what you are doing and encouraging others on?

We have a church that God is blessing – I urge you to partner with Him and us as we each take just the next faithful step with Him.

2025 was great, 2026 so far is no less exciting!

God is so, so good – Amen!

Financial Team

Two months have now passed since our last update – where has that time gone! This is our third finance news update, and we do hope that you are finding these useful in understanding what it is that the Finance Team do and how you can all help with the financial side of St Thomas’.

At the end of April, we held our APCM. Thank you all for coming to hear how we did in 2025 and to be inspired about the work of St Thomas’ for 2026.

After the presentation of the budget for 2026, Lyndsey answered a couple of questions from the floor about ‘on the plate’ giving. So, for those of you who are not aware, we’d like to explain further about the government scheme called GASDS (Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme).

The GASDS scheme allows St Thomas’ to claim 25% back from HMRC on cash and card donations under £30, given ‘on the plate’ or through the new card reader. A claim is made annually at the end of each financial year, but there is a maximum amount that we can claim, and we are currently running very close to this. (i.e. if the amount of ‘on the plate’ giving increases much more, then we will not be able to take advantage of claiming Gift Aid on any amount over the maximum.)

Therefore, if you regularly give to St Thomas’ through these means, and you are a taxpayer, please consider switching the way you donate to direct bank transfer and complete a Gift Aid Declaration Form. Gift Aid Declaration forms are available next to the card reader at the back of church or ask Esther for a copy.

If you require any more information about the accounts or the GASDS scheme, please do speak to one of us and we will happily attempt to answer your questions.

Have a lovely summer,

Lyndsey and Esther
Finance Team



St John's Update

Here we are in June, can we cope with more sunshine?

What a month May was - the usual two services were held - PAT (Portable Appliance Testing) took place (all passed apart for an extension lead); PCC Meeting took place in the church; Fire Extinguishers were serviced; daffodils cut down and front garden replanted. But best of all, at long last St John's had the green light to go ahead to wash and redecorate some walls to eliminate the damp mould. This will commence on 15th June. The work was anticipated to start in July/August, but contractors (Ellis & Co.) brought the start date forward. The church has to be cleared so a container has been booked, and removal company assigned for the removal work.

The church will have scaffolding throughout, and the organ and pulpit will be boxed in for safety. Our last service will be on the 7th June and if all goes well will reopen on 17th July for the school leaver's service and for Sunday 19th July for Holy Communion (this is if all goes to plan, fingers crossed). The total package of work is very costly, and it is sincerely hoped that it somewhat resolves the damp mould problem. Extensive work/paperwork has been spear headed by Peter H and St John's sends a vote of thanks to him. During the closure of the church, St Thomas' have kindly invited the congregation and friends of St J's to join them for Sunday Worship, we are very grateful of the kind invitation. We apologise for the disruption to services, but the work needs to be done and the sooner it is started the quicker it will be finished. We thank you for your patience with this project.

We must mention the one-year milestone reached by Revd. Simon and family at our churches. 15th June was his first service at West Ashton - anticipation was running high on that day - and we have not looked back. Thank you Revd. Simon and Elle for bringing Gods word to us with your ministry, we are blessed to have you with us.

St John's next service will be Service Of The Word - 7 June, then closure until 17th July for the Schools end of term service and the 19th July for Holy Communion.

In early June the world of leaf, of blade and flowers explodes and every sunset is different - J Steinbeck.
Enjoy Gods gifts around us.

We Are One

There are people in our lives,
Some are friends and some are strangers,
Though we see through different eyes,
And we come from many places.

There are places in our lives,
There are things we've done
together,
And the memory of these times
Will be in our hearts forever.

There are seasons in our lives,
And they bring us many changes.
Through the low times and the highs,
As we turn our separate pages.

Together we are strong,
We sing our songs together.
Each one of us belongs,
We share our lives together. Amen



Broads Adventure 2026

Post Cruise Report

28th of March -
4th of April

Ephesians 2:10 “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”



Broads Adventure 2026 was a week filled with sailing, worshipping God and having lots of fun. During the week we explored examples of ‘Real People with Real Faith’ through bible studies, Talks, Worship and Discussions.

On the first day, after reuniting with old friends and meeting new ones too, we set sail just after midday. The first challenge for the boats coming from Martham Boatyard was to get under Potter Heigham bridge. Fortunately, with some help from the boatyard, our yachts ‘Palace’ and ‘America’ made it under without a hitch. The weekend had brought some strong winds along with it, so there was no sailing for the first day. We motored gently down to our first night mooring, Womack Water, a picturesque and secluded spot located just outside Ludham village.



A lovely dinner prepared by the crew followed, and then we all met aboard ‘Palace’ for our evening meeting. We shared exciting moments in our day, worshiped Jesus and explored the bible through a talk from one of the skippers.

We rose bright and early on day 2 where the crews got acquainted with the morning routine of boat inspection. All of our yachts are inspected for cleanliness and tidiness each morning to ensure they stay Ship-shape and ready to sail. Each morning the best crew is awarded the Broads adventure shield, where boats eagerly compete for the grand prize at the end of the week. With decks scrubbed and rollocks polished, we then headed to the medieval St Benets Abbey for our Palm Sunday church service. The crews then had the tricky task of preparing a roast dinner onboard the boats. The roast chicken was thoroughly enjoyed and fuelled us for an exciting afternoon. We suited up with waterproofs and lifejackets and set sail on South Walsham Broad. After the first proper sail of the week, we rounded off the afternoon with a walk.

We wound down for the evening and moored up at the edge of South Walsham broad. Strong winds battered our fleet, but our mud weights and lines held firm and kept us safe for the night.

By Monday we were really into the swing of things. We had an exciting morning sail with some sporty conditions on South Walsham Broad. It was an excellent opportunity for our crew to learn and demonstrate some excellent yacht sailing. After a well-earned lunch, we moored up along Fleet Dyke for some land-based games and activities.

We cracked out the dinghies on Tuesday morning. A calm breeze rolled over South Walsham broad, just enough to sail the dinghies and learn some sailing fundamentals. By lunch time we began the river sail down towards Upton boatyard. Snaking along Upton Dyke our fleet moored up for a change of pace for the afternoon. After showering, some opted to chill and play board games whilst others ran off some steam in the field. This lead up to one of the



highlights of the week, a barbeque! With bellies full we met on 'Palace' for our evening meeting before winding down for the night.



Wednesday morning

brought with it a turn in the weather. Calm winds and sunshine made way for a relaxing and peaceful sail up towards Ludham bridge. A perfect opportunity to spot some wildlife en-route.

With all of our yachts safely under the bridge we stopped for a quick lunch before pressing on up the river Ant. We stopped off at Howe hill for some rounders and ball games and then we finished with a short sail. We made our way onto Barton Broad where we could really stretch the legs of our yachts. Some crews impressed with synchronised sailing and practicing of man-over-board drills.

With tired eyes, we woke up on Thursday for another day of excitement. There were strong winds on Barton Broad, which was also especially busy with sailing yachts.

This made way for some exciting boat manoeuvres and thrilling sailing. By the afternoon, it was time to test our crews problem solving and rowing skills in the Dinghy Treasure hunt. We nestled our fleet in a sheltered corner of the broad and our crews set off on their clue finding missions, all eager to be the first to figure it out. The sun had come out by the afternoon where we meandered down the river Ant to Howe Hill for our night mooring. We enjoyed our dinner with scenic views and distant birdsong and then headed to bed.

For our last full day on the water, we headed back down the river Ant in the morning. With crews working like well-oiled-machines, masts were lowered and our boats made their way under Ludham bridge before pressing on towards St Benets Abbey.

Before lunch we played some games around the grassy ruins of St Benets Abbey and then headed towards Womack Water for the final night.

The main event for the afternoon was the renowned Dinghy regatta. A championship like no other, the crews lined up in their dinghies to race for the title. Oars clashed, and shrieks of competition and rivalry filled the air. All crews showed excellent sportsmanship and demonstrated just how far their rowing skills had come over the week.

Finishing where we had started on the first night, crews chatted, dinner was had and we all piled into 'Palace' for the last evening meeting.



On Saturday morning, we said our goodbyes and held close our everlasting stories and friendships made over the past week. Our fleet then split with two boats heading back under Potter bridge, to Martham boatyard. The rest headed back to Upton Boatyard.

2026 had some excellent sailing and some even more excellent encounters with God. We saw our young people flourish in their faith, gain confidence and become truly terrific sailors. Thank you to

everyone for the prayers and support to make Broads Adventure 2026 a success!

Skipper Jacob

If you would like to find out more about West Runton Holidays and Broads Adventure 2027, visit <https://westruntonholidays.org/> or speak to **Jamie F**

Thank You



We want to say a Big Thank You to Gordon R for producing new room name plaques for all the Church

Trowbridge Street Pastors

Street Pastors were first seen on the streets of Trowbridge in 2009. Approximately 25 Christians originally signed up to be part of the group. More than a third of them were members of St Thomas'. Having a large number of pastors we were able to send out a team of four each week with no pastor going out more than once a month. Apart from the Covid period Street Pastors teams have gone out for the past 17 years. Currently there are only 7 active pastors and there are two who have fairly long term medical problems who hope to return as soon as they are able.

For the first 15 years we had a team out every week on either a Friday or Saturday night. This is no longer possible due to the lack of pastors. Please pray that we can continue and also prayerfully consider whether this is something you could do. Street Pastors are always armed with water, flip flops and lollies so as to cater for different problems. Over the years we have found that our teams are much loved by many of those that we meet and would be much missed if we were no longer out and about. Also, the fellowship experienced in the teams is second to none.

Is it easy being a Street Pastor? No. Is it dangerous being a Street Pastor? No. Do Street Pastors intervene in arguments and fights? No. Fights are extremely rare but we are there to help afterward. Are Street Pastors evangelists? No. but if asked "what are old people like you doing out at this time of the night?" We can, if led, take the opportunity to share our faith. What are the hours? Now generally 10.00pm to 2.30am. Originally we often stayed out until 4.00am or later on occasions. However, since Covid, as in many towns, the nighttime economy has greatly shrunk. Originally St Thomas' led the way numerically with Trowbridge Street Pastors but currently we do not have any active Street Pastors. A number of us are still involved as prayer partners. Others of us, who are no longer able to go out, are involved in the management of the teams.

If you would like to know more about Street Pastors, David G, Margaret H, Keith E or myself would be very pleased to talk with you.

Gordon R, Secretary/Treasurer, Trowbridge Street Pastors

Anastasiia Testimony

Dear Church Family

The fact that I stand here, doesn't mean that I am special, I haven't done anything worthy of praise. I don't want you to see a person standing in front of you, I want you to see God, who is great and worthy in the life of this person. A God, for whom there is nothing impossible and who is good to us every day, no matter the circumstances we find ourselves in.

I want to tell you the story of how God found me, not to evoke your pity or sympathy. I want to share my story for you to see how God's red string was embroidered through my life: His care, His attention and His love. Like a bracelet, with beads from periods of my life, is holding up only because of the string of His love.

I was born in a family of non-believers. My parents weren't rich. My father was a drug addict. I cannot say that my childhood was bright. This was at the time of the Soviet Union; we often didn't have much to eat and my father often hurt us. We were always scared when he would return home from work.

When I was seven, one lady told my parents about Jesus. Since then, we began going to church, while I joined Sunday School there. I liked that for some time; our family had some peace and quiet. My father stopped doing drugs, however he continued to drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes. It was difficult for me to believe in God, because my family behaved in church one way, while behaving at home in another. Their words didn't match their actions.

I guess that was what influenced me during my teenage years. When we moved to my mother's side of the family in Ukraine, I started drinking alcohol and smoking. Thanks to God, it didn't come to doing drugs, but I was smoking weed. I believed, I knew that I wasn't doing the right thing, that God didn't like it either, but I really didn't want to go to church and be hypocritical by putting up the face of a good Christian. I stopped going to church. I tried to forget God.

But He didn't forget me. Maybe, there's twice the responsibility to know what is right to do and intentionally not do it.

One time, when I was out drinking with my friends again, in some abandoned building, we were startled by a security guard. When we were in the process of jumping out of the window to escape getting caught (the window of the ground floor by the way), I felt like I was stopped by something. I heard God's gentle voice inside me, which was hurt because of what I was doing right now and what was happening to me.

After that, I decided that I have to return to church. Return to God. I decided to change my life. Give my life to Him.

In the year of 2000, I was baptised with my best friend - Nadya (as Marysia noted: her name means Hope in Ukrainian). From that moment on, no matter what happened in my life, I never regretted my choice even for a second. The choice of giving my life to the one, who gave His life for me.

God gifted me a wonderful time of youth, when I could dedicate my time serving him to the fullest. I worked at a Christian organisation: Youth for the Christ. We organised a lot of youth clubs, camps, meetups for children, conferences, small groups and evangelisation events.

In 2008, I married my wonderful husband, who I believe was gifted to me by God. We had three wonderful children. I don't want to say that all this time life was easy and comfortable, but I can confidently say that God stays faithful, even when we aren't.

On the first week since the war began, we simply didn't know what to do. Later, we fled to Slovakia, where we had a few friends who were ready to help us. Life was turned upside down. And that's an understatement.

When we were staying in Slovakia, some of our friends said that they were planning to go to England or somewhere else in Europe. Deep inside my heart, I wanted to go here, because my daughter was learning English, but in my opinion, it was impossible.

Do you need any more evidence that nothing is impossible to God?

When we didn't know where to go, I suddenly received a call from my friend who suggested we find a sponsor for our family. I agreed, even though, honestly, I didn't believe that it was possible, considering that, at the time, there were five of us. Yet, after a week we received an answer that someone was ready to open the doors to our family here, in Britain.

When we left behind our life in Ukraine, I couldn't imagine that God would gift us an incredible family in a country, where we didn't have anyone, we knew or any contacts, yet.

It is through you that God didn't just fill the chalice of our life, He simply made it overflow. We will never forget the first day when we arrived. The first faces, first people who met us: Gwen, Fiona, Marjory, Dan and Mandi. Thank you for the care and love with which you greeted us. Then, Ty and Willow kept visiting us almost every day to check how we were doing and if we needed any help (he even agreed to host Marysia's first birthday here, which she remembers as one of the most unforgettably special memories in UK). And the first time when we came to your church, Helen and her family were the first ones to invite us to a picnic (the fact that we struggled with our English back then and she didn't find it as an issue, makes her invitation even more brave). The first time we met everyone will stay in our memories forever. And if only I had time, I would've named every single one of you by name, since a lot of you touched the heart of our family. And a lot of you will stay there forever. Unfortunately, though, I am limited by time. I don't think Simon would allow me to have a whole census of the population...

Thank you for your patience when we were learning from the beginning. We were adults, but we were like children who just began living. Thank you for not judging us. You've done so much for our family.

And here we are, for almost four years already. I don't know how much longer we'll be able to stay here. But I know that God has a plan. I believe that He has our future in His hands, even though, honestly, it's difficult to believe in that sometimes.

I understand that my life won't be enough to return everything that you gave us and all that you sacrificed for us. I only know that all I can do at the moment for all of you is bring your names to the throne of God. I pray that Jesus wasn't just a part of your life. I pray that he is your entire life.

There will be times in life when things we don't understand happen. And maybe we cannot understand them during our time here on earth. But I want to share one of my favourite verses in the Bible. It is written in John 13:7. When Jesus was going to wash the feet of the disciples, Simon protested. He didn't understand why Jesus was doing this. But: "Jesus replied, 'You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.'"

Trust Him. Even if you don't understand what's happening. He is God.

So, while we can't know everything, we can know God, who knows everything! And in whom we can trust.

Sincerely, with a genuine love for all of you,
Anastasiia.

Posers and Answers

Here are the answers for May's Posers

1. The young lady is 12 years old
2. Odd one out is cross. Other words can be preceded by 'bed' to form new words
3. The youngest camel is 2 years old

How about trying these for June's Posers

1. A family had 9 children 18 months apart. The eldest born is 5 times as old as the youngest. How old is the eldest?
2. How many items do I have if I put them away----
2 at a time I have 1 left over
3 at a time I have 2 left over
4 at a time I have 3 left over
5 at a time I have 4 left over
6 at a time I have 5 left over
7 at a time I have 0 left over
3. What do these words have in common?
almost, forty, adopt, glory, ghost

That is it for today
Y NOT

Deadline for July's Magazine: Monday 29th June.