

Parish profile



Living God's love in our worship, our community and our prayer

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A Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world

A Preface from Archdeacon Cassa and Associate Archdeacon Chris Bull



It is a pleasure to commend this Parish Profile to you as you prayerfully consider God's call to ministry at St James', Downley. This is a church with a clear sense of vocation: to live God's love through worship, prayer and generous service at the heart of its community.

St James' is deeply rooted in Downley village life, known for its hospitality, safeguarding, and practical compassion. Partnerships with organisations such as Growing Hope, One Can Trust and Wycombe Homeless Connection reflect a lived-out faith expressed through faithful service. Its growing work with families, schools and children with additional needs speaks warmly of the church's prayerful vision and commitment to the wider community.



The coming years bring both opportunity and challenge, including significant building works and the next stage of the church's mission and growth. The parish is seeking a collaborative priest with a pastoral heart who will nurture faith, encourage gifts, and help discern God's call for the future. Within the supportive context of the Wycombe Team and a well-resourced Deanery, this is a post with real scope for flourishing ministry.

We warmly encourage you to consider whether God may be calling you to share in the next chapter of St James' story. Chris is leading the recruitment. He has a wealth of local experience, having been the Vicar of Flackwell Heath for 25 years and Area Dean of High Wycombe. He is now Associate Archdeacon and chaplain to Bucks Royal British Legion.

Welcome

Hello and welcome to St James Church Downley, and thank you for reading our Parish Profile as you consider God's calling to your next ministry!

St James is a small but growing church in the heart of the community in Downley, with a passion for showing God's love in action. We are a warm, inclusive and welcoming church, and we believe that through our care and compassion, through loving active service, we might see more people coming to know Jesus, and see lives and our community transformed by His love.



Our vision

Our Vision

We believe that God loves every person whom he has created, and he wants to have a relationship with each one of us.

Our part in God's plan

In our prayer life as a church and as individuals, we seek to discern God's plan for our church as part of the community, and the part we can play in working for His Kingdom in Downley and High Wycombe.



Family Service prayer chain



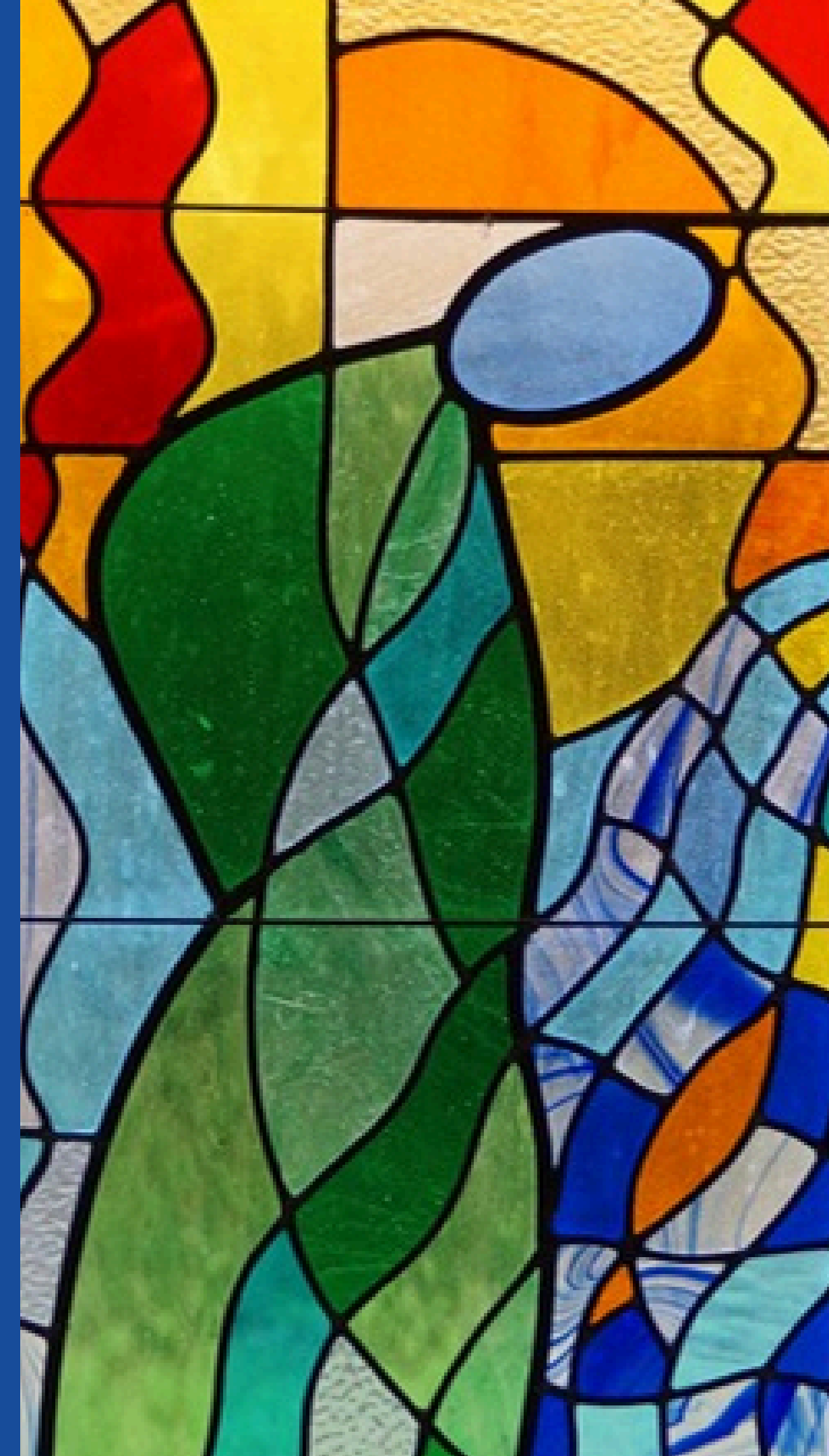
Our church

A serving church

- Living God's love in our community in our generous acts and lives of service
- Living our Mission supporting our Charities – Growing Hope, One Can Trust, Wycombe Homeless Connection
- Serving our community and each other with love and acceptance

A safe and welcoming church

- Seeking to be a church that is inclusive, open and accessible to all, where all can feel safe and accepted and come to know Jesus
- A caring community where we recognise God in everyone, and where all can be heard and accepted and loved for who they are



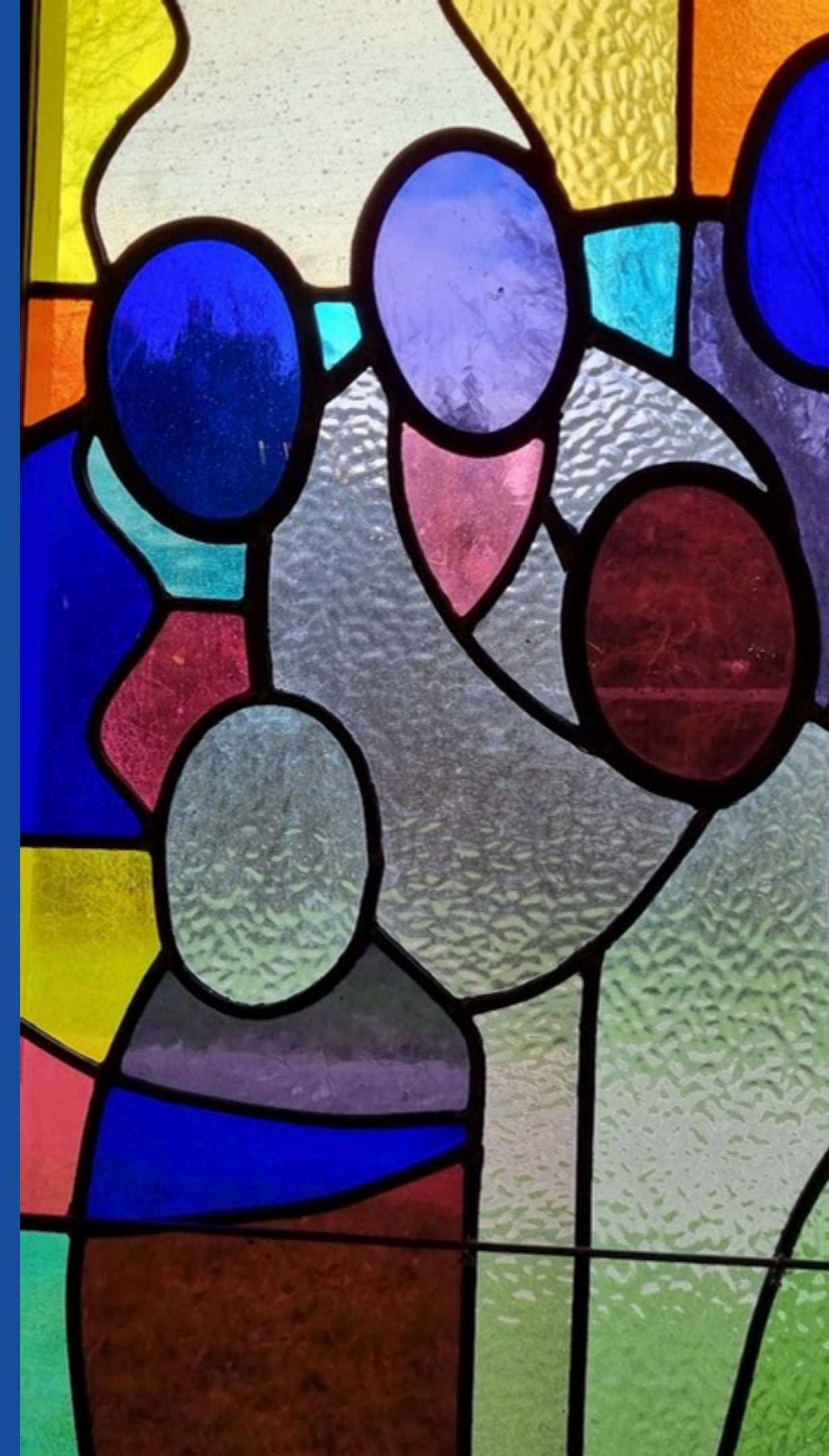
Our church

A praying church

- A community open to the work and presence of the Holy Spirit
- A people who pray consistently, individually and together, for each other and the world, believing that God hears and answers our prayers

A worshiping church

- A people whose lives are an act of worship, and reflect the light of Jesus Christ that He might be seen in us
- A Church community who gather together in love to read and study God's word, pray, learn, sing, laugh, cry and equip us to let our joy into the world



Who we are

St James's Church is a warm, safe and welcoming church in the heart of the Downley Community. We are a fairly diverse group, joined together by the love of God, an acceptance of every person for who they are, and a passion for living our lives as an act of worship that shows God's love in action. It is no surprise that at the heart of our church is the teaching of our patron Saint James, as we seek to serve our community in good works for the Kingdom of God at the same time as living out and growing in our faith through God's Grace.

St James' has become a centre of community service in Downley, with a real heart for worshipping God and supporting our mission partners. Many of us are involved in the wide range of charitable and community support activities that take place in the church and the wider community. We are a One Can Trust hub for processing and distributing emergency food parcels for people in our local community, our church supports the Wycombe Homeless Connection with staff and volunteers, and we have established a local branch of Growing Hope, based in our church premises, providing free therapy to local families with children that have additional needs.

Our congregation of ~60 members has seen steady growth in numbers over the last few years, built on a solid foundation of a few faithful people who have kept things going through some challenging recent times. Regular worship service attendance on Sunday morning is 30 – 40 people, with more joining online through Zoom. We also have active home groups that meet weekly to pray and learn together.

Every last Sunday afternoon in the month we hold a Messy Church service which is seeing many more families with children attending to enjoy creative play, stories, music and hospitality, finishing with a meal together. We also have recently introduced Thursday morning communion service (20 – 30 communicants) and “Coffee Poppin”, which is increasingly popular and provides a place where people from different parts of the community can meet.

Our church is known as a warm, caring place of acceptance and love, both within the church, and in the wider community. We have a dedicated safeguarding officer and safeguarding is integral to our love and care for one another and for our community. St James' has been awarded an ECO Church Bronze award for its work in promoting stewardship and care for God's creation, and helping everyone to make more environmentally friendly lifestyle choices, and to improve environmental engagement.

We are actively engaged in supporting local schools with Christingle (Year 2), Christmas Unwrapped (Year 5) and Easter Eggsplained, and regularly take services in the nearby Heights Care Home along with other churches in Downley.

The church, its members and accessible buildings (Gold Award awarded by Growing Hope) are truly at the heart of village life in Downley, with many groups using the church buildings daily, and engagement with local village life and activities with regular community events such as quizzes, concerts, community choir meetings. It's a great place to show the love of God in action and to help all to come to know Jesus.



Our hopes for the future

As we look forward to the next phase of our journey and seek a new vicar to lead us, our hopes are that we would continue to grow in numbers and in spiritual depth, while sustaining a homely church feel and welcome as we grow. We pray that St James's would be a church where the Holy Spirit is welcomed and expected to move so that our hearts would be open to our development as individuals and as a church community.

Community & Outreach

We want to become a thriving, safe, inclusive community hub, and to reach out to those in our community who do not yet know Jesus.

Activities and ministries

We want to broaden our connections with all age groups, particularly young people, and to broaden the use of our venue and facilities for the community. We want to develop our commitment to supporting serving ministries through our work with Growing Hope, One Can Trust, Wycombe Homeless connection, for whom many of us already volunteer.

Worship & Identity

We want to build on our authentic and evolving worship and prayer ministries, to be truly accessible and welcoming to all, and to equip ourselves to be better prepared to explain the reason for our hope in Jesus Christ to anyone who asks.

Who are we looking for?

The people of St James have many gifts and strengths. All are volunteers who willingly give their time to serve God, each other and the wider community.

There are of course some specific things we would like a new person to offer.

However, we most of all want **someone who will help us to get to know God better**, work alongside us and is committed to see God's kingdom grow in Downley.

Your letter of application should provide evidence of the qualities, skills and experience listed below and on the right:

We are looking for someone who is **collaborative**; willing to **share leadership** and **encourage** the gifts and strengths of people in all three congregations.

We want our new vicar to be **visionary** and someone who aligns with the vision of St James, supporting us in working out what God wants of us in the years to come.

We want you to be **mission focused**, enabling us to see where God is working and encouraging us to share the good news of Jesus.

We would hope you have **strong pastoral instincts**, inclusive and welcoming of all.

We are a church who wants to be **open to the work of the Spirit in worship** (be it traditional through to charismatic), in prayer and in mission.

We would welcome your experience **reaching unchurched families**.

What we can offer

- A committed and talented fellowship of Christians who want to serve and grow in faith
- A church committed to bring God's love to the community
- A flexible church building
- A church committed to growth and outreach

- A paid administrator – 10 hours per week
- An experienced ministry team
- A 4 bedroomed vicarage within the church grounds

The position

This is a part-time post: 3 days plus Sundays.



All about St. James

Our Mission in Action

In seeking to live God's love in the community as part of our Mission, we support charities with our buildings, resources and people.

Growing Hope is a charity providing free therapy services to children with additional needs. St James' church has partnered with Growing Hope to support this work which operates clinics from our church buildings during the week. Many families are benefiting from a free therapy service that avoids the waiting times for the NHS. Some new families have started coming to Messy Church as a result of engagement with the church.

One Can Trust provides food parcels to families and those in need the local area. St James' acts as a collection and distribution hub on Thursday mornings, and recipients often stay for the Coffee Poppin, where many helpful and supportive relationships have been formed.

Wycombe Homeless Connection provides overnight accommodation and meals for homeless people in High Wycombe. Several of our members support the work of WHC by volunteering at the Night Shelter, and by providing laundry services for bedding during the window of operation over winter.

Coffee Poppin is a coffee stop that is open in the church on a Thursday morning for anyone to pop in for a coffee and a chat. It runs right after the Thursday morning Communion service, with a good mix and mingling of people from different walks of life.



Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a fundamental part of our mission of Living God's Love. We value every individual as being unique and precious to God. We are called to love one another as Christ loves us. Safeguarding is integral to our love and care for one another and for our community.

We want our church to be a place of welcome, a place of safety where everyone is nurtured, valued and protected. We have in place a range of measures to prevent abuse taking place within our context. We aim to manage risk and work effectively within our church community and with external agencies to keep everyone safe. Training is undertaken as necessary. Safeguarding is reported at every PCC meeting.

On our Safeguarding Sunday we talk about safeguarding in both a practical and theological context.

We are looking for leadership which will continue to ensure that we develop and maintain safe and healthy cultures, resources and scrutiny arrangements to deliver high quality safeguarding practices and outcomes.

As we grow in numbers, we aim to build effective structures, listen well, establish good governance, communicate well, model safe behaviours and manage power.

Hilary - our safeguarding officer (right)



Worship

We have a mixed musical worship style, with traditional hymns led by our regular organist and more contemporary worship led by a small worship band.

The Second and Fourth Sundays are Organ led services, the band leads worship on the First Sunday, and the third Sunday is shared between organ and band. Our congregation loves to sing, and the focus on inclusion and breadth of worship style ensures everyone feels welcome and included. We are steadily introducing new songs to our worship, that allows us to complement and reflect the teaching and scripture. Song words are projected onto a screen, operated from the A/V mixing desk.

The mix of traditional hymns and more modern worship songs / modern hymns enables everyone to engage in worship.



Services

Our weekly worship services are friendly sincere and warm with a strong sense of family and belonging, and a real sense of the Holy Spirit among us. We are blessed with talented spiritual leaders and teachers, and we follow a pattern of themed teaching or sermon series, and use Common Worship as the basis of our liturgy.

Service times

- 1st Sunday is all age service with no communion
- Sunday – 11am communion
- Thursday – 10am communion, said service with short talk
- Messy Church on the last Sunday of every month at 4.00pm

Messy Church

15 children with families. Some of the families are coming as a result of their attendance at Growing Hope clinics, and there is good support in the community through word of mouth.

We regularly have craft and creative play, teaching and reading, prayer and music, and the sessions are rounded off with a shared meal. This is such a wonderful way to engage with the younger people and families in Downley and High Wycombe.



Discipleship

Home Groups

We have two Home Groups who meet weekly where members can share their prayer needs and gratitude for prayers answered, where we can pray with and for each other, and study ongoing teaching themes.

For example we have recently completed an online study series led by Pete Greig on aspects of prayer, and we hope to integrate some of these themes with teaching themes in our regular worship services.

Prayer

Prayer Meetings

A weekly prayer meeting is held in the church on Thursday mornings to pray for St James', for the community and for the world. We also have a monthly prayer meeting for Growing Hope High Wycombe in the church.

Prayer Diary

Our prayer Diary is produced monthly and circulated by email - and physical copy if preferred - to the congregation. We publish a daily prayer to those on WhatsApp, and the group chat is a great place for people to respond or to ask for prayer. This creates a wonderful real time sense of a worshipping and praying community outside of the normal weekly service timetable.



Community & Outreach

Community engagement

Downley is a vibrant community with many local events taking place. Most notably are the Downley “Up” Festival and Downley Day, which take place on the Common and are well attended by the local community. St James’ is present as a part of the Downley All Churches Together initiative, and we all take pitches together serving food, entertaining children, and a running bottle stall.

ACTs (All Churches Together) is a collaboration between the 4 churches in Downley, to support and pray for each other, and to show the love of Jesus to the community in service. We hold a special “LoveD” day in May (Love Downley / Disraeli) to show love and hospitality to the people of Downley. Major Festivals such as Christmas and Easter are marked by churches leading singing of Carols on the Common, and an early morning Easter Dawn service.

Schools

Six times a year cakes are baked by members of St James and taken into our two local schools for the school staff. This is hugely appreciated by the staff. Until very recently, a ministry team member was a school governor at the Downley School. Good relationships have been built with the senior staff at this school.



Who is who in church

Ministry Team

The ministry team meets monthly to pray, support and plan. Once a term they are joined by the wardens. Our retired minister, Ian Fishwick, supervises our curate and LLM/ordinand in training (to be ordained deacon in July 2026).

This team leads us spiritually and continues to lead us through the vacancy with a programme of theme based teaching, applied to life.



Ian and wife Jan



Rowena and Lucy

PCC

We have a team of 9 elected members serving on our PCC including 2 Church Wardens, with regular bi-monthly meetings to discuss, plan and address the church's operational matters.

Members also represent the church at the Deanery Synod. Our current focus with the ministry team is leading St James through this vacancy and seeking our next vicar.

Phoenix Team

Our Church organises and hosts many activities organised by a group of volunteers called the Phoenix Group. They organise church outings, fund raising events, monthly Sunday lunches, social evenings and quizzes, harvest suppers, entertainment, and refreshments at other church events.

Church Wardens

Tony Sackville



Sylvia Small



Our Buildings

St James' Church

St James's current church building was built in 1975 as a modern multipurpose design along simple lines, that would allow flexibility and a range of uses while keeping maintenance costs to a minimum. It was historically shared with the local Roman Catholic community but since 2012 has been dedicated to use by the Church of England. This light and airy room is blessed by the installation of two stained glass windows, by students from the local Bucks University, one depicting "St James" and the other "The Community", either side of the altar.

The main worship hall can comfortably hold 100 people with completely flexible seating, is equipped with an Allen 2-manual electric organ, full A/V projection and a 12 channel sound mixing desk. Adjacent is a children's / youth area, a kitchen, and the church office. There is a prayer room and two toilets (one accessible) off the entrance lobby.



Our Buildings

Church roof repairs

In late 2025 it was noticed there was a deformation in the roof structure. A subsequent structural survey has indicated that the roof has experienced some movement, and some bowing to the rafters. The survey recommended that the roof be replaced as soon as possible. This was a surprise given the age of the building, but is probably consistent with the early adoption of this type of roof construction. We have taken remedial action to stabilise the roof, and we are assured that it is stable, however, significant structural works will be required to restore it for the long term.

Our church community stands ready to do anything it can to resolve this situation, to protect our place of worship and the community centre that provides a home for so many worthy Downley community activities. With the demands of fund raising required and the potential disruption of structural works we pray that our strength would increase through this apparent weakness, and that our new vicar would help to lead us through this challenging time.



Our Buildings

Church Hall

The church hall was built in 1987 immediately to the rear of the church building, and is used for a wide variety of community and church activities as well as being available for hire by community groups and for private functions. The hall is 80m² and comprises a main hall, fully equipped kitchen, meeting rooms and toilet facilities. Funds raised from the hire of the church hall provide valuable income to support the work of the church.

The church and hall share a car park for about 30 cars with disabled access to both buildings, and dedicated accessible parking



The Vicarage

The vicarage is a four bed roomed house built in 1977 and is situated across the car park from the church.

It has a study, large lounge, dining room, sizeable kitchen and utility room.

The house is double glazed throughout.

The vicarage has its own large south facing garden and a detached garage.



Our Parish of Downley

Downley is a scenic village, and an energetic vibrant and creative community with a population just over 5000. Located on high ground about a mile to the north-west of the market town of High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire, with regular buses, and with excellent connections to the motorways and rail services to London and to the North.

Most of the housing stock has been built in the last 45 years, but the original 200 year-old village nucleus is still recognisable with many beautiful old buildings, and there is strong civic parish council. Much of St. James' parish lies outside the civic parish.

To the north and west, and within easy walking distance, Downley is bounded by woodland and open country including National Trust areas of outstanding natural beauty. To the north side of the village is the 22 hectares of Downley Common, a traditional common of medieval origins, itself part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which extends northwards, with beautiful walks in the woods and a couple of lovely pubs.

Local Services

There are two small shopping areas with a supermarket, local stores, a pharmacy a number of takeaways. Downley has no GP practices, but there are several within a mile in the town of High Wycombe.



Our Parish of Downley

Churches: Downley is served by 4 churches of various denominations; in addition to St James's are the Sunnybank Methodist Church, The Vibe Church, The Grace Baptist Church, and there is strong inter church collaboration supporting the Downley and Disraeli communities, working together as ACTs (All Churches Together), and jointly ministering at the many community activities that take place through the year.

Demographic: The population includes families of Afro Caribbean, Asian and Eastern European heritage. The socio-economic profile is slightly above the High Wycombe parish average with no very rich and few very poor properties.

Schools: There are three Primary stage schools in Downley, two of which cater for the primary age group (with a combined total roll of almost 1000) and the third is a school for children with significant special educational needs. The Disraeli School lies just outside the Parish but essentially forms part of the community. There is a C of E primary school in High Wycombe town within easy travelling distance. There are no secondary schools within Downley parish. Buckinghamshire has retained the two-tier grammar school system and three state-funded grammar schools are in High Wycombe together with several comprehensive schools. There are also a number of public schools in High Wycombe town and surrounding districts.

Nursing Care: "The Heights" is a residential nursing home, built in 2009, catering for 90 residents, offering nursing and dementia care and provision for adults with learning difficulties. St James's takes part with other churches in holding Church Services in the Heights Care home for the residents.

A lot of information is contained in our [own website](#) and the [Parish Council website](#).





Wycombe Deanery is a family of Anglican churches and congregations in and around High Wycombe. Like all families, our Deanery is diverse, stretching from the Thames Valley to the Chilterns Escarpment, encompassing urban areas in High Wycombe, some smaller towns, and dozens of rural villages. What unites us as a Deanery is a vision to see all of our churches flourishing in serving their parishes and working together to seek God's Kingdom.

A new Deanery Plan was approved by our Deanery Synod in October 2025. The plan, which was drawn together with contributions from across the Deanery, offers a shared direction of travel for the Deanery over the next five years. While not being a rigid blueprint, it is a framework built upon our vision, values, and priorities.



James Dwyer, Area Dean



Caroline Sants, Lay Chair



Wycombe Deanery

Further information about our Deanery, including our Deanery Plan, who's who, and upcoming meeting dates, can be found on our website: www.wycombedeanery.com

Our vision

At the heart of our Deanery is a longing to see the love of Jesus known across our churches and parishes, and to see our churches playing their part in seeing God's Kingdom come. This is summed up in our vision statement:

To help our churches serve their parishes and work together to see God's Kingdom come

Our values

Our values define who we are and how we foster a culture of mission and ministry in the Deanery. They are:

- To be centred on Jesus, Spirit-led, and rooted in prayer
- To be a catalyst for mission
- To work for the flourishing of our churches and their people
- To celebrate our differences

Our priorities

Through prayer we have identified four priority areas which have emerged from our values. These are areas where, as a Deanery, we will seek to discern how God may be calling us to support our churches. They are also areas we encourage every church in the Deanery to consider for their own context. These are:

- Strengthening the next generation
- Discerning opportunities for new congregations
- Developing clergy for lifelong mission and ministry
- Supporting churchwardens and lay leaders



The Wycombe Team

St James is in a team of seven parishes spread across High Wycombe. The team operates more like a group or small deanery than a team. The team ministry is expressed through the relationships of the clergy team who meet monthly for lunch and prayer. Clergy relate well and are supportive to one another.

All Saints

All Saints is a busy town centre church in the modern catholic tradition, working in a diverse context, with a historic grade 1 listed 13th century building. The incumbent is also the Team Rector. All Saints building is open every day for community work and services, and the church has an inclusive approach. Regular concerts and other community events are part of All Saints life, alongside strong interfaith relationships, and work with people who are homeless or addicted and the charities who support them. All Saints has links with On Fire Mission, with a bimonthly Sunday evening Led by the Spirit Catholic Charismatic Eucharist.

St Andrew, Hatters Lane

St Andrews occupies a slice of the Wye Valley to the east of the town centre and has a vision to be God's transforming presence for High Wycombe and beyond. St Andrew's is a Resource Church in partnership with the Oxford Diocese, with the aim of planting new churches, revitalising existing churches and equipping and encouraging other local churches in our region.

In 2019, St Andrew's sent a team to St Mary and St George, Sands to revitalise the church and reach out to the local community.

St Anne & St Peter, Wycombe Marsh and Micklefield

St Anne and St Peter consists of two church locations on the eastern side of High Wycombe: St Anne's Church, a 150 year-old brick and flint building, on the London Road and St Peter's Church at the heart of the Micklefield community.

According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation data (2015), Micklefield is the second most economically deprived area of the wards in Wycombe and South Buckinghamshire.

Christ the Servant King, Cressex

Christ the Servant King (CSK) sits within the Abbey and Booker & Cressex wards in the South West of High Wycombe. Perhaps unusually, our fellowship is the coming together of two congregations back in 2005 culminating in the building of a wonderful new place of worship in 2013.

St Francis, Terriers

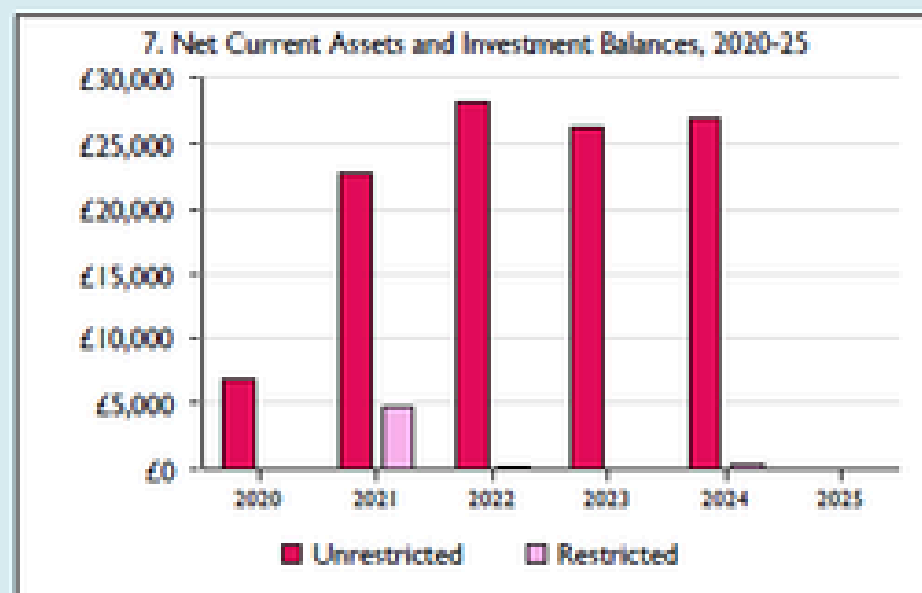
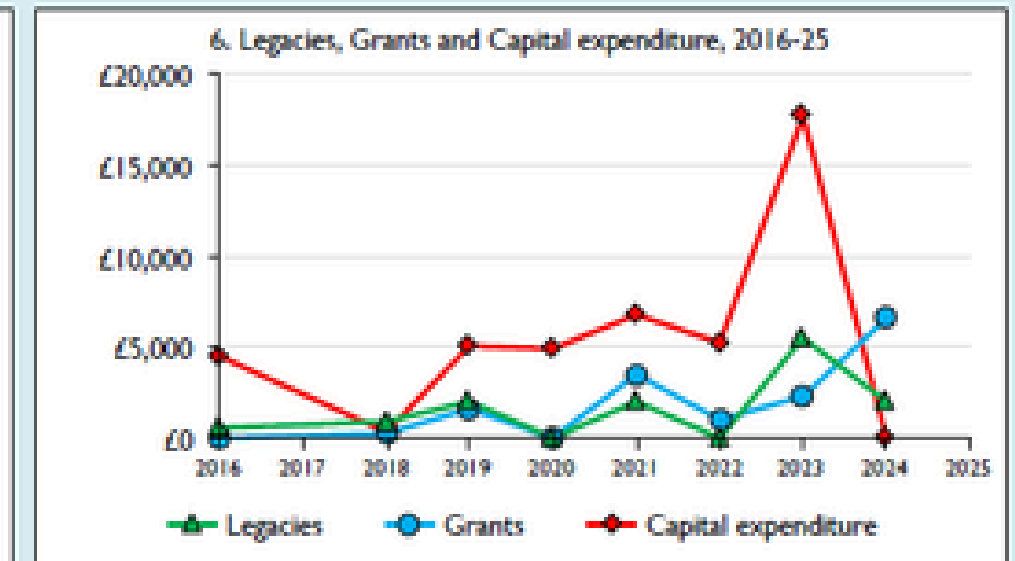
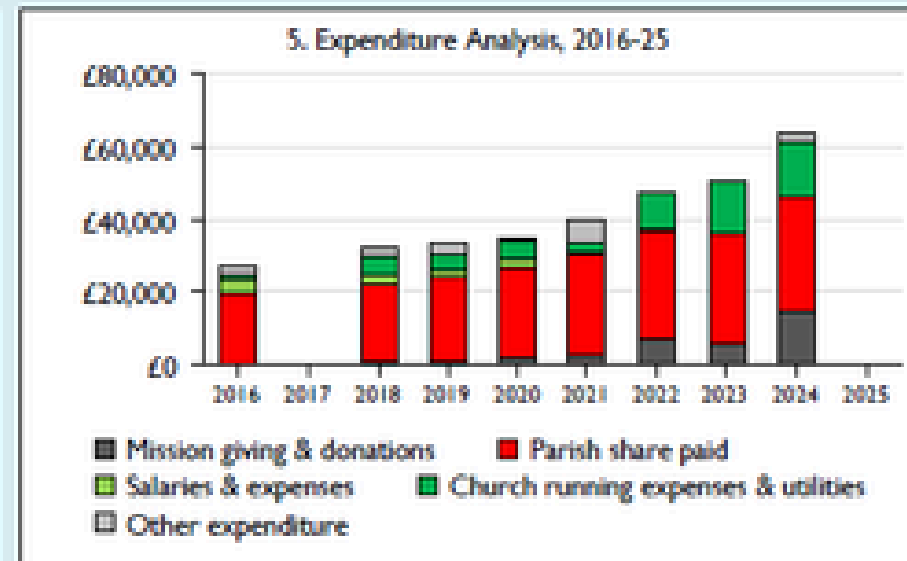
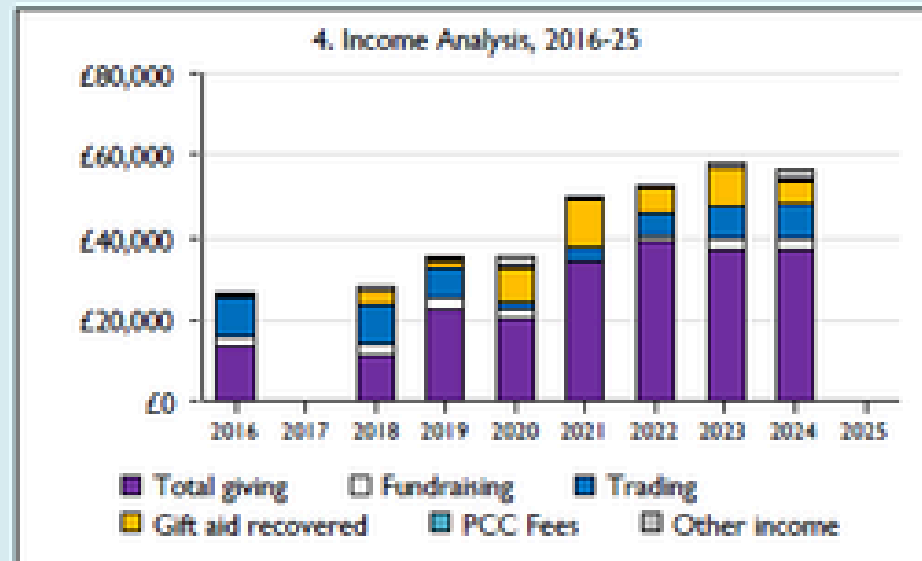
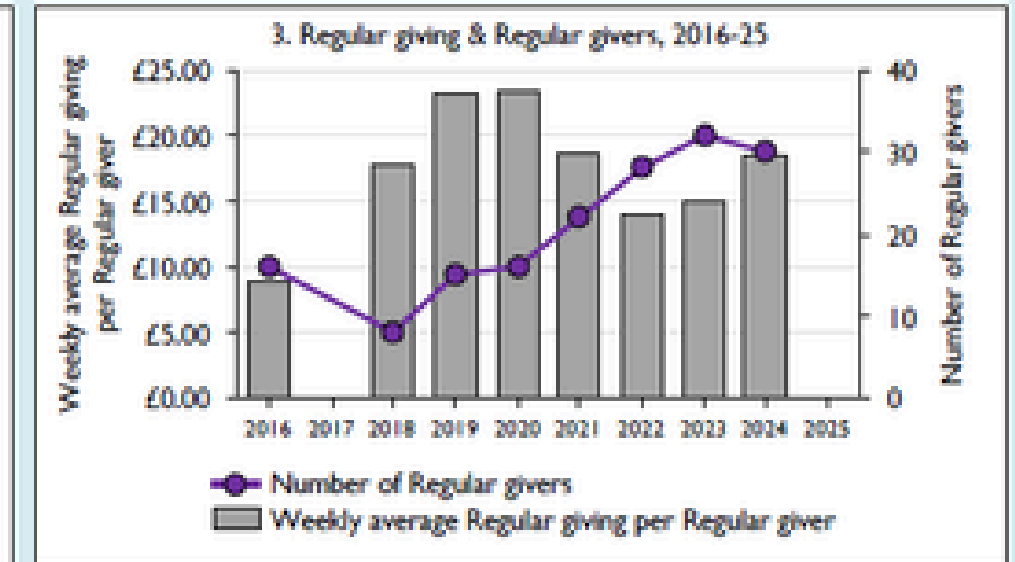
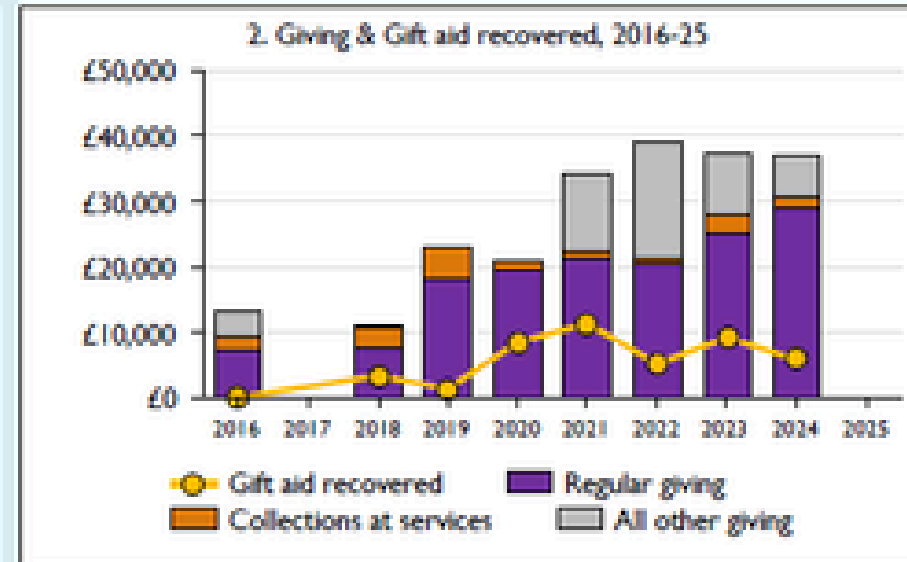
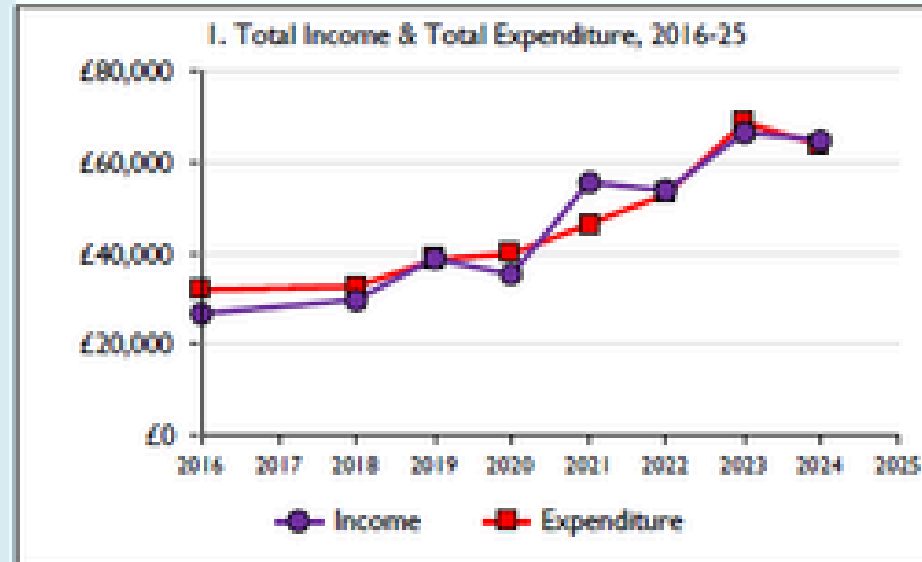
St Francis (SFT) is a friendly, inclusive and liberal catholic church on the northern side of High Wycombe. They have a community garden, which is also used as an alternative worship space and informal gatherings for those exploring faith. St Francis' vision is to be a Beacon of Hope, Community of Love and Well of Refreshment for all.

St Mary & St George, Sands

St Mary & St George Church serves the communities of Sands and Castlefield on the western edge of High Wycombe. The parish is hugely diverse in terms of its demographic, ethnic and socio-economic make-up. In 2019, the church was part of a revitalisation initiative with St Andrews which led to the planting of a new contemporary congregation alongside the existing Anglo-Catholic community. Together, as one church family, our vision is, 'To Make Christ's Presence Known in our Community.'

Appendix: St. James' financials

Finance Dashboard for the Parish of High Wycombe Saint James in the Deanery of WYCOMBE



Weekly average Regular giving per Regular giver (2025)
Parish: missing
Diocese: 17.96

Number of churches in parish (2025): 1
Parish code: 270829

Notes & definitions

This dashboard contains figures as submitted by churches currently in the Parish; gaps may be the result of missing returns.
Graph 2 shows a detailed breakdown of the **Total giving** figure in graph 4.
Graph 4 shows income other than grants and legacies.
Graph 4: **Total giving** = Regular giving + Collections at services + All other giving, including special appeals
Graph 4: **Other income** = Dividends, interest, income from property + Any other income.
Graph 5 shows expenditure other than capital expenditure.
Graph 5: **Other expenditure** = Fund-raising activities + Mission and evangelism costs + Cost of trading + Other expenses.
Graph 5: **Running expenses & utilities** also includes governance costs.
Graphs 1-6: Unrestricted and Restricted amounts have been combined.
For further definitions please see the guidance notes attached to the Return of Parish Finance:

Variations from year to year may be the result of changes in the number of churches that submitted returns, or changes in parish/benefice structure.

Number of churches included in returns: 2016 1;2018 1;2019 1;2020 1;2021 1;2022 1;2023 1;2024 1.

Produced by Data Services, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ. Date of production: 07/04/2026.

Every effort has been made to ensure that data are reliable. We would be pleased to be notified of any significant errors or omissions by email to statistics.unit@churchofengland.org